***Jane Eyre***

***Vol-3 Chapter 7***

***Chapter 33***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* The next day, Jane sits in her cottage reading the book St. John brought her; it snowed all night and there are huge snowdrifts everywhere.
* St. John arrives, even though he had to struggle through the snow. He won’t tell her why he’s there, and he’s behaving really strangely. She starts to worry that he might be a little bit insane.
* After a while, Jane goes back to reading, because St. John still won’t tell her what’s going on.
* Jane chats to St. John about various different things going on at the village school, but he isn’t really paying attention.
* Suddenly, St. John asks Jane to listen as he tells her a story that he’s discovered:
* Twenty years before, a poor clergyman married a rich man’s daughter and her family disowned her. Two years later they were both dead and left an orphan daughter.
* The orphan was adopted by Mrs. Reed of Gateshead and lived there for ten years.
* After ten years, the orphan went to Lowood Institute, and was a student and then a teacher there.
* After eight years at Lowood, the orphan became a governess for the ward of a man named Mr. Rochester.
* Rochester proposed to the girl, but at the altar it was revealed that his wife was alive and insane.
* The governess left in the middle of the night and nobody knows where she is, although they’ve been looking for her to tell her something important.
* Jane asks St. John how Mr. Rochester is, and he says he doesn’t know—he just knows all the details that Mason’s lawyer, Mr. Briggs, told him in a letter some time ago.
* St. John suggests that Mr. Rochester must have been "a bad man," but Jane denies this.
* St. John then shows Jane the thing he got so excited about the day before—her name, written on the piece of paper he tore off.
* Jane learns from St. John that Mr. Briggs is looking for her so that he can give her the fortune she inherited from her uncle, Mr. Eyre, who finally died out in Madeira. Jane can’t quite wrap her head around all this. She finds out that she has inherited twenty thousand pounds.
* Before St. John leaves, Jane asks why Mr. Briggs wrote to him about her. He’s reluctant to tell her, but finally he admits that his name is St. John Eyre Rivers—his mother was the sister of Jane’s father. Diana, Mary, and St. John are all Jane’s cousins!
* Jane’s much more excited about finding out that she has such great relatives than about the money. She realizes that she has the power to bring the Rivers family back together now that she has wealth: Diana and Mary won’t have to be governesses anymore.
* St. John tries to talk Jane out of it, but she insists on splitting the twenty thousand pounds four ways so that she, St. John, Diana, and Mary each have five thousand.
* St. John also agrees to treat Jane as a sister, although he tells her that she doesn’t have to feel like she’s buying her family: she could keep the money. Jane still insists on splitting it.
* Jane agrees to stay at the village school until St. John finds a substitute, despite her newfound wealth.

***Synopsis:***

As darkness falls, Jane is surprised when St. John arrives. He tells a story, which turns out to be Jane's life story, then indicates he received a letter from Mr. Briggs looking for Jane. The bit of paper he had torn off earlier was her name, Jane Eyre. St. John tells her that her uncle passed away and left her 20,000 pounds. He implies he has more news, but wants one of his sisters to give it. Jane presses him and he relates that his full name is St. John Eyre Rivers and his mother was the sister of both Jane's father and her uncle John, the same who left the three siblings nothing. Jane is excited and tells St. John to write his sisters and bring them home as she will open Moor House and share the fortune equally with them.

Here Jane's entire fortune changes in one day. She now has the things she has always desired. Jane has three new cousins whom she enjoys and sees as kindred spirits. She also has a fortune of her own, enough to keep her comfortable for her entire life. Despite their history, Jane is still in love with Mr. Rochester. This is shown by her insistent questioning of St. John concerning Mr. Rochester.

***Short Study:***

One snowy night, Jane sits reading Marmion when St. John appears at the door. Appearing troubled, he tells Jane the story of an orphan girl who became the governess at Thornfield Hall, then disappeared after nearly marrying Edward Rochester: this runaway governess’s name is Jane Eyre. Until this point, Jane has been cautious not to reveal her past and has given the Rivers a false name. Thus although it is clear that St. John suspects her of being the woman about whom he speaks, she does not immediately identify herself to him. He says that he has received a letter from a solicitor named Mr. Briggs intimating that it is extremely important that this Jane Eyre be found. Jane is only interested in whether Mr. Briggs has sent news of Rochester, but St. John says that Rochester’s well-being is not at issue: Jane Eyre must be found because her uncle, John Eyre, has died, leaving her the vast fortune of 20,000 pounds.

Jane reveals herself to be Jane Eyre, knowing that St. John has guessed already. She asks him how he knew. He shows her the scrap of paper he tore from her drawing the previous day: it is her signature. She then asks why Mr. Briggs would have sent him a letter about her at all. St. John explains that though he did not realize it before, he is her cousin: her Uncle John was his Uncle John, and his name is St. John Eyre Rivers. Jane is overjoyed to have found a family at long last, and she decides to divide her inheritance between her cousins and herself evenly, so that they each will inherit 5,000 pounds.

***Analysis:***

While a snowstorm whirls outside, Jane sits reading Marmion. Suddenly, she hears a noise at the door: it's St. John. After a long delay, he tells Jane's own story, ending by saying that finding Jane Eyre has become a matter of serious urgency. St. John explains that he discovered her true identity from the paper he tore from her art supplies, which had the name Jane Eyre inscribed on it. The reason everyone has been looking for Jane is that her uncle, Mr. Eyre of Madeira, is dead and has left his entire fortune to her, so she is now rich. Jane is astonished to learn she has inherited twenty thousand pounds and wishes she had a family to share it with.

As St. John prepares to leave, Jane asks why Mr. Briggs, Eyre's attorney, sent him a letter inquiring about Jane's whereabouts. St. John completes the story: his full name is St. John Eyre Rivers, so the Rivers are Jane's cousins. Jane feels she's found a brother and two sisters to love and admire; relatives, in her opinion, are real wealth, "wealth to the heart." Now she has the opportunity to benefit those who saved her life. She decides to share her legacy with them, to divide it into four pieces, making five thousand pounds each. That way, justice will be done, and Jane will have a home and family. St. John reminds her of the lofty place should could take in society with twenty thousand pounds, but Jane insists that she'd rather have love.

This chapter highlights the differences in personality between Jane and St. John; while he is so cold "no fervour infects" him, Jane is "hot, and fire dissolves ice." For icy St. John, reason is more important than feeling, but for fiery Jane, feeling predominates. Relating her story, St. John expects Jane's primary concern will be to know why Briggs has been searching for her; instead, she's more interested in Rochester's fate, worrying that he has returned to his life of dissipation in Europe. After learning of the inheritance, Jane is sorry to hear her uncle, a man she's never met, is dead, and wishes she had a "rejoicing family" to share the money with, rather than her isolated self. So discovering she has three cousins is heavenly for Jane. In fact, the blessing of relatives is "exhilarating — not like the ponderous gift of gold: rich and welcome enough in its way, but sobering from its weight." St. John believes Jane is neglecting the essential points (the money) for the trifles (family). For a clergyman, St. John's lack of understanding of or caring for people is shocking. Sharing the wealth, Jane will transform it from an unwanted weight into a "legacy of life, hope, enjoyment," but her comment that the money will help her win "to myself lifelong friends," sounds as if she is planning to buy friendship with the legacy. Jane says she is happy to indulge her feelings, something she seldom has the opportunity to do. Jane values family and feeling above all else, while St. John thinks only of the opportunities, if she keeps the inheritance, that Jane will have to take her place in society.

Describing his love for his sisters at the end of the chapter, St. John says his affection for them is based on "respect for their worth, and admiration of their talents," and he believes he'll be able to love Jane because she also has "principle and mind." How cold his description of love is compared with Jane's passionate connection to Rochester, with her heartfelt "craving" for love and family. Her inheritance may lead Jane back to her relationship with Rochester. Earlier in the novel, as she planned her wedding, Jane worried because she couldn't offer Rochester beauty, money, or connections; now she has at least two of the three — relatives she's proud of and plenty of cash! Slowly, she is moving into a position of equality with Rochester.

***Critical Study:***

The following day, in the midst of a whirling snowstorm, St. John returns to Jane's cottage. He tells her a story about a rich man's daughter who married a poor curate and was disowned by her family. Less than two years later, both were dead. Their infant daughter was taken in by rich relations and raised by Mrs. Reed. He goes on to tell Jane's own story, up to her flight from Thornfield. St. John explains that the scrap of paper he had taken from Jane's cottage the previous day contained the signature "[Jane Eyre](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Jane-Eyre/character-analysis/#Jane_Eyre)," and he had recently received a letter from Mr. Briggs inquiring about Jane Eyre. Briggs wants to inform Jane that her uncle John Eyre has died in Madeira and left his fortune of 20,000 pounds to her. Her first reaction is to lament the loss of the possibility of a relationship with a relative—she had hoped to get to know her uncle. Her second is to recognize the benefit of such a sum: "independence would be glorious," she thinks. Jane asks St. John why Briggs had thought to write to him about Jane. After some persuasion St. John tells Jane that "[his] mother's name was Eyre, and she had two brothers." One brother married Jane Reed (Jane's mother), and the other was John Eyre of Madeira, a merchant. Jane is overjoyed to learn that the Rivers siblings are her cousins. She immediately decides that she will divide her inheritance four ways and share it with them and plans to stop teaching.

St. John chides Jane about having misplaced priorities because when she learned about inheriting a fortune, she was serious, but when she learned about her newfound cousins, she was excited. The desire for family and human connection has always been more important to Jane than the desire for wealth. She tells St. John, "I never had a home, I never had brothers or sisters; I must and will have them now." Jane now imagines a new future for herself. She sees herself living at Moor House enjoying her cousins' company and free to pursue her own interests, a vision underscored by her pleasure in "independence."

***Significance:***

One night in winter, St. John visits Jane at her cottage. He tells her a story of a poor curate who, twenty years ago, fell in love with a rich man's daughter and married her; her friends disowned her after the wedding. They both died within two years, leaving behind a daughter, who was raised by her aunt-in-law, [Mrs. Reed](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#mrs-reed) of Gateshead. St. John recounts the rest of Jane's life up until her departure from Thornfield, after which everyone searched for her to no avail. Although Jane realizes that St. John is talking about her, she still does not identify herself as “[Jane Eyre](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre).” St. John informs her that he has just received a letter from [Mr. Briggs](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#mr-briggs), in which the solicitor asserts the importance of finding the missing [Jane Eyre](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#jane-eyre).

The reason Briggs sought Jane, St. John says, is because Jane's uncle, Mr. [John Eyre](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#john-eyre) of Madeira, has died and left her his great fortune of 20,000 pounds. Jane is stunned and reveals her true identity to St. John. Still, she does not understand why Briggs attempted to reach her through St. John. St. John reveals that his full name is St. John Eyre Rivers, and his mother’s brother is Jane’s uncle. St. John also admits that he tore the scrap of paper from Miss Rosamond’s portrait because it was her legal signature and allowed her to corroborate the story. Jane is as overjoyed to discover that she has cousins as she is by the fortune. Jane decides to split the fortune four ways among the cousins and live to at Moor House with Diana and Mary, but St. John urges her to reconsider; the fortune was left solely to her, and she should not feel obliged to share it. Jane refuses to change her decision, asserting that having close relations is more important to her than the money; she also discards the notion of ever marrying. St. John pledges to treat her as his sister, and Jane promises to remain headmistress until he finds a replacement at the Morton school. Eventually, Jane persuades her cousins to share her fortune, and they each inherit 5,000 pounds.

In this chapter, Brontë incorporates various hints scattered throughout the novel – including the existence of Jane's wealthy uncle John Eyre and the scrap of paper St. John tore from Jane's portrait – to finally establish Jane’s financial independence. Moreover, Jane finally discovers her real family: coming across her long-lost cousins, purely by accident. Although the fortune is a deus ex machina plot twist that, as Jane says, gives her a victory she "never earned and do[es] not merit," she has, in many ways, earned it. By being selfless, humble, and eschewing the fortune Rochester would have given her in return for her virtual servitude, Jane is most deserving of a gift that will finally give her true independence. This particular plot conclusion is perhaps the most improbably of the plot, but it allows Brontë to overcome several of the difficulties that were obstructing the relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester.***Notes:***

This lesson provides an overview of chapter 33 of Jane Eyre. In this chapter, Jane's true identity is discovered and she learns two things that will change the course of her life forever.

## Snow

It starts snowing as St. John concludes his visit to Jane from the previous chapter. The snow continues through the night and into the next day. Because of the inclement weather, Jane does her best to seal up her cottage against the cold and then snugs herself by the fire with a book. She is engrossed in reading when she is startled by a knock at the door. It's St. John. He has walked through thick, drifting snow to get to Jane's house.

## St. John, Behaving Strangely (Again)

At first, Jane is alarmed by St. John's arrival and worries that something is wrong--because, really, who walks through a snowstorm unless something urgent has happened? He insists everything is fine, but then he refuses to explain himself. Jane tries to engage him in small talk, but he answers distractedly and proceeds to stare at the fire. Perplexed, Jane wonders if St. John has finally lost it: 'I began to fear his wits were touched.' She consoles herself afterward by observing that, if he were insane, at least 'his was a very cool and collected insanity.'

## St. John Tells a Story

After his initial quiet, St. John finally speaks. Jane is astonished to hear from his lips her own story--St. John tells her of an orphaned girl, raised by a Mrs. Reed of Gateshead and sent to Lowood School, who eventually became a governess at Thornfield Hall employed by a Mr. Rochester.

It must sting Jane a bit as St. John goes on to tell of how Mr. Rochester had proposed to marry this girl--only for her to discover at the altar that he was married already, though to a woman who is mentally ill. After this, the girl flees from Thornfield and is not seen again.

## How Jane was Discovered

When St. John found her, starving and homeless, Jane gave 'Elliot' as her last name. Clearly, he has found out her true identity and has discovered her whole history besides. He tells Jane of a letter from Mr. Briggs, an attorney, asking if he had any information about a certain Jane Eyre with this particular history.

The reader will remember St. John's strange fascination with a stray bit of paper on Jane's desk in the last chapter--it turns out Jane had, without thinking, idly written her true name of Eyre on that piece of paper. That information, together with the letter from Mr. Briggs, allowed St. John to discover Jane's story.

After St. John's revelations, all Jane can ask is, 'What of Mr. Rochester? How and where is he? What is he doing? Is he well?' She skips completely over amazement or wonder or concern that St. John has found out her identity and her past. She only wants to hear about Mr. Rochester.

## Life-Changing Information

St. John is not concerned with Mr. Rochester and knows nothing about him. Instead, he intimates to Jane that he has something more important to tell her. Jane persists, however, in trying to extract information about Mr. Rochester. St. John's frustration mounts and with exasperation he finally asks Jane if she wants to know what this is all about. Equally exasperated, Jane yields, giving St. John an opportunity to explain himself, even though she would clearly rather hear about Mr. Rochester.

Still a bit miffed, St. John reveals with some sarcasm that he is come 'merely to tell you that your uncle, Mr. Eyre of Madeira, is dead; that he has left you all his property, and that you are now rich--merely that--nothing more.'

Initially, Jane reacts with disbelief, and then with a tangled web of emotions. St. John expects her to just be happy, but Jane, who has been alone all her life and who craves family ties above all things, receives as a blow the information that her one known relative is dead. She feels isolated and alone.

Jane's chagrin deepens when she hears that she has inherited twenty thousand pounds--which, if calculated in modern American currency--would translate into about two or three million dollars. Jane has suddenly gone from abject poverty to extreme wealth. Still, there is no rejoicing. Jane is overwhelmed and confused. She feels as though she is 'sitting down to a feast alone at a table spread with provisions for a hundred.'

## The Rest of the Story

After all this, there is still more. As she recovers from the initial shock, it occurs to Jane to ask St. John why this Mr. Briggs would write to him about her at all. St. John tries to say that it is just because he is clergy, but Jane calls his bluff. Finally she extracts from him the truth: He reminds Jane of the letter he and his sisters received a few chapters ago telling them their uncle had died but left all his fortune to their cousin, whom they had never met. Jane, it turns out, is this cousin. St. John, Diana, and Mary all have the surname Rivers, but their mother's last name was Eyre. She was Jane's father's sister. John Eyre was therefore uncle to them all.

## A Solution

Jane is far more excited to find that she has family than she was to find she has wealth. 'Glorious discovery to a lonely wretch!' she says, 'this was wealth indeed!' She proposes, therefore, to divide the vast sum in quarters, giving five thousand pounds each to Jane, St. John, Diana, and Mary. This would be sufficient to allow each of them to live without working. Moor House, the Rivers' home, could be reopened, and they all could live there together in comfort.

## Lesson Summary

In this chapter, Jane learns that she has inherited a fortune and that St. John, Diana, and Mary are her cousins. More excited about the cousins than the fortune, Jane proposes to divide the wealth among them so they can live together as family and still have all they need without working.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

The following night, [St. John](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/st-john-rivers) fights through the [snow](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/symbols/fire-and-ice) to visit [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre). He tells her a story which, to Jane's astonishment, is her own personal history. It ends with something she didn't know: after Jane disappeared from Thornfield, an urgent message came that her uncle [John Eyre](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) had died and left her a fortune of 20,000 pounds.

***Analysis Part 1:***

St. John is associated with ice and snow, symbolizing his cold personality and lack of affectionate emotions. The money will make Jane independent, without having to work or to marry for financial security.

***Summary Part 2:***

Notices and letters were posted everywhere to find Jane. One reached [St. John](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/st-john-rivers) because [John Eyre](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) is in fact his uncle, too. St. John reveals to [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) his full name: St. John Eyre Rivers. His mother was Jane's father's sister, so St. John, [Mary](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters), and [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters) are all Jane's cousins. St. John says he pieced together the mystery from the scrap of drawing paper he grabbed at the end of Chapter 32: it had her signature, "Jane Eyre." [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) is elated to suddenly have close family, and decides the best thing she could do is share her new fortune equally among all of them. Jane hopes the money will allow [Mary](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters), [Diana](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters), and [St. John](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/st-john-rivers) all to be financially independent and to live nearby.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Rochester ended up married to Bertha because social convention is that people do not share inheritances. Out of love and gratitude to the Rivers, Jane breaks that social rule. As for the Rivers, Jane's generosity rewards their true Christian charity, which was given without any expectation of compensation. In sharing her inheritance, Jane also atones for the injustices of her uncle, whose dealings impoverished the Rivers' father.