***Jane Eyre***

***Chapter 7***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Short Summary:***

Conditions at the school are deplorable: the girls are not clothed nor fed adequately. The older, larger girls, take food and spaces by the fire from the younger ones. Sunday is a four mile round trip walk in freezing temperatures, although the girls do receive a piece of buttered bread instead of plain bread.

Mr. Brocklehurst and his family pay a visit and Jane dreads the possibility that he will pass on the information he learned from Mrs. Reed. Mr. Brocklehurst's main concern, however, is what he considers to be wasteful spending of the school's money. Mr. Brocklehurst chastises Miss Temple for spoiling the girls. Mr. Brocklehurst demands all girls receive short haircuts because long hair does not adhere to his rules of modesty. Mr. Brocklehurst's own family are richly dressed in fashionable clothes with curled hair. Jane accidentally drops and breaks her slate and Mr. Brocklehurst proclaims Jane a liar to the whole school and encourages the teachers and students to shun her. Jane is commanded to stand on a stool 30 minutes longer and she is almost at the point of breaking, but Helen walks past and gives Jane a look that gives Jane courage. Jane marvels that all Helen's teachers see are her imperfections instead of the beauty of her nature.

Jane describes in more detail the hardships of life at Lowood during her "first quarter." The girls are always hungry because of the small portions and poor quality of the food, and they don't have warm clothing for the long trek to church in the cold and snow. After Jane has been at Lowood for three weeks, Brocklehurst visits the school. Brocklehurst reprimands Miss Temple for spending too much money on food and clothing for the students. Then he demands that girls with abundant or curly hair have it cut off completely to make them look modest and plain. Brocklehurst's very well dressed wife and two daughters come in. Jane drops her slate, breaking it, and for punishment Brocklehurst has her stand on a stool at the front of the room for 40 minutes. Then he warns the entire school to shun Jane because she is a liar. Mortified, Jane's emotions begin to get the better of her. As her emotions begin to rise again, Helen comes near her to talk to the teacher and meets her eyes in a silent signal of support. When Helen returns to her seat, she smiles warmly at Jane, "like a reflection from the aspect of an angel."

***Short Analysis:***

Jane's worst nightmare has come true. Mr. Brocklehurst has unveiled her "true" character and has made an example of her in front of the school. Also note the example Helen makes by encouraging Jane even when she herself is being punished.

In Chapter 6, Jane is fascinated by the way Helen handles being punished because it is the opposite of how she herself reacts to punishment. Jane seems to have a vague sense that she should learn to control her rebellious, passionate nature. She can't quite understand Helen's "doctrine of endurance," but she says, "Still I felt that [Helen Burns](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Jane-Eyre/character-analysis/#Helen_Burns) considered things by a light invisible to my eyes. I suspected she might be right and I wrong; but ... I put [thinking about] it off to a more convenient season." This theme of governing one's passions recurs throughout the story and is examined through the actions of several of the characters.

Jane's ability to follow Helen's model is tested in the next chapter, when she is punished for dropping her slate. Worse than that, Jane's worst fears are realized when Brocklehurst condemns her as a liar. She struggles with her anger against Brocklehurst. Will she respond to his accusations with a passionate outburst, or will her conversation with Helen help her to have a more measured response? How will the support she receives from Helen affect her behavior? The chapter ends with Jane reflecting on the irony of her perception of Helen's goodness and deeply moral nature versus yet another unjust punishment Helen suffers at the hands of Miss Scatcherd, who, like Brocklehurst and Mrs. Reed, represents the hypocrisy that [Brontë](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Jane-Eyre/author/) criticizes.

***Summary in detail(Chapter 6-7):***

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.

Jane's first quarter at Lowood passes, and Chapter 7 records Jane's general impressions of her first three months at the school. Again, she focuses on the harshness of life at Lowood: the severe cold, near starvation, and the long hours spent memorizing the Church Catechism and listening to long sermons. Fortunately for Jane, Mr. Brocklehurst, the financial manager of Lowood, is absent during most of this time. Finally, he appears at the school. Jane is worried at his arrival, because she remembers Mrs. Reed's comments to him about Jane's deceitfulness and Mr. Brocklehurst's promise to warn the teachers at the school of Jane's unsavory character.

During his visit, Jane accidentally drops her slate. Brocklehurst immediately brands her as careless. Although Miss Temple tells her not to be afraid of punishment, Jane is soon made the dunce of the school. Brocklehurst stands her on a stool and announces to the entire school that Jane is a liar. No one is to speak to Jane for the rest of the day, but Helen silently supports her friend by smiling every time she passes Jane's stool.

***Analysis in Detail(Chapter6-7):***

The significant differences between Jane's and Helen's philosophies of life become apparent in this chapter. While Jane is always ready to fight against her enemies, Helen practices a doctrine of patient endurance. Although Helen accepts all punishment without a tear, the "spectacle" of her friend's suffering causes Jane to quiver with "unavailing and impotent anger." What are the reasons for Helen's endurance? First, she doesn't want to be a burden on her family, causing them grief by misbehaving. She also feels all people are required to bear what fate has ordained for them. Her belief in predestination, the idea that one's life is guided by fate rather than choice, shows her adherence to the philosophy of Calvinism. Founded by the Swiss theologian John Calvin, a leader in the Protestant Reformation movement, Calvinists follow a strict moral code and believe in the salvation of a select few who have been elected by God's grace.

Although Jane thinks Helen may have access to some deep spiritual truth, Jane cannot understand Helen's "doctrine of endurance" or her sympathy for her torturer. Unlike Helen, Jane believes in being good to people who are good to her. When struck without reason, the victim needs to "strike back again very hard," in order to teach the assailant a lesson. As readers saw in her final conversation with Aunt Reed, Jane firmly believes in retaliation and vengeance. Helen argues that a true Christian should mimic Jesus by loving, blessing, and benefiting her neighbors. In Helen's opinion, Jane should even try to forgive her Aunt Reed, because life is too short for "nursing animosity." With her mind aimed squarely at heaven, Helen urges Jane to remember the eternal spirit that animates her temporary, corruptible body. Helen offers a view of Christianity that contrasts with the strict, hypocritical religion of Mr. Brocklehurst. While her compassion for other people is admirable and her rejection of vengeance and retaliation temper Jane's passionate anger, Helen will not offer Jane a completely acceptable model of Christianity because of her refusal to live in the real world. She is too much like the poor orphan in Bessie's song who rejected the real world in her dreams of heaven.

Brocklehurst's hypocrisy is highlighted in this chapter. At the arrival of this dour man, who looks "longer, narrower, and more rigid than ever," Jane is immediately upset. Her intuitive dislike for him is clearly justified in this scene. Brocklehurst insists that the girls eat a starvation-level diet so that they don't become accustomed to "habits of luxury and indulgence." Brocklehurst justifies this extreme lifestyle by referring to Christian doctrines. Like the primitive Christians and tormented martyrs, the girls should revel in their suffering and accept Jesus' consolations. Brocklehurst's hypocrisy becomes most apparent when his own wife and daughters enter the classroom. As Brocklehurst lectures Miss Temple on the need to cut off the girls' long hair — it's a sign of vanity — his wife and daughters walk into the room, ornately dressed in velvet, silk, and furs. Jane notes that his daughters' hair is "elaborately curled" and that his wife wears fake French curls.

Rather than arguing with Brocklehurst, as the headstrong Jane might have, Miss Temple attempts to hide her emotions, but Jane notices that her face appears to become as cold and fixed as marble, "especially her mouth, closed as if it would have required a sculptor's chisel to open it." Miss Temple turns to stone rather than confront her boss. While her compassion, elegance, and reverence for learning make her a valuable role model for Jane, Miss Temple's failure to confront injustice directly is unacceptable to Jane.

Calling Jane an "interloper and an alien," Brocklehurst attempts to place Jane back into the inferior, outsider position she occupied at Gateshead. Although she is initially humiliated by his punishment, feeling that she is standing on a "pedestal of infamy," Helen offers solace. The light that shines in Helen's eyes when she walks past Jane's stool sends an "extraordinary sensation" through Jane, as if a "hero" has walked past a "slave or victim, and imparted strength in the transit." Again, Jane employs the language of heroism and slavery — but while she had been a "rebel slave" at the Reeds, here Helen's heroism passes into Jane so that she can relinquish her victimization. Again Helen's power is spiritual rather than corporeal: Her eyes are inspired by a "strange light" and her smile is angelic. Through Helen's actions, Jane learns that heroism isn't achieved by vengeance, but by dignity, intelligence, and courage. Equally, she learns to change her behavior by changing her attitude; Helen's mere smile turns Jane's shame into strength.

***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.