***Jane Eyre***

***Vol-3 Chapter 8***

***Chapter 34***

***Summary and Analysis***

***Summary:***

* At Christmastime, Jane closes up the school. St. John asks her if she feels good about the work she’s been doing, and when she admits that she does he asks if she would devote her entire life to charitable works. She says that she couldn’t do that; she wants to enjoy her own life, too.
* Jane begins preparing Moor House for Diana and Mary’s return. St. John objects to her keeping her talents and abilities for her private domestic life and argues that she has larger duties in the world.
* Jane ignores St. John and spends a few days getting Moor House ready, cleaning and decorating.
* On the Thursday when Diana and Mary are supposed to arrive, Jane is waiting at the house for them. St. John arrives first; she shows him everything she’s done in the house, but he doesn’t care about any of it and starts reading a book.
* Jane realizes that St. John is right about his calling—he really doesn’t care about leading a pleasant, comfortable life, only about huge, glorious projects and challenges and sacrifices.
* Diana and Mary arrive and are delighted with all Jane’s work in the house.
* A poor boy comes and asks St. John to go and see his dying mother. St. John does and comes back tired but happier.
* Diana, Mary, and Jane spend Christmas week hanging out together and chatting; St. John gets away from them to do different clergyman-type duties as much as possible.
* Diana and Mary ask St. John about his plans; he has arranged to go to India next year, and he’s heard that Rosamond Oliver is about to be married to someone else. Nobody really knows how to react to this, but St. John seems to be calm about it now.
* For a few weeks, things settle into a pattern; each of the women has something she’s reading or studying, and Jane also makes weekly visits to the school. St. John is really excited about these weekly visits and encourages Jane to make them in all types of weather.
* One day, St. John asks Jane to stop learning German and start learning Hindustani, because he needs a study-buddy and he thinks she would be better than either of his sisters. She agrees.
* Jane makes progress studying Hindustani, but somehow her teacher-student relationship with St. John makes her feel like she’s very much under his control. She starts to be extremely obedient to him whenever he asks her to do anything.
* One evening, when St. John is kissing his sisters goodnight, Diana convinces him to kiss Jane, too, because she’s sort of like a sister to them. He does, and the kiss is super-weird.
* More and more frequently, Jane wants to please St. John, but she feels like she has to suppress her real personality to do it.
* Jane writes to Mrs. Fairfax, but doesn’t hear anything back from her.
* One day, St. John asks Jane to go for a walk with him. They go out onto the moor and sit beside some large rocks. St. John tells Jane about his plans to leave England for India in six weeks.
* St. John asks Jane to marry him and go with him to India; he says that God intended her to be a missionary’s wife.
* Jane objects, saying that she doesn’t have the right calling to be a missionary. St. John says that he’s watched her for ten months (that’s how long she’s been in Morton) and he can tell she has all the right qualities.
* Jane asks for time to think, and they sit in silence. She realizes that she could do the work, but is worried that living in India would kill her. She also realizes that St. John might approve of her, but he’ll never love her.
* Jane offers to go with St. John to India as his fellow-missionary, but refuses to marry him.
* St. John tries to persuade her that there’s no way for her to go to India if she’s not married to him; going alone together, both of them single, just wouldn’t be right in his opinion.
* Jane sticks to her guns again. She’ll go with him, but not as his wife. They can continue to be like brother and sister, since they are, after all, cousins, or even act just like co-workers.
* St. John refuses this arrangement again… they seem to be stuck in a loop here.
* St. John tells Jane that he’s going to Cambridge for two weeks to say goodbye to various friends and that he wants her to think bout it while he’s gone.
* That evening, they shake hands before going to bed; St. John is angry with her, although he thinks that he’s forgiven her.

***Synopsis:***

St. John urges Jane to reconsider retiring to Moor House and rather to stay teaching and doing good in the world. Jane says she wants to do what she desires for a while. Diana and Mary return to Moor House and love the changes Jane has made. St. John urges Jane to learn Hindostanee and to visit the school no matter the weather. One day he finds her crying because neither of her letters to Thornfield have been answered. He asks her to walk with him and while they are walking, he proposes. Jane knows St. John only proposes because she would be a good missionary's wife and he does not love her in a wifely way. Jane says she will go with him, but not as his wife. He says that arrangement will not work.

For the second time in her life, Jane is proposed to. This time she declines, knowing she cannot allow herself to married to a man she does not love and who does not love her. Notice that while around St. John, Jane feels as if she is being suffocated and is not allowed to be herself. These are the opposite feelings Jane has when she is around Mr. Rochester. Unlike St. John's love which causes Jane to feel trapped, Mr. Rochester's love makes her feel free.

***Short Study:***

Jane closes her school for Christmas and spends a happy time with her newfound cousins at Moor House. Diana and Mary are delighted with the improvements Jane has made at the school, but St. John seems colder and more distant than ever. He tells Jane that Rosamond is engaged to a rich man named Mr. Granby. One day, he asks Jane to give up her study of German and instead to learn “Hindustani” with him—the language he is learning to prepare for missionary work in India. As time goes by, St. John exerts a greater and greater influence on Jane; his power over her is almost uncanny. This leaves Jane feeling empty, cold, and sad, but she follows his wishes. At last, he asks her to go to India with him to be a missionary—and to be his wife. She agrees to go to India as a missionary but says that she will not be his wife because they are not in love. St. John harshly insists that she marry him, declaring that to refuse his proposal is the same as to deny the Christian faith. He abruptly leaves the room.

***Analysis:***

Christmas has arrived and Jane is closing the Morton school. She is happy to discover that she is beloved by the girls and promises to visit the school for an hour each week. St. John asks Jane if she wouldn't like to dedicate her life to working with the poor, but she wants to enjoy herself, as well as cultivating others. Jane sets off for Moor House to prepare for the arrival of Diana and Mary.

St. John shows a disappointing lack of interest in the renovations Jane has done at Moor House, but Diana and Mary ungrudgingly appreciate Jane's hard work. The women spend the week in "merry domestic dissipation," a pleasure St. John can't enjoy. He tells them Rosamond Oliver is to be married to a Mr. Granby, but the news doesn't seem to upset him. To Jane, St. John seems more distant than before they knew they were cousins.

One day when Jane sits home with a cold, St. John suddenly asks her to give up German lessons and learn Hindustani, the language he is studying in preparation for his missionary work. Slowly, St. John takes more control over Jane, sucking away her freedom; she doesn't enjoy her new servitude. She is also stricken with sadness, because she is unable to discover what has happened to Rochester since she left him. Then St. John surprises her. In six weeks, St. John will leave for India, and he wants Jane to accompany him, as his wife. If she goes to India, Jane knows she'll die prematurely, but she agrees to go anyway — if she can go as his sister, not his wife, because they don't love each other as husband and wife should. St. John insists on the marriage. After much discussion, they are unable to overcome the obstacle of the marriage issue, so St. John asks Jane to think about his proposal for a couple of weeks. He warns her that rejecting his proposal means rejecting God.

St. John's absolute, God-sanctioned despotism becomes apparent in this chapter. Just as Brocklehurst was a "black pillar," St. John is "a white stone" and a "cold cumbrous column"; Brocklehurst was evil and St. John is good, but both men are equally stony. Even St. John's kisses are "marble" or "ice" kisses: No warmth or affection warms them.

St. John's God is an infallible, warrior deity: king, captain, and lawgiver. Similarly, Jane says she would accompany St. John as "comrade" or "fellow-soldier." He uses imagery of war to describe his devotion to this God: He will "enlist" under the Christian "banner," Jane says he prizes her like a soldier would an effective weapon, under God's "standard" St. John "enlists" Jane, and she should "wrench" her heart from humanity to fix it upon God. All of these quotes suggest the violence and severity that underlies St. John's views of Christianity. Like Helen Burns, he has his eyes turned on heaven, but while her spirituality emphasized a martyred compassion, his makes God into a warrior tyrant who demands absolute submission. While Helen sought solace in heaven to compensate for her unhappy life on earth, St. John seeks glory in heaven to make up for his obscurity on earth.

The representation of marriage in this chapter suggests its inherently oppressive nature. St. John argues that a wife would be "the sole helpmeet I can influence efficiently in life, and retain absolutely till death"; thus, he wants a wife he can control completely. Jane recognizes the imperialism in his statement. As his "curate" or "comrade," Jane could preserve her "unblighted" self, but as his wife, she would become "part of" him and, therefore, "always restrained," her flame "imprisoned," perhaps leading to the madness that afflicts Bertha Mason. As husband, St. John would invade the private places in her mind, trample her with his "warrior-march," ultimately erasing her identity and dousing her passions for life. Rather than resisting like the madwoman in the attic, Jane would become a mere husk. Both Rochester and St. John value Jane for her seeming submissiveness, thinking they can shape her into their ideal versions of woman, but her strength surprises them both.

Glossary

paysannes peasant women.

Bäuerinnen peasant women.

beau ideal the perfect type.

carte blanche complete authority.

***Critical Study:***

Before the Christmas holidays, Jane shuts the village school and prepares to move into Moor House with the Rivers siblings. She and Hannah prepare the house for the arrival of Mary and Diana. St. John is critical of the pleasure Jane takes in "domestic endearments and household joys." He expects her to devote her time and talents to higher pursuits. A week later Mary, Jane, and Diana are spending their time studying languages, reading, and drawing. Rosamond has chosen a new suitor; St. John has lost her, due to his self-control. St. John persuades Jane to give up her study of German to help him in his study of Hindostanee, an Asian language. Jane has become closer to the Rivers siblings; at Diana's urging, St. John kisses Jane, as he would a sister.

Jane constantly worries that Rochester might have gone back to a life of pleasure-seeking. She writes letters to Mrs. Fairfax, but there's no response. Six months have passed since Christmas, and Jane sinks into a kind of despair. One day St. John asks her to go for a walk with him. He says he will leave for India in six weeks and wants her to go with him as his wife. Jane objects that she knows nothing about the missionary life, but he assures her he will direct her "from hour to hour." Jane knows he doesn't love her—he loves only his work—and he had loved Rosamond. She doesn't love him either, much as she tries to please him. Jane tells St. John she'll consider going with him as his sister but not as his wife. Their handshake at the end of the chapter reveals his lack of passion and the hurt it causes Jane.

***Significance:***

Jane finishes her duties at the school before Christmas and returns to Moor House to prepare for a holiday with her newfound family. Diana and Mary are overjoyed with the changes in their situation, particularly having Jane as their cousin, but St. John seems to be increasingly aloof. They all soon hear that Miss Oliver is to marry the wealthy Mr. Granby. St. John is stoic and claims that he is glad, as it has cleared the way for his mission to India. While Jane loves living with her female cousins, St. John continues to treat Jane coldly, treating her more as a servant than as a relative. He also asks her to postpone her study of German and instead study “Hindustani,” the language needed for missionary work in India. Although Jane still feels connected to Mr. Rochester, she notices that St. John is able to influence her more and more with each passing day.

One spring day, St. John asks Jane to go to India with him as a missionary and as his wife. Jane resists, telling him that she will go to India as a missionary but she cannot marry him. St. John insists that Jane has the right qualities for a missionary wife, but Jane continues to refuse. She scorns St. John’s conception of marriage since it is one devoid of love, and St. John, in turn, accuses Jane of denying Christianity by refusing to marry him. St. John promises to give Jane two weeks to reconsider his proposal and then leaves the room.

In this chapter, autonomy again appears as Jane's main desire. Though the idea of being a Christian missionary is appealing to her as a way to add structure to her life (and continue her notion of serving others), she is unwilling to be imprisoned in another marriage. While she rejected Mr. Rochester's proposal because she feared a status of inferiority, she refuses St. John's proposal because love would not be a part of it.

Jane thus rejects St. John's model of Christianity, as she formerly rejected [Helen Burns](https://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/study-guide/character-list#helen-burns)'s and Brocklehurst's. While St. John's Christianity is neither overly meek nor hypocritical and corrupt, his is emotionless. As Jane said earlier, he has not found his peace with God, and his religious zeal seems more mechanical than human. Although Jane is prepared to deal with questions of morality and duty, she refuses to believe that true Christianity requires individuals to strip themselves of all love.***Notes:***

This lesson provides an overview of Chapter 34 of Jane Eyre in which we see Jane, St. John, Mary, and Diana all embarking on their next phase of life after their unexpected inheritance.

## Another New Beginning

The chapter opens as Jane is closing Morton School for the Christmas holiday. She will not return to the school as its mistress after the holiday. Instead, she will begin her new life with Diana, Mary, and St. John, whom she has recently discovered are her cousins. They all share a substantial inheritance from their uncle. Jane looks forward to cleaning and restoring Moor House and to enjoying the holidays with her cousins. For the first time in her life, Jane finally has family she loves.

## St. John Still the Grinch

St. John, who has previously shown himself to be rather hard and cold, expresses some scorn for Jane's domestic holiday ambitions. He tells her, 'I hope you will begin to look beyond Moor House and Morton, and sisterly society, and the selfish calm and sensual comfort of civilised affluence.' This is unfair, as Jane has just given St. John and his sisters each a large sum of money. Additionally, Jane is proposing to restore and improve his family home--hardly warranting the label 'selfish calm' or 'sensual comfort.' St. John remains resolute in his disdain, and when Jane eagerly shows him the fruits of her industrious cleaning, arranging, and decorating, he is completely dismissive and unappreciative.

Fortunately, Diana and Mary are pleasanter company than St. John. They are both rapturous over Jane's improvements to their home. The three young women are very merry together in their newfound leisure. St. John can barely stand all this enjoyment, however, and he is restless and discontent for the entire week of the Christmas holiday. He spends as much time out and away as he can, and the time he does spend in the house with the ladies is a considerable strain on his patience.

## Mr. Rochester Still On Jane's Mind

In the midst of the joy of becoming financially independent and the greater joy of discovering she has a family, Jane does not forget Mr. Rochester. The idea of him runs as a sub-current through this chapter. Jane writes letters to him and to Mrs. Fairfax seeking news of his well-being. She worries about him and loves him still. When six months elapse with no answer to her letters, she is very concerned and disappointed. Still, she soldiers on with day-to-day life.

## St. John the Dictator

In addition to being crabby about Christmas celebrations, St. John takes to bossing Jane around in a rather unsavory way. For instance, if Jane were scheduled to visit the school on a certain day and the weather turned out to be bad, Mary and Diana would suggest she put the visit off until the weather improved. St. John, however, would dismiss his sisters' concerns and practically insist Jane should still go.

St. John also commands Jane to give up her study of German and instead spend her time learning 'Hindostanee' which was most likely a different spelling of 'Hindustani,' the language of parts of India and Pakistan. It looks like this:

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| --- |
| Hindustani Writing |

It is still used today in some places but has largely been replaced by Urdu or Hindi. St. John is learning this language to prepare for his career as a missionary and insists Jane learn it too. Jane tells us that she wanted very much to please St. John in these things, but in order to do so she says 'I felt...that I must disown half my nature.' She is not happy under St. John's commands.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

When the winter holidays arrive, [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) closes her school and spends a happy Christmas with Mary and Diana, who have returned from their jobs. [St. John](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/st-john-rivers), on the other hand, is increasingly distant and cold. Asked about [Rosamond Oliver](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters), St. John tells them she has recently married a wealthy aristocrat.

***Analysis Part 1:***

The cheery holidays illustrate the loving home that Jane has found. St. John though has little respect for worldly connections. He won't even admit unhappiness for having lost Rosamond.

***Summary Part 2:***

One day, [St. John](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/st-john-rivers) finds [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) studying German and suggests that she learn "Hindostanee" instead—the language he's studying for his missionary work in India. Jane agrees, and notes that she feels as if St. John is slowly gaining a strong influence over her, but one that leaves her cold.

***Analysis Part 2:***

As happened with Rochester, Jane instinct towards "servitude" lead her into a position as a helper to a strong and commanding man.

***Summary Part 3:***

Time passes. That summer, [St. John](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/st-john-rivers) takes [Jane](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/jane-eyre/characters/jane-eyre) on a walk in the hills. St. John tells Jane she has admirable qualities, and proposes that she marry him and accompany him on his missionary work. But Jane's "heart is mute." She recognizes that she could never be happy as St. John's wife. She tells him she would only go to work in India as his sister. He responds that in denying his proposal she is denying the Christian faith.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Unlike Rochester, St. John only admires Jane's qualities for their usefulness. He wants her to be a traditional religious wife—an aide to her husband. He doesn't love her; he only loves his religion. While St. John believes that human hearts should only serve God, Jane wants the freedom to feel.