***Jane Eyre***

***Chapter 10***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Short Summary:***

Jane skips ahead in her biography ten years, noting only that after the typhus outbreak at Lowood, things improved greatly there because the sickness brought the school's poor conditions to the attention of the public. Not only was a new school built on a more healthy site but the student's food quality and quantity improved as well and Mr. Brocklehurst was relieved of his duties as sole administrator. After six years as a student at Lowood, Jane graduates to a teaching position where she works for two years until her friend and mentor Miss Temple gets married and moves away. Jane receives permission to place an ad and then to accept a position as a governess. She is hired by a Mrs. Fairfax. Bessie comes to visit Jane and tells her that she has married, has two children, one named Jane. Bessie tells her that the Reed family is all out of sorts; John fails college exams and the girls fight constantly. Bessie said that a man, who appeared to be a gentleman, came to the Reed house asking after Jane, saying he was a relative. He was about to leave on a business trip to Africa.

***Short Analysis:***

This is another transitory chapter in which Jane decides to leave behind her life at Lowood. Miss Temple, who until this time has been a stabilizing factor in Jane's life, gets married and leaves the school. While this chapter acts as a conclusion for Jane's life at Lowood, there are also ties to her past. Bessie, Jane's friend from Gateshead, visits Jane on her last day at Lowood bringing news of the Reeds and also of Jane's father's relatives. Ironically the rich and privileged Reeds are not as accomplished as Jane is, even in her disadvantaged state. Also, it appears Jane's living relatives from her father's family are not as poor and despicable as Mrs. Reed depicted them. Jane however, is not as physically developed as the Reed children, perhaps because of the scanty diet she has received at Lowood. This fact reflects Brontë's own life, as she claimed her years at boarding school stunted her growth and impaired her health.

***Summary in detail:***

After Mr. Brocklehurst’s negligent treatment of the girls at Lowood is found to be one of the causes of the typhus epidemic, a new group of overseers is brought in to run the school. Conditions improve dramatically for the young girls, and Jane excels in her studies for the next six years. After spending two more years at Lowood as a teacher, Jane decides she is ready for a change, partly because Miss Temple gets married and leaves the school. She advertises in search of a post as a governess and accepts a position at a manor called Thornfield.

Before leaving, Jane receives a visit from Bessie, who tells her what has happened at Gateshead since Jane departed for Lowood. Georgiana attempted to run away in secret with a man named Lord Edwin Vere, but Eliza foiled the plan by revealing it to Mrs. Reed. John has fallen into a life of debauchery and dissolution. Bessie also tells Jane that her father’s brother, John Eyre, appeared at Gateshead seven years ago, looking for Jane. He did not have the time to travel to Lowood and went away to Madeira (a Portuguese island west of Morocco) in search of wealth. Jane and Bessie part ways, Bessie returning to Gateshead, and Jane leaving for her new life at Thornfield.

* The older Jane narrating the novel breaks in, explaining that she’s going to skip eight years ahead in the story. First, she fills us in on a few details of what’s happened at Lowood in the meantime:
* Many girls died of typhus at the school, and the outbreak put the school in the public eye, so Mr. Brocklehurst’s cruelty and neglect as an inspector became known. Other people who had both money and compassion got involved, built a new school building in a better place, and passed new regulations to make the school more humane.
* Mr. Brocklehurst is still treasurer, but there are other people looking over his shoulder now to make sure the girls have enough to eat and nobody cuts their hair off for them or anything weird and cruel like that.
* Jane is a student at the school for six more years and then becomes a teacher there for two years.
* At this point, Miss Temple, who has been Jane’s mentor and inspiration and all that jazz, gets married and leaves the school.
* Jane realizes that, without Miss Temple, she’s not content to stay at Lowood anymore—she wants to get out in the world and have adventures. She looks out her window at the road to the school and realizes she hasn’t traveled away from the school on that road at all since she arrived there eight years ago. Even if her new adventure is just a new lowly position somewhere else, she wants to get away.
* Jane’s longing for freedom is interrupted by her teaching duties. Finally, after her teacher-roommate Miss Gryce falls asleep that night, she can start thinking again about how to leave Lowood.
* Jane decides to advertise herself in the regional newspaper as an available tutor or governess. She posts the ad without telling anyone at Lowood what she’s doing.
* A week later, Jane goes into town to see if any letters came in response to her ad; everyone at Lowood thinks she’s going "to get measured for a pair of shoes" (1.10.26). There is one letter, but she has to wait for that evening, after everyone is asleep, to read it.
* Jane is satisfied with the situation offered by the letter, which is a post as governess to a little girl less than ten years old. The salary is double what she makes at Lowood. She’s also glad that the letter writer is an older woman, a Mrs. Fairfax, and she imagines Mrs. Fairfax as an elderly widow with one daughter at her home—Thornfield.
* Jane tells the current superintendent of the school about her new job and asks her to be the one to tell Mr. Brocklehurst so that she doesn’t have to talk to him herself. He insists on writing to Mrs. Reed, but she doesn’t care at all and says Jane can do whatever she wants.
* Jane gets everything prepared over the next two weeks. As she is waiting for the carriage to come to take her on the first part of her journey to Thornfield, someone comes to see her: Bessie!
* Bessie tells Jane all the news about Gateshead. Bessie and Robert Leaven, the coachman, are married, and Bessie has a three-year-old boy, who is with her on the visit to see Jane. Georgiana Reed is curvy, stout, and pretty, and tried to elope with a lord. Eliza Reed is tall, thin, and jealous of her sister’s romance. John has flunked out of college, failed to become a barrister, and is generally a good-for-nothing, spending his mom’s money. Mrs. Reed is upset about John’s conduct.
* Bessie exults over Jane’s achievements at school—her piano playing, painting, French, and sewing are far superior to the Reed girls’ abilities. Even so, Bessie is honest with Jane about her looks—she is "no beauty" but she does "look like a lady" (1.10.64).
* Bessie also tells Jane that one of her relatives, possibly her uncle, came to Gateshead to see her seven years ago, but had to leave for Madeira before he could go to Lowood to see her. They speculate that he may be a wine merchant or employed by one.
* Bessie leaves to go back to Gateshead, and Jane leaves for Thornfield.

***Analysis(Ch5-10):***

This section details Jane’s experiences at Lowood, from her first day at the school to her final one some nine years later. Jane’s early years at Lowood prove to be a period of considerable tribulation, as she endures harsh conditions, cruel teachers, and the tyranny of Mr. Brocklehurst. Moreover, the harsh conditions she experiences as a student at Lowood show us that, despite Jane’s intelligence, talent, and self-assurance, she is merely a burden in the eyes of society, because she is poor.

The most important thematic elements in this section are the contrasting modes of religious thought represented by Mr. Brocklehurst and Helen Burns. Mr. Brocklehurst is a religious hypocrite, supporting his own luxuriously wealthy family at the expense of the Lowood students and using his “piety” as an instrument of power over the lower-class girls at Lowood. He claims that he is purging his students of pride by subjecting them to various privations and humiliations: for example, he orders that the naturally curly hair of one of Jane’s classmates be cut so as to lie straight.

The angelic Helen Burns and her doctrine of endurance represent a religious position that contrasts with Mr. Brocklehurst’s. Utterly passive and accepting of any abjection, Helen embodies rather than preaches the Christian ideas of love and forgiveness. But neither form of religion satisfies Jane, who, because of her strong sensitivity to indignities and injustices, reviles Brocklehurst’s shallow devotional displays and fails to understand Helen Burns’s passivity. As Jane herself declares: “when we are struck at without a reason, we should strike back again very hard . . . so as to teach the person who struck us never to do it again” (Chapter 6). Helen’s doctrine of endurance and love is incompatible with Jane’s belief in fairness and self-respect.

***Critical Analysis:***

Eight years pass before Jane again picks up her narrative. Following an investigation into the cause of the typhus epidemic at Lowood, Mr. Brocklehurst is publicly humiliated, and a new building is erected. Brocklehurst remains the treasurer for the school, but other, more enlightened, gentlemen become the school's inspectors and it becomes a "truly useful and noble institution." Jane remains at Lowood for eight years: six as a student and two as a teacher.

Jane enjoys excelling in her studies, but after two years as a teacher, Jane needs a change. First, Miss Temple marries and moves far away, taking with her Jane's "serene" feelings about Lowood. Jane's old need for adventure returns and she longs to experience the perils of the real world. Since arriving at the school, Jane has never quitted it, even for holidays, and she now dreams of "liberty" and a "new servitude." Jane places an ad in the newspaper for a job as a governess. A response arrives from a Mrs. Fairfax of Thornfield, Millcote, who needs a governess for a little girl, and Jane decides to take the job. Before leaving for her new position, Jane has an unexpected visit from Bessie Lee, the Reeds' nursemaid. From her, she learns that none of the Reed children has turned out well: Georgiana tried to elope with a young man and Eliza jealously tattled on them, and John leads a life of excess. Bessie is impressed with Jane's ladylike appearance and accomplishments. Jane also learns that her father's brother, John Eyre had come to the Reeds seeking Jane seven years ago. Unfortunately, he couldn't visit her at Lowood, because he was leaving for Madeira to make his fortune.

Another portion of Jane's journey is about to end, and its demise is signaled by Miss Temple's departure from Lowood. Over time, Miss Temple has become more than a teacher to Jane: she is also mother, governess, and companion. Miss Temple's guidance has tempered Jane's impulsiveness and fire so that her thoughts have become "harmonious," her feelings "regulated," and her appearance "disciplined and subdued." But this appearance is only that: an external shell. When Miss Temple leaves Lowood, the shell cracks and Jane realizes that many of her new feelings didn't reflect her true nature, but were merely "borrowings" from her teacher. Jane's nature yearns for sensation, excitement, and the knowledge gained through experience, rather than the peaceful isolation of Lowood. The landscape reflects Jane's thoughts: She would like to leave Lowood's safe garden and explore the remote blue peaks in the distance.

As Jane's departure from Gateshead was signaled by her pseudo-supernatural experience in the red-room, her movement away from Lowood also has a paranormal component. Meditating upon the best means for discovering "a new servitude," Jane is visited by a "kind fairy," who offers her a solution. This psychic counselor gives Jane very specific advice: Place an advertisement in the local newspaper, with answers addressed to J.E. — and do it immediately. The fairy's plan works, and Jane soon has a new employment opportunity.

Jane is happy to see that the handwriting in the letter is old-fashioned, like that of an elderly lady. Why? Because it is important for her, as a single woman in Victorian culture, to maintain her decorum; "above all things, I wished the result of my endeavours to be respectable, proper, en règle." The chapter's emphasis on propriety and decency is continued during Bessie's conversation with Jane. In fact, the novel continues to ask what it means to be a "lady" or a "gentleman." Bessie is impressed because Jane has become "quite a lady": She can now play the piano, draw and speak French better than the Miss Reeds, yet they are still considered her social superiors, as is their alcoholic brother, John. Jane's social status may be higher, however, than the Reeds think. According to Bessie, Jane's uncle, who stopped at the Reeds' home on his search for Jane, "looked quite a gentleman." The conversation emphasizes the ambiguities of Jane's family's class status and of the class system in general. Should a lady be judged on her academic accomplishments, money, or family name? This question will become more pronounced as the novel progresses.

***Critical Study:***

The passage of eight years has brought many changes at Lowood. After the typhus epidemic, an investigation was made into conditions at the school. Mr. Brocklehurst's power was reduced, and a committee of benefactors formed to make many changes, improving students' lives. Jane has stayed on through all the changes—as a student for six years and as a teacher for two years.

For Jane's eight years at Lowood, Miss Temple filled the roles of "mother, governess, and ... companion." By modeling herself after Miss Temple, the impulsive, angry 10-year-old who arrived at Lowood has become a "disciplined and subdued character." When Miss Temple marries and moves away, however, Jane begins to want change, praying "for a new servitude," and advertises independently and secretly for a governess position. A response arrives from Mrs. Fairfax, offering Jane a position at Thornfield, where her pupil will be a 10-year-old girl. Jane asks the new superintendent of teachers for permission to leave. She passes the request to Mr. Brocklehurst, who writes to ask Mrs. Reed if she will agree to the change. Mrs. Reed replies that she cares not, as she "had long relinquished all interference" in Jane's life. Accordingly the school committee grants Jane permission to go and provides her with a testimonial to her character and ability.

About two months later, the night before she is to leave for Thornfield, Jane receives a surprise visit from Bessie, who is now married, with two children, Bobby and Jane. Bessie brings Jane up to date on the Reed family: the sisters are always quarreling; John failed at college and is living a degenerate life pursuing pleasure; and Mrs. Reed is unhappy about how much money John spends. Bessie is delighted with Jane's success. She mentions that "nearly seven years ago, a Mr. Eyre came to Gateshead" looking for Jane. Learning that Jane was 50 miles (80 kilometers) away, he said he had to leave for Madeira and wouldn't have time to visit her. Bessie thinks Mr. Eyre is Jane's uncle. The next morning they see each other briefly before Bessie sets off to return to Gateshead and Jane leaves for Thornfield and her next adventure.

This is a transitional chapter that resolves the story lines of characters both at Lowood and Gateshead. At Lowood Mr. Brocklehurst's abuses are uncovered and his power is diminished; the school has been improved, with a new building and with the students receiving better food and clothing. Miss Temple marries (a standard happy ending for women of this era); Jane has achieved the goals that she set for herself when she came to Lowood. In addition, she has matured and is no longer the impulsive, emotionally driven child she had been. At Gateshead the despicable Reed family members seem to have received their just desserts, while kind Bessie is happily married with two children. The fact that her daughter is named Jane may be a nod to the affection she felt for [Jane Eyre](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Jane-Eyre/character-analysis/#Jane_Eyre). With these loose ends resolved, Jane is ready to begin her "new duties and a new life." The news of Mr. Eyre's visit leaves a new untidy story line and suggests that more will be heard from this mysterious relation later.

Jane's prayer "for a new servitude" calls up the theme of class and gender. Not part of the upper class, not part of any family, and thus with no real prospects of marriage, she faces a life of service. With her education and intelligence, she can serve as a governess, thus enjoying a slightly higher position than most servants. But she cannot be fully independent.

***Significance:***

The epidemic of typhus fever incites an investigation into Lowood's unhealthy conditions and Mr. Brocklehurst’s management of the school, and a new group of overseers takes control of the school. With Mr. Brocklehurst’s dishonor, the quality of the school improves immensely, and Jane and the other students are able to focus on their education. Jane excels as a student under Miss Temple’s guidance for six years and then works as a teacher for an additional two years. When Miss Temple marries and leaves Lowood, Jane is left feeling empty and searching for a "new servitude,” a new job serving someone else. She places a newspaper advertisement in search of a post as governess and gains employment for a [Mrs. Fairfax](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#mrs-fairfax) at Thornfield Manor. Before Jane leaves to take up this position, she is overjoyed by a visit from Bessie, who is now married to the coachman, [Robert Leaven](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#robert-leaven). Bessie brings news of the Reed family, informing Jane that John had become a compulsive gambler and alcoholic while Georgiana had attempted to elope with a certain Lord Edwin Vere but had been foiled by Eliza’s intervention. Bessie also mentions that Mr. [John Eyre](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#john-eyre), Jane’s uncle, had come to Gateshead seven years ago in an effort to contact Jane before sailing to Madeira to work as a wine-merchant. After the brief visit, Bessie and Jane part ways, and Jane begins her adventure at Thornfield Manor.

***Analysis:***

This brief transitional chapter spans eight years of Jane's life, during which she matures from an angry girl bent on self-survival into a self-reliant young woman seeking to serve others. Bronte incorporates appropriate endings for some of the more significant characters at Lowood School: Mr. Brocklehurst is removed from power at the school, a just punishment for his negligence and cruelty, while the lovely Miss Temple escapes the difficult life of a teacher and becomes a happily-married woman. Bronte also uses this chapter to incorporate certain narrative details that will be important to the overall plot of the novel. The problems of the Reed family, particularly John’s descent into debauchery and vice, foreshadow Mrs. Reed’s final confrontation with Jane, as well as hinting that the Reed family is being punished for their mistreatment of Jane. The mention of Mr. Eyre’s visit to Gateshead also suggests that he will reappear in some form later on, perhaps with a more important role.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

The epidemic and deaths expose the depravity at Lowood and [Mr. Brocklehurst](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters)'s neglect. New management takes over and improves the school.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Mr. Brocklehurst's negligence comes back to him. He receives divine and social justice.

***Summary Part 2:***

Eight years pass. [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) excels in her studies during that time. Driven by a wish to please her teachers, she graduates first in her class and becomes a teacher at the school herself. But when Ms. Temple marries and leaves for a distant country, Jane yearns for a change herself, to venture out into the wide world and find a "new servitude."

***Analysis Part 2:***

Marriage interferes with women's relationships, and Jane is "orphaned" again when Ms. Temple leaves. Now Jane feels isolated and restless and wants her freedom, to define herself. Yet at the same time she yearns for "servitude."

***Summary Part 3:***

[Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) posts a newspaper advertisement for her services as a tutor, and a week later is offered a job by a [Mrs. Fairfax](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) to teach a young girl at the manor of Thornfield.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Jane's ad symbolizes her entrance into independent public life, though as a poor woman she must still serve others.

***Summary Part 4:***

Just as she's leaving Lowood, [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) gets a surprise visit from [Bessie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters). Bessie updates Jane about the Reeds—[Georgiana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) tried to run off with a young lord, but her jealous sister [Eliza](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) ratted her out to [Mrs. Reed](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters). [John Reed](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) is failing school, spending money wildly, and generally disappointing his mother. Bessie thinks that Jane is far more accomplished than any of the Reed children.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Through her devotion to her education, Jane has gained self-confidence, admirable skills, and a respectable social position. Mrs. Reed may have rated her children above Jane, but raised without discipline and integrity, they turned out poorly.

***Summary Part 5:***

[Bessie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) also notes that [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre)'s family (the Eyres) was poor but respected—they even owned property. In fact, seven years previous (shortly after Jane left Gateshead), Jane's uncle John, a well-to-do wine merchant, had visited Gateshead looking for her. He didn't have time to visit her at Lowood, because he was headed to the island of Madeira on business.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Jane's social position becomes a little clearer. Though poor, she is a member of the gentry. Jane's uncle is a self-made man and a solid middle-class figure. His virtues parallel Jane's.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

Jane Eyre

"A new servitude! There is something in that," I soliloquized (mentally, be it understood; I did not talk aloud). "I know there is, because it does not sound too sweet; it is not like such words as Liberty, Excitement, Enjoyment: delightful sounds truly; but no more than sounds for me; and so hollow and fleeting that it is mere waste of time to listen to them. But Servitude! That must be matter of fact. Any one may serve: I have served here eight years; now all I want is to serve elsewhere." (1.10.13)

***Explanation:***

Jane’s keeping it real here: she knows that she can’t just up and leave Lowood and be the Queen of England tomorrow. (Besides, that job is taken, and Victoria’s not going anywhere.) Instead of wanting complete freedom from all responsibilities, she just wants new responsibilities. She’s accepted that she’s just a peon, and all she’s asking for is a change of scenery. So her new job really isn’t any kind of class or status change—just a transfer.

***Quotation 2:***

I had had no communication by letter or message with the outer world: school-rules, school-duties, school-habits and notions, and voices, and faces, and phrases, and costumes, and preferences, and antipathies: such was what I knew of existence. And now I felt that it was not enough: I tired of the routine of eight years in one afternoon. I desired liberty… (1.10.9)

***Explanation:***

Some people get sick of things slowly and stuff builds up forever; other people wake up one day and need to change their whole lives. Obviously, Jane is the second type of person. It’s pretty amazing, though, that she realizes there’s more to life than studying—after all, education was her ticket out of Gateshead and her way of earning approval from her closest friends and teachers.

Where do you think Jane got the idea that education is only a part of her life, and not the whole of it? Why does she get sick of Lowood and long to get out in the world, besides simple wanderlust?

***Quotation 3:***

"I dare say you are clever, though," continued Bessie, by way of solace. "What can you do? Can you play on the piano?"  
  
"A little."  
  
There was one in the room; Bessie went and opened it, and then asked me to sit down and give her a tune: I played a waltz or two and she was charmed.  
  
"The Miss Reeds could not play as well!" she said exultingly. "I always said you would surpass them in learning." (1.10.66-69)

***Explanation:***

Bessie has always thought of Jane’s intellectual abilities as making up for, or even replacing, her (lack of) good looks. If Bessie were a high school teacher, she’d be the kind who totally believed that there are only two kinds of girls: the popular, pretty ones and the dorky, bookish ones, and never the twain shall meet.

We know that’s a pretty silly way to see the world—haven’t we learned from reality TV that anyone can be gorgeous with the right expensive makeover? And haven’t you learned from Shmoop that anyone can get smarter with the right tutor? It’s nice that Bessie’s so excited for Jane’s accomplishments, but the way she sees the world—pretty and smart are opposites—is going to make a lot of trouble for Jane down the line, when she has to keep herself dowdy in order to feel savvy.