***Jane Eyre***

***Chapter 12***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* Jane continues to work as Adèle’s governess; her life with Mrs. Fairfax and her pupil is much more pleasant than anything she’s experienced before, but she’s still restless for adventure and excitement, or at least some contact with the outside world. Her favorite activity is going up to the roof of Thornfield and looking across the landscape.
* Jane defends her dissatisfaction to the reader: she knows that many will think she should be happy with what she has, but she thinks everyone, including women, needs "exercise for their faculties" (1.12.5).
* When she’s up on the roof or in the attic, Jane often hears Grace Poole’s weird laugh, but she’s never able to draw Grace into a real conversation.
* Jane tells us that her relationships with the other servants are good, but not especially exciting.
* Three months go by, and now it’s January. Jane decides to give Adèle a holiday and volunteers to take a long walk and carry a letter for Mrs. Fairfax two miles to the nearby town of Hay.
* Jane enjoys the walk, despite the cold weather, and takes delight in the beautiful landscape around her. She stops partway along the lane and sits on a stile, examining her surroundings. Suddenly, she hears a horse coming, and she stays on the stile, sitting quietly, to let it pass.
* While she’s waiting for the horse to go by, Jane suddenly remembers the spooky stories Bessie used to tell her about a spirit called a "Gytrash," which could appear as a horse or dog to lost or lonely travelers. And then—a dog comes around the corner, looking exactly as Bessie described the Gytrash. But when the horse appears, the fact that it has a rider breaks the spell; the Gytrash never has a rider or a companion. (Hmm, who could this mysterious rider be?)
* The horse and rider pass, and Jane starts to go on her way, but then she hears the horse slip on the ice, and horse and rider both fall. The dog runs about, trying to help, and finally runs over to Jane—she must be the only other person for a mile all around.
* Jane helps the gentleman up; he has sprained his ankle, but is mostly okay. He is thirty-five, dark, and stern. Jane explains that, if he had been a handsome young man, she would have recoiled from him, but she’s able to approach him as he is.
* Jane insists on helping him, and he questions her about who she is; she explains that she’s the governess in Mr. Rochester’s household. He seems a bit surprised by this, but doesn’t explain who he is. (Who is he, anyway?) We do learn that the dog’s name is Pilot, but that’s not much help.
* Unfortunately, Jane’s not able to catch the bridle of the spooked horse, so instead she helps the man over to the horse and lets him lean on her to remount; then they go their separate ways. We’ll probably never see him again, right?
* After delivering the letter in the town, Jane walks back to Thornfield, pleased to have helped someone, and interested in the man she met. She’s a bit disappointed to go back home to her boring old existence. She loiters outside for a long time, looking at the sky, reluctant to go inside.
* When she finally re-enters Thornfield, she hears voices in the dining room. She looks for Mrs. Fairfax, but finds Pilot instead. Jane calls the maid and learns that the master of the house has just arrived with a sprained ankle. That’s right—that stranger in the lane was *Mr. Rochester*. Are you shocked? Nah, we didn’t think so. Jane’s a bit out of the loop, though, isn’t she?

***Short Summary:***

Jane feels an emptiness and boredom with her new occupation, though she likes her student. She feels restless and unchallenged in her profession and her life and longs for something new. Jane offers to carry a letter to town and stops on her way to sit on a stile where she watches the horse and rider and large dog pass. The horse slips on the ice and both rider and horse on down. Jane goes and offers assistance, though the man declines her assistance or her fetching help. He asks who she is and why she is out at night. She helps him to his horse and they part with his admonishments to complete her errand quickly. She mulls over the man on her walk and when she returns, she is hesitant to enter the house and return to the dreariness of her life. Once inside, she finds the dog, Pilot, and inquires about it. She is told that the dog belongs to Mr. Rochester, who is being cared for at the moment by the doctor.

***Short Analysis:***

The lukewarmness Jane shows toward her pupil is similar to Brontë's feelings toward the students she taught. It was generally well known that the writer did not have any special liking for her pupils. Jane's life has dissolved into a dull monotony. Although her surroundings and job are comfortable, there is no one and no way for her to exercise her mind. This leaves her feeling restless and unfulfilled.

The chance meeting with Mr. Rochester, however, signals a change is about to come in Jane's life. She helps the man after he falls from his horse, at which point she does not know who he is. She returns home, however, to find the owner of the house has indeed returned. Jane is curious about the man, first because he is one of the few men with whom she has ever had contact. She also notes she feels no fear of him, as she would have if he were attractive or heroic looking. His grim nature and stern look somehow puts her at ease. This relates to her earlier description of her own looks. Though she wishes she were a natural beauty, she finds her own face unattractive and not proportional. For this reason she feels no one of exceptional beauty would ever be attracted to her.

***Summary in detail:***

Jane finds life at Thornfield pleasant and comfortable. Adèle proves to be exuberant and intelligent, though spoiled and at times a bit petulant. Nonetheless, Jane is frequently restless and collects her thoughts while pacing Thornfield’s top-story passageway. One evening a few months after her arrival at Thornfield, Jane is alone watching the moon rise when she perceives a horse approaching. It calls to her mind the story Bessie once told her of a spirit called a Gytrash, which disguises itself as a mule, dog, or horse to frighten “belated travellers.” Oddly enough, a dog then appears as well. Once she realizes that the horse has a rider, the uncanny moment ceases. Just after the horse passes her, it slips on a patch of ice, and its rider tumbles to the ground. Jane helps the man rise to his feet and introduces herself to him. She observes that he has a dark face, stern features, and a heavy brow. He is not quite middle-aged. Upon reentering Thornfield, Jane goes to Mrs. Fairfax’s room and sees the same dog—Pilot—resting on the rug. A servant answers Jane’s queries, explaining that the dog belongs to Mr. Rochester, who has just returned home with a sprained ankle, having fallen from his horse.

***Analysis in Detail:***

The 12th chapter of ''Jane Eyre'' spans the first several months of Jane's position as governess at Thornfield Hall. She is happy, but she is a little bored. Thankfully, the end of the chapter brings a change for Jane.

Jane Longs for More

In chapter 12 we learn that four months have passed in Jane's tenure at Thornfield. She is grateful for a good job, pleasant accommodations, and genial company. Adele has proved a good but not extraordinary pupil. Mrs. Fairfax is a pleasant but not extraordinary companion. Despite these good things, Jane finds herself yearning for something more. She worries that these feelings make her ungrateful, but surely it is natural for a young woman Jane's age to long for 'the busy world, towns, regions full of life' as Jane does. After many months shut away in a remote house with only a few people for company, not even Grace Poole and her enigmatic laughter can provide sufficient diversion for Jane's yearning. She wishes for people more interesting than those who reside at Thornfield and she wishes to do and see more things than Thornfield can offer her.

Jane Has Spirit

We have seen in previous chapters Jane's penchant for deep thought, and it seems she retains a predilection for this activity. Her yearning for more frequently drives her to wander the halls at Thornfield, thinking, walking, and thinking. Through various inner monologues, we are made privy to some of what may be at the root of Jane's discontent: 'Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do.' She goes on to add, 'it is narrow-minded...to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags.' Hopefully this just sounds like common sense to readers today, but in Jane's time and at the time of this book's publication, these were quite radical thoughts indeed. It stands to reason that any female possessed of these ideas in that time period would feel insufferably stifled. Jane wished 'to do more or learn more' than her society believed women ought to do or learn. In addition to being bored and lonely, Jane is also contending (at least mentally) with her society's confining view of women.

Looking for Change

In lieu of the more substantial change she craves, Jane makes use of a free afternoon in January by walking two miles to Hay, the nearest town. Mrs. Fairfax needs a letter posted and Adele has a cold and will not be having afternoon lessons. On her way, she is met by a large dog and a horse and rider moving at a swift pace. Jane is initially startled, but she soon moves out of the way for the party to pass. Moments after, however, the horse loses its footing on some ice and falls down, rider and all. Jane cautiously approaches, asking the rider if he needs help. He can't hear her at first because he is busy swearing, or at least 'pronouncing some formula which prevented him from replying.' Eventually Jane gets his attention and through some effort helps him to remount his horse. His ankle is injured, but not broken. The horse seems fine. In the course of their interactions, the man asks Jane a few general questions: who she is, where she lives, what she does for work, and if she knows Mr. Rochester. In rural 19th century England, these questions from a stranger on a lonely road would be considerably less alarming than they would be today. Jane answers him politely and goes on her way.

***Critical Analysis:***

Thornfield meets up to Jane's initial expectations: calm and comfortable. Adèle is a lively, spoiled child, but she is also obedient and teachable. Jane still longs for the busy world of the city, for variety, for conversation with her peers. A restlessness exists in Jane's nature that causes her pain. Walking along the corridor of the third story of the house is her only way of easing this discomfort.

Several months pass, and one day in January, Jane takes a long walk through the fields surrounding Thornfield. As she sits on a hill, watching the moon rising, a noise breaks her reverie; a horse is coming up the lane. While Jane watches for the horse, she thinks of a North-of-England spirit Bessie had once told her about, called a Gytrash. Assuming the form of a horse, mule or large dog, the Gytrash often scared lonely travelers. After thinking this, Jane sees a huge Newfoundland dog gliding through the bushes. A man rides into view, and breaking Jane's spell. His horse slips on a patch of ice, and the man falls. Jane tells the man, who is in his late-thirties and not handsome, that she is the governess at Thornfield and helps him hobble to his horse. Then horse, man, and dog all vanish. Meditating upon the experience, Jane is happy to have offered active assistance. She returns to Thornfield and learns that the man she helped was her employer — Mr. Rochester.

In this chapter the reader is shown another example of Jane's restlessness. The quiet haven of Thornfield has become stagnant and lonely, and the uniform, still life it offers provides "an existence whose very privilege of security and ease" that Jane is becoming unable to appreciate. Yearning for a life of excitement, variety, and intellectual stimulation, Jane isn't satisfied with the monotony of Mrs. Fairfax or the youthful simplicity of Adèle. In consequence, Jane spends much time within her own imagination, opening her inward ear to "a tale my imagination created, and narrated continuously; quickened with all incident, life, fire, feeling, that I desired and had not in my actual existence." Jane suggests that her problems are gender-related. Women need active pursuits, 0just as men do; they, too, need to stretch their intellectual limits. Like men, they suffer from rigid restraint and absolute stagnation. Indeed, Jane believes men are "narrow-minded" to suggest women should satisfy themselves with domestic pursuits. Arguing that a silent rebellion is brewing in women's minds, the novel's message is revolutionary.

Jane's momentous meeting with Rochester is significant at many levels. First, her association of Rochester's horse and dog with the mythical Gytrash brings another supernatural element into the story. The massive dog is "a lion-like creature with long hair and a huge head" (at the end of the novel, Rochester will also be described as lionish) Jane is almost surprised when it doesn't look up to her "with strange pretercanine eyes." In English folklore, the Gytrash often appears to warn people of the coming death of a friend or relative, but it also adds a mythic feeling to Jane and Rochester's first meeting that makes their later relationship seem more extraordinary. It is also significant that Rochester is disabled during their first meeting. Having fallen from his horse, Rochester requires Jane's assistance. Many critics have argued that this incident helps to establish equality between the two characters. It also foreshadows Rochester's dependence upon Jane at the end of the novel. Jane also limits Rochester's powers by emphasizing that he is neither handsome nor heroic-looking. Finally, Rochester recognizes Jane's ambiguous class and social position through his inability to guess her role in the Thornfield household; he realizes she isn't a servant, yet her clothes aren't fine enough for a lady's-maid. On Jane's part, she is happy to have left behind, even for a moment, her passive, dependent, feminine status by offering active, and necessary assistance.

***Critical Study:***

Over the next months, from October to January, Jane settles in at Thornfield. She finds some satisfaction in her daily routine but feels restless as well. She had hoped for a more exciting environment, where she could meet interesting people and have new experiences.

One cold December day, Jane walks to the town of Hay to post a letter. En route she stops to rest and observe "the rising moon." Suddenly a huge dog and a man on horseback come thundering along the road. The horse slips on ice in the road and falls, and Jane helps the man, who has injured his ankle. Before he rides off, he questions her briefly, learning that she is the governess at Thornfield. As Jane walks on, she can't shake the image of the stranger's face, although it's not a handsome one. Returning to Thornfield, she notes the moon's progress over the hilltops. Once inside she learns that Mr. Rochester has returned home and the surgeon is tending to the ankle he sprained when his horse fell.

***Significance:***

Life at Thornfield proves to be pleasant, and Jane is pleased with Adèle. Although the girl is somewhat spoiled, Jane recognizes that she is an affectionate and able student and hopes that she will be able to separate Adèle from some of her French affectation. Still, when Jane walks around the attic of Thornfield, she yearns for more experience in the world. Her existence at Thornfield is stable, but her passionate nature still longs for more adventure and passion in her life. During her time near the attic, Jane also frequently hears Grace's bizarre laugh and "eccentric murmurs" and observes other strange behavior. One day in January, Jane walks to town in order to deliver a letter for Mrs. Fairfax and inadvertently startles a gentleman riding on horseback with his dog accompanying him. The gentleman falls from his steed and sprains his ankle, and Jane must help him back on his horse. Although he is unwilling to accept her help, Jane insists, realizing that she never would have been able to be so bold if the rider had been a handsome, young man.

The man asks Jane several questions about Rochester and then departs. When Jane returns to Thornfield, she recognizes the same dog – [Pilot](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#pilot) – lying on the rug. She asks a servant for an explanation and discovers that it is, indeed, the dog from the road, and Mr. Rochester has just sprained his ankle while riding his horse.

Analysis:

Jane's desire for experience apart from stereotypical female experience is explained in a lengthy passage: "It is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures [men] to say that [women] ought to confine themselves to making pudding and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags." She goes on, and the conflict is clear; Jane desires a life of action and independence that is unavailable to her as a woman during the Victorian time. Jane’s thirst for adventure also reveals her passionate nature; although her time at Lowood has taught her to control her emotions beneath a calm exterior, the fiery and passionate [Jane Eyre](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre) from her childhood at Gateshead still exists and yearns to escape a life of passivity.

In this chapter, Jane also meets Mr. Rochester for the first time. He is instantly cloaked in mystery by his refusal to identify himself to her when they meet along the road. In fact, it is only through the dog that Jane is able to assign an identity to the master of Thornfield Manor. Still, Jane asserts some power at the beginning of their relationship, since Rochester is placed in a weakened position because of his sprained ankle and is reliant on Jane for aid. Another physical impediment forcing Rochester's dependence on Jane will arise later in the novel.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) eases into the habits of life at Thornfield. She is comfortable and likes the bright but spoiled [Adèle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters), but she soon starts to feel discontented, confined, and restless. She thinks that people are wrongfully constrained by their roles in society, especially women, and that all humans need stimulation. Jane finds some comfort in occasionally strolling along the third-floor passageway and allowing her imagination to wander.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Jane is a restless and curious soul who wants a purpose in life. Yet at the same time she still lets her imagination wander, and daydreams fantastical stories. Jane's thoughts about women and confinement foreshadow the appearance of Bertha, a woman who really is imprisoned.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) frequently hears the strange laughter on the third floor, and observes [Grace Poole](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) coming and going with her servant work. Jane is puzzled by Grace Poole, whose plain curt personality doesn't seem to match the bizarre sounds she hears from the third floor.

***Analysis Part 2:***

The scapegoating of Grace Poole reflects Brontë's belief that false appearances must be scrutinized to uncover hidden truths—the same view that Brontë presents in her Preface.

***Summary Part 3:***

As [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) carries a letter to the post one winter evening, she hears a horse approaching. The dreary scene and the noise make her think of [Bessie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters)'s ghost stories about "Gytrash," a spirit creature, sometimes horse and sometimes dog, which pursues travelers at night. Sure enough, out comes a huge intimidating dog, but it is immediately followed by a horse and rider that dispel Jane's worries about ghosts.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Here Brontë blends the Gothic style with realism. She makes it seem as if something supernatural is happening and then explains the causes behind those events. This approach is sometimes called the "explained supernatural."

***Summary Part 4:***

The horse then slips and falls on a sheet of ice. [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) helps up the rider, a dark and stern-faced man, who questions Jane about her position at Thornfield before riding away. On returning to Thornfield, Jane discovers from the servants that the gentleman was [Edward Rochester](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/edward-fairfax-rochester), who has returned home.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Jane and Rochester's first encounter sets the tone for much of their future relationship. Jane helps Rochester, her "master," while Rochester stays in disguise with Jane, hiding his real identity and history from her.