***Jane Eyre***

***Chapter 13***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* For a little while, Jane doesn’t see Rochester much; he has a lot of business and goes out riding frequently. Sometimes he is haughty or cold, but she can tell that he’s just moody, and that his attitude doesn’t really have anything to do with her.
* One evening, Rochester sends for Jane and Adèle after dinner. A box of presents that Rochester has bought for Adèle has arrived, and he parks her in the corner with it, exactly the way some parents might park a kid in the corner with the TV to keep them busy.
* He calls in Mrs. Fairfax, so that Adèle can talk to her about the presents while he talks to Jane.
* Rochester keeps insisting that Jane bring her chair closer to him instead of moving back into the shadows so that he can’t see her face. He seems to be in a better mood than usual, but he’s still not very good at being polite; he tends to order her around.
* Suddenly, because she is staring at him, Rochester asks Jane if she thinks he’s handsome. Without thinking, she gives an honest answer: no.
* Jane’s immediately sorry that she didn’t say something more socially acceptable, like "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder," but Rochester doesn’t seem to mind—in fact, he seems glad that she’s honest.
* He asks her to criticize him, and she examines his skull and face. (This is more weird nineteenth-century pseudo-science: it was a common belief in the Victorian period that you could determine someone’s character from the shape of their skull. The technical name for this is "phrenology.")
* Based on the shape of Rochester’s skull, Jane suggests that he might not be very charitable—and, from his reaction, she’s absolutely right.
* Rochester explains a little bit about himself, suggesting that, when he was younger, he used to give people the benefit of the doubt, but these days he’s pretty jaded. He asks Jane if she thinks he can turn back into "flesh" (i.e., into his old self), but she doesn’t know enough about his past to make the call.
* He’s glad, however, that he confused her, because it keeps her from staring piercingly at his face. This is really heating up! Too bad he’s almost twice her age (remember that she’s 18 and he’s 35).
* Jane continues to think about Rochester’s appearance; she thinks that a lot of people might find him ugly, but something about the way he carries himself makes him imposing.
* Rochester tells her that he’s feeling chatty tonight, and orders Jane to chat with him about something. He’s really not very good at this small-talk stuff. Jane doesn’t know what he likes to talk about, so she doesn’t say anything.
* Rochester tries to explain his attitude toward Jane a little; even though he’s kind of abrupt and tends to order her to do things instead of asking, he doesn’t want to treat her as an inferior.
* At least, he explains, he only considers himself her superior because he’s so much older and more experienced than she is. And so he will sometimes order her around and be "masterful," he says, but she’ll have to forgive him.
* Jane contradicts him: just because he’s older and has done more doesn’t mean he’s wiser, she tells him. It depends on what he’s done with those seventeen years he has on her; maybe he hasn’t learned anything. He has to admit that she’s right, but he still wants to be able to order her around sometimes, and tries to think of an excuse.
* Jane smiles at this—after all, he’s paying her to take his orders, which he seems to have forgotten. She reminds him, and he leaps on this: will she agree to let him order her around a bit because she’s getting paid?
* No, Jane says, getting paid isn’t enough, but she will let him order her around simply because he was worried about her feelings and wanted her to be comfortable with how he treated her.
* Rochester presses the point: is it okay if he drops a lot of the polite nonsense? She won’t just think he’s being rude?
* Jane’s a bit careful on this point; she’s okay with him being informal, but not with him actually being a jerk. No salary would make up, she says, for actually being treated badly.
* Rochester thinks that a lot of people don’t have Jane’s principles and would let themselves get mistreated for money, but he’s impressed with her answers, her tendency to stand up for herself, and her strong personality.
* Then Rochester changes his mind a little: Jane is unusual, he says, but maybe she has flaws that make up for her good points. Jane doesn’t say anything, but it’s clear that she’s thinking the same thing about him.
* Rochester admits that he has a checkered past, but a lot of it he blames on the circumstances. Again, Jane doesn’t know—and *we* don’t yet know—exactly what he’s talking about, but it sounds pretty sordid… and really interesting.
* Next Rochester tells Jane that one of her major roles in life is to listen. Did you ever have that one friend who somehow gets to hear everybody’s personal problems? Like, they don’t really ask, but something makes everyone tell that particular person everything?
* Rochester thinks Jane is going to be one of those people, but maybe he’s just making excuses for having told her so much already.
* Rochester talks about remorse and regretting his past mistakes, whatever those are. Jane advises him to repent, and Rochester says that reform is better than repentance, but that there’s something standing in the way of his reform.
* Jane says he’ll just get worse and worse if he keeps grabbing for pleasure without changing, and that eventually his pleasures will sour anyway. He doesn’t like being preached to and objects to this, but Jane holds her ground.
* Now Rochester tries to claim that the "temptation" he is feeling is actually an "inspiration," that it’s an angel and not a devil. We’re going crazy to know what the heck it is he’s tempted to do. Jane tells him that it’s still a temptation, no matter what he says, and he should resist.
* Rochester gets a bit over-excited here and dramatically mimes taking the "angel" or "demon" or whatever this idea is into himself. Jane’s really confused at this point, but insists that, if Rochester feels like he’s not a good person, that he should make a genuine effort to change.
* Rochester tells Jane that he *is* going to change, and that, if what he’s doing is immoral, then he’ll declare a new moral law to make it right. Jane claims that anything that needs morals to change in order to be okay is obviously immoral.
* They argue about ethics for a bit, and Jane keeps getting the better of him. Basically, Rochester really wants to do something, we don’t know what, and Jane can tell from how he talks about it that it’s wrong, even though she doesn’t know what it is or why.
* Jane ends the conversation by getting up and going to put Adèle to bed. Rochester is worried that he drove her away by saying such weird things, but she assures him that she’s not afraid of him, even though she is a little confused.
* Rochester discerns that Jane isn’t naturally so stern and repressed—it’s the effect of Lowood, he says, and it will wear off. He describes her as a caged bird that wants to be free. She doesn’t really say anything to this, but it seems a lot like how she described herself at the beginning of the last chapter.
* While Jane and Rochester have been talking, Adèle has run out to try on one of the dresses that were among her new presents from Rochester. When she comes back and frolics around in the dress, she looks just like her mother.
* Rochester hints at his involvement with Adèle’s mother—Céline Varens. It’s not clear yet what Rochester’s actual relationship to Adèle is, but if he was "involved" with her mother, then we can guess that maybe he’s her pops.

***Short Summary:***

Jane and Adèle are again called to Mr. Rochester's presence several days later. Rochester sets Mrs. Fairfax to entertaining Adèle while he talks to Jane, who is studying his face. He asks if she finds him attractive and she says no. Mr. Rochester presses her for an explanation. They discuss whether he has the right to make Jane listen to a litany of his faults and mistakes. Jane becomes irritated by the conversation and attempts to go. He asks Jane to stay until Adèle models the dress he bought and adds that he wishes he were not responsible for Adèle's care, but he does so to make up for past "sins."

***Short Analysis:***

This chapter does not add to the action of the novel as much as it pours the foundation for the relationship between Mr. Rochester and Jane. He is evidently impressed by Jane's intelligence, but as yet does not trust her enough to share his secret, wrong deeds with her.

Mr. Rochester's attitude towards Adèle draws a comparison between Jane and the child. Neither were particularly liked by their guardians, only raised out of feelings of duty and responsibility. However, Mr. Rochester is doing his best to care for Adèle whereas Jane's aunt did not try to provide the best for Jane.

***Summary in detail:***

**Thornfield with Mr. Rochester at Home**

Thornfield remains a busier, livelier place with Mr. Rochester in residence, though Jane does not see him for several days after their initial conversation over tea. They occasionally pass in the hallway, where Mr. Rochester is sometimes cold and haughty, showing her 'gentleman-like affability.' One evening, Mr. Rochester asks for Jane's art portfolio to share with friends at dinner. Later that night he summons Jane and Adele to his presence once again.

**A Second Meeting**

Having waited patiently for the gift Mr. Rochester promised her, Adele pounces on it with alacrity as she and Jane enter the room. Mr. Rochester sends her off to the couch, asking her to enjoy her gift in silence, saying, 'don't bother me with any details.' As an afterthought, Mr. Rochester sends for Mrs. Fairfax and charges her with listening to Adele talk about her presents. 'I am not fond of the prattle of children,' he tells Jane, 'Nor do I particularly affect simpleminded old ladies.' He does, however, want to speak with Jane and directs her to sit near him by the fire.

**Beauty and Character**

After he sees her studying his face, Mr. Rochester demands to know if Jane finds him attractive. Caught off guard, Jane answers honestly, 'No, Sir,' which she quickly wishes to retract. He is intrigued by her frankness, though, and wants her to explain further. At this point they discuss the shape of Mr. Rochester's skull in relation to his character. That might strike a modern reader as odd, but it was totally normal in the 19th century. Phrenology was believed to be a 'scientific' study of skulls, their measurements, and their correlation to character and personality. Different areas of a skull were said to correspond to different character traits, as is shown in charts such as this one:

|  |
| --- |
|  |

According to this rather absurd analysis, Jane determines that Mr. Rochester is likely very smart but maybe not terribly kind.

**Jane Asserts Herself to Mr. Rochester**

'It would please me now to draw you out--to learn more of you,' Mr. Rochester tells Jane, and then he attempts to command her: 'therefore speak.' Considering what we have learned about Jane's character thus far in the novel, it comes as no surprise when Jane tells us her response to this command: 'Instead of speaking, I smiled; and not a very complacent or submissive smile either.'

Failing to elicit conversation by command, Mr. Rochester attempts to extract it by establishing his superiority, suggesting that he has a right 'to be a little masterful, abrupt; perhaps exacting' because he is older and more experienced than Jane. Again in keeping with her character, Jane responds, 'I don't think, sir, you have a right to command me, merely because you are older than I, or because you have seen more of the world than I have.'

Sufficiently responsive to Jane's retorts, Mr. Rochester ends the conversation by asking Jane if she will continue to obey his orders 'now and then,' regardless of their commanding tone. This comment wins him some respect from Jane.

**Mr. Rochester's Darker Side**

After earning enough respect from Jane to ensure her participation in conversation, Mr. Rochester launches into a philosophical discussion of good vs. bad and right vs. wrong, which is tied heavily to his own experience. He is unusually talkative this evening (perhaps because of the wine, Jane observes), explaining 'When fate wronged me, I had not the wisdom to remain cool: I turned desperate; then I degenerated.' He reveals here that he has experienced misfortune in his life and afterward has made some regrettable decisions. He speaks also quite candidly of the remorse which follows him because of these choices, telling Jane, 'remorse is the poison of life.'

***Analysis in Detail:***

During the next few days, Jane sees little of Mr. Rochester as he deals with business and acquaintances. His moods shift rapidly, but Jane cannot figure out their source. One night, during one of his warmer moods, Mr. Rochester gives Adèle her long-awaited gift and is more genial while talking with Jane. Jane keeps scrutinizing his face, a fact he notes; he asks if she finds him handsome, but she gives the honest answer: "No, sir." Mr. Rochester seems to be amused by Jane’s answer, and she concludes that he must be slightly drunk. Although the conversation continues, Jane begins to feel increasingly awkward because of Mr. Rochester’s position of superiority as her master. Mr. Rochester claims that their relationship should not be one of servitude. Moreover, he does not mean to condescend to her, but his air of superiority comes from his being much older and more experienced. Jane disagrees, arguing that age and experience should automatically confer authority. The conversation moves to the topic of sin and redemption, and Mr. Rochester promises to explain more about Adèle’s mother in the future.

Regardless of what Mr. Rochester says about his superiority in regards to experience with Jane, it is clear from his lengthy, involved discussion with her that he views her as his intellectual equal. Though she has a fraction of his worldly experience, Jane acquits herself well with the complicated topics Mr. Rochester brings up and even earns his approval at points for her thoughts. Their flirtation also unofficially begins, as Jane admits to herself that though "most people would have thought him an ugly man," he carries himself with a charismatic, detached confidence.

However, despite his assertion that their relationship is not one in which she is the servant, Mr. Rochester cannot change the social expectations of the time period. Even with their intellectual equality, Jane remains Mr. Rochester’s inferior, first as the governess to his ward, but primarily because she is a woman. Still, Mr. Rochester’s social domination over Jane will be far more pleasant and affectionate than the submissive position that she assumed with [Mr. Brocklehurst](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#mr-brocklehurst) or will take up with [St. John Rivers](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#st-john-rivers) at a later point in the novel.

***Critical Study:***

Jane sees little of Rochester during his first days at Thornfield. One night, however, in his “after-dinner mood,” Rochester sends for Jane and Adèle. He gives Adèle the present she has been anxiously awaiting, and while Adèle plays, Rochester is uncharacteristically chatty with Jane. When Rochester asks Jane whether she thinks him handsome, she answers “no” without thinking, and from Rochester’s voluble reaction Jane concludes that he is slightly drunk. Rochester’s command that she converse with him makes Jane feel awkward, especially because he goes on to argue that her relationship to him is not one of servitude. Their conversation turns to the concepts of sin, forgiveness, and redemption. When Adèle mentions her mother, Jane is intrigued, and Rochester promises to explain more about the situation on a future occasion.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) barely sees [Rochester](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/edward-fairfax-rochester), until one night after dinner he calls for Jane and [Adèle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) to join him. He gives Adèle the gift from Paris that he's been impatiently waiting for, and she goes off to play. Rochester, who seems a bit drunk, chats amiably with Jane, and she answers with all of her usual directness. Rochester asks if Jane thinks he's handsome. Jane bluntly says no, even though she secretly admires his [eyes](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/symbols/eyes). They converse about each other's personalities, about treating people directly and on equal terms. It seems to her that Rochester sometimes speaks as if he were reading her mind.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Rochester cannot be himself around Jane yet—he needs to get drunk to converse with her at all. Yet Jane already senses a deep, almost spiritual connection with him that cuts across social boundaries. Even so, for all his talk of treating people directly and on even terms, Rochester does neither of those things with Jane. He summons her to come talk with him, and keeps secrets.

***Summary Part 2:***

Describing himself, [Rochester](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/edward-fairfax-rochester) claims to be a man of experience and unfortunate circumstances, hardened from flesh into "Indian-rubber." He makes obscure references to his past and his plans for reforming himself, but [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) gets confused by his vagueness and she stops the conversation.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Rochester's desire to reform suggests some illicit behavior on his part that's troubling him. His desire to remake himself from "Indian-rubber" into flesh contrasts with Helen's faith in transcending the flesh.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Adèle](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) soon returns, dressed up in a new pink gown, and dances around. [Rochester](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/edward-fairfax-rochester) says that Adèle reminds him of her French mother, [Céline Varens](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters). Rochester promises to someday explain to Jane more about how and why Adèle became his ward.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Adèle is a living symbol of Rochester's past, which he wants to reform. But he will need Jane's help, symbolized in part by her role as Adèle's tutor.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

[W]e descended, Adèle wondering whether the petit coffre was at length come; for, owing to some mistake, its arrival had hitherto been delayed. She was gratified: there it stood, a little carton, on the table when we entered the dining-room. She appeared to know it by instinct.  
  
"Ma boîte! ma boîte!" exclaimed she, running towards it.  
  
"Yes, there is your ‘boîte’ at last: take it into a corner, you genuine daughter of Paris, and amuse yourself with disembowelling it," said the deep and rather sarcastic voice of Mr. Rochester, proceeding from the depths of an immense easy-chair at the fireside. "And mind," he continued, "don’t bother me with any details of the anatomical process, or any notice of the condition of the entrails: let your operation be conducted in silence: tiens-toi tranquille, enfant; comprends-tu?" (1.14.3-5)

***Explanation:***

Reading Jane Eyre, it can be easy to overlook the novel’s interest in the French while we’re thinking about Bertha Mason’s origin in the West Indies or St. John Rivers’ desire to go on a missionary trip to India. Of course, these British colonies and their foreignness are being directly contrasted with the foreigners next door—the French.

Adèle’s obsession with superficial things—fancy clothes, presents, and her appearance—is stereotyped in the novel as her inherent "Frenchness" or Parisian nature. At the very end of the novel, Jane tells us what happened to Adèle: "a sound English education corrected in a great measure her French defects." So we definitely have a sense of Jane Eyre as a novel with a nationalist bias—Englishness is considered normal and everything else needs to conform to it.

***Quotation 2:***

I am sure most people would have thought him an ugly man; yet there was so much unconscious pride in his port; so much case in his demeanour; such a look of complete indifference to his own external appearance; so haughty a reliance on the power of other qualities, intrinsic or adventitious, to atone for the lack of mere personal attractiveness, that in looking at him, one inevitably shared the indifference; and even in a blind, imperfect sense, put faith in the confidence. (1.14.33)

***Explanation:***

Jane is able to separate Rochester’s actual appearance from how Rochester is perceived by the people around him and from what she herself thinks of his character. Distinguishing appearance from personality is something she learned to do at Lowood.

***Quotation 3:***

"Nature meant me to be, on the whole, a good man, Miss Eyre: one of the better end; and you see I am not so. […] Then take my word for it,—I am not a villain: you are not to suppose that—not to attribute to me any such bad eminence; but, owing, I verily believe, rather to circumstances than to my natural bent, I am a trite common-place sinner, hackneyed in all the poor petty dissipations with which the rich and worthless try to put on life." (1.14.61)

***Explanation:***

Before Jane even really knows Rochester, he’s claiming he’s really not that bad a guy. We think the gentleman doth protest too much.

***Quotation 4:***

"Dread remorse when you are tempted to err, Miss Eyre: remorse is the poison of life."  
  
"Repentance is said to be its cure, sir."  
  
"It is not its cure. Reformation may be its cure; and I could reform—I have strength yet for that—if—but where is the use of thinking of it, hampered, burdened, cursed as I am? Besides, since happiness is irrevocably denied me, I have a right to get pleasure out of life: and I will get it, cost what it may." (1.14.63-65)

***Explanation:***

The difference between "repentance" and "reform" is important here. Jane thinks it’s enough to repent —to feel bad for what you’ve done. Rochester thinks that’s not enough and that you actually need to reform—to actively change your ways. We’ll be watching through the rest of the novel to figure out which of them the text supports.

***Quotation 5:***

"You seem to doubt me; I don’t doubt myself: I know what my aim is, what my motives are; and at this moment I pass a law, unalterable as that of the Medes and Persians, that both are right."  
  
"They cannot be, sir, if they require a new statute to legalize them."  
  
"They are, Miss Eyre, though they absolutely require a new statute: unheard-of combinations of circumstances demand unheard-of rules."  
  
"That sounds a dangerous maxim, sir; because one can see at once that it is liable to abuse." (1.14.83-86)

***Explanation:***

The rules say Rochester is doing something wrong, so he’s out to change the rules. We don’t know what the thing is that he wants to get away with, but we’re suspicious already.