

Source A

This extract is from Chapter 1 of *Jane Eyre*, a 19th-century novel by Charlotte Brontë. Jane is an orphan who lives with her aunt and cousins.

1 ‘I want you to come here;’ and seating himself in an arm-chair, he intimated by a gesture that I was to approach and stand before him.

John Reed was a schoolboy of fourteen years old; four years older than I, for I was but ten: large and stout for his age, with a dingy and unwholesome skin; thick lineaments 5 in a spacious visage, heavy limbs and large extremities. He gorged himself habitually at table, which made him bilious, and gave him a dim and bleared eye and flabby cheeks. He ought now to have been at school; but his mama had taken him home for a month or two, ‘on account of his delicate health.’ Mr Miles, the master, affirmed that he would do very well if he had fewer cakes and sweetmeats sent him from home; but the mother’s heart 10 turned from an opinion so harsh, and inclined rather to the more refined idea that John’s sallowness was owing to over-application and, perhaps, to pining after home.

John had not much affection for his mother and sisters, and an antipathy to me. He bullied and punished me; not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in the day, but continually: every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh in my bones 15 shrank when he came near. There were moments when I was bewildered by the terror he inspired, because I had no appeal whatever against either his menaces or his inflictions; the servants did not like to offend their young master by taking my part against him, and Mrs Reed was blind and deaf on the subject: she never saw him strike or heard him abuse 20 me, though he did both now and then in her very presence, more frequently, however, behind her back.

Habitually obedient to John, I came up to his chair: he spent some three minutes in thrusting out his tongue at me as far as he could without damaging the roots: I knew he would soon strike, and while dreading the blow, I mused on the disgusting and ugly appearance of him who would presently deal it. I wonder if he read that notion in my 25 face; for, all at once, without speaking, he struck suddenly and strongly. I tottered, and on regaining my equilibrium retired back a step or two from his chair.

‘That is for your impudence in answering mama awhile since,’ said he, ‘and for your sneaking way of getting behind curtains, and for the look you had in your eyes two minutes since, you rat!’

30 Accustomed to John Reed’s abuse, I never had an idea of replying to it; my care was how to endure the blow which would certainly follow the insult.

‘What were you doing behind the curtain?’ he asked.

‘I was reading.’

‘Show the book.’

35 I returned to the window and fetched it thence.

‘You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent, mama says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen’s children like us, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mama’s expense. Now, I’ll teach you to rummage my bookshelves: for they ARE mine; all 40 the house belongs to me, or will do in a few years. Go and stand by the door, out of the way of the mirror and the windows.’

I did so, not at first aware what was his intention; but when I saw him lift and poised the book and stand in act to hurl it, I instinctively started aside with a cry of alarm: not soon enough, however; the volume was flung, it hit me, and I fell, striking my head 45 against the door and cutting it. The cut bled, the pain was sharp: my terror had passed its climax; other feelings succeeded.

‘Wicked and cruel boy!’ I said. ‘You are like a murderer - you are like a slave-driver - you are like the Roman emperors!’

I had read Goldsmith’s History of Rome, and had formed my opinion of Nero,

50 Caligula, &c. Also I had drawn parallels in silence, which I never thought thus to have declared aloud.

‘What! what!’ he cried. ‘Did she say that to me? Did you hear her, Eliza and Georgiana? Won’t I tell mama? but first -’

He ran headlong at me: I felt him grasp my hair and my shoulder: he had closed with

55 a desperate thing. I really saw in him a tyrant, a murderer. I felt a drop or two of blood from my head trickle down my neck, and was sensible of somewhat pungent suffering: these sensations for the time predominated over fear, and I received him in frantic sort. I don’t very well know what I did with my hands, but he called me ‘Rat! Rat!’ and bellowed out aloud. Aid was near him: Eliza and Georgiana had run for Mrs Reed, who was gone

60 upstairs: she now came upon the scene, followed by Bessie and her maid Abbot. We were parted: I heard the words -

‘Dear! dear! What a fury to fly at Master John!’

‘Did ever anybody see such a picture of passion?’

Then Mrs Reed subjoined -

‘Take her away to the red-room, and lock her in there.’ Four hands were immediately laid upon me, and I was borne upstairs.’

1. Read the following paragraph taken from the source.

John Reed was a schoolboy of fourteen years old; four years older than I, for I was but ten: large and stout for his age, with a dingy and unwholesome skin; thick lineaments in a spacious visage, heavy limbs and large extremities. He gorged himself habitually at table, which made him bilious, and gave him a dim and bleared eye and flabby cheeks.

List **four** things about John Reed from this part of the source.

[4 marks]

1.
2.
3.
4.

2. Look in detail at this extract from the source:

John had not much affection for his mother and sisters, and an antipathy to me. He bullied and punished me; not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in the day, but continually: every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh in my bones shrank when he came near. There were moments when I was bewildered by the terror he inspired, because I had no appeal whatever against either his menaces or his inflictions; the servants did not like to offend their young master by taking my part against him, and Mrs Reed was blind and deaf on the subject: she never saw him strike or heard him abuse me, though he did both now and then in her very presence, more frequently, however, behind her back.

AQA practice exam questions for GCSE English Language Paper 1

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë

How does the writer use language here to describe Jane's fear of John?

[8 marks]

Tip: Before you answer the question, annotate the text, labelling particular words and phrases the writer uses which have an impact. You should also try to identify certain literary techniques the writer uses.

3. You now need to think about the whole of the source.

This text is from Chapter 1 of a novel.

How has the writer structured the text to interest you as a reader?

You could write about:

- what the writer focuses your attention on at the beginning of the source
- how and why the writer changes this focus as the source develops
- any other structural features that interest you.

[8 marks]

4. Focus this part of your answer on the second part of the source from line 35 to the end.

A student, having read this section of the text said: 'The writer creates a sense of panic and hysteria.' To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- write about your own impressions of the characters
- evaluate how the writer has created these impressions
- support your opinions with references to the text.

[20 marks]

Suggested answers

1.

- schoolboy
- fourteen
- large
- stout
- dingy and unwholesome skin
- heavy limbs
- gorged himself at (dinner) table
- dim and bleared eye
- flabby cheeks

2.

- ‘antipathy’ - deep dislike or hatred of her
- ‘bullied and punished’ - verbs, simple statement makes it clear to the reader what the situation is
- ‘not ... nor ... but continually’ - relentless, sympathy for Jane, no escape
- ‘every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh in my bones shrank’ - repetition of ‘every’ shows fear takes over her whole body, again no escape from it; shows there must be a long history of being treated this way. Could say personification is used to describe her nerves/flesh - threat of violence causes instinctive retreat like an animal. John is like a predator.
- ‘bewildered by the terror’ (verb choice) as if she is amazed and confused by this bullying and has no idea what can be done about it, ‘terror’ shows extreme fear. Nothing else in the world could cause this fear in her.
- ‘no appeal whatever’ means there is nothing she can do or say to make the bullying stop.
- ‘Mrs Reed was blind and deaf’ (metaphor) she ignores what is going on, pretends not to see/hear what John is doing so Jane has no help or protection from adults.

3.

- Beginning - John orders Jane ‘I want you to come here’ then shifts focus to describe John’s appearance in an unattractive way. We learn he is greedy (‘gorged’). Implication he is lazy and not doing well at school. This makes the reader dislike him immediately. Brontë then goes on to describe the impact his bullying has on Jane, who is younger than him, which makes the reader invest their sympathy in her, ‘every nerve I had feared him’.
- Brontë then brings the reader’s attention back to the current scene where Jane now stands in front of this bully. The reader is aware of the danger Jane is in because of the descriptions Brontë has just given us. ‘I knew he would soon strike’: this creates tension as we fear Jane will be hurt and we don’t want this to happen. We are waiting in anticipation for him to strike too.
- Brontë moves on to a section of dialogue which gives us the context of Jane’s position. She uses John’s words to deliver this information to us: ‘you are a dependent, mama says’. Brontë’s use of speech makes the reader feel more dislike of John and greater empathy for Jane. She also uses this device because we are shown the attitudes of the other characters which would otherwise be limited in a first person narrative.
- In the final section of this extract, Brontë surprises the reader with Jane’s rebellious actions. Firstly, when she retaliates with ‘Wicked and cruel boy!’ and then when she receives his blows ‘in frantic sort’. Despite her fear of him she fights back, even though she knows she cannot win. This fighting is even more instinctive than fear- ‘I don’t very know what I did with my hands’. By ending the chapter in this way, Brontë reveals how brave Jane is and the reader’s interest is even more firmly rooted in her.
- The last line shows the danger Jane is in. The ‘red-room’ sounds ominous, with red having connotations of blood and danger. The reader is left with questions which we want to be answered in the following chapter.
- To sum up, the extract is structured in a way to make the reader’s interest and emotional investment in Jane grow more and more.