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Jane Eyre
BY CHARLOTTE BRONTE


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Name: _____

Date: _____

Pre-Reading**Research****Objective:** Relating *Jane Eyre* to its literary period**Activity**

Charlotte Brontë is one of the most famous and popular novelists of the Victorian Era in British Literature. The Victorian literary period took place during the reign of Queen Victoria between 1837-1901.

Using the library or Internet, research significant aspects of the Victorian Era and add your findings to the following **Victorian Era Chart**. Mention at least four items for each category.

A few answers have been provided for you.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Volume I - Chapter I

Intertextuality
Inference

Objective: Recognizing, researching, and evaluating intertextual references

Activity

Intertextuality is a technique many authors use to situate their own work within a particular frame of reference in terms of spatial and temporal setting or with regard to particular thematic ideas. By referring to other texts in the book, (for example novels, plays, poems, essays, movies, etc.) authors allow readers to draw comparisons between different stories and think about the possible relationships between these texts.

Jane Eyre was published in 1847, and Charlotte Brontë frequently references other texts her contemporary readers would most likely have been familiar with. In Chapter I, Jane, the narrator, mentions the following four titles: Bewick's *History of British Birds*, *Pamela*, *Henry Earl of Moreland*, and Goldsmith's *History of Rome*.

Using the library or the Internet, research these four titles by finding out the following details:

- author (if name not given in text already)
- date of publication
- content of the work/brief summary of the plot

Add the findings of your research to the following **Intertextuality Chart**. Then take a few moments to consider why Brontë included references to these four texts in her book. What can you infer about Jane or other characters from the intertextual references? How can they help you understand particular characters and their actions, ideas, or beliefs better?

Name: _____

Date: _____

Volume I – Chapter V**Chronology****Objective:** Noticing and recording chronological order**Activity**

In Chapter IV, Mr. Brocklehurst explains to Mrs. Reed that consistency is his primary goal in the education of the young women in his care:

“Consistency, madam, is the first of Christian duties; and it has been observed in every arrangement connected with the establishment of Lowood: plain fare, simple attire, unsophisticated accommodations, hardy and active habits; such is the order of the day in the house and its inhabitants.” (Pg. 38)

When Jane arrives at Lowood in Chapter V, she quickly encounters Mr. Brocklehurst's ideal of consistency when she observes that every day goes by according to the same mundane and monotonous routine.

Study Chapter V carefully and then create a **Daily Activity Log** in chronological order for Jane at Lowood.

A few entries have been completed for you. Try to find as many activities as possible and add them to the appropriate time slot.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Volume I – Chapter VI-VII

Letter Writing

Objective: Writing a letter from one character to another
Understanding characters' actions and emotions

Activity

In her early days at Lowood, Jane observes the unjust treatment of Helen Burns at the hands of Miss Scatcherd. It does not take long, however, until she experiences what it feels like to be singled out for public humiliation and punishment. Mr. Brocklehurst, the headmaster of Lowood, visits the institution with Mrs. Brocklehurst and their two daughters. In the course of Mr. Brocklehurst's visit, Jane accidentally drops her slate and draws everybody's attention to herself. At that instant, Mr. Brocklehurst recognizes Jane as the "new girl" he had picked up from Mrs. Reed, and he recalls what Mrs. Reed had told him about Jane. Consequently, he draws the conclusion that Jane is a disobedient and problematic child, and he publicly humiliates Jane by making an example of her "destructive" behavior:

"My dear children,' pursued the black-marble clergyman, with pathos, 'this is a sad, a melancholy occasion; for it becomes my duty to warn you, that this girl, who might be one of God's own lambs, is a little castaway: not a member of the true flock, but evidently an interloper and an alien. You must be on your guard against her; you must shun her example: if necessary, avoid her company, exclude her from your sports, and shut her out from your converse.'" (Pg. 69)

As a punishment, Mr. Brocklehurst orders Jane to stand on a chair in the middle of the room for half an hour, and he prohibits anyone from speaking to her for the rest of the day:

"There was I, then, mounted aloft: I who had said I could not bear the shame of standing on my natural feet in the middle of the room, was now exposed to general view on a pedestal of infamy. What my sensations were, no language can describe: but just as they all rose, stifling my breath and constricting my throat, a girl came up and passed me: in passing, she lifted her eyes. What a strange light inspired them! What an extraordinary sensation that ray sent through me! How the new feeling bore me up! It was as if a martyr, a hero, had passed a slave or victim, and imparted strength in the transit. I mastered the rising hysteria, lifted up my head, and took a firm stand on the stool." (Pg. 69)

Put yourself in Jane's shoes. Imagine that you have experienced everything that she has thus far at Lowood.

Consider the following:

- your experiences at Lowood and your reasons for being sent to school
- your conversations and friendship with Helen
- your relationship with Miss Scatcherd and Miss Smith
- your humiliation at the hands of Mr. Brocklehurst

Now take your recollections of these incidents and experiences as a basis for writing two letters, one to Helen and one to Mrs. Reed. You may begin the letters like this:

Name: _____

Date: _____

Volume II – Chapter XXIII-XXV

Symbolism
Foreshadowing

Objective: Analyzing the image of the chestnut tree in terms of its symbolic meaning
Paying attention to the technique of foreshadowing

In the garden at Thornfield Hall, Jane accepts Mr. Rochester's unexpected marriage proposal. During the conversation between Jane and Mr. Rochester, the weather is getting exceedingly worse. As the two lovers walk back to the house, they realize that the wind is blowing heavily through the leaves of an old chestnut tree.

Chapters XXIII-XXV are not the only ones that contain a description of the chestnut tree at Thornfield. Later in the novel, Jane will, again, refer to the chestnut tree and remember the night of the marriage proposal. As a recurring image, the chestnut tree functions as a powerful symbol in the story. Through its symbolic significance, the chestnut tree foreshadows important developments in the plot of the story.

In order to understand the symbolic significance of the chestnut tree and its function as a means of foreshadowing events in the story, it is important to pay close attention to the descriptions of the tree in Chapters XXIII-XXV.

Activity I

Add quotations from Chapters XXIII-XXV that involve references to the chestnut tree to the following chart:

The Symbolism of the Chestnut Tree

Quotation	Page Number
	246
	247
	266

Name: _____

Date: _____

Volume II – Chapters XXXVI-XXXVIII**Image
Foreshadowing**

Objective: Recognizing the recurrence of foreshadowed images
Interpreting the symbolism of the chestnut tree

Activity

When Jane finds Mr. Rochester, she learns that he has not only lost his home, but also his eyesight in the fire that destroyed Thornfield Hall. Jane, however, still loves Mr. Rochester and decides that she will stay with him, no matter what. Mr. Rochester fears that his disability will drive Jane away. He exclaims:

“I am no better than the old lightning-struck chestnut-tree in Thornfield orchard.”

Jane responds:

“You are no ruin, sir – no lightning-struck tree: you are green and vigorous. Plants will grow about your roots whether you ask them or not, because they take delight in your bountiful shadow; and as they grow they will lean toward you, and wind round you, because your strength offers them so safe a prop.” (Pg. 419)

Jane offers an interesting interpretation of the symbolism of the chestnut tree. Sometimes, images can symbolize several ideas. Review the first passage that refers to the chestnut tree early on in the novel. It might be helpful to refer to your notes or past activities. Then study the references to the chestnut tree uttered by Mr. Rochester and Jane above. Consider other interpretations of the chestnut tree. What else can the image of the tree split by lightning symbolize? Write a short argumentative essay outlining different possibilities for interpretation. As a starting point, you might consider a number of different characters from the novel and consider how the tree image might relate to their fate or behavior.