***Jane Eyre***

***Chapter 6***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Short Summary:***

Winter has set in and the school is frigid, even indoors. On Jane’s second morning at Lowood, the girls are unable to wash, as the water in their pitchers is frozen. Jane quickly learns that life at the school is harsh. The girls are underfed, overworked, and forced to sit still during seemingly endless sermons. Still, she takes comfort in her new friendship with Helen, who impresses Jane with her expansive knowledge and her ability to patiently endure even the cruelest treatment from Miss Scatcherd. Helen tells Jane that she practices a doctrine of Christian endurance, which means loving her enemies and accepting her privation. Jane disagrees strongly with such meek tolerance of injustice, but Helen takes no heed of Jane’s arguments. Helen is self-critical only because she sometimes fails to live up to her ascetic standards: she believes that she is a poor student and chastises herself for daydreaming about her home and family when she should be concentrating on her studies. Jane is somewhat lost in her classes and is happy to be given sewing to accomplish. She listens to other girls recite their lessons. Jane is placed in the lowest academic class. Helen Burns, the girl Jane befriended the day before, is unfairly picked on by the teacher, but again, Helen meekly accepts the punishment and shows no emotion, although Jane notices a tear on Helen's cheek when she puts away the switch she is hit with. When Jane asks Helen about her patience with punishment, Helen replies that she deserved it and must accept her fate for doing wrong. Jane thinks maybe Helen is right. They talk about Christ and how one should bless those who persecute them. Jane tells Helen about her life with the Reeds and Helen encourages Jane to let go of the memories and anger they elicit.

***Short Analysis:***

Jane begins her formal education at Lowood. What seems more of interest to Jane, however, is the remarkable behavior of Helen. Although the girl is constantly ridiculed by teachers and other students alike, the girl refuses to retaliate. The only sign of emotion Jane ever sees is the trace of a tear on Helen's cheek. Also, Helen introduces to Jane her own Christian creed, the same one held by the Brontë sisters. It should be noted here that Brontë modeled the character of Helen after her sister Maria, who also died of consumption after having lived at a boarding school similar to Lowood.

***Summary in detail:***

When the girls wake for breakfast on Jane's second morning at Lowood, they discover that the water in the pitchers is frozen. Before, she had been merely a spectator at Lowood, but now Jane will become an actor, participating fully in the events at the school. As Jane sits sewing, she notices once again how unfairly Helen Burns in treated: Miss Scatcherd picks on Helen for inconsequential things, such as poking her chin unpleasantly or not holding her head up. Despite Miss Scatcherd's criticisms, Helen appears to be one of the brightest students in the class. She has answers for the most difficult questions.

Later in the evening, Jane converses once again with Helen. She learns more about Helen's philosophy of life and her doctrine of endurance. Helen praises Jane for her virtues, such as the ability to pay careful attention during lessons. In contrast, Helen believes she herself suffers from carelessness and poor concentration, spending too much time daydreaming about her home in Deepden, Northumberland. While Jane thinks Helen should fight against injustice, Helen tells her to follow Christ's example by loving her enemies.

***Analysis in Detail:***

Helen presents her Christian philosophy of forgiveness and endurance: one must bear the sins of others, turn the other cheek, and love thy enemy. Jane, of course, is at odds with this idea, believing that standing up for herself often means fighting back. We have already witnessed several situations in which Jane availed herself of these tactics, particularly the fight against John and her lashing out at [Mrs. Reed](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#mrs-reed). The former led to her imprisonment in the red-room, while the latter was a short-lived victory that soon turned into remorse. While Helen's form of Christianity is not useful for Jane, neither is Jane's attitude of self-defense; she must find and develop her own brand of spirituality.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

On [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre)'s second day at the school, she wakes up shivering to a meager [breakfast](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/symbols/food). She finds that her wash water is frozen in its pitcher.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Lowood's "discipline" is actually neglect. But the girls have no power to change anything.

***Summary Part 2:***

In classes, [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) is overwhelmed by the lessons, but is fascinated by watching [Helen Burns](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) across the room. Even though Helen answers many difficult questions in her class, [Miss Scatcherd](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) goes out of her way to criticize and punish Helen. When she whips Helen across the neck, Jane is amazed that Helen doesn't flinch or cry.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Jane feels a connection with Helen that she never feels with anyone else. Humiliated and even physically injured, Helen is a Christ-like figure who endures unjust persecution without complaint.

***Summary Part 3:***

Later, [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) tells [Helen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) how she should furiously resist such unjust treatment. Helen explains to Jane her philosophy of turning the other cheek, and her belief in a beautiful afterlife that gives her hope and patience to endure suffering in this world.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Helen's religious views help her endures her suffering. Helen's optimistic faith will contrast with the stern Christianity of characters later in the book.