***Jane Eyre***

***Vol-2 Chapter 3***

***Chapter 18***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* The party at Thornfield continues; things are much more active than they were during the first three months Jane spent there.
* One evening, the guests play charades, but it’s a much more elaborate version of charades than we play these days, complete with costumes and teams of people working together to act out just one word or phrase.
* Rochester invites Jane to play, but she won’t; she does watch, though.
* Blanche and Rochester team up and go first; they think up a phrase, and then put together costumes and silent actions to act out the parts of the phrase. The phrase they choose has two parts.
* The first part of the phrase is the word "bride," and Rochester and Blanche pretend to be a couple getting married, wearing costumes and everything. We’re sure Jane’s not too happy to see their wedding, even if it is just a joke—this time.
* The second part of the phrase is harder for everyone to guess. Rochester and Blanche act out a complicated Biblical scene in which Rebecca gives Isaac a drink at the well of Nahor. Basically, this is a lot like the first scene, because the story is about Isaac wooing Rebecca, so once again there’s a romantic undertone.
* Nobody can guess what word the Isaac and Rebecca scene is supposed to represent, so Rochester and Blanche act out the whole phrase. This time Rochester is dressed like a prisoner in a cell.
* The team that’s guessing correctly identifies the word or phrase they’re acting out as "Bridewell," which is a prison. (So the second scene represented the word "well.")
* Blanche giggles obnoxiously about the way she and Rochester just got "married."
* The teams switch, and some other people start acting out their scenes. Jane doesn’t notice anything they do because she’s watching Mr. Rochester.
* Rochester is letting Blanche flirt with him and kind of flirting back, but Jane can tell that he really sees through her. This makes it much worse for Jane: she can tell Rochester doesn’t really love Blanche, and she can also tell that Blanche isn’t worthy of him, but it seems like he’s going to marry her anyway. If he were really smitten, or Blanche were a better person, Jane claims she wouldn’t mind so much.
* Jane also notices that Blanche isn’t very good at pleasing Rochester. The few times that Jane has been with him alone, she’s figured out how to get him in a good mood, and Blanche can’t do it.
* Rochester is more interesting to Jane than ever; she’s come to like his rudeness and sarcastic nature, because they make him a deeper person. She also notices that, in spite of the way he behaves, Rochester is pretty much the life and soul of the party, and when he’s gone everyone else seems depressed.
* One day Rochester has to go to the nearest town (Millcote) on some kind of business, and everyone’s pretty bored, especially Blanche Ingram. Just before dinner, with Rochester still absent, a stranger arrives at Thornfield.
* The stranger is a polite man in his thirties or forties; he has an unusual accent and claims to be an old friend of Mr. Rochester’s. He joins the group for dinner while he waits for Rochester to come back.
* Jane evaluates him and decides that he’s the exact opposite of Mr. Rochester—in fact, she suggests that, if Mr. Rochester is a sheepdog, this guy is a sheep. The other women at dinner think he’s adorable, which just proves that they’re ninnies.
* Sitting with the group in the drawing room (remember, Rochester ordered her to join them every night), Jane learns more about the stranger: his last name is Mason, he’s from the West Indies, and that’s where he met Mr. Rochester.
* Suddenly, a strange gypsy woman arrives. There’s a gypsy camp in the area and some of the women had wanted to visit it, but they couldn’t because it rained too much that day. Now one of the gypsy women has come to them offering to tell their fortunes.
* Some of the guests want to send the woman away, but a few of the women are excited about getting their fortunes told, and the old woman refuses to leave until she tells the fortune of each and every woman there.
* Blanche Ingram insists that they let the gypsy woman tell their fortunes. The woman insists that the servants put her in a little room by herself and the guests go in to see her one by one.
* One of the men wants to check the gypsy out first to make sure it’s safe for the ladies to see her, but the gypsy woman says that she’ll only tell fortunes for the young, single women in the group.
* Blanche Ingram goes first. Everyone waits excitedly for her to come back and tell them what the woman said, but when she does come back she’s all grumpy-pants, says the woman is obviously a fraud, and starts reading a book and ignoring everyone.
* Each of the other single women—Mary Ingram, Amy Eshton, and Louisa Eshton—goes to have her fortune told with lots of "hysterical giggling and little shrieks." They come back amazed at how much the gypsy seems to know about them.
* The servant, Sam, tells Jane that the gypsy woman says she knows there’s another single woman in the group, and that he thinks that must mean her. Jane’s curious about the woman, so she goes to see her and have her own fortune told.

***Synopsis:***

The guests stay at Thornfield for several days. Rochester and Blanche compete as a team at charades. From watching their interaction, Jane believes that they will be married soon though they do not seem to love one another. Blanche would be marrying Rochester for his wealth, and he for her beauty and her social position. One day, a strange man named Mr. Mason arrives at Thornfield. Jane dislikes him at once because of his vacant eyes and his slowness, but she learns from him that Rochester once lived in the West Indies, as he himself has done. One evening, a gypsy woman comes to Thornfield to tell the guests’ fortunes. Blanche Ingram goes first, and when she returns from her talk with the gypsy woman she looks keenly disappointed. Jane enjoys guests in the house. She observes how bland the relationship between Mr. Rochester and Blanche seems. Jane is surprised Mr. Rochester would be interested in a mate only for looks and money, instead of as a companion. One evening, a man named Mr. Mason appears asking for Rochester; additionally, an old gypsy woman arrives offering to tell fortunes, who will only see the guests one by one. Blanche returns from her reading seemingly disbelieving what she heard, but Jane can tell she is quite disturbed. After all are through, the gypsy says there is one more lady who has not had her fortune read. Jane agrees to meet with the gypsy.

Chapter 18 begins with a joyful tone. Jane enjoys the festive nature of Thornfield Hall. Much of the chapter is taken up with Jane's impressions of Blanche and Mr. Rochester's interactions. However, at the end of the chapter, the text takes on a mysterious tone with the appearance of two strange guests. The first, a man from the West Indies, claims to be a friend of Mr. Rochester. The next is an old, unattractive gypsy woman who wants to tell the young, unmarried ladies their fortunes. Blanche insists on having her fortune told first. She emerges with a look of coldness in her eyes. Although she does not appear to be terribly affected by the woman's words, it is implied that the gypsy tells Blanche something she does not want to hear.

***Critical Analysis***:

Jane is sickeningly disappointed when Rochester hasn't returned in a week, and Mrs. Fairfax suggests that he might go directly to Europe, not returning to Thornfield for a year or more. After two weeks, Rochester sends a letter telling Mrs. Fairfax that he will arrive in three days, along with a party of people. Jane is still amazed by Grace Poole's erratic behavior, yet no one else in the house seems to notice her odd habits, her isolation, or her drinking. One day, Jane overhears some of the servants discussing Grace, emphasizing how much Grace is being paid. From this conversation, Jane concludes that there is a mystery at Thornfield from which she is being purposely excluded.

On Thursday evening, Rochester and his guests arrive. Together, they give Jane an impression of upper-class elegance, unlike anything she has ever experienced. When Rochester summons Jane and Adèle to meet the party, Adèle is ecstatic, but Jane is nervous and remains inconspicuously in a window-seat. Jane gives her impressions of the guests, including the dark, majestic Blanche Ingram, whom she thinks Rochester must admire. Jane tries to sneak away from the party, but Rochester stops her. He notices she looks depressed and wonders why. At first he insists that she return to the drawing room, but when he sees tears in her eyes, he allows her to leave. In future, though, she must appear in the drawing room every evening. He says goodnight, stopping himself from adding a term of endearment.

In this chapter, the negative attributes of Blanche's character become apparent, at least in Jane's eyes. While Blanche's beauty lives up to Mrs. Fairfax's description of her, it also contains a "haughtiness," a "fierce and hard eye" that resembles her mother's. According to Jane, Blanche is "the very type of majesty." But majesty is hard to live with, and Jane wonders if Rochester truly admires her. Blanche appears to dislike both children — she notices Adèle with a "mocking eye" — and governesses. Her dislike of governesses goes beyond economizing: She rudely (because she knowingly speaks so Jane can hear her) calls them "detestable," "ridiculous" incubi, sucking the lifeblood from the family. Blanche's mother supports her, arguing "there are a thousand reasons why liaisons between governesses and tutors should never be tolerated a moment in any well-regulated house." Not only are these employees subject to constant persecution, but they are desexualized, not allowed to fall in love. Other members of the party join in with their stories of governess abuse; obviously, it was not pleasant to be responsible for teaching the children of the upper classes. The Ingrams' cruelty is similar to the Reeds', and Jane says Lady Ingram's "fierce and hard eye" reminds her of Mrs. Reed's.

Jane's gaze is active, almost masculine in this chapter: "I looked, and had an acute pleasure in looking — a precious yet poignant pleasure; pure gold, with a steely point of agony: a pleasure like what the thirst-perishing man might feel . . . ." Generally gazing is a power men have over women, appropriating women by looking at them, cataloguing their beauty. But here Jane appropriates that power for herself. While Blanche is looking for Rochester's gold coins, Jane finds her gold in gazing at her beloved. The mixture of pleasure and pain in her description — "poignant pleasure" and "steely point of agony" — suggest the erotic appeal of Rochester to her; this isn't an innocent glance, but a gaze tinged with sexual tension.

Glossary

passées out-of-style.

Elles changent de toilettes The women are changing their clothes.

Chez maman . . . comme cela on apprend. At my mother's house . . . when we had company, I followed them everywhere, to the drawing-room and their bedrooms; often I watched the maids fixing their ladies' hair or helping them dress, and it was very entertaining; I learned to imitate them.

Mais oui, mademoiselle: voilà cinq ou six heures que nous n'avons pas mangé. But of course, Miss: We haven't eaten for five or six hours.

et alors quel dommage! that's too bad.

Est-ce que je ne puis . . . ma toilette. Can't I take one of these magnificent flowers, miss? It would complete my outfit.

minois chiffonné darling; pretty face.

Bon jour, mesdames good day, ladies.

père noble de théâtre a grand patriarch of the theatre.

Tant pis too bad.

charivari clatter; noise.

belle passion beautiful passion.

Au reste besides.

Donna Bianca Miss Blanche.

Signior mister.

con spirito with spirit.

Gardez-vous-en bien take care.

***Critical Study:***

The guests pursue various amusements at Thornfield, including a game of charades. When Rochester and a male guest invite Jane to join the game, Jane declines, and Miss Ingram's mother declares that Jane "looks too stupid" to play. During the game Rochester and Miss Ingram pantomime a marriage ceremony. Jane notices that Miss Ingram seems to be pursuing Mr. Rochester, and, although he seems somewhat receptive, he doesn't seem captivated by her. Miss Ingram seems unkind, small-minded, and cold. Jane doesn't feel jealous because she knows that Miss Ingram will never have the kind of connection with Rochester that Jane has, or could have, with him.

One evening while Rochester is away on business, Mr. Mason arrives and explains that he knew Rochester in the West Indies. Jane takes an instant dislike to the man, seeing something weak or unstable in him. Then an old gypsy woman arrives and insists on telling the guests their fortunes in the library. Miss Ingram goes first. When she returns she is subdued and withdrawn. After the other young women in the party have their fortunes told, the gypsy insists on telling Jane's fortune. Curious, Jane agrees.

***Significance:***

The guests stay for several stays, and Thornfield becomes a fun and vibrant place. One night the group plays charades; Mr. Rochester pairs off with Miss Ingram, while Miss Ingram's mother says that Jane "looks too stupid" to play. Mr. Rochester and Miss Ingram pantomime a marriage ceremony, among other scenes, until one of the gentlemen solves the charade: Bridewell (a London prison). Jane watches the two of them flirt after their mutual success and is unable to still her growing love for Rochester. However, she realizes that she is not jealous of Miss Ingram, whom she views as disingenuous, dim, and rude, and she hopes that Mr. Rochester will resist Miss Ingram’s attempts to woo him. Rochester's desire to marry for social connections surprises Jane, though she does not hold it against him.

One day while Mr. Rochester is out on business, a handsome man named [Richard Mason](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#richard-mason) arrives looking for Mr. Rochester, whom he knows from the West Indies. While he waits for Mr. Rochester’s return, Mason joins the party. That night a gypsy fortune-teller comes to Thornfield; after much debate, the visitors allow her to tell the fortunes of the young ladies in private. Miss Ingram is first and promptly dismisses the teller as a charlatan after returning to the room. Jane notices that she seems upset and suspects that Miss Ingram is disturbed by whatever her fortune was. The three other young ladies have their fortunes told, and report, with glee, that the woman seemed to know everything about them. The fortune-teller insists that she will not leave until she has read Jane's fortune.

The marriage pantomime has obvious parallels to Jane's romantic anxieties. While she cannot believe that Mr. Rochester could prefer the vapid Miss Ingram to her, she does believe that he must marry someone of Miss Ingram's elevated social position. After careful observation of the pair, Jane concludes that the pair will never love each other, but is uncertain that a marriage will not take place nonetheless. Jane is no bride, but a "Bridewell," imprisoned by her social class and confined to limited romantic possibilities.

The arrival of Richard Mason is significant for the plot as another clue to the mystery of the demonic laugh in the third-story attic. Bronte also gives Jane an opportunity to demonstrate her good sense and morality with Mason’s introduction: although Mason is technically a very handsome man, Jane automatically dislikes him, a sentiment that foreshadows his later role in the novel. Bronte also perpetuates the Gothic theme of the novel by introducing the gypsy fortune-teller. She creates suspense both by ending the chapter on a cliffhanger - what will Jane's fortune reveal? - and by not revealing the nature of Miss Ingram's disturbing fortune.

***Notes:***

This lesson provides a summary of Chapter 18 of ''Jane Eyre'', in which Jane continues to love Mr. Rochester despite his obvious focus on Miss Ingram. Two unexpected visitors arrive at Thornfield.

## Mr. Rochester and Miss Ingram Up in a Tree...

It is clear in this chapter that Mr. Rochester and Miss Ingram definitely have something going on. Jane observes them constantly seeking one another out and leaning toward each other in conversation. One evening, the guests decide to play charades. In choosing teams, Mr. Rochester says 'Miss Ingram is mine, of course.' During the game, Mr. Rochester and Miss Ingram together pantomime a marriage wherein Miss Ingram is the bride and Mr. Rochester the bridegroom. Afterward, Mr. Rochester flirtatiously tells Miss Ingram, 'remember, you are my wife.'

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| --- |
| Bride and Groom |

## Jane Keeps Loving Him

The reader might expect Jane's affection to cool as she observes Mr. Rochester's attentions so obviously focused elsewhere, but, alas, she tells us, 'I could not unlove him now merely because I had found that he had ceased to notice me.' This behavior doesn't necessarily fit with the spicy assertiveness we have seen from Jane earlier in the novel, and it is difficult to tell if it is romance or weakness which keeps her pining after him. What do you think?

## Jane Observes Miss Ingram

Even though Jane is watching Mr. Rochester and Miss Ingram move closer and closer to marriage, she manages to not feel jealous. She tells us, 'Miss Ingram was a mark beneath jealousy: she was too inferior to excite the feeling.' That's a rather unexpected reason, given Miss Ingram's high social standing in comparison with Jane's dependent status. Jane explains further: 'her mind was poor, her heart barren by nature.' Miss Ingram seems largely incapable of original thought. She is not kind and is even downright nasty to little Adele, calling her, 'you tiresome monkey!' In short, Miss Ingram is socially elite and pretty but has not much else to recommend her.

## Jane Observes Mr. Rochester

Jane tells us that she can't understand why anyone would marry for anything other than love, but she does not condemn Mr. Rochester for seeming to be about to do just that. At this point, she is so blind with love that she can't even see his faults anymore. She tells us Mr. Rochester's negatives worked 'like keen condiments in a choice dish,' serving only to add flavor to his positives. Really, Jane?! That's what she claims, as she goes on loving him while he ignores her and showers affection on another.

## Visitors

On a day when Mr. Rochester must leave home to do some business in town, two different people arrive at Thornfield. The first is a Mr. Mason, who has come from the West Indies. He claims to be a good friend of Mr. Rochester's and insists on waiting for him to return. The second visitor is a surly gypsy woman whom the servants would like to send away. She offers to tell fortunes to the assembled gentry, who decide it would be a fun rainy day activity. They therefore invite her in.

## Fortunetelling

The gypsy is installed in the library and requests only the young, single women be allowed to see her. Miss Ingram goes first. No one can hear or see what passes between her and the fortuneteller, but when she returns, Miss Ingram refuses to tell anyone what her fortune contained. She sits down sulkily on the sofa with a book and stares unseeingly at it without ever turning a page. Jane observes that her face becomes 'momently darker, more dissatisfied, and more sourly expressive of disappointment.'

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

***Summary Part 1:***

The guests remain for several days. Each night [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) has to watch [Blanche](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) flirt with [Rochester](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/edward-fairfax-rochester), including during a game of charades from which Jane is excluded.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Rochester forces Jane to attend the parties, while the other guests exclude her. None of them treat her as an equal.

***Summary Part 2:***

[Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) senses that [Blanche](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters), despite all her efforts, cannot charm [Rochester](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/edward-fairfax-rochester). Still, she thinks Rochester will probably marry Blanche, perhaps for political or social reasons that Jane doesn't understand.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Jane continues to believe that Rochester will place a higher priority on class constraints than on his emotions.

***Summary Part 3:***

One day, [Rochester](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/edward-fairfax-rochester) is away on business. A strange gentleman—[Mr. Mason](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters)—comes looking for him. The man's unusual, vacant appearance makes [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) uneasy. She learns from Mr. Mason that he and Rochester both had business in the West Indies.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Mr. Mason's disturbing nature seems to link him to the Gothic events at Thornfield. His West Indies origins make him an outsider, and therefore suspect.

***Summary Part 4:***

A few nights later, while Rochester is still away, an old gypsy woman comes to the house to tell the fortunes of the party. [Blanche](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) demands to be first, but returns from the library looking disappointed. The other girls twitter about the gypsy's surprising knowledge. The old woman then requests to see [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre).

***Analysis Part 5:***

The gypsy's presence emphasizes Brontë's interest in a supernatural connection between minds, which will come into play later in the novel.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

Seated on the carpet, by the side of this basin, was seen Mr. Rochester, costumed in shawls, with a turban on his head. His dark eyes and swarthy skin and Paynim features suited the costume exactly: he looked the very model of an Eastern emir, an agent or a victim of the bowstring. Presently advanced into view Miss Ingram. She, too, was attired in oriental fashion: a crimson scarf tied sash-like round the waist: an embroidered handkerchief knotted about her temples; her beautifully-moulded arms bare, one of them upraised in the act of supporting a pitcher, poised gracefully on her head. Both her cast of form and feature, her complexion and her general air, suggested the idea of some Israelitish princess of the patriarchal days; and such was doubtless the character she intended to represent. (2.3.11)

*Explanation:*

Rochester and Blanche act out a Bible scene in their game of charades, only to make it obvious to Jane that both of them have a certain weird foreign look to them anyway that makes it easy for them to play-act a Middle Eastern scene. Making it a scene from the Bible puts it in a sort of middle ground: it’s "foreign," because it’s "Eastern," but it’s also familiar, because it’s Judaeo-Christian. It’s a case of "we have seen the Other, and it is us."

***Quotation 2:***

Ere long, a bell tinkled, and the curtain drew up. Within the arch, the bulky figure of Sir George Lynn, whom Mr. Rochester had likewise chosen, was seen enveloped in a white sheet: before him, on a table, lay open a large book; and at his side stood Amy Eshton, draped in Mr. Rochester’s cloak, and holding a book in her hand. Somebody, unseen, rang the bell merrily; then Adèle (who had insisted on being one of her guardian’s party) bounded forward, scattering round her the contents of a basket of flowers she carried on her arm. Then appeared the magnificent figure of Miss Ingram, clad in white, a long veil on her head, and a wreath of roses round her brow: by her side walked Mr. Rochester, and together they drew near the table. They knelt; while Mrs. Dent and Louisa Eshton, dressed also in white, took up their stations behind them. A ceremony followed, in dumb show, in which it was easy to recognize the pantomime of a marriage. (2.3.8)

***Explanation 2:***

Blanche Ingram and Mr. Rochester pair up for an elaborate game of charades, and the first thing they do is play-act their own wedding, silently, in front of the other houseguests and Jane. This is the first of several not-quite-real weddings we’ll see in Jane Eyre, each of which suggests something about the actual marriages and pairings in the novel. In this particular case, the pretend wedding is meant to be a charade for the word "bride"—but that’s only the first half of the word being acted out in the game, which is "Bridewell," a famous prison. Hmm, something that begins with a marriage ends with being in prison. Do you think that’s supposed to be some kind of omen or something?

***Quotation 3:***

I have not yet said anything condemnatory of Mr. Rochester’s project of marrying for interest and connexions. […] All their class held these principles: I supposed, then, they had reasons for holding them such as I could not fathom. It seemed to me that, were I a gentleman like him, I would take to my bosom only such a wife as I could love; but the very obviousness of the advantages to the husband’s own happiness, offered by this plan, convinced me that there must be arguments against its general adoption of which I was quite ignorant: otherwise I felt sure all the world would act as I wished to act. (2.3.31)

***Explanation 3:***

Jane doesn’t get why anyone would not marry for love, especially if they’re rich enough to do pretty much whatever they want, but she figures there must be some reason that so many people who are already wealthy and important insist on marrying to get more money and status instead of to make themselves happy. Notice that Jane doesn’t talk about her own ideas about marriage—only the ideas that she would have if she were in Rochester’s place. Somehow Jane can’t conceive of herself needing to make a choice about marrying for love or status—only of a man like Rochester doing so.

***Quotation 4:***

I saw he was going to marry her, for family, perhaps political reasons; because her rank and connexions suited him; I felt he had not given her his love, and that her qualifications were ill adapted to win from him that treasure. This was the point—this was where the nerve was touched and teazed—this was where the fever was sustained and fed: she could not charm him. (2.3.27)

***Explanation 4:***

Jane is really hot and bothered by the idea that Rochester is going to marry Blanche, not just because she’s jealous, but also because she can tell that they are so unsuited and that Rochester himself knows exactly how flawed and unpleasant Blanche is.

Jane herself knows exactly how to "charm" Rochester, how to argue with him and keep him amused and even how to make him love her. Basically, the way Jane feels here is the way we feel when we see someone doing something badly that we know how to do well. She wants to take Rochester away and show Blanche how this relationship should be done—but she can’t. She has to watch and suffer in silence, as usual.