

Jane Eyre

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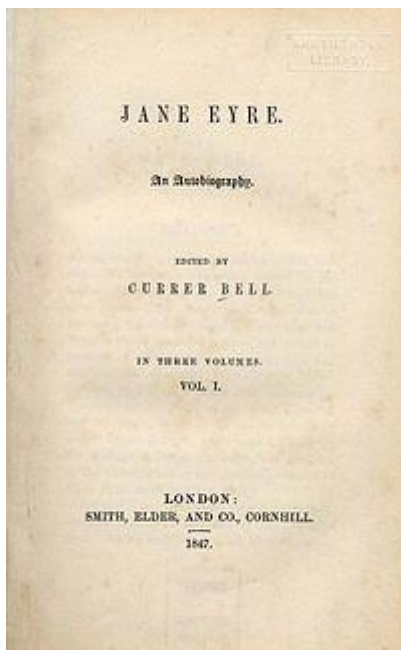
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Jane Eyre



Title page of the first *Jane Eyre* edition

Author(s)	Charlotte Brontë
Country	England
Language	English
Genre(s)	Gothic horror , social criticism , Bildungsroman
Publisher	Smith, Elder & Co. , Cornhill
Publication date	16 October 1847
Media type	Print

Jane Eyre /ˈɛər/ is a novel by [English writer Charlotte Brontë](#). It was published in [London](#), England, in 1847 by [Smith, Elder & Co.](#) with the title *Jane Eyre. An Autobiography* under the pen name "Currer Bell." The first American edition was released the following year by [Harper & Brothers](#) of New York. The [Penguin edition](#) describes it as an "influential feminist text" because of its in-depth exploration of a strong female character's feelings.

The novel merges elements of three distinct genres. It has the form of a [Bildungsroman](#), a story about a child's maturation, focusing on the emotions and experiences that accompany growth to adulthood. The novel also contains much [social criticism](#), with a strong sense of morality at its core, and finally has the brooding and moody quality and [Byronic](#) character typical of [Gothic fiction](#).^[1]

It is a novel often considered ahead of its time due to its portrayal of the development of a thinking and passionate young woman who is both individualistic, desiring for a full life, while also highly moral. Jane evolves from her beginnings as a poor and plain woman without captivating charm to her mature stage as a compassionate and confident whole woman. As she matures, she comments much on the complexities of the human condition. Jane also has a deeply pious personal trust in God, but is also highly self-reliant. Although Jane suffers much, she is never portrayed as a [damsel in distress](#) who needs rescuing. For this reason, it is sometimes regarded as an important early feminist (or proto-feminist) novel.^[2]

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[\[edit\]](#) **Plot introduction**


Jane Eyre is a first-person narrative of the title character. The novel goes through five distinct stages: Jane's childhood at Gateshead, where she is emotionally and physically abused by her aunt and cousins; her education at Lowood School, where she acquires friends and role models but also suffers privations and oppression; her time as the [governess](#) of Thornfield Hall, where she falls in love with her [Byronic](#) employer, Edward Rochester; her time with the Rivers family during which her earnest but cold clergyman-cousin St John Rivers proposes to her; and the finale with her reunion with and marriage to her beloved Rochester.

Jane Eyre is divided into 38 chapters and most editions are at least 400 pages long (although the preface and introduction on certain copies are liable to take up another 100 or so). The original publication was in three volumes, comprising chapters 1 to 15, 16 to 26, and 27 to 38; this was a common publishing format during the 19th century (see [three-volume novel](#)).

Brontë dedicated the novel's second edition to [William Makepeace Thackeray](#).

[\[edit\]](#) Plot summary



 Young Jane argues with her guardian Mrs. Reed of Gateshead. Illustration by [F. H. Townsend](#).

The novel begins with a ten-year-old orphan named [Jane Eyre](#) who is living with her uncle's family, the Reeds, as her uncle's dying wish. Jane's parents died of [typhus](#). Jane's aunt Sarah Reed does not like her and treats her like a servant. She and her three children are abusive to Jane, physically and emotionally. One day Jane is locked in the red room, where her uncle died, and panics after seeing visions of him. She is finally rescued when she is allowed to attend Lowood School for Girls.

Jane arrives at Lowood Institution, a charity school, with the accusation that she is deceitful. During an inspection, Jane accidentally breaks her slate, and Mr. Brocklehurst, the self-righteous clergyman who runs the school, brands her as a liar and shames her before the entire assembly. Jane is comforted by her friend, Helen Burns. Miss Temple, a caring teacher, facilitates Jane's self-defense and writes to Mr. Lloyd, whose reply agrees with Jane's. Ultimately, Jane is publicly cleared of Mr. Brocklehurst's accusations.

The eighty pupils at Lowood are subjected to cold rooms, poor meals, and thin clothing. Many students fall ill when a [typhus](#) epidemic strikes. Jane's friend Helen dies of [consumption](#) in her arms. When Mr. Brocklehurst's neglect and dishonesty are discovered, several benefactors erect a new building and conditions at the school improve dramatically.

After six years as a student and two years as a teacher, Jane decides to leave Lowood, like her friend and confidante Miss Temple. She advertises her services as a governess, and receives one reply. It is from Alice Fairfax, the housekeeper at Thornfield Hall. She takes the position, teaching Adele Varens, a young French girl. While Jane is walking one night to a nearby town, a horseman passes her. The horse slips on ice and throws the rider. She helps him to the horse. Later, back at the mansion she learns that this man is Edward Rochester, master of the house. He teases her, asking whether she bewitched his horse to make him fall. Adele is his ward, left in Mr. Rochester's care when her mother died. Mr. Rochester and Jane enjoy each other's company and spend many hours together.

Odd things start to happen at the house, such as a strange laugh, a mysterious fire in Mr. Rochester's room, on which Jane throws water, and an attack on Rochester's house guest, Mr. Mason. Jane receives word that her aunt was calling for her, after being in much grief because her son has died. She returns to Gateshead and remains there for a month caring for her dying aunt. Mrs. Reed gives Jane a letter from Jane's uncle, Mr Eyre, asking for her to live with him. Mrs. Reed admits to telling her uncle that Jane had died of fever at Lowood. Soon after, Jane's aunt dies, and she returns to Thornfield.



St. John Rivers admits Jane to Moor House.

After returning to Thornfield, Jane broods over Mr. Rochester's impending marriage to Blanche Ingram. But on a midsummer evening, he proclaims his love for Jane and proposes. As she prepares for her wedding, Jane's forebodings arise when a strange, savage-looking woman sneaks into her room one night and rips her wedding veil in two. As with the previous mysterious events, Mr. Rochester attributes the incident to drunkenness on the part of Grace Poole, one of his servants. During the wedding ceremony, Mr. Mason and a lawyer declare that Mr. Rochester cannot marry because he is still married to Mr. Mason's sister Bertha. Mr. Rochester admits this is true, but explains that his father tricked him into the marriage for her

money. Once they were united, he discovered that she was rapidly descending into madness and eventually locked her away in Thornfield, hiring Grace Poole as a nurse to look after her. When Grace gets drunk, his wife escapes, and causes the strange happenings at Thornfield. Mr. Rochester asks Jane to go with him to the south of [France](#), and live as husband and wife, even though they cannot be married. Refusing to go against her principles, and despite her love for him, Jane leaves Thornfield in the middle of the night.

Jane travels through England using the little money she had saved. She accidentally leaves her bundle of possessions on a coach and has to sleep on the moor, trying to trade her scarf and gloves for food. Exhausted, she makes her way to the home of Diana and Mary Rivers, but is turned away by the housekeeper. She faints on the doorstep, preparing for her death. St. John Rivers, Diana and Mary's brother and a clergyman, saves her. After she regains her health, St. John finds her a teaching position at a nearby charity school. Jane becomes good friends with the sisters, but St. John remains reserved.

The sisters leave for governess jobs and St. John becomes closer with Jane. St. John discovers Jane's true identity, and astounds her by showing her a letter stating that her uncle John has died and left her his entire fortune of £20,000 (equivalent to over £45.5 million in 2009, calculated using the share of GDP).^[3] When Jane questions him further, St. John reveals that John is also his and his sisters' uncle. They had once hoped for a share of the inheritance, but have since resigned themselves to nothing. Jane, overjoyed by finding her family, insists on sharing the money equally with her cousins, and Diana and Mary come to Moor House to stay.

Thinking she will make a suitable missionary's wife, St. John asks Jane to marry him and to go with him to India, not out of love, but out of duty. Jane initially accepts going to India, but rejects the marriage proposal, suggesting they travel as brother and sister. As soon as Jane's resolve against marriage to St. John begins to weaken, she mysteriously hears Mr. Rochester's voice calling her name. Jane then returns to Thornfield to find only blackened ruins. She learns that Mr. Rochester's wife set the house on fire and committed suicide by jumping from the roof. In his rescue attempts, Mr. Rochester lost a hand and his eyesight. Jane reunites with him, but he fears that she will be repulsed by his condition. When Jane assures him of her love and tells him that she will never leave him, Mr. Rochester again proposes and they are married. He eventually recovers enough sight to see their first-born son.

[\[edit\]](#) Characters

- **[Jane Eyre](#)**: The protagonist of the novel and the title character. Orphaned as a baby, she struggles through her nearly loveless childhood and becomes governess at Thornfield Hall. Jane is passionate and opinionated, and values freedom and independence. She also has a strong conscience and is a determined Christian.
- **Mr. Reed**: Jane's maternal uncle, who adopts Jane when her parents die. According to Mrs. Reed, he pitied Jane and often cared for her more than for his own children. Before his own death, he makes his wife promise to care for Jane.
- **Mrs. Sarah Reed**: Jane's aunt by marriage, who adopts Jane on her husband's wishes, but abuses and neglects her. She eventually disowns her and sends her to Lowood School.

- **John Reed:** Jane's cousin, who as a child bullies Jane constantly, sometimes in his mother's presence. He ruins himself as an adult by drinking and gambling and is thought to have committed suicide.
- **Eliza Reed:** Jane's cousin. Bitter because she is not as attractive as her sister, she devotes herself self-righteously to religion. She leaves for a nunnery near Lisle after her mother's death, determined to estrange herself from her sister.
- **Georgiana Reed:** Jane's cousin. Though spiteful and insolent, she is also beautiful and indulged. Her sister Eliza foils her marriage to the wealthy Lord Edwin Vere, when they were about to elope. She also becomes a friend of Jane's towards the end of the novel and eventually marries a wealthy man.^[4]
- **Bessie Lee:** The plain-spoken nursemaid at Gateshead. She often treats Jane kindly, telling her stories and singing her songs. Later she marries Robert Leaven.
- **Robert Leaven:** The coachman at Gateshead, who brings Jane the news of John Reed's death, which brought on Mrs. Reed's stroke.
- **Mr. Lloyd:** A compassionate apothecary who recommends that Jane be sent to school. Later, he writes a letter to Miss Temple confirming Jane's account of her childhood and thereby clearing Jane of Mrs. Reed's charge of lying.
- **Mr. Brocklehurst:** The clergyman headmaster and treasurer of Lowood School, whose maltreatment of the students is eventually exposed. A religious traditionalist, he advocates for his charges the most harsh, plain, and discipline possible lifestyle—but not, hypocritically, for himself and his family. His second daughter Augusta hereby states: "Oh, my dear papa, how quiet and plain all the girls at Lowood look... they look at my dress and mama's, as if they never seen a silk gown before."
- **Miss Maria Temple:** The kind superintendent of Lowood School, who treats the students with respect and compassion. She helps clear Jane of Mr. Brocklehurst's false accusation of deceit, and cares for Helen in her last days.
- **Miss Scatcherd:** A sour and vicious teacher at Lowood.
- **Helen Burns:** Jane's best friend and classmate at Lowood School. She refuses to hate those who abuse her, trusting in God and praying for peace one day in heaven. She teaches Jane to trust Christianity, and dies of consumption in Jane's arms. [Elizabeth Gaskell](#), in her biography of the Brontë sisters, wrote that Helen Burns was 'an exact transcript' of [Maria Brontë](#), who died of [Consumption](#) at age 11.^[5]
- **Edward Fairfax Rochester:** The master of Thornfield Manor. A [Byronic hero](#), he is tricked into making an unfortunate first marriage to Bertha Mason many years before he meets Jane, with whom he falls madly in love.
- **Bertha Antoinetta Mason:** The violently insane first wife of Edward Rochester; moved to Thornfield and locked in the attic.
- **Adèle Varens:** An excitable French child to whom Jane is governess at Thornfield. She has been Mr. Rochester's ward since the death of her mother, Rochester's mistress.
- **Mrs. Alice Fairfax:** An elderly widow and the housekeeper of Thornfield Manor. She cares for both Jane and Mr. Rochester.
- **Leah:** The young, pretty and kind housemaid at Thornfield, with an occasional excitable nature.
- **Blanche Ingram:** A socialite whom Mr. Rochester temporarily courts in order to make Jane jealous. She is described as having great beauty, but displays callous behaviour and avaricious intent.
- **Richard Mason:** An Englishman from the West Indies, whose sister is Mr. Rochester's first wife. He took part in tricking Mr. Rochester into marrying Bertha, earning both of their anger. He still, however, cares for his sister's well-being.

- **Grace Poole:** Bertha Mason's caretaker. Mr. Rochester pays her a very high salary to keep Bertha hidden and quiet, and she is often used as an explanation for odd happenings. She has a weakness for drink that occasionally allows Bertha to escape.
- **St. John Eyre Rivers:** A clergyman who befriends Jane and turns out to be her cousin. He is thoroughly practical and suppresses all of his human passions and emotions in favour of piety. He is determined to go to India as a missionary, even if it means losing his love, Rosamond.
- **Diana and Mary Rivers:** St. John's sisters and (as it turns out) Jane's cousins. They are poor, intelligent, and kind-hearted, and want St. John to stay in England.
- **Rosamond Oliver:** A beautiful, wealthy young woman, the patron of the village school where Jane teaches. She falls in love with St. John, only to be rejected because she will not make a good missionary's wife.
- **Alice Wood:** Jane's maid when she is mistress of the girls' charity school in Morton.
- **John Eyre:** Jane's paternal uncle, who leaves her his vast fortune and wishes to adopt her at the age of 13. Mrs. Reed prevents the adoption out of spite towards Jane.
- **Mr. Oliver:** Rosamond Oliver's father. He is a kind and charitable old man and is fond of St. John.

[\[edit\]](#) Themes



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[\[edit\]](#) Morality

Jane refuses to become Mr. Rochester's paramour because of her "impassioned self-respect and moral conviction." She rejects St. John Rivers' Puritanism as much as the libertine aspects of Mr. Rochester's character. Instead, she works out a morality expressed in love, independence, and forgiveness. Jane does not want to be seen as an outcast to society or be a mistress to Rochester.

[\[edit\]](#) God and religion

Throughout the novel, Jane endeavours to attain an [equilibrium](#) between moral duty and earthly happiness. She despises the hypocritical puritanism of Mr. Brocklehurst, and sees the deficiencies in St. John Rivers' detached devotion to his Christian duty. As a child she partly admires Helen Burns' turning the other cheek, which helps her to forgive Aunt Reed and the Reed cousins. Although she does not seem to subscribe to any of the standard forms of popular Christianity, she honours traditional morality – in particular in not marrying Rochester until he is widowed. The last sentence of the novel (which is also the next to last line of the [New Testament](#)) is a prayer on behalf of St. John Rivers. Religion acts to moderate her behaviour but she never represses her true self.

In her preface to the second edition of *Jane Eyre*, Brontë made clear her belief that "conventionality is not morality" and "self-righteousness is not religion." She declared that "narrow human doctrines, that only tend to elate and magnify a few, should not be substituted for the world-redeeming creed of Christ." Throughout the novel, Brontë presents contrasts between characters who believe in and practice what she considers a true Christianity, and

those who pervert religion to further their own ends. Mr. Brocklehurst, who oversees Lowood Institution, is a hypocritical Christian. He professes charity but uses religion as a justification for punishment. For example, he cites the Biblical passage "man shall not live by bread alone" to rebuke Miss Temple for having fed the girls an extra meal to compensate for their inedible breakfast of burnt porridge. He tells Miss Temple that she "may indeed feed their vile bodies, but you little think how you starve their immortal souls!" Helen Burns is a complete contrast to Brocklehurst; she follows the Christian creed of turning the other cheek and loving those who hate her. On her deathbed, Helen tells Jane that she is "going home to God, who loves her."

Jane herself cannot quite profess Helen's absolute, selfless faith. Jane does not seem to follow a particular doctrine, but she is sincerely religious in a non-doctrinaire way. (It is Jane, after all, who places the stone with the word "Resurgam" (Latin for 'I will rise again') on Helen's grave, some fifteen years after her friend's death). Jane frequently prays and calls on God to assist her, particularly in her trouble with Mr. Rochester. She prays too that Mr. Rochester is safe. When the Rivers' housekeeper, Hannah, tries to turn the begging Jane away, Jane tells her that "if you are a Christian, you ought not consider poverty a crime." The young evangelical clergyman St. John Rivers is a more conventionally religious figure. However, Brontë portrays his religious aspect ambiguously. Jane calls him "a very good man," yet she finds him cold and forbidding. In his determination to do good deeds (in the form of missionary work in India), St. John courts martyrdom. Moreover, he is unable to see Jane as a whole person, but views her only as a helpmate in his proposed missionary work. Mr. Rochester is far less a perfect Christian. He is, indeed, a sinner: he attempts to enter into a bigamous marriage with Jane and, when that fails, tries to persuade her to become his mistress. He also confesses that he has had three previous mistresses. In the end, however, he repents of his sinfulness, thanks God for returning Jane to him, and begs God to give him the strength to lead a purer life.

[\[edit\]](#) Social class

Jane's ambiguous social position — a penniless yet moderately educated [orphan](#) from a good family — leads her to criticize discrimination based on class. Although she is educated, well-mannered, and relatively sophisticated, she is still a governess, a paid servant of low social standing, and therefore powerless. Nevertheless, Jane possesses certain class prejudices herself, as is made clear when she has to remind herself that her unsophisticated village pupils at Morton "are of flesh and blood as good as the scions of gentlest genealogy."

[\[edit\]](#) Gender relations

A particularly important theme in the novel is the depiction of a patriarchal society. Jane attempts to assert her own identity within male-dominated society. Three of the main male characters, Mr. Brocklehurst, Mr. Rochester and St. John Rivers, try to keep Jane in a subordinate position and prevent her from expressing her own thoughts and feelings. Jane escapes Mr. Brocklehurst and rejects St. John, and she only marries Mr. Rochester once she is sure that their marriage is one between equals. Through Jane, Brontë opposes Victorian stereotypes about women, articulating her own feminist philosophy:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and

it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex. (Chapter XII)

[\[edit\]](#) Love and passion

A central theme in *Jane Eyre* is that of the clash between conscience and passion — which one is to adhere to, and how to find a middle ground between the two. Jane, extremely passionate yet also dedicated to a close personal relationship with God, struggles between either extreme for much of the novel. An instance of her leaning towards conscience over passion can be seen after it has been revealed that Mr. Rochester already has a wife, when Jane is begged to run away with Mr. Rochester and become his mistress. Up until that moment, Jane had been riding on a wave of emotion, forgetting all thoughts of reason and logic, replacing God with Mr. Rochester in her eyes, and allowing herself to be swept away in the moment. However, once the harsh reality of the situation sets in, Jane does everything in her power to refuse Mr. Rochester, despite almost every part of her rejecting the idea and urging her to just give into Mr. Rochester's appeal. In the moment Jane experiences an epiphany in regards to conscience, realizing that “laws and principles are not for times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this.” Jane finally comes to understand that all passion, as she had been living her life up until then, and all conscience, as she had leaned towards during her time at Lowood, is neither good nor preferable. In this case, Jane had allowed herself to lean too far in the direction of passion, and she is in danger of giving up all logic and reason in favour of temptation. However, Jane finally asserts that in times of true moral trial, such as the one she is in with Mr. Rochester at the moment, to forgo one's principles, to violate the “law given by God,” would be too easy - and not something she is willing to do. Jane's struggles to find a middle ground between her passionate and conscience-driven sides frequently go back and forth throughout the novel, but in this case she has drawn the line as to where passion is taking too great a role in her life, and where she will not allow herself to forgo her moral and religious principles.

[\[edit\]](#) Feminism

The role and standing of women in the Victorian era is constantly debated by Brontë throughout *Jane Eyre*, specifically in regard to Jane's independence and ability to make decisions for herself. As a young woman, small and of relatively low social standing, Jane encounters men during her journey, of good, bad, and morally debatable character. However, virtually all of them, no matter their ultimate intentions, attempt to establish some form of power and control over Jane. One example can be seen in Mr. Rochester, a man who ardently loves Jane, but who without so much as an afterthought constantly commands and orders Jane about. As a self-assured and established man, Mr. Rochester naturally assumes the position of the master in their relationship. He tends to demand rather than question Jane, manipulate and assess her feelings towards him however he wishes, and enjoy propping up Jane through excessive gifts and luxuries that only he would have been able to provide. Jane, however, believes in the importance of women's independence, and strives to maintain a position in life devoid of any debts to others. Her initial lack of money and social status unnerves her, as she realizes that without the means to be an independent woman, she is bound to either struggle through life trying to make a living or marry and become dependent on a man. Even after Jane agrees to marry Mr. Rochester, and is swept up in the passion of the moment, the feminist elements of her personality still shine through. She is uncomfortable

with the showering of lavish gifts, as she resents that they will make her further reliant on and in debt to Mr. Rochester, and thus tries to resist them. Furthermore, Jane asserts that even after she is married to Mr. Rochester, she will continue to be Adèle's governess and earn her keep. This plan, which was entirely radical and unheard of for the time, further illustrates Jane's drive to remain an independent woman, with no true obligation or economic reliance on a man, even if he were her husband. While the significant men present in Jane's life throughout the novel all try to, in some form or another, establish themselves as dominant over Jane, she in most cases remains resistant at least to a certain degree, refusing to fully submit or lose all of her independence. This final adherence to her strong convictions on the independence of women point out Brontë's similar views on the patriarchal Victorian society of the time.

[\[edit\]](#) Atonement and forgiveness

Much of the religious concern in *Jane Eyre* has to do with atonement and forgiveness. Mr. Rochester is tormented by his awareness of his past sins and misdeeds. He frequently confesses that he has led a life of vice, and many of his actions in the course of the novel are less than commendable. Readers may accuse him of behaving sadistically in deceiving Jane about the nature of his relationship (or rather, non-relationship) with Blanche Ingram in order to provoke Jane's jealousy. His confinement of Bertha may bespeak mixed motives. He is certainly aware that in the eyes of both religious and civil authorities, his marriage to Jane before Bertha's death would be bigamous. Yet, at the same time, Mr. Rochester makes genuine efforts to atone for his behaviour. For example, although he does not believe that he is Adele's natural father, he adopts her as his ward and sees that she is well cared for. This adoption may well be an act of atonement for the sins he has committed. He expresses his self-disgust at having tried to console himself by having three different mistresses during his travels in Europe and begs Jane to forgive him for these past transgressions. However, Mr. Rochester can only atone completely — and be forgiven completely — after Jane has refused to be his mistress and left him. The destruction of Thornfield by fire finally removes the stain of his past sins; the loss of his left hand and of his eyesight is the price he must pay to atone completely for his sins. Only after this purgation can he be redeemed by Jane's love.

[\[edit\]](#) Search for home and family

Without any living family that she is aware of (until well into the story), throughout the course of the novel Jane searches for a place that she can call home. Significantly, houses play a prominent part in the story. (In keeping with a long English tradition, all the houses in the book have names). The novel's opening finds Jane living at Gateshead Hall, but this is hardly a home. Mrs. Reed and her children refuse to acknowledge her as a relation, treating her instead as an unwanted intruder and an inferior.


Shunted off to Lowood Institution, a boarding school for orphans and destitute children, Jane finds a home of sorts, although her place here is ambiguous and temporary. The school's manager, Mr. Brocklehurst, treats it more as a business than as school *in loco parentis* (in place of the parent). His emphasis on discipline and on spartan conditions at the expense of the girls' health make it the antithesis of the ideal home.

Jane subsequently believes she has found a home at Thornfield Hall. Anticipating the worst when she arrives, she is relieved when she is made to feel welcome by Mrs. Fairfax. She feels genuine affection for Adèle (who in a way is also an orphan) and is happy to serve as her

governess. As her love for Mr. Rochester grows, she believes that she has found her ideal husband in spite of his eccentric manner and that they will make a home together at Thornfield. The revelation — as they are on the verge of marriage — that he is already legally married — brings her dream of home crashing down. Fleeing Thornfield, she literally becomes homeless and is reduced to begging for food and shelter. The opportunity of having a home presents itself when she enters Moor House, where the Rivers sisters and their brother, the Reverend St. John Rivers, are mourning the death of their father. She soon speaks of Diana and Mary Rivers as her own sisters, and is overjoyed when she learns that they are indeed her cousins. She tells St. John Rivers that learning that she has living relations is far more important than inheriting twenty thousand pounds. (She mourns the uncle she never knew. Earlier she was disheartened on learning that Mrs. Reed told her uncle that Jane had died and sent him away.) However, St. John Rivers' offer of marriage cannot sever her emotional attachment to Rochester. In an almost visionary episode, she hears Mr. Rochester's voice calling her to return to him. The last chapter begins with the famous simple declarative sentence, "Reader, I married him," and after a long series of travails Jane's search for home and family ends in a union with her ideal mate.

[\[edit\]](#) Context



 The Salutation pub in [Hulme](#), [Manchester](#). This is where Charlotte Brontë began to write *Jane Eyre*; the pub was a lodge in the 1840s. ^{[6][7]}

The early sequences, in which Jane is sent to Lowood, a harsh [boarding school](#), are derived from the author's own experiences. Helen Burns's death from [tuberculosis](#) (referred to as consumption) recalls the deaths of Charlotte Brontë's sisters Elizabeth and Maria, who died of the disease in childhood as a result of the conditions at their school, the Clergy Daughters School at [Cowan Bridge](#), near [Tunstall, Lancashire](#). Mr. Brocklehurst is based on Rev. William Carus Wilson (1791–1859), the Evangelical minister who ran the school, and Helen Burns is probably modelled on Charlotte's sister Maria. Additionally, John Reed's decline into [alcoholism](#) and dissolution recalls the life of Charlotte's brother Branwell, who became an opium and alcohol addict in the years preceding his death. Finally, like Jane, Charlotte becomes a [governess](#). These facts were revealed to the public in *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) by Charlotte's friend and fellow novelist [Elizabeth Gaskell](#). ^[8]

The Gothic manor of Thornfield was probably inspired by North Lees Hall, near [Hathersage](#) in the [Peak District](#). This was visited by Charlotte Brontë and her friend [Ellen Nussey](#) in the summer of 1845 and is described by the latter in a letter dated 22 July 1845. It was the residence of the Eyre family, and its first owner, Agnes Ashurst, was reputedly confined as a lunatic in a padded second floor room. ^[8]

It has been suggested that^{[[weasel words](#)]} [Wycoller Hall](#) in Lancashire provided the setting for Ferndean Manor to which Mr Rochester retreats after the fire at Thornfield. Parallels have also been drawn^{[[weasel words](#)]} between the owner of Ferndean, Mr Rochester's father, and Henry Cunliffe who inherited Wycoller in the 1770s and lived there until his death in 1818. Also of note is that one of Henry Cunliffe's relatives was named Elizabeth Eyre (née Cunliffe). Since Haworth is only a short distance across the moors from Wycoller and Elizabeth Eyre would have lived there at the time, it seems likely that she and the Brontës would have met. Wycoller Hall was even used to illustrate the cover of the 1898 edition of *Jane Eyre*.^{[[citation needed](#)]} The sequence in which Mr Rochester's wife sets fire to the bed curtains was prepared in an August 1830 homemade publication of Brontë's, [The Young Men's Magazine, Number 2](#).^[9]

[[edit](#)] Literary motifs and allusions

Jane Eyre uses many [motifs](#) from [Gothic fiction](#), such as the Gothic manor (Thornfield), the [Byronic hero](#) (Mr. Rochester) and [The Madwoman in the Attic](#) (Bertha), whom Jane perceives as resembling "the foul German spectre—the [Vampyre](#)" (Chapter XXV) and who attacks her own brother in a distinctly vampiric way: "She sucked the blood: she said she'd drain my heart" (Chapter XX). The mystery of Thornfield manor with its dark secrets creates a typically Gothic atmosphere of suspense. When resolved, we then get the theme of madness, also common in Gothic fiction, as is the motif of two characters, John Reed and Bertha Mason, who commit suicide. Although the novel contains no overt supernatural occurrences, hints of apparently supernatural happenings are frequently mentioned such as Jane's prophetic dreams, her sense of the ghost of her uncle, the lightning striking the chestnut tree on the night she agrees to marry Mr. Rochester, and Jane and Mr. Rochester being able to hear each other's call over miles of separation when St John forced Jane into a decision to marry him.

Jane Eyre also combines Gothicism with [romanticism](#) to create a distinctive Victorian novel. Jane and Rochester are attracted to each other, but there are impediments to their love. The conflicting personalities of the two lead characters and the norms of society are an obstacle to their love, as often occurs in romance novels, but so also is Rochester's secret marriage to Bertha, the main Gothic element of the story.

Literary [allusions](#) from the Bible, [fairy tales](#), [The Pilgrim's Progress](#), [Paradise Lost](#), and the novels and poetry of [Sir Walter Scott](#) are also much in evidence.^[8] John Reed is compared to [Caligula](#). Jane is compared to [Guy Fawkes](#). Both Biblical figures like Samson and figures from Greek myths such as Apollo are referred to at various times.

[[edit](#)] Adaptations



Mr. Reed torments young Jane Eyre in Suffolk Youth Theatre's 2008 production of *Jane Eyre*.

There have been numerous adaptations and related works inspired by *Jane Eyre*.

A 2009 *Washington Post* article (reviewing a novel about Charlotte Brontë's writing of this novel) credited [Orson Welles](#), [Timothy Dalton](#), and [William Hurt](#) as having the most memorable performances of Mr. Rochester.^[10] This refers to the two best-known of the three English-language theatrical films and the 1983 television mini-series which is the longest adaptation at 5 and 1/2 hours.

Television adaptations easily available on home video include the 1970 version with [George C. Scott](#) (released as a movie in Europe), the 1973 and 1983 BBC mini-series, and recent adaptations with [Samantha Morton](#) (1997) and the four-hour 2006 BBC mini-series.

[[edit](#)] Motion picture versions (1910–1926)

Several [silent film](#) adaptations entitled *Jane Eyre* were released; one in 1910, two in 1914, plus:

- 1915: *Jane Eyre* starring [Louise Vale](#).^[11]
- 1915: A version was released called *The Castle of Thornfield*.
- 1918: A version was released called *Woman and Wife*, directed by [Edward José](#), adapted by Paul West, starring Alice Brady as Jane.
- 1921: *Jane Eyre* starring [Mabel Ballin](#) and directed by [Hugo Ballin](#).^[11]
- 1926: A youth version was made in Germany called *Orphan of Lowood*.

[[edit](#)] Motion picture versions (1934–2011)

- 1934: *Jane Eyre*, starring [Colin Clive](#) and [Virginia Bruce](#).^[12]
- 1943: *I Walked with a Zombie* is a horror movie loosely based upon *Jane Eyre*.
- 1943: *Jane Eyre*, with a screenplay by [John Houseman](#) and [Aldous Huxley](#). It features [Orson Welles](#) as Mr. Rochester, [Joan Fontaine](#) as Jane, [Agnes Moorehead](#) as Mrs. Reed, [Margaret O'Brien](#) as Adele and [Elizabeth Taylor](#) as Helen Burns.

Joan Fontaine had earlier starred in *Rebecca*, directed by [Alfred Hitchcock](#) and based upon the novel of the same name which was influenced by *Jane Eyre*.^[13]

- 1952: *Sangdil*, a [Hindi](#) version, also known as *Jane Eyre* starring [Madhubala](#).
- 1956: A version was made in [Hong Kong](#) called *The Orphan Girl*.
- 1963: A version was released in [Mexico](#) called *El Secreto* (English: "The Secret")
- 1970: *Jane Eyre*, starring [George C. Scott](#) as Mr. Rochester and [Susannah York](#) as Jane. (Released in theatres in Europe but television in the United States. Also listed below.)
- 1972: An [Indian](#) adaptation in [Telugu](#), *Shanti Nilayam*, was directed by C. Vaikuntarama Sastry, starring [Anjali Devi](#).
- 1978: A version was released in [Mexico](#) called *El Ardiente Secreto* (English: "Ardent Secret").
- 1996: *Jane Eyre*, directed by [Franco Zeffirelli](#) and starring [William Hurt](#) as Mr. Rochester, [Charlotte Gainsbourg](#) as Jane, [Elle Macpherson](#) as Blanche Ingram, [Joan Plowright](#) as Mrs. Fairfax, [Anna Paquin](#) as the young Jane, [Fiona Shaw](#) as Mrs. Reed and [Geraldine Chaplin](#) as Miss Scatcherd.
- 2011: *Jane Eyre*, directed by [Cary Fukunaga](#), starring [Mia Wasikowska](#) as Jane Eyre and [Michael Fassbender](#) as Rochester.

[edit] Musical versions

- A two-act ballet of *Jane Eyre* was created for the first time by the London Children's Ballet in 1994, with an original score by composer [Julia Gomelskaya](#) and choreography by Polyanna Buckingham. The run was a sell-out success.
- A musical version with music by Michael Malthaner, lyrics by Charles Corritore, and book by David Matthews, was written and produced in 1998, originally premièring at the [Erie Playhouse](#) in [Erie, Pennsylvania](#).
- A [musical](#) version with a book by [John Caird](#) and music and lyrics by [Paul Gordon](#), with [Marla Schaffel](#) as Jane and [James Stacy Barbour](#) as Mr. Rochester, opened at the [Brooks Atkinson Theatre](#) on 10 December 2000. It closed on 10 June 2001.
- *Jane Eyre*, opera in three acts, Op. 134 was composed by [John Joubert](#) in 1987–1997 to a libretto by Kenneth Birkin after the novel.
- An opera based on the novel was written in 2000 by English composer [Michael Berkeley](#), with a libretto by [David Malouf](#). It was given its première by [Music Theatre Wales](#) at the [Cheltenham Festival](#).
- *Jane Eyre* was played for the first time in Europe in [Beveren, Belgium](#). It was given its première at the cultural centre.
- The ballet *Jane*, based on the book, was created in 2007, a Bullard/Tye production with music by [Max Reger](#). Its world première was scheduled at the Civic Auditorium, [Kalamazoo, Michigan](#), June 29 and 30, performed by the Kalamazoo Ballet Company, Therese Bullard, Director.
- A musical production directed by Debby Race, book by Jana Smith and Wayne R. Scott, with a musical score by Jana Smith and Brad Roseborough, premièred in 2008 at the Lifehouse Theatre in [Redlands, California](#)^[14]
- A symphony (7th) by [Michel Bosc](#) premiered in [Bandol](#) (France), 11 October 2009.

[edit] Radio show versions

- 1943: Extremely loose adaptation (primarily chapters 11–26) on *The Weird Circle*, premièring on 11 November.

- 2009: A Radio production of Jane Eyre was aired on the British radio in August, 2009

[\[edit\]](#) **Television versions**

- 1952: This was a live television production presented by "Westinghouse Studio One (Summer Theatre)".^[15]
- Adaptations appeared on British and American television in 1956 and 1961.
- 1963: *Jane Eyre*. It was produced by the [BBC](#) and starred [Richard Leech](#) as Mr. Rochester and [Ann Bell](#) as Jane.^[16]
- 1970: *Jane Eyre*, starring [George C. Scott](#) as Mr. Rochester and [Susannah York](#) as Jane. (Released in theatres in Europe but television in the United States. Also listed above.)
- 1972: *Jana Eyrová*. It was produced by [Czechoslovak television](#) and starred Marta Vančurová as Jane, Jan Kačer as Mr. Rochester.^[17]
- 1973: *Jane Eyre*. It was produced by the [BBC](#) and starred [Sorcha Cusack](#) as Jane, [Michael Jayston](#) as Mr. Rochester, Juliet Waley as the child Jane, and [Tina Heath](#) as Helen Burns.
- 1978: *Telenovela El Ardiente Secreto* (English *The impassioned secret*) was an adaptation of this novel.
- 1982: *BBC Classics Presents: Jane Eyrehead*. A parody movie by [SCTV](#) starred [Andrea Martin](#) as Jane Eyrehead, [Joe Flaherty](#) as Mr. Rochester, also starting [John Candy](#), [Eugene Levy](#), and [Martin Short](#) in supporting roles.^[18]
- 1983: *Jane Eyre*. It was produced by the [BBC](#) and starred [Zelah Clarke](#) as Jane, [Timothy Dalton](#) as Mr. Rochester, Sian Pattenden as the child Jane, and Colette Barker as Helen Burns.
- 1997: *Jane Eyre*. It was produced by the [A&E Network](#) and starred [Ciarán Hinds](#) as Mr. Rochester and [Samantha Morton](#) as Jane.
- 2006: *Jane Eyre*. It was produced by the [BBC](#) and starred [Toby Stephens](#) as Mr. Rochester, [Ruth Wilson](#) as Jane, and [Georgie Henley](#) as Young Jane.

[\[edit\]](#) **Graphic novel**

- 2003: *Jane Eyre. The Graphic Novel*. Script Adaptation: Amy Corzine; Artwork: John M. Burns; Lettering: Terry Wiley; Classical Comics Ltd.

[\[edit\]](#) **Literature inspired by the novel**

Sequels

- 1997: *Mrs. Rochester: A Sequel to Jane Eyre* by [Hilary Bailey](#)
- The novelist [Angela Carter](#) was working on a sequel to *Jane Eyre* at the time of her death in 1992. This was to have been the story of Jane's stepdaughter Adèle Varens and her mother Céline. Only a synopsis survives.^[19]
- 2000: *Jane Rochester* by Kimberly A. Bennett, content explores the first years of the Rochesters' marriage with gothic and explicit content.
- 2008: *Jane Eyre's Daughter* by Elizabeth Newark. A fully grown daughter of Jane Eyre must choose between two men.

Re-workings

- 1938: *Rebecca* by [Daphne du Maurier](#) was partially inspired by *Jane Eyre*.^{[13][20]}
- 1958: *Nine Coaches Waiting* by [Mary Stewart](#) makes implicit and explicit reference to *Jane Eyre*. The novel is a gothic romance set in a remote French château in the 1950s. The heroine, Linda, is, like Jane, an orphan who takes on the role of governess, this time to a young boy. She compares her situation to that of Jane Eyre on several occasions. Motifs from *Eyre* also appear in Stewart's *The Ivy Tree* (1961) but without explicit references to the novel.
- 2002: *Jenna Starborn* by [Sharon Shinn](#), a science-fiction novel based upon *Jane Eyre*.
- 2010: *Jane Slayre* by Sherri Browning Erwin. Part of the popular series begun by *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, this has Jane Eyre battling vampires while also working through the events of the original story.
- 2010 *Sloane Hall* by Libby Sternberg, a retelling set in 1929 Hollywood as films shifted from silent to sound.
- 2010: *Jane* by April Lindner. Set in the 20th century with Mr. Rochester as Nico Rathburn, a world-famous rockstar.

Re-tellings

- 2007: *Thornfield Hall: Jane Eyre's Hidden Story* by Emma Tennant. This is another version of *Jane Eyre*.
- 2010: *I am Jane Eyre* by Teana Rowland. This is a version of *Jane Eyre* which delves in to some of the unexplained aspects of the novel.

Prequels

- 1966: *Wide Sargasso Sea* by [Jean Rhys](#). The character Bertha Mason serves as the main protagonist for this novel which acts as a prequel to *Jane Eyre*. It describes the meeting and marriage of Antoinette Cosway (later renamed Bertha by Mr. Rochester) and Mr. Rochester. In its reshaping of events related to *Jane Eyre*, the novel suggests that Bertha's madness is not congenital, but rather the result of terrible childhood experiences and Mr. Rochester's unloving treatment of her. *Wide Sargasso Sea* has been [adapted into film](#) twice.

Spin-offs

- 2001: The novel *The Eyre Affair* by [Jasper Fforde](#) revolves around the plot of *Jane Eyre*. It portrays the book as originally largely free of literary contrivance: Jane and Mr. Rochester's first meeting is a simple conversation without the dramatic horse accident, and Jane does not hear his voice calling for her and ends up starting a new life in India. The protagonist's efforts mostly accidentally change it to the real version.
- 2009: *Becoming Jane Eyre* by Sheila Kohler. A novel about Charlotte Brontë writing the story.
- 2009: *Jane Airhead* by Kay Woodward. A novel about a present-day teenage girl obsessed with Jane Eyre.

Re-tellings from Another Character's Point of View

- 2000: *Adele: Jane Eyre's Hidden Story* by [Emma Tennant](#)
- 2006: *The French Dancer's Bastard: The Story of Adele From Jane Eyre* by Emma Tennant. This is a slightly modified version of Tennant's 2000 novel.

- 2009: *Adele, Grace, and Celine: The Other Women of Jane Eyre* by Claire Moise. This both retells the story from the point of view of three other women and explains their fate after the main events of the story.
- 2010: *Rochester: A Novel Inspired by Jane Eyre* by J.L. Niemann. *Jane Eyre* told from the first person-perspective of Edward Rochester.
- 2011: *Jane Eyre's Rival: The Real Mrs Rochester* by Clair Holland. Told from the perspective of Bertha Antoinetta Mason, Mr Rochester's first wife, by Lisa Mason, Antoinetta's modern day descendant.
- 2011: *Jane Eyre's Husband - The Life of Edward Rochester* by Tara Bradley. Rochester's entire life.

[\[edit\]](#) References in culture

- The 2010 Australian film *Jucy* centers around the production of a theatre adaptation of *Jane Eyre*.

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