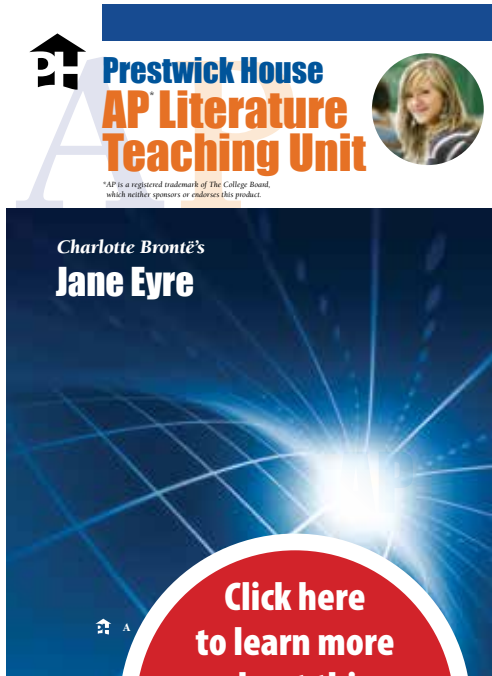




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Teaching Unit

**Jane Eyre**

by Charlotte Brontë

Written by Kelly Stewart McConathy



**Prestwick House**

Item No. 301954

# Jane Eyre

## Objectives

*By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:*

1. analyze the characters of Jane, Mrs. Reed, Bessie, Helen Burns, Miss Temple, Mr. Brocklehurst, Edward Rochester, St. John Rivers, Mary, and Diana and their relationships to each other.
2. analyze how Brontë creates suspense throughout the novel and explain its effect on the text.
3. identify and analyze how literary techniques and figurative language, such as simile, metaphor, hyperbole, connotation, anaphora, polysyndeton, repetition, onomatopoeia, and parallelism, affect the development of the plot and meaning of the text.
4. study how Brontë uses the weather to mirror and contrast characters' moods at pivotal points in the plot.
5. explain the impact of a first person protagonist narrator on the novel.
6. investigate Victorian social class structure, considering social class, wealth, employment, gender, and education.
7. analyze Brontë's use of literary elements, such as foreshadowing and tone, on the overall meaning of the novel.
8. respond to multiple choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
9. respond to writing prompts similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
10. offer a close reading of *Jane Eyre* and support all assertions and interpretations with direct evidence from the text, from authoritative critical knowledge of the genre, or from authoritative criticism of the novel.

## Lecture Notes

### CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S LIFE

Born in Yorkshire, England in 1816, Charlotte Brontë was the third daughter of Reverend Patrick Brontë and his wife Maria Branwell Brontë. In sum, there were five daughters and one son, Branwell, in the family. Charlotte's mother died of cancer in 1821 when Charlotte was only five years old, and Elizabeth Branwell, Patrick's sister, helped raise the children. Along with three of her sisters, Charlotte was sent to the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge, Lancashire. While enduring poor conditions at the school, Charlotte's sisters Maria and Elizabeth became seriously ill. As a result, all of the daughters were removed from the school, but Maria and Elizabeth died of tuberculosis soon after arriving home.

Now spending their time at their home in Haworth, the remaining children—Charlotte, Branwell, Emily, and Anne—were active readers. Their father's extensive library contained volumes by Lord Byron and Walter Scott, for example. The siblings spent their time creating imaginary kingdoms using wooden soldiers, given to them by their father, as their inspiration. Charlotte and Branwell teamed to create the kingdom of Angria; Emily and Anne created Gondal. The siblings spent their time writing stories, articles, plays, and poems about their imaginary lands.

Charlotte returned to school in Roe Head, England. After a few years, she became a teacher there, earning money to support her family and finance Branwell's art studies. Charlotte soon resigned from her position at the school, however, to work as a private governess. She acquired a position with the Sidgwick family, but left the position due to her own unhappiness. She then worked for a new family, but found the same disappointment. Charlotte decided she would find happiness by teaming with her sisters to establish their own school for girls.

While their attempt at creating a school failed miserably, the sisters began collaborating on a book of poetry. It sold two copies; the sisters then started writing their own novels. The sisters chose to publish under androgynous pen names: Charlotte, Anne, and Emily used the names Currer, Acton, and Ellis Bell, respectively. Charlotte's first novel, *The Professor*, was a failure; it was not published until after her death. She continued to use her pen name when she published her second novel, *Jane Eyre*, in 1847, and it was an immediate bestseller, earning Charlotte 500 pounds, which was much more than her salary as a governess. Near the same time, Emily published *Wuthering Heights*, and Anne published *Agnes Grey*, both under pen names.

Charlotte's brother Branwell, an alcoholic and drug addict, died in 1848. It was also in 1848 that the sisters revealed their true identities to their publisher. The sisters Emily and Ann soon followed Branwell in death. Left alone with only her father, Charlotte became an accepted member of the literary society, spending time with William Thackeray, Elizabeth Gaskell, and G. H. Lewes, for example.

Unable to find true love in her lifetime, Charlotte married Reverend Nicholls, her fourth suitor and the curate of Haworth, in 1854. It was obvious that she did not love him, but she admired him and agreed to the marriage. Performing the duties of a minister's wife and caring for her aging father, Charlotte had little time for writing. Expecting their first child, Charlotte died at the age of 38, probably of

## Practice Free Response Questions

### PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION #1

Read the following passage from Chapter 2 and write a well-organized essay in which you discuss the techniques Brontë uses to create suspense. Include in your discussion such considerations as the impact of word choice and imagery on mood. Do not merely summarize the passage.

They went, shutting the door, and locking it behind them.

The red-room was a square chamber, very seldom slept in; I might say never, indeed, unless when a chance influx of visitors, at Gateshead Hall rendered it necessary to turn to account all the accommodation it contained; yet it was one of the largest and stateliest chambers in the mansion. A bed supported on massive pillars of mahogany, hung with curtains of deep red damask, stood out like a tabernacle in the center; the two large windows, with their blinds always drawn down, were half shrouded in festoons and falls of similar drapery; the carpet was red; the table at the foot of the bed was covered with a crimson cloth; the walls were a soft fawn color, with a blush of pink in it; the wardrobe, the toilet-table, the chairs were of darkly-polished old mahogany. Out of these deep surrounding shades rose high, and glared white, the piled-up mattresses and pillows of the bed, spread with a snowy Marseilles counterpane. Scarcely less prominent was an ample, cushioned easy-chair near the head of the bed, also white, with a footstool before it; and looking, as I thought, like a pale throne.

This room was chill, because it seldom had a fire; it was silent, because remote from the nursery and kitchens; solemn, because it was known to be so seldom entered. The house-maid alone came here on Saturdays, to wipe from the mirrors and the furniture a week's quiet dust; and Mrs. Reed herself, at far intervals, visited it to review the contents of a certain secret drawer in the wardrobe, where were stored divers parchments, her jewel-casket, and a miniature of her deceased husband; and in those last words lies the secret of the red-room—the spell which kept it so lonely in spite of its grandeur.

Mr. Reed had been dead nine years; it was in this chamber he breathed his last; here he lay in state; hence his coffin was borne by the undertaker's men; and, since that day, a sense of dreary consecration had guarded it from frequent intrusion.

My seat, to which Bessie and the bitter Miss Abbot had left me riveted, was a low ottoman near the marble chimney-piece; the bed rose before me; to my right hand there was the high, dark wardrobe, with subdued, broken reflections varying the gloss of its panels; to my left were the muffled windows; a great looking-glass between them repeated the vacant majesty of the bed and room. I was not quite sure whether they had locked the door; and when I dared move, I got up and went to see. Alas! yes: no jail was ever more secure. Returning, I had to cross before the looking-glass; my fascinated glance involuntarily explored the depth it revealed. All looked colder and darker in that visionary hollow than in reality; and the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit; I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp, Bessie's evening stories represented as coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors, and appearing before the eyes of belated travelers. I returned to my stool.

Superstition was with me at that moment; but it was not yet her hour for complete victory; my blood was still warm; the mood of the revolted slave was still bracing me with its bitter vigor; I had to stem a rapid rush of retrospective thought before I quailed to the dismal present.

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Daylight began to forsake the red-room; it was past four o'clock, and the beclouded afternoon was tending to drear twilight. I heard the rain still beating continuously on the staircase window, and the wind howling in the grove behind the hall; I grew by degrees cold as a stone, and then my courage sank.

# Jane Eyre

## Chapter I

1. What narrative point of view does Brontë use for this novel?

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2. What can the reader expect in a story told from this point of view?

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3. How does Brontë create sympathy for Jane in the first chapter?

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4. Describe the exposition of the novel.

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## Chapter X

1. An aporia occurs when a character speaks directly to oneself or to the reader, especially when a character is trying to solve a dilemma or decide on a plan. Explain when and why Brontë uses aporia in this chapter.

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2. Explain the device that Brontë uses in this quotation: “I had had no communication by letter or message with the outer world: school rules, school duties, school habits and notions, and voices, and faces, and phrases, and costumes, and preferences, and antipathies: such was what I knew of existence.” What effect does the device produce?

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3. How does Miss Temple’s marriage affect Jane?

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4. Discuss Jane’s one real concern about venturing away from Lowood.

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5. Bessie notes that Jane is “quite a lady.” On what does Bessie base her opinion?

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6. Explain how Brontë uses the supernatural in this chapter.

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## Chapter XX

1. How does Brontë effectively use Gothic elements in Chapter 20?  
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2. What effect does Brontë create in having Mr. Rochester refer to Jane as his “little friend” multiple times in this chapter?  
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3. Contrast how Mr. Rochester and Jane view Thornfield in different ways.  
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4. Explain the comparison Brontë makes here: “Why had the mere name of this unresisting individual—whom his word now sufficed to control like a child—fallen on him, a few hours since, as a thunder-bolt might fall on an oak?”  
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5. Mr. Mason has been seriously injured by the woman locked in the third story room. However, he obviously cares for her: “Let her be taken care of; let her be treated as tenderly as may be: let her—” he stopped and burst into tears.” What can readers infer from his words and actions?  
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6. Consider Mr. Rochester’s comments at the end of Chapter 20. What statement does he make about class and society?  
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**Chapter XXX**

1. Why does Jane find happiness and comfort at Moor House?

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2. How does the weather mirror Jane's mood in this chapter?

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3. Contrast St. John's personality with that of his sisters, Diana and Mary.

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4. Why does St. John delay in informing Jane of the position he finds for her?

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5. How is St. John a hypocrite?

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6. Explain the significance in the fact that St. John's uncle is named "John."

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