***Jane Eyre***

***Vol-2 Chapter 1***

***Chapter 16***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* Jane is convinced that Rochester will come and visit her and Adèle in the schoolroom the next day, but he doesn’t.
* She overhears the other servants talking—they are under the impression that Rochester was sleeping with a lit candle beside his bed, woke up with the bed on fire, and put it out himself. None of them know about Jane’s involvement or about the strange visit from someone on the third floor.
* When she passes Rochester’s bedroom, Jane sees Grace Poole sitting beside the bed, sewing new curtains. She can’t believe that Grace is just sitting there, behaving normally, and she questions the servant about the incident to trick her into betraying her guilt.
* Grace doesn’t seem guilty, but she does seem to know something, and asks if Jane heard anything last night.
* Jane tells Grace about the eerie laugh, insisting that she wasn’t dreaming. Grace asks if she saw anything, and Jane tells her that instead of looking outside, she locked her door—which is true, although she went outside a little later.
* Grace advises Jane to keep her door locked every night, which Jane takes as either hypocrisy about safety, or a weird threat.
* Jane tries to figure out why Rochester has insisted that she keep the events of the night a secret, and what power Grace Poole could have over him to prevent him from having her arrested, or at least firing her, after she tried to murder him in his bed.
* She briefly speculates that perhaps Grace is Mr. Rochester’s ex-lover, and that he has to do what she says so that she doesn’t expose him, but she can’t quite believe this: Grace is so plain-looking and matronly, almost ugly, and they just don’t seem to be a match. Of course, Rochester seems to like Jane, and she’s no looker, so maybe it could be true.
* Jane reminds herself that even if she’s not pretty, she is ladylike, which Grace isn’t, and then she trembles, remembering Rochester’s behavior the night before. She’s teaching Adèle at the moment, and the girl notices her daydreaming.
* That evening, Jane expects Rochester to send for her so that they can talk further about the murder attempt, but when she goes downstairs to have tea with Mrs. Fairfax, she discovers that Rochester left right after breakfast to stay with some friends ten miles away at a house called "the Leas." Mrs. Fairfax thinks he will stay there for a week.
* Jane’s first question is whether there are any ladies at the Leas—and there are several, including the local beauty, Blanche Ingram. Blanche, according to Mrs. Fairfax, is gorgeous and accomplished and sang duets with Mr. Rochester.
* Jane suggests to Mrs. Fairfax that Rochester might be interested in marrying Blanche Ingram. Mrs. Fairfax thinks the age difference is too much: Blanche is only twenty-five. Jane’s about to push the issue, but Adèle comes in and they have to start talking about something else.
* Later, alone in her room, Jane kicks herself for being such an idiot and thinking that Rochester would actually be interested in her.
* Jane decides that, the next day, she will make two sketches, one of herself with all her flaws, and one of a beautiful woman who fits the description Mrs. Fairfax gave of Blanche Ingram. Whenever she starts to think of Mr. Rochester fondly, she’ll compare these two portraits, and remind herself that she can’t compete with women like Blanche. Doesn’t that sound healthy?
* The next morning, she spends an hour or two drawing her own portrait, and two weeks making one of her imagined version of Blanche.

***Synopsis:***

The next morning, Jane is shocked to learn that the near tragedy of the night before has caused no scandal. The servants believe Rochester to have fallen asleep with a lit candle by his bed, and even Grace Poole shows no sign of guilt or remorse. Jane cannot imagine why an attempted murderer is allowed to continue working at Thornfield. She realizes that she is beginning to have feelings for Rochester and is disappointed that he will be away from Thornfield for several days. He has left to attend a party where he will be in the company of Blanche Ingram, a beautiful lady. Jane scolds herself for being disappointed by the news, and she resolves to restrain her flights of imaginative fancy by comparing her own portrait to one she has drawn of Blanche Ingram, noting how much plainer she is than the beautiful Blanche.

***Analysis***:

Rochester told everyone he was reading in bed, fell asleep and the fire was started by a candle. Jane tries to question Grace Poole, but gets nowhere. Jane does not understand why Grace is allowed to stay and why there is so much secrecy around the event. Rochester leaves Thornfield for a party and to see Blanche Ingram, a beautiful, talented woman. Jane asks if the two might marry, but Mrs. Fairfax discounts the possibility due to age differences. Jane forces herself to draw a plain, critical picture of herself, then to draw a picture of the beautiful Miss Ingram. The two portraits make a striking contrast. Jane uses the differences to prove to herself that Mr. Rochester would never choose her over Blanche.

In an attempt to satisfy her curiosity, Jane attempts to question Grace about the events that occurred in Mr. Rochester's bed room the night before. Jane interprets Grace's responses as cool and calculated. By her responses, Jane suspects the woman is covering for herself and perhaps even planning an attack on Jane.

Here is also the beginning of a love triangle which involves Jane, Blanche and Mr. Rochester. Jane already shows signs of being emotionally attached to Mr. Rochester and when a second female appears in Mr. Rochester's life, she does her best to suffocate those feelings which she believes are improper.

***Analysis(Ch11-16):***

This section marks the third phase of Jane’s life, in which she begins her career as a governess and travels to Thornfield, where the principal incidents of her story take place. By linking Jane’s stages of development to the various institutions or geographic locations with which she is involved (Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Moor House, and Ferndean, in order), the book positions itself among a literary genre known as the Bildungsroman.

The Bildungsroman, a novel that details the growth and development of a main character through several periods of life, began as a German genre in the seventeenth century, but by the mid-1800s had become firmly established in England as well. Such important Victorian novels as David Copperfield base themselves on this form, which continues as an important literary sub-genre even today. The Bildungsroman typically told the story of a man growing from boyhood to adulthood; Charlotte Brontë’s appropriation of the form for her heroine represents one of the many ways in which her novel challenges the accepted Victorian conceptions of gender hierarchy, making the statement that a woman’s inner development merits as much attention and analysis as that of a man. Still, although Jane herself and Jane Eyre as a novel are often identified as important early figures in the feminist movement, Jane experiences much inner questioning regarding her gender role; she is not a staunch and confident feminist at all times. That is, while Jane is possessed of an immense integrity and a determination to succeed on her own terms, her failure to conform to ideals of female beauty nonetheless troubles her and makes her question herself.

Just as Jane’s time at Lowood involved a number of elements taken from Charlotte Brontë’s own life, so too is Jane’s career as a governess based in part on Brontë’s short-lived position as a governess in the late 1830s. In many ways, Brontë’s exploration of the role of the governess represents the novel’s most important and challenging treatment of the theme of social class. Just as Emily Brontë does with Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights, Charlotte Brontë makes Jane a figure of ambiguous class standing. Consequently, she is a source of extreme tension for the characters around her. But while Heathcliff (an orphan like Jane) achieves wealth and power without achieving education or social grace, Jane acquires the manners, sophistication, and education of an aristocrat while remaining penniless and powerless. Such was the role of the governess: brought into wealthy Victorian households as the children’s private tutors in both academics and etiquette, governesses were expected to possess the demeanor of the aristocracy; but as paid employees, they were in many ways treated merely as servants. Jane begins to experience this tension as soon as she notices her emerging feelings for Rochester. Though she is in some ways his social equal, she is also his servant, and thus she cannot believe that he could ever fall in love with her.

***Critical Study:***

On the morning following the fire, Jane dreads seeing Rochester, but his behavior hasn't changed. Watching the servants cleaning Rochester's room, Jane is amazed to find Grace Poole sewing new curtain rings. Grace seems calm for a woman who tried to commit murder the previous night. Like the other servants, Grace seems to believe that Rochester fell asleep with his candle lit, and the curtains caught on fire. Grace advises Jane to bolt her door every night. Throughout their conversation, Grace gives no sign of guilt at having set the fire, astonishing Jane with her self-possession and hypocrisy. Jane is curious about Grace's role in the household. Why hasn't he fired Grace following the previous night's near murderous arson? At first, Jane believes Rochester might be in love with Grace, but rejects this idea because of Grace's unattractive and matronly appearance.

Jane is dismayed to learn that Rochester has left the house to attend a party at the Leas, home of Mr. Eshton, and will be gone for several days. She's particularly upset to learn that a beautiful woman, Miss Blanche Ingram, will be at the party. Recognizing that she's falling in love with Rochester, Jane tries to discipline her feelings by drawing two pictures: a self-portrait in crayon and an imaginary picture of Blanche on ivory. Whenever her feelings for Rochester become too intense, Jane compares her own plainness with Blanche's beauty.

Jane's love for Rochester becomes apparent in this chapter. In her jealousy, Jane imagines a past love relationship between Grace and Rochester; perhaps Grace's "originality and strength of character" compensate for her lack of beauty. Jane doesn't think Rochester is overly impressed by women's looks; for example, Jane is not beautiful, yet Rochester's words, look, and voice on the previous night indicated that he likes her. But a major difference exists between Jane and Grace; as Bessie Leaven said, Jane is a lady. In fact, she looks even better than she did when Bessie saw her, because she has gained color, flesh, and vivacity from the pleasures she enjoys in her relationship with Rochester. She is especially pleased with her ability to vex and sooth him by turns, but always maintaining "every propriety of my station." All of these meditations show Jane's anxieties about Rochester hinge on the issues of social class and beauty.

Her hopes are dashed when she learns of Blanche Ingram. Considered the beauty of the county, Blanche, whose name means "fair" or "white," has "noble features," "raven-black" hair arranged in glossy curls, and brilliant black eyes, which contrast with the "pure white" clothes she wears. As with Jane's descriptions of Mrs. Reed and her son John, "darkness" often has negative connotations — the ethnocentricity of Victorian England tended to associate dark with night and evil. Therefore, Jane's description of Blanche, which emphasizes her dark, Spanish features, implies a negative side of her personality; like Céline, Blanche will be an unacceptable model of femininity. But at this point in the novel, Jane views Blanche as an accomplished and beautiful rival. Most important, as the daughter of landed gentry, her class position more closely matches Rochester's, making Jane's earlier claims to be a "lady" seem insignificant. Jane's dream of the previous night is quickly becoming reality: Rather than allow herself to be brutally tossed around in the sea of her passion for Rochester, Jane vows to be sensible and accept that Rochester could never love her. In creating contrasting portraits of herself and Blanche, Jane emphasizes her own plainness. To Blanche, on the other hand, she gives the loveliest face she can imagine, a Grecian neck, dazzling jewelry, and glistening satin. Once again, Jane's passions have become hyperbolic, as she cannot fully discipline her jealousy of Blanche. In her portraits, Jane excessively emphasizes the material differences between the two women, showing that Jane hasn't yet learned the value of her own spiritual superiority. Jane still has a long way to go on her path to self-knowledge.

Glossary

Qu'avez-vous . . . des cerises! What's wrong, Miss? your fingers tremble like a leaf, and your cheeks are red: as red as cherries!

ignis-fatuus a deceptive hope, goal, or influence; delusion. Literally, a strange light that sometimes appears over marshy ground.***Critical Analysis:***

The following morning, Jane speaks with Grace Poole and is amazed the woman hasn't been dismissed or punished for setting the fire. Rochester has told everyone that he accidentally set the fire. At her dinner with Mrs. Fairfax, Jane wonders what hold Poole has over Rochester. At tea Jane is disappointed to learn from Mrs. Fairfax that he has left for a party at a neighbor's estate and will likely be away for "a week or more." Mrs. Fairfax chats about the ladies who will be at the party, especially the "beautiful and accomplished" Blanche Ingram. Jane immediately begins to worry about a possible match between Rochester and Miss Ingram. She realizes she has fallen in love with Rochester, with whom she has no hope of marriage. In an attempt to rein in her emotions, Jane draws a harsh self-portrait, labeling it "Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain." Then, using her imagination, she draws a portrait of the lovely Blanche Ingram, labeled "Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank."

The continued presence of Grace Poole is unnerving to Jane. In asking Jane not to reveal what really happened, Rochester has involved her in a deception that she doesn't understand. What information is he keeping from her? Why is he covering up for an apparently dangerous woman?

Rochester's absence and the thought of the beautiful Blanche Ingram make Jane realize that she has been lulled into dreaming of a possible future with a man who would not be likely to marry a poor, plain-looking governess. She decides she must rid herself of all such thoughts and vows that in the future, should she ever "chance to fancy Mr. Rochester thinks well of [her]," she will "take out these two pictures and compare them." Jane controls her emotions by limiting her expectations, demonstrating the discipline she has achieved and reflecting the themes of religion and self-control.

***Significance:***

The day after the fire in Mr. Rochester's bedroom, Jane is shocked to find Grace, who had presumably tried to murder Mr. Rochester, mending the curtains. Grace tells Jane that Rochester fell asleep while his candle was lit, but he awoke before the fire spread too far. Both Jane and Grace seem to know more than each lets on, and they test the other's story; Jane accordingly changes part of her account. Jane is flummoxed by Grace's version of the event, especially because she shows no sign of guilt for what has occurred. Jane is also confused by Mr. Rochester's desire for her not to tell her side of what happened.

When Jane looks for Mr. Rochester to answer her questions about [Grace Poole](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#grace-poole), she discovers that he has left for a social engagement at someone's estate and will be gone for a week or more. Jane already feels his absence from Thornfield and is distressed when she learns that Mr. Rochester is quite a favorite of the ladies he is visiting, particularly the young and beautiful [Blanche Ingram](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#blanche-ingram). Jane feels foolish for having thought that a plain, poor governess such as herself could ever be of interest to Mr. Rochester. In order to suppress any further romantic inclinations and remind herself of her position in life, she sketches an ugly portrait of herself and then compares it to a gorgeous picture of what she imagines Miss Ingram looks like.

The chapter is split into two sections: the plot developments surrounding the fire, and Jane's preoccupation with Mr. Rochester. After her odd conversation with Grace, Jane realizes that Grace is probably not the culprit of the fire. Not only does she demonstrate little guilt or remorse for her behavior, Mr. Rochester did not even have her removed from Thornfield. Yet, Jane is still not able to figure out the mystery of Grace Poole’s presence on the estate. Her only conclusion is that Grace is somehow involved with the fire but is also under direct orders from Mr. Rochester not to reveal her role.

Jane’s attempts to find Mr. Rochester and clear up the mystery about Grace lead to the introduction of Blanche Ingram as a character. Jane's sense of inadequacy compared to Blanche Ingram pivots around appearance but also has to do with class. Though Mr. Rochester is not handsome, his high position in society and noble manners determine that his wife must be of an equally high station. Jane’s personality, for all its sparkle, cannot make up for her relative poverty and plainness, especially when compared to the beautiful Miss Ingram.

***Notes:***

This lesson provides a summary of Chapter 16 of ''Jane Eyre,'' in which the plot twists yet again in several directions. Things which seemed certain in the last chapter are called into question, and courses which seemed set are altered.

## Mr. Rochester's Cover Story

Despite actual events, Mr. Rochester tells the household staff that the fire in his bedroom was started by his own carelessness. He claims to have fallen asleep with his candle still lit. Jane knows this isn't true, but Mr. Rochester has sworn her to secrecy on the matter. Because the laugh Jane heard before discovering the fire had been attributed to Grace Poole, she is firmly convinced that this lady must be the one who started the fire. She is utterly perplexed as to why Mr. Rochester would create this false story instead of accusing Grace of the crime. She goes so far as to wonder if Mr. Rochester and Grace Poole are or once were lovers, despite Grace's 'square, flat figure, and uncomely, dry, even course face.'

## A Conversation with Grace Poole

Previously in the novel, Grace Poole was introduced to Jane as a servant whose job is primarily to sew things. Mrs. Fairfax also attributes the eerie laughter Jane has sometimes heard to Grace Poole. On the night of the fire, Mr. Rochester confirms Jane's suspicions that Grace was the arsonist to blame for the crime. It is understandable, therefore, that Jane is surprised to find Grace Poole seated serenely in Mr. Rochester's room the very next morning, sewing him new curtains for his bed.

Jane engages Grace in conversation, hoping to squeeze out of her some indication of her guilt. 'Has anything happened here?' Jane asks, feigning ignorance. Grace simply recounts Mr. Rochester's tale of falling asleep with his candle lit. Indignant at Grace's coolness, Jane tells her that she heard a laugh at the time of the fire. Grace questions Jane cagily, trying to tell if Jane had seen anything further. Jane lies, saying she bolted her door and stayed in her room. Grace lectures Jane on why she should bolt her door every night.

## Waiting for Mr. Rochester

After parting from Jane so affectionately the night before, Jane is at first nervous to see Mr. Rochester the next day. As the day wears on without his presence, however, she becomes quite eager to see him. Had she imagined his affection? Could he possibly return her feelings? She waits with pointed anticipation for a visit from him, but it never comes.

## Hopes Dashed

Still wishing to see Mr. Rochester, Jane joins Mrs. Fairfax for tea. Jane's hopes suffer a considerable blow when Mrs. Fairfax casually remarks on the fine weather and says 'Mr. Rochester has, on the whole, had a favorable day for his journey.' Unbeknownst to Jane, Mr. Rochester departed early that morning and traveled some miles to visit friends. Mrs. Fairfax speculates that he is likely to stay away for a week or longer.

Furthermore, Jane learns that the beautiful Blanche Ingram will be in attendance among the party Mr. Rochester has joined. Blanche and Mr. Rochester have been acquainted for some time, and Mrs. Fairfax tells Jane of the lovely duets they sang together at Mr. Rochester's Christmas party. This intelligence causes Jane to reevaluate her own interaction with Mr. Rochester.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) wakes up in the nursery, cared for by [Bessie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters), and by the local apothecary, [Mr. Lloyd](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters). Bessie tells Jane that she thinks that Mrs. Reed mistreated her, nurses Jane, and even sings Jane a song, but Jane is melancholy and unreachable. Jane only feels better when she gets a book—[Gulliver's Travels](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/gulliver-s-travels), a fanciful satire by Jonathan Swift, which she believes is a factual story of distant places.

***Analysis Part 1:***

For her own children, Mrs. Reed would have hired a real doctor rather than an apothecary. Jane takes refuge in her imagination which, as with Mr. Reed's ghost, can sometimes be too powerful and distort the truth.

***Summary Part 2:***

As [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) recovers, [Mr. Lloyd](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) asks her about her health and her well-being. Jane confesses her unhappiness and her regrets about having no family, but says she does not want to leave and become a beggar. Even if she had family, Jane says she would not want to rejoin them if they were very poor.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Poverty has affected Jane deeply enough to challenge her desire for family. Dependents and young women on their own had it rough—they could either work for someone or hit the streets.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Mr. Lloyd](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) asks [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) if she'd like to attend school. Jane gladly says yes. He obtains permission from [Mrs. Reed](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters), who is thrilled to get rid of her niece.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Education is necessary for an orphan girl like Jane to create a place for herself in society.

***Summary Part 4:***

Later, [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) overhears [Bessie](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) telling [Miss Abbot](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) the story of Jane's family. Jane's father was a poor clergyman. Jane's mother, a Reed, married him against her wealthy family's wishes, and they disowned her. Just after Jane was born, Jane's father caught typhus while helping the poor, and both of Jane's parents soon died. Jane's uncle [Mr. Reed](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) adopted her. Mr. Reed also died within a year, but made his wife, [Mrs. Reed](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters), promise to raise Jane like one of their own children—[John](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters), [Eliza](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters), and [Georgiana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters).

***Analysis Part 5:***

Jane's parents are split between the working class and the upper-class gentry (people who owned property). Jane's mother chose love and her own desires over her family's money. Jane will do the same eventually. Like her mother, Jane is determined to earn respect for herself, and for women in general.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

"Listen, then, Jane Eyre, to your sentence: to-morrow, place the glass before you, and draw in chalk your own picture, faithfully; without softening one defect: omit no harsh line, smooth away no displeasing irregularity; write under it, 'Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain.'  
  
"Afterwards, take a piece of smooth ivory—you have one prepared in your drawing-box: take your pallette, mix your freshest, finest, clearest tints; choose your most delicate camel-hair pencils; delineate carefully the loveliest face you can imagine; paint it in your softest shades and sweetest hues, according to the description given by Mrs. Fairfax of Blanche Ingram: remember the raven ringlets, the oriental eye;—what! you revert to Mr. Rochester as a model! Order! No snivel!—no sentiment!—no regret! I will endure only sense and resolution. Recall the august yet harmonious lineaments, the Grecian neck and bust: let the round and dazzling arm be visible, and the delicate hand; omit neither diamond ring nor gold bracelet; portray faithfully the attire, aërial lace and glistening satin, graceful scarf and golden rose: call it 'Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank.'  
  
"Whenever, in future, you should chance to fancy Mr. Rochester thinks well of you, take out these two picture and compare them: say, 'Mr. Rochester might probably win that noble lady’s love, if he chose to strive for it; is it likely he would waste a serious thought on this indigent and insignificant plebeian?'" (2.1.72-74)

***Explanation:***

Notice that the portrait Jane draws of Blanche is completely imaginary; she hasn’t seen or met Blanche yet, although we already know that Jane’s drawings and paintings sometimes have an eerie way of looking just like real places and people that she’s never seen. These portraits probably tell us more about the contrast between who Jane is and who she wishes she could be than about the real contrast between Jane and Blanche. It’s like feeling a bit depressed, having low self-esteem, and comparing yourself to airbrushed pictures of Zoë Kravitz.