Jane Eyre Summary

Ten-year-old orphan Jane Eyre lives unhappily with her wealthy relatives, the Reed family, at Gateshead. Resentful of the late Mr. Reed's preference for her, Jane's aunt and cousins take every opportunity to neglect and abuse her as a reminder of her inferior station. Jane's only salvation from her daily humiliations is Bessie, the kindly servant who tells her stories and sings her songs. One day, Jane confronts her bullying cousin, John, and Mrs. Reed punishes her by imprisoning her in the "red-room," the room in which her uncle died. Convinced that she sees her uncle's ghost, Jane faints. When she awakes, Jane is being cared for the apothecary, Mr. Lloyd, who suggests that she be sent off to school. Mrs. Reed is happy to be rid of her troublesome charge and immediately sends Jane to the Lowood School, an institution fifty miles from Gateshead.

Jane soon discovers that life at the Lowood School is bleak, particularly because of the influence of the hypocritical headmaster, Mr. Brocklehurst, whose cruelty and evangelical self-righteousness results in poor conditions, inedible meals, and frequent punishments for the students. During an inspection of the school, Mr. Brocklehurst humiliates Jane by forcing to stand on a stool in the middle of the class and accusing her of being a liar. The beautiful superintendent, Miss Temple, believes in Jane's innocence and writes to Mr. Lloyd for clarification of Jane's nature. Although Jane continues to suffer privations in the austere environment, Miss Temple's benevolence encourages her to devote herself to her studies.

While at Lowood, Jane also befriends Helen Burns, who upholds a doctrine of Christian forgiveness and tolerance. Helen is constantly mistreated by Miss Scratcherd, one of the more unpleasant teachers at the school, but maintains her passivity and "turns the other cheek." Although Jane is unable to accept Helen's doctrine completely – her passionate nature cannot allow her to endure mistreatment silently– Jane attempts to mirror Helen's patience and calmness in her own character. During the spring, an outbreak of typhus fever ravages the school, and Helen dies of consumption in Jane's arms. The deaths by typhus alert the benefactors to the school's terrible conditions, and it is revealed that Mr. Brocklehurst has been embezzling school funds in order to provide for his own luxurious lifestyle. After Mr. Brocklehurst's removal, Jane's time at Lowood is spent more happily and she excels as a student for six years and as a teacher for two.

Despite her security at Lowood, Jane is dissatisfied and yearns for new adventures. She accepts a position as governess at Thornfield Manor and is responsible for teaching a vivacious French girl named Adèle. In addition to Adèle, Jane spends much of her time at Thornfield with Mrs. Fairfax, the elderly housekeeper who runs the estate during the master's absence. Jane also begins to notice some mysterious happenings around Thornfield, including the master's constant absence from home and the demonic laugh that Jane hears emanating from the third-story attic.

After much waiting, Jane finally meets her employer, Edward Rochester, a brooding, detached man who seems to have a dark past. Although Mr. Rochester is not handsome in the traditional sense, Jane feels an immediate attraction to him based on their intellectual communion. One night, Jane saves Mr. Rochester from a fire in his bedroom, which he blames on Grace Poole, a seamstress with a propensity for gin. Because Grace continues to

work at Thornfield, Jane decides that Mr. Rochester has withheld some important information about the incident.

As the months go by, Jane finds herself falling more and more in love with Mr. Rochester, even after he tells her of his lustful liaison with Adèle's mother. However, Jane becomes convinced that Mr. Rochester would never return her affection when he brings the beautiful Blanche Ingram to visit at Thornfield. Though Rochester flirts with the idea of marrying Miss Ingram, he is aware of her financial ambitions for marriage. During Miss Ingram's visit, an old acquaintance of Rochester's, Richard Mason, also visits Thornfield and is severely injured from an attack - apparently by Grace - in the middle of the night in the attic. Jane, baffled by the circumstances, tends to him, and Rochester confesses to her that he made an error in the past that he hopes to overturn by marrying Miss Ingram. He says that he has another governess position for Jane lined up elsewhere.

Jane returns to Gateshead for a few weeks to see the dying Mrs. Reed. Mrs. Reed still resents Jane and refuses to apologize for mistreating her as a child; she also admits that she lied to Jane's uncle, John Eyre, and told him that she had died during the typhus outbreak at Lowood. When Jane returns to Thornfield, Rochester tells her that he knows Miss Ingram's true motivations for marriage, and he asks Jane to marry him. Jane accepts, but a month later, Mason and a solicitor, Mr. Briggs, interrupt the wedding ceremony by revealing that Rochester already has a wife: Mason's sister, Bertha, who is kept in the attic in Thornfield under the care of Grace Poole. Rochester confesses his past misdeeds to Jane. In his youth he needed to marry the wealthy Bertha for money, but was unaware of her family's history of madness. Despite his best efforts to help her, Bertha eventually descended into a state of complete madness that only her imprisonment could control. Jane still loves Mr. Rochester, but she cannot allow herself to become his mistress: she leaves Thornfield.

Penniless and devastated by Mr. Rochester's revelations, Jane is reduced to begging for food and sleeping outdoors. Fortunately, the Rivers siblings, St. John (pronounced "Sinjin"), Diana, and Mary, take her into their home at Moor House and help her to regain her strength. Jane becomes close friends with the family, and quickly develops a great affection for the ladies. Although the stoically religious St. John is difficult to approach, he finds Jane a position working as a teacher at a school in Morton. One day, Jane learns that she has inherited a vast fortune of 20,000 pounds from her uncle, John Eyre. Even more surprising, Jane discovers that the Rivers siblings are actually her cousins. Jane immediately decides to share her newfound wealth with her relatives.

St. John is going to go on missionary work in India and repeatedly asks Jane to accompany him as his wife. She refuses, since it would mean compromising her capacity for passion in a loveless marriage. Instead, she is drawn to thoughts of Mr. Rochester and, one day, after experiencing a mystical connection with him, seeks him out at Thornfield. She discovers that the estate has been burned down by Bertha, who died in the fire, and that Mr. Rochester, who lost his eyesight and one of his hands in the fire, lives at the nearby estate of Ferndean. He is overjoyed when she locates him, and relates his side of the mystical connection that Jane had. He and Jane soon marry. At the end of the novel, Jane informs the readers that she and Mr. Rochester have been married for ten years, and Mr. Rochester regained sight in one of his eyes in time to see the birth of his first son.

Major Themes

Family

The main quest in Jane Eyre is Jane's search for family, for a sense of belonging and love. However, this search is constantly tempered by Jane's need for independence. She begins the novel as an unloved orphan who is almost obsessed with finding love as a way to establish her own identity and achieve happiness. Although she does not receive any parental love from Mrs. Reed, Jane finds surrogate maternal figures throughout the rest of the novel. Bessie, Miss Temple, and even Mrs. Fairfax care for Jane and give her the love and guidance that she needs, and she returns the favor by caring for Adèle and the students at her school. Still, Jane does not feel as though she has found her true family until she falls in love with Mr. Rochester at Thornfield; he becomes more of a kindred spirit to her than any of her biological relatives could be. However, she is unable to accept Mr. Rochester's first marriage proposal because she realizes that their marriage - one based on unequal social standing - would compromise her autonomy. Jane similarly denies St. John's marriage proposal, as it would be one of duty, not of passion. Only when she gains financial and emotional autonomy, after having received her inheritance and the familial love of her cousins, can Jane accept Rochester's offer. In fact, the blinded Rochester is more dependent on her (at least until he regains his sight). Within her marriage to Rochester, Jane finally feels completely liberated, bringing her dual quests for family and independence to a satisfying conclusion.

Religion

Jane receives three different models of Christianity throughout the novel, all of which she rejects either partly or completely before finding her own way. Mr. Brocklehurst's Evangelicalism is full of hypocrisy: he spouts off on the benefits of privation and humility while he indulges in a life of luxury and emotionally abuses the students at Lowood. Also at Lowood, Helen Burns's Christianity of absolute forgiveness and tolerance is too meek for Jane's tastes; Helen constantly suffers her punishments silently and eventually dies. St. John, on the other hand, practices a Christianity of utter piousness, righteousness, and principle to the exclusion of any passion. Jane rejects his marriage proposal as much for his detached brand of spirituality as for its certain intrusion on her independence.

However, Jane frequently looks to God in her own way throughout the book, particularly after she learns of Mr. Rochester's previous marriage and before St. John takes her in to Moor House. She also learns to adapt Helen's doctrine of forgiveness without becoming complete passive and returns to Mr. Rochester when she feels that she is ready to accept him again. The culmination of the book is Jane's mystical experience with Mr. Rochester that brings them together through a spirituality of profound love.

Social position

Brontë uses the novel to express her critique of Victorian class differences. Jane is consistently a poor individual within a wealthy environment, particularly with the Reeds and at Thornfield. Her poverty creates numerous obstacles for her and her pursuit of happiness, including personal insecurity and the denial of opportunities. The beautiful Miss Ingram's higher social standing, for instance, makes her Jane's main competitor for Mr.

Rochester’s love, even though Jane is far superior in terms of intellect and character. Moreover, Jane’s refusal to marry Mr. Rochester because of their difference in social stations demonstrates her morality and belief in the importance of personal independence, especially in comparison to Miss Ingram’s gold-digging inclinations. Although Jane asserts that her poverty does not make her an inferior person, her eventual ascent out of poverty does help her overcome her personal obstacles. Not only does she generously divide her inheritance with her cousins, but her financial independence solves her difficulty with low self-esteem and allows her to fulfill her desire to be Mr. Rochester’s wife.

Gender inequality

Alongside Brontë's critique of Victorian class hierarchy is a subtler condemnation of the gender inequalities during the time period. The novel begins with Jane's imprisonment in the "red-room" at Gateshead, and later in the book Bertha's imprisonment in the attic at Thornfield is revealed. The connection implies that Jane's imprisonment is symbolic of her lower social class, while Bertha's containment is symbolic of Victorian marriage: all women, if they marry under unequal circumstances as Bertha did, will eventually be confined and oppressed by their husbands in some manner. Significantly, Jane is consciously aware of the problems associated with unequal marriages. Thus, even though she loves Mr. Rochester, she refuses to marry him until she has her own fortune and can enter into the marriage contract as his equal.

While it is difficult to separate Jane's economic and gender obstacles, it is clear that her position as a woman also prevents her from venturing out into the world as many of the male characters do – Mr. Rochester, her Uncle John, and St. John, for instance. Indeed, her desire for worldly experience makes her last name ironic, as "Eyre" derives from an Old French word meaning "to travel." If Jane were a man, Brontë suggests, she would not be forced to submit to so much economic hardship; she could actively attempt to make her fortune. As it is, however, Jane must work as a governess, the only legitimate position open for a woman of her station, and simply wait for her uncle to leave her his fortune.

Fire and Ice

The motifs of fire and ice permeate the novel from start to finish. Fire is presented as positive, creative, and loving, while ice is seen as destructive, negative, and hateful. Brontë highlights this dichotomy by associating these distinct elements with particular characters: the cruel or detached characters, such as Mrs. Reed and St. John, are associated with ice, while the warmer characters, such as Jane, Miss Temple, and Mr. Rochester, are linked with fire. Interestingly, fire serves as a positive force even when it is destructive, as when Jane burns Helen's humiliating "Slattern" crown, and when Bertha sets fire to Mr. Rochester’s bed curtains and then to Thornfield Manor. The first of Bertha’s fires brings Jane and Mr. Rochester into a more intimate relationship, while the second destroys Thornfield and leads to Bertha's death, thus liberating Rochester from his shackled past. Although the fire also blinds Rochester, this incident helps Jane see that he is now dependent on her and erases any misgivings she may have about inequality in their marriage. Although Brontë does not suggest that the characters associated with ice are wholly malignant or unsympathetic, she emphasizes the importance of fiery love as the key to personal happiness.

Gothic elements

Brontë uses many elements of the Gothic literary tradition to create a sense of suspense and drama in the novel. First of all, she employs Gothic techniques in order to set the stage for the narrative. The majority of the events in the novel take place within a gloomy mansion (Thornfield Manor) with secret chambers and a mysterious demonic laugh belonging to the Madwoman in the Attic. Brontë also evokes a sense of the supernatural, incorporating the terrifying ghost of Mr. Reed in the red-room and creating a sort of telepathic connection between Jane and Mr. Rochester. More importantly, however, Brontë uses the Gothic stereotype of the Byronic hero to formulate the primary conflict of the text. Brooding and tortured, while simultaneously passionate and charismatic, Mr. Rochester is the focal point of the passionate romance in the novel and ultimately directs Jane's behavior beginning at her time at Thornfield. At the same time, his dark past and unhappy marriage to Bertha Mason set the stage for the dramatic conclusion of the novel.

External beauty versus internal beauty

Throughout the novel, Brontë plays with the dichotomy between external beauty and internal beauty. Both Bertha Mason and Blanche Ingram are described as stunningly beautiful, but, in each case, the external beauty obscures an internal ugliness. Bertha's beauty and sensuality blinded Mr. Rochester to her hereditary madness, and it was only after their marriage that he gradually recognized her true nature. Blanche's beauty hides her haughtiness and pride, as well as her desire to marry Mr. Rochester only for his money. Yet, in Blanche's case, Mr. Rochester seems to have learned not to judge by appearances, and he eventually rejects her, despite her beauty. Only Jane, who lacks the external beauty of typical Victorian heroines, has the inner beauty that appeals to Mr. Rochester. Her intelligence, wit, and calm morality express a far greater personal beauty than that of any other character in the novel, and Brontë clearly intends to highlight the importance of personal development and growth rather than superficial appearances. Once Mr. Rochester loses his hand and eyesight, they are also on equal footing in terms of appearance: both must look beyond superficial qualities in order to love each other.

Character List

Jane Eyre

The protagonist and narrator of Jane Eyre, Jane begins the novel as an angry, rebellious, 10-year-old orphan and gradually develops into a sensitive, artistic, maternal, and fiercely independent young woman. In each stage of the novel, Jane is met with fierce opposition from those around her, often because of her low social class and lack of economic independence. Yet, Jane maintains her independent spirit, growing stronger in her beliefs and ideals with each conflict; Jane's inferior position as a governess serves simply to heighten her thirst for independence, both financial and emotional. She rejects marriages to both Mr. Rochester and St. John because she understands she will have to forfeit her independence in the unions. Only after she has attained the financial independence and self-esteem to maintain a marriage of equality does Jane allow herself to marry Mr. Rochester and enjoy a life of love. This self-esteem is gained through Jane's making her mark in various worlds: Lowood, Thornfield, and particularly Moor House, in which she is valued for her humanity and values. Paralleling Jane's desire for independence is her search for a proper set of religious values. She rejects the extremist models of Brocklehurst, Helen

Burns, and St. John, and eventually settles on a spirituality of love and connection. The novel ends happily for Jane: not only does she maintain her independence and live with the man she loves, she is able to overcome the social constraints of her position as governess and become a heroine with which every reader can relate.

Edward Rochester

The owner of Thornfield Manor and Jane's lover. Mr. Rochester is an interesting twist on the tragic Byronic hero; though not handsome in a strict sense, his great passion and forcefulness make him an extremely appealing and sensual character in Jane's perspective. Mr. Rochester is also a sympathetic character because of the mistakes he has made in his past: deceived by Bertha Mason's external beauty, Mr. Rochester is constantly brooding and rejecting the darkness of his decision. Despite their difference in backgrounds and social status, Mr. Rochester is a kindred spirit to Jane and feels a sort of emotional peace when he is in her presence. Mr. Rochester is also particularly important to Jane because he provides her with the unconditional love and sense of family that she has never experienced before. Although Mr. Rochester is clearly presented as Jane's superior in intellect and worldly knowledge, the revelation of his marriage to the insane Bertha Mason demonstrates that Jane possesses the moral and ethical superiority in the relationship. Jane rejects his marriage proposal after she learns of Bertha, not only because she feels it would flout the law, but perhaps because Bertha's marriage is a cautionary symbol of Victorian marriage: despite Mr. Rochester's best intentions and Jane's equal intellectual standing, he may still end up imprisoning Jane in his own way through matrimony, just as he has imprisoned Bertha. Ironically, when Jane finally does agree to marry Rochester after having gained her independence, the fire Bertha set to Thornfield has blinded him. Thus, he is suddenly dependent on Jane, a fact which nullifies the typical marriage inequalities of the time period and tips the balance in her favor. On a kinder note, Brontë closes the novel with Mr. Rochester's sight regained in one eye: the marriage is restored to equality and Mr. Rochester and Jane can be happy in their union.

St. John Rivers

The evangelist who takes Jane in at Moor House, brother to Diana and Mary and, it turns out, cousin to Jane. St. John is the last of the three major Christian models Jane observes over the course of the novel. Stoical, cold, and strictly devoted to Christianity, St. John's religion is far too detached for Jane. He refuses to give in to his love for Rosamond Oliver out of a warped sense of duty to God, and Jane concludes that he still knows little about God's love. Although St. John does not love Jane, he believes that she would be suited to missionary work in India and thus, asks her to marry him. While Jane admits that she would gladly accompany him as his cousin (or adopted sister), marrying him under such circumstances would mean forfeiting her rights to a life of passion and love. Losing her autonomy in such a way is unacceptable to her, while accompanying him without marriage violates St. John's sense of propriety. Jane's rejection of St. John's advances seems to spur her return to Rochester, her one chance for spiritual passion. While Rochester is described in terms of fire and flames, St. John is constantly associated with ice and cold, a connection that heightens the lack of passion and joy that would come with a marriage to him. Although the book ends happily for Jane and Mr. Rochester, St. John's ending is far more

ambiguous. Although he has traveled to India to fulfill his Christian duty, Bronte still gives the impression that St. John's life could have been more meaningful if he had ever accepted love.

Helen Burns

Jane's friend at Lowood School. Though she dies early on in Jane's time at Lowood, Helen is perhaps the fourth-most important character in the novel for her symbolic value. Upholding the extreme Christian doctrine of tolerance and forgiveness at all costs, Helen serves as a foil to both Mr. Brocklehurst, with his cruel lack of Christian compassion, and Jane, with her anger at those who mistreat her. Helen espouses a Christianity in which faithfulness and compassion are rewarded in Heaven. As an orphan like Jane, Helen believes that her true family is waiting for her in the kingdom of Heaven. With that in mind, she faithfully turns the other cheek when accepting all the cruel punishments handed down at Lowood. She faces especial torments from Mrs. Scratcherd, and, though Helen is distressed by the treatment, she remains unwavering in her beliefs. When Helen dies, Jane absorbs the lesson that the meek shall not inherit the earth. While Jane initially rejects Helen's brand of religion, she does incorporate it in her life later on, especially when she relies on the spiritual kindness of strangers after leaving Thornfield.

Mr. Brocklehurst

The stingy manager of Lowood. Mr. Brocklehurst hypocritically espouses Christian morals in his evangelical sermons and then treats the students at Lowood with disrespect and cruelty. The starvation-level rations and poor condition of the school come in sharp contrast to the luxurious and well-fed existence enjoyed by Brocklehurst's family, and it is discovered that Mr. Brocklehurst has been embezzling school funds to line his own pockets. He is eventually replaced as head of the school.

Mrs. Fairfax

The kindly housekeeper at Thornfield. Distantly related to the Rochesters, Mrs. Fairfax is extremely welcoming to Jane upon her arrival to Thornfield and serves as another surrogate mother for Jane in the novel. She warns Jane against marrying Mr. Rochester because she is concerned about the differences in age and social class. After Jane's departure from Thornfield, Mrs. Fairfax retires with a generous pension from Mr. Rochester.

Bertha Mason

Rochester's insane wife and Richard Mason's sister. A beautiful Creole woman from a prominent West Indies family, Bertha was married to Mr. Rochester in an effort to consolidate the wealth of the two families. Suffering from hereditary insanity that had been kept secret from Mr. Rochester, Bertha began to spiral into madness and violence shortly after their marriage. Eventually, Bertha is imprisoned in the attic at Thornfield under the guard of Grace Poole, a confinement meant to ensure both her own protection and the protection of the other inhabitants of the house. Bertha occasionally escapes from her prison and wreaks havoc in the house; her last outburst involves setting fire to Thornfield and leaping to her own death. As the representation of the classic Gothic figure of "The Madwoman in the Attic," Bertha is both pitiable and terrifying and supports Bronte's critique of gender inequalities and Victorian marriage during the period.

Mrs. Reed

Jane's aunt. Although she promised Mr. Reed that she would treat Jane as her own, Mrs. Reed favors her own spoiled children and harshly punishes Jane for her seeming impudence, even locking her up in the "red-room." When Jane is ten years old, Mrs. Reed sends her to Lowood and then tells John Eyre that Jane has died of typhus fever at the school. On her deathbed, Mrs. Reed reveals that she hated Jane because Mr. Reed loved Jane more than any of his biological children, and she refuses to apologize for mistreating her.

Bessie Lee

A servant at Gateshead. Bessie is Jane's only comfort during her time at Gateshead and occasionally sings her songs and tells her stories. Acting as a surrogate mother for Jane, she is particularly kind after Jane's experience in the red-room and even treats her to a tart on her favorite plate. Bessie visits Jane at Lowood several years after her departure and is impressed with Jane's gentile demeanor. She marries the Gateshead coachman, Robert Leaven, and has three children, the youngest of which she names Jane.

John Reed

Jane's cousin and brother to Eliza and Georgiana. The spoiled darling of his mother, John constantly bullies Jane and is ultimately responsible for her confinement in the red-room at Gateshead. John becomes an alcoholic and avid gambler during his adulthood and commits suicide in order to escape from his massive gambling debts.

Georgiana Reed

Jane's cousin and Eliza's sister. The prettier of the two Reed girls, Georgiana's beauty makes her a spoiled, selfish child, though she befriends Jane as Mrs. Reed dies. She blames Eliza for her failed plans to marry Lord Edwin Vere and shows a similar lack of compassion during her mother's illness. She eventually marries a wealthy man.

Eliza Reed

Jane's cousin and Georgiana's sister. Described by Jane as headstrong and selfish, Eliza is extremely jealous of her sister's beauty and vindictively breaks up Georgiana's engagement to Lord Edwin Vere. She becomes a devout Christian, but, rather than espousing compassion and humanity, she believes only in the importance of "usefulness." After her mother's death, Eliza breaks off all communication with Georgiana and enters a convent in France. She eventually becomes Mother Superior and leaves all of her money to the church.

AdèleVarens

The French-speaking, scampish ward of Mr. Rochester that Jane is hired to tutor. Adèle is the illegitimate child of the opera dancer Céline Varens and an unnamed gentleman. Although she lacks discipline and intellect and suffers from many "French" traits, Adèle improves greatly under Jane's tutelage. She studies at a school of Jane's choosing and grows into a sensible and docile woman who becomes a good companion for Jane.

Grace Poole

Bertha Mason's keeper at Thornfield. As the guard for the third-story prison, Grace's fondness for gin and occasional alcohol-induced naps allow Bertha to escape and wreak havoc in the house, including setting fire to Mr. Rochester's bedchamber, ripping Jane's wedding veil, and causing the fire that destroys Thornfield. Jane is led to believe that the strange goings-on in Thornfield are caused by Grace Poole. It is only after Mr. Briggs and

Richard Mason reveal that Mr. Rochester is already married that Jane understands Grace's true position at Thornfield.

Blanche Ingram

The young and beautiful society lady who is Jane's primary romantic rival. Jane is convinced that the haughty Miss Ingram would be a poor match for Mr. Rochester, but she believes that Mr. Rochester prefers Blanche's beautiful appearance to her own plainness. Mr. Rochester is aware that Blanche is only interested in him for his money, but he pretends that he loves her in order to make Jane jealous. Blanche's comments about governesses during her visit to Thornfield are particularly upsetting to Jane and demonstrate the popular beliefs about governesses during Charlotte Bronte's time.

Miss Temple

The beautiful and kindly superintendent of Lowood. Miss Temple is presented as the foil to the cruel and stingy Mr. Brocklehurst and strives to treat the students at Lowood with as much compassion as possible, even providing them with extra bread and cheese to supplement their meager meals. Miss Temple is particularly kind to Jane and Helen, providing them with seedcake during their tea together and giving Helen a warm bed to die in. As one of the novel's surrogate maternal figures for Jane, Miss Temple demonstrates the lady-like demeanor and inner strength that Jane wishes to possess as an adult.

Céline Varens

Adèle's mother and Mr. Rochester's former mistress. A French opera dancer, Céline pretended to love Rochester but actually only used him for his money. Rochester overhears a conversation between her and one of her other lovers and, filled with rage at his personal humiliation, promptly severs all ties with her. Although Adèle is not his biological daughter, Rochester takes her in as his ward when Céline abandons her to run off to Italy with a musician.

Richard Mason

The brother of Bertha Mason. The handsome but weak-willed man, Richard met Mr. Rochester in the West Indies and encouraged him to marry his beautiful sister without mentioning her hereditary madness. Richard comes to Thornfield in order to check on his sister and is brutally bitten and stabbed by Bertha when he goes to her room alone. When he later learns of Mr. Rochester's bigamous plan to marry Jane, Richard arrives back in England with the solicitor, Mr. Briggs, and stops the marriage.

Diana Rivers

Jane's cousin and the sister of St. John and Mary. Charismatic and independent, Diana is forced to work as a governess in a wealthy household because of her family's financial difficulties. Along with her sister, Diana reveals the injustice of society's treatment of well-bred, intelligent women who are unmarried. Diana supports Jane's decision not to marry St. John and helps Jane to maintain her independence. She marries a navy officer.

Mary Rivers

Jane's cousin and the sister of St. John and Diana Rivers. A strong and independent woman, Mary is forced to work as a governess after her family's loss of wealth. Despite their misfortunes, Mary is kind and compassionate, particularly when Jane begins to live

with them at Moor House. Mary and her sister both exemplify the type of independent woman that Jane desires to become. She marries a clergyman.

Mr. Lloyd

The kindly apothecary who suggests Jane attend school at Lowood after her traumatic experience in the red-room at Gateshead. Mr. Lloyd also sends a letter to Miss Temple that clears Jane of Mr. Brocklehurst's charges that she is a liar.

Mr. Briggs

The solicitor from London who publicly reveals Rochester's marriage to Bertha Mason. Briggs is also instrumental in giving Jane her proper inheritance after her uncle dies.

Hannah Rivers

The elderly servant at Moor House. Hannah initially refuses to allow Jane to enter the house because she believes that Jane is a lower-class beggar. Jane chides her for her class prejudices, and the two eventually become good friends.

Rosamond Oliver

The daughter of Mr. Oliver. The beautiful and angelic Rosamond is the benefactress of Jane's school and is overcome with love for St. John. Although he secretly returns her love, St. John cannot allow himself to marry her because of their differing circumstances and his intention to become a missionary. Rosamond ultimately marries the wealthy Mr. Granby.

Mr. Oliver

Rosamond's father. Mr. Oliver is the wealthiest man in Morton and attempts to use his wealth for the benefit of the town, particularly in terms of helping St. John Rivers with his school.

John Eyre

Jane's uncle (as well as the uncle of the Rivers siblings), John made his fortune in wine in Madeira. He intended to adopt Jane but was told that she was dead by Mrs. Reed. Although he dies before they ever meet, John leaves his vast fortune of 20,000 pounds to Jane.

Miss Scatcherd

The history and grammar teacher at Lowood. Miss Scatcherd is generally unkind to her students, but she is particularly cruel and abusive to Helen.

Pilot

Mr. Rochester's faithful dog. Pilot foreshadows Mr. Rochester's presence throughout the book, appearing immediately before Mr. Rochester falls off his horse and maintaining his loyal companionship after Mr. Rochester has lost his eyesight and hand.

Mr. Reed

Jane's other uncle. Because of his great affection for his sister (Jane's mother), Mr. Reed took Jane in when her parents died and intended to raise her with love and kindness. While he was dying, he made Mrs. Reed promise to raise Jane as one of her own, but Mrs. Reed breaks the promise. Although Mr. Reed does not appear as a living character in the novel, Jane constantly feels the presence of his "ghost" during her childhood at Gateshead.

John and Mary

A married couple who works at Thornfield and then cares for Mr. Rochester during his convalescence at Ferndean.

Robert Leaven

The coachman at Gateshead and Bessie's husband. After John Reed's death, Robert comes to Thornfield to bring Jane back to Gateshead with him.

Miss Miller

One of the teachers at Lowood. Miss Miller greets Jane on her initial arrival to the school.

Miss Smith

A teacher at Lowood who instructs the students in sewing.

Madame Pierrot

The French instructor at Lowood.

Miss Gryce

Jane's roommate and fellow teacher at Lowood.

Alice Wood

An orphan who is hired by Rosamond Oliver to assist Jane at the school in Morton.

Summary and Analysis

Volume I, Chapters 1-5

Volume I, Chapter 1 Summary:

The novel begins with the ten-year-old Jane Eyre narrating from the home of the well-off Reed family in Gateshead Hall. Mr. Reed, Jane's uncle, took her into his home after both of her parents died of typhus fever, but he soon died himself. Mrs. Reed was particularly resentful of her husband's favoritism toward Jane and takes every opportunity to neglect and punish her. At the beginning of the narrative, Jane is secluded behind the curtains of a window seat and reading Bewick's "History of British Birds." Although she attempted to join the rest of the family, she was refused permission by Mrs. Reed to play with her cousins Eliza, John, and Georgiana. Although the family mistreats her, Jane still wishes that she could have the same attention and love that her cousins receive from her aunt. The bullying John interrupts Jane's reading and informs her that she has no right to read their books because she is an orphan who is dependent on his family. He strikes her with the book, and Jane surprises him by fighting to defend herself. John is frightened by Jane's zeal and blames her for the fight. As punishment for Jane's inappropriate behavior, Mrs. Reed has two servants lock her in the "red-room," the room in which Mr. Reed died.

Analysis:

From the very beginning of the book, Bronte uses careful novelistic craftsmanship to position the reader on Jane's side. Not only does the narration occur in Jane's voice, a fact which automatically makes her a more sympathetic character, but Bronte incorporates all of the tragic facts of Jane's childhood in the first few pages. From the start, Jane is oppressed; she is sent off while her cousins play. We learn through exposition from John that she is a penniless orphan, dependent on the heartless Reed family but never on an equal level with her relatives; indeed, social class will play an important role in the rest of the novel. Although we do not have a clear sense of the extent of Mrs. Reed's resentful feelings toward Jane, Bronte emphasizes Jane's loneliness and lack of familial affection. Bronte also emphasizes Jane's sensitive nature and inner strength. She is given to flights of fancy while reading, but she also displays a great deal of courage and sense of justice in her defense against John. All of the elements are in place for a classic "Bildungsroman," the

literary genre originating in the German as "novel of formation" or, as it is generally known, the "coming-of-age" story. In the Bildungsroman, classic examples of which are Goethe's The Sorrows of Young Werther, Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, and J.D. Salinger's The Catcher in the Rye, the young protagonist matures through a series of obstacles and defines his or her identity.

Volume I, Chapter 2 Summary:

Jane resists physically and verbally as the servants Bessie and Miss Abbot lead her to the red-room, named for the color of its drapery and furniture. The room also contains a miniature portrait of Mr. Reed, who has been dead nine years; his actual body lies in a vault under the Gateshead church. Before they lock her up, the servants reprimand Jane for her disobedience and warn her against angering God. As Jane considers their reprimands, she becomes angry at the injustice of her family situation, wondering why she is always mistreated while her cousins are pampered and petted. She catches her ghostly reflection in the mirror and, thinking about her miserable condition and about her dead uncle, recalls how he took the orphaned Jane in and made Mrs. Reed promise to take care of her. Suddenly, a ray of light enters the room, and Jane cries out, believing that the light is the ghost of her uncle. Her scream of terror alerts Bessie, Miss Abbot, and Mrs. Reed, but they accuse her of trickery and refuse to free her. After they leave, Jane faints.

Analysis:

The red-room has clear associations with death (red as the color of blood, the room's containing a miniature version of the dead Mr. Reed, and Jane's belief that she sees a ghost in it) but is also a symbol of imprisonment. This is only the first time that Jane will be imprisoned in the novel, though her later imprisonments will generally be more metaphorical, particularly in relation to class, gender, and religion. In this case, John is the root cause of Jane's imprisonment and his word is taken above hers, a fact that parallels the gender relations of the male dominated Victorian society. Ironically, however, the three aggressors that maintain Jane’s imprisonment in the red-room are females, and Jane’s one savior, it appears, was her uncle.

The chapter also introduces some of the Gothic literary tradition that inform much of the narrative structure of the text. The Gothic novel, popularized in the 18th-century, utilizes supernatural, suspenseful, and mysterious settings and events to create an atmosphere of horror and morbidity. With that in mind, the ominous quality of the red-room, the ghost that Jane thinks she sees and the revelation that Mr. Reed's body lies beneath the church each contribute to the horror that Jane feels at her imprisonment. The Gothic novel is also characterized by damsels in distress (and women are frequently the protagonists); though Jane faints here, common for Gothic women, she proves herself to be strong-willed and determined to fight back against her oppressors.

Volume I, Chapter 3 Summary:

Jane wakes up, dimly aware of voices and of someone supporting her. She soon realizes that she is in her bed and sees Bessie and Mr. Lloyd, the apothecary. He gives instructions for Jane's care and departs, and Bessie, more concerned than before over Jane's health, sleeps in the neighboring room in case Jane needs anything during the night. Jane sleeps and awakens the next day feeling terrible. The Reed family is away, and Bessie brings Jane a

fruit tart and her favorite book, “Gulliver's Travels.” Yet, Jane still feels so distressed from her experience in the red-room that she is unable to eat the tart or even enjoy the fantastical tales of “Gulliver’s Travels” as she normally does. She cries after Bessie sings her a sad song (a popular one composed by Edward Ransford, c. 1840) about an orphan.

Mr. Lloyd returns and, once Bessie is gone, Jane tries to tell him about the ghost of Mr. Reed that she saw. He does not believe her, and whenever she brings up the abuses she suffers at Gateshead, he observes that she is lucky to live in such a beautiful house. Jane thinks that she has some poor relatives, but, after Mr. Lloyd’s prompting, admits that she would not like to live with them, even if they were kind. Mr. Lloyd then asks her if she would like to go to school. After some contemplation, Jane concludes that school would be an improvement over Gateshead, and she begins to be excited about the possibility.

The family returns, and Mr. Lloyd speaks with Mrs. Reed with the recommendation of sending Jane to school. Later, while pretending to be asleep, Jane overhears Miss Abbot and Bessie discussing her parent's history. Jane’s mother was a member of the wealthy Reed family but was cut off financially when she married a poor clergyman against the wishes of her father. Soon after Jane’s birth, her parents died of typhus while visiting poor people in a manufacturing town. Miss Abbot and Bessie admit that Jane’s background is a tragic one, but admit that it would be easier to pity her if she were a pretty, likable child.

Analysis:

The conflicts of social class that were suggested in Chapter 1 become even more prominent in this chapter. Jane is trapped in the odd situation of being poor within a rich family. Moreover, her mother was once a member of a wealthy family, but her choice of husband resulted in her financial ruin and indirectly led to both of their deaths. As such, Jane’s notions of poverty are fundamentally skewed; as she admits, children "have not much idea of industrious, working, respectable poverty - poverty for me was synonymous with degradation." Even though she is unhappy at Gateshead, she freely admits to Mr. Lloyd that she would rather be mistreated in a wealthy home than treated kindly among poor people.

Adding insult to injury, Bessie's song, well-meaning though it may have been, emphasizes Jane's status as a "poor orphan child" and isolation in the Reed family. Jane, of course, is poor in both pitiable and pecuniary terms, without anyone to love her and without any money for self-sufficiency. However, Mr. Lloyd’s suggestion about going to school is intriguing, particularly because an education was the one thing that could help a woman strive for financial independence in the Victorian era.

Volume I, Chapter 4 Summary:

Time passes, and Jane regains her strength, but the subject of her unhappiness is never broached, and the Reed family treats her even more poorly than before. One day, Jane challenges Mrs. Reed, questioning what her late husband would think of her behavior. Mrs. Reed punishes Jane for the impertinent question, boxing her ears and ordering Bessie to lecture her, but Jane is interested in the sudden look of fear that she detected in her aunt’s eyes. When the holidays arrive, Jane continues to be excluded from family celebrations and finds solace only in the doll with which she sleeps and in Bessie's kindly goodnight kisses. In mid-January, Mr. Brocklehurst, whoseLowood School Jane learns she will attend, visits

Gateshead and interrogates Jane about her religious beliefs. When Jane informs him that she finds the Psalms to be uninteresting, Mr. Brocklehurst warns her that such beliefs are a sign of wickedness, and she must repent and cleanse her "wicked heart." Mrs. Reed tells Mr. Brocklehurst that she hopes that Jane's time at Lowood will reform her, particularly her tendency to lie, an accusation that stings Jane. After Mr. Brocklehurst leaves, Jane defends her honesty to her aunt and launches a series of recriminations. Mrs. Reed seems stunned and leaves the room, but Jane's victorious feelings soon give way to remorse. She feels better later when Bessie confides in her that she prefers Jane to the other children.

Analysis:

Religion makes its first formal appearance in the novel in the form of Mr. Brocklehurst. Already, we can see the religious hypocrisies that Bronte exposes; Mr. Brocklehurst believes the deceitful Mrs. Reed's accusations about Jane and relishes the seemingly heartless reformations that take place at school. He also displays an abhorrence for any form of creative thinking; although Jane enjoys Revelations, the book of Daniel, Genesis, and other parts of the Bible, she is accused of being "wicked" because she does not approve of the Psalms. The extent of Mr. Brocklehurst's hypocrisy in his beliefs about Christianity will become more apparent in later chapters of the novel.

After the night in the red-room, Jane's position in the Reed family seems to have fallen even further. Instead of being tormented by Georgiana, Eliza, and John, as she was before, Jane is now simply ignored; she no longer even exists in the context of the family. However, Jane does find comfort in Bessie, who begins to act as a surrogate mother figure and is Jane's only source of consolation and affection. Although Bessie seemed to be harsh at earlier points in the novel, her sole support of Jane during this time (and acknowledgement that she prefers Jane over the other children), make Mrs. Reed's antipathy toward Jane seem increasingly callous. Bessie's behavior toward Jane and Jane's love for her doll both constitute one of the major themes of the novel, the idea that "human beings must love something."

In this chapter, Bronte also introduces the motif of fire and ice, a theme that will appear frequently throughout the novel. Fire is associated with Jane and with positive creation, while ice is associated with Jane's antagonists and with negative destruction. Bronte is often subtle with these symbolic attachments; for example, Mrs. Reed's eyes are twice compared to ice in this chapter: "her cold, composed grey eyes" and "her eye of ice continued to dwell freezingly on mine."

Volume I, Chapter 5 Summary:

Four days after meeting Mr. Brocklehurst, Jane leaves Gateshead by the 6am coach for Lowood School. When she arrives at the school, she is taken into a dull, grey room for supper and then put to bed in a room filled with other girls. The next day, Jane is introduced to some of the school's daily routines, which consist of Bible recitations, regular academic lessons, and abominable meals. She also meets the kindly, beautiful superintendent, Miss Temple, and another girl, Helen Burns, who informs Jane that all the student are "charity-children" - orphans whose tuition is largely made up for by benefactors. Jane realizes that Mrs. Reed has not paid anything to support her at Lowood, and she is truly without any family. Jane also observes one of the nastier teachers, Miss

Scatcherd, mistreating Helen in class. Much to her surprise, the stoic Helen impressively bears her punishment without complaint.

Analysis:

Immediately we see that Lowood's religious education does not necessarily mean that the orphans are treated well. Their food is often inedible and served in small portions, their lodgings are cramped, and some of the teachers are extremely cruel. Although Jane is adjusting to the change in surroundings, she is still taken aback by the conditions of the school, particularly the food, and the fact that the Reed family did not pay anything to maintain her keep. Bronte hints at the suspicious nature of the school's poor conditions when Helen reveals that "benevolent-minded ladies and gentlemen" make up the tuition and that Mr. Brocklehurst is the treasurer of the house.

Another possible surrogate mother figure for Jane arrives in the form of the beautiful Miss Temple. Her name, with its religious overtones, indicates that she is the only teacher at Lowood who truly upholds the Christian ethic. Bronte also introduces Helen as a confidante and friend for Jane, as well as model of another type of Christianity. Jane is already intrigued and even confused by Helen's calm acceptance of her mistreatment at the school and will soon learn much about patience and emotional control from Helen's example.

Volume I, Chapters 6-10

Volume I, Chapter 6 Summary:

On her second day, Jane learns that life at Lowood School is difficult. The meals are hardly large enough to quell Jane's hunger pangs, and the students are forced to sit through unending sermons. Jane becomes more friendly with Helen and observes as Miss Scatcherd continually berates and even whips Helen, who never makes any response. Helen tells Jane about her personal doctrine of endurance, since the Bible "'bids us return good for evil.'" She also refuses to call Miss Scatcherd cruel; she believes that she has numerous character flaws that Miss Scatcherd is correct to point out. Although Helen is very fond of Miss Temple and finds that she learns more from her, Helen tells Jane that Miss Temple's mild-mannered teaching style does not force her to be actively good; rather, Helen is only passively good, and she believes "'there is no merit in such goodness.'" Jane disagrees with Helen's philosophy; she believes that one should repay goodness with goodness and cruelty with cruelty. She tells Helen about the Reed family, but Helen insists in a long speech that one must forgive one's enemies.

Analysis:

Helen presents her Christian philosophy of forgiveness and endurance: one must bear the sins of others, turn the other cheek, and love thy enemy. Jane, of course, is at odds with this idea, believing that standing up for herself often means fighting back. We have already witnessed several situations in which Jane availed herself of these tactics, particularly the fight against John and her lashing out at Mrs. Reed. The former led to her imprisonment in the red-room, while the latter was a short-lived victory that soon turned into remorse. While Helen's form of Christianity is not useful for Jane, neither is Jane's attitude of self-defense; she must find and develop her own brand of spirituality.

Volume I, Chapter 7 Summary:

Jane passes a difficult first quarter at Lowood, with both the snowy weather and strict environment contributing to her misery. After a long absence from the school, Mr. Brocklehurst visits Miss Temple's classroom and instructs her not to indulge the girls in the slightest way; their privations will remind them of the Christian ethic. He spots a girl with curly hair and deems it unacceptable for an evangelical environment, as are all the top-knots on the girls' heads. Jane, nervous that Mr. Brocklehurst will convey Mrs. Reed's warnings about her behavior to Miss Temple, accidentally drops her slate. Mr. Brocklehurst chastises her in front of the class and three visiting fashionable ladies (Mr. Brocklehurst's family) and tells everyone that she is a wicked liar. He orders Jane to stand on a stool in front of the class to repent for her wickedness and forbids any of the other students from talking to her. Jane's only solace during the day is when Helen disobeys Mr. Brocklehurst's orders and secretly smiles at her.

Analysis:

Jane attempts to test Helen's philosophy of Christian forgiveness when Mr. Brocklehurst punishes her. For the first time in her life, she does not fight back when she is mistreatment and accepts her humiliating punishment of standing on the stool. Yet, Jane inwardly seethes at the injustice and thinks, "I was no Helen Burns." Still, Helen's encouraging smile gives Jane strength, and she feels less isolated even in her despair.

At this point in the text, Bronte points out that Mr. Brocklehurst's version of Christianity is made up of increasingly hypocritical flaws. Though he claims that privation leads to purity, his relatives are dressed in luxurious silks and furs, elegant ensembles that are in clear contrast to the tattered pinafores worn by the students at the school. Mr. Brocklehurst even wants to cut off one girl's naturally curly hair, simply because the curls seem to be an exhibition of vanity. His lust for absolute power over others reveals his truly unchristian nature and also speaks to the male dominated society of the time that provides him with a superior position to the benevolent Miss Temple.

Volume I, Chapter 8 Summary:

When school is dismissed, Jane falls to the floor, filled with self-pity and shame that all of the students despise her because of Mr. Brocklehurst's false accusations. Helen assures her that everyone actually sympathize with her maltreatment. Jane tells Helen of her aching need to have love from others to survive, but Helen tells her that she puts too much stock in love from others; the rewards of spirituality and the glorious afterlife should be our ballast. Miss Temple finds them and takes Helen and Jane to her room, where she asks Jane to tell her version of the story concerning Mrs. Reed. Jane does, strongly insisting upon her innocence, and also mentions Mr. Lloyd's visit to her during her illness. Miss Temple believes her and promises to write Mr. Lloyd for corroboration; when he does, Jane's name will be cleared. She treats the girls to tea and cake and discusses intellectual matters with Helen.

The bedtime bell breaks the heavenly atmosphere, and Miss Scatcherd reprimands Helen for messiness as soon as the girls enter their bedroom. The next day Helen must wear the word "Slattern" on a paper crown around her forehead; at the end of the day, Jane tears it off for her and burns it. A week later Miss Temple announces to the school that Jane's name has been cleared of all of Mr. Brocklehurst's charges, and she is officially reaccepted

into the community. Jane is relieved to be cleared of blame and works harder in class, particularly in French and drawing. Despite its failings, Lowood is beginning to grow on her.

Analysis:

In this chapter, Jane reveals her constant need for love and affirmation from others. No doubt a result of her lonely and loveless time at Gateshead, Jane believes that love is the only thing that can make her happy. Helen counters by describing her belief that spirituality is enough; love in the earthly realm is nothing when compared to the spiritual love of God. While it is clear that Jane will never accept these notions completely, Helen is correct in noting that Jane needs to be less reliant on others. In order to gain independence and strength of character, Jane must learn to be dependent on herself and rely less on the love of those around her.

As we have seen before, Bronte uses ice as a motif for cruel, negative destruction, and fire fans out as a symbol of goodness and creation. The fire in Miss Temple's room warms the girls, as does Miss Temple's kindness, conversation, and cake. More interestingly, Jane burns Helen's shameful "Slattern" crown in fire; even when destructive, fire can serve a sort of positive destruction that obliterates evil in the world. This idea of destructive fire as a positive source will reappear in the actions of Bertha Mason later in the text.

Volume I, Chapter 9 Summary:

As spring arrives, Lowood becomes a more pleasant place. However, the warmer temperatures and dampness of the neighboring forest are ideal for breeding disease, and more than half the girls at the school fall ill with typhus. The disease is particularly bad because of the neglectful care that the students receive at the school. Jane, one of the healthy students, enjoys the outdoors, all the more so because Mr. Brocklehurst no longer visits the school. Jane is shocked to learn that Helen is dying, not of typhus, but of consumption. She is not allowed to visit Helen in Miss Temple's room, but Jane sneaks in at night, hoping for one last conversation. Helen accepts her impending death and place in heaven, and tells Jane not to grieve for her; she is happy to be entering heaven. Jane falls asleep in her arms, and Helen dies during the night. Her grave is unmarked at first, but fifteen years later, a marble tablet is placed over it inscribed with the Latin word "Resurgam," or "I will rise again."

Analysis:

Helen maintains her Christian beliefs to the moment of her death, and she fulfills her representation as a Christ figure for Jane, dying so that Jane can learn more of what it means to be a Christian. Although Jane’s devotion to Helen is moving, she continues to question Helen's unshakable faith; she wonders, though does not speak aloud, if heaven truly does exist. Although Jane is not willing to accept fully everything that Helen espouses, the "Resurgam" tablet on Helen’s grave (placed by Jane, it seems) indicates that she has adapted Helen’s beliefs to her own ideology.

Volume I, Chapter 10 Summary:

The epidemic of typhus fever incites an investigation into Lowood's unhealthy conditions and Mr. Brocklehurst’s management of the school, and a new group of overseers takes control of the school. With Mr. Brocklehurst’s dishonor, the quality of the school improves immensely, and Jane and the other students are able to focus on their education. Jane

excels as a student under Miss Temple's guidance for six years and then works as a teacher for an additional two years. When Miss Temple marries and leaves Lowood, Jane is left feeling empty and searching for a "new servitude," a new job serving someone else. She places a newspaper advertisement in search of a post as governess and gains employment for a Mrs. Fairfax at Thornfield Manor. Before Jane leaves to take up this position, she is overjoyed by a visit from Bessie, who is now married to the coachman, Robert Leaven. Bessie brings news of the Reed family, informing Jane that John had become a compulsive gambler and alcoholic while Georgiana had attempted to elope with a certain Lord Edwin Vere but had been foiled by Eliza's intervention. Bessie also mentions that Mr. John Eyre, Jane's uncle, had come to Gateshead seven years ago in an effort to contact Jane before sailing to Madeira to work as a wine-merchant. After the brief visit, Bessie and Jane part ways, and Jane begins her adventure at Thornfield Manor.

Analysis:

This brief transitional chapter spans eight years of Jane's life, during which she matures from an angry girl bent on self-survival into a self-reliant young woman seeking to serve others. Bronte incorporates appropriate endings for some of the more significant characters at Lowood School: Mr. Brocklehurst is removed from power at the school, a just punishment for his negligence and cruelty, while the lovely Miss Temple escapes the difficult life of a teacher and becomes a happily-married woman. Bronte also uses this chapter to incorporate certain narrative details that will be important to the overall plot of the novel. The problems of the Reed family, particularly John's descent into debauchery and vice, foreshadow Mrs. Reed's final confrontation with Jane, as well as hinting that the Reed family is being punished for their mistreatment of Jane. The mention of Mr. Eyre's visit to Gateshead also suggests that he will reappear in some form later on, perhaps with a more important role.

Volume I, Chapters 11-15

Volume I, Chapter 11 Summary:

As Jane arrives in Millcote, she is overcome with anxiety; there is no one at the station to meet her, and she fears that this Mrs. Fairfax will prove to be a second Mrs. Reed. By the time the servant arrives to take her to Thornfield, night has fallen, and Jane can see nothing of the exterior of the house or its grounds. Jane's feels are allayed, however, when she is shown into a cozy room where the elderly Mrs. Fairfax is waiting for her. At first, Jane assumes that Mrs. Fairfax is the owner of the manor, but she soon learns that Mrs. Fairfax is only the housekeeper. Because Mr. Rochester, the manor's owner, is a "peculiar" man who frequently travels on business, Mrs. Fairfax manages the household and estate and thus, responded to Jane's advertisement in the newspaper herself. Mr. Rochester's ward, AdèleVarens, will be Jane's sole pupil at Thornfield. After the initial introduction, Mrs. Fairfax shows Jane to her room, and Jane sleeps peacefully, content to have embarked on a new adventure. The next day, Jane explores the grounds of Thornfield and meets the young Adèle, a garrulous but sweet French girl who chatters in a mixture of French and English. While exploring the house with Mrs. Fairfax, Jane hears a loud, odd laugh. Mrs. Fairfax brushes off the laugh and explains that it was probably one of the servants. She then

chastises Grace Poole, a seamstress employed in the house, for "'Too much noise,'" and bids her to "'Remember directions!'"

Analysis:

The introductory chapter to Thornfield plants a few narrative seeds. First, there is an obvious correspondence between Jane and Adèle, both orphans, although Adèle's living conditions are far better. Rochester's background is mysterious, made more so by Adèle's belief that he "'has not kept his word'" to her by constantly abandoning her on his business trips and Mrs. Fairfax's opaque label that he is "'peculiar.'" The ghostly laugh at the end of the chapter, emanating near the attic of the manor, heightens the Gothic suspense of the novel, as do Mrs. Fairfax's curious commands to Grace Poole. Still, despite some strange aspects of Thornfield Manor, Jane feels a certain calm contentment. Not only is she no longer an inferior relative in Gateshead, she is also not a poor student at Lowood. Thornfield provides Jane with the first real opportunity to start her life anew, exploring her independence, maturity, and important position at Thornfield Manor.

Volume I, Chapter 12 Summary:

Life at Thornfield proves to be pleasant, and Jane is pleased with Adèle. Although the girl is somewhat spoiled, Jane recognizes that she is an affectionate and able student and hopes that she will be able to separate Adèle from some of her French affectation. Still, when Jane walks around the attic of Thornfield, she yearns for more experience in the world. Her existence at Thornfield is stable, but her passionate nature still longs for more adventure and passion in her life. During her time near the attic, Jane also frequently hears Grace's bizarre laugh and "eccentric murmurs" and observes other strange behavior. One day in January, Jane walks to town in order to deliver a letter for Mrs. Fairfax and inadvertently startles a gentleman riding on horseback with his dog accompanying him. The gentleman falls from his steed and sprains his ankle, and Jane must help him back on his horse. Although he is unwilling to accept her help, Jane insists, realizing that she never would have been able to be so bold if the rider had been a handsome, young man.

The man asks Jane several questions about Rochester and then departs. When Jane returns to Thornfield, she recognizes the same dog – Pilot – lying on the rug. She asks a servant for an explanation and discovers that it is, indeed, the dog from the road, and Mr. Rochester has just sprained his ankle while riding his horse.

Analysis:

Jane's desire for experience apart from stereotypical female experience is explained in a lengthy passage: "It is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures [men] to say that [women] ought to confine themselves to making pudding and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags." She goes on, and the conflict is clear; Jane desires a life of action and independence that is unavailable to her as a woman during the Victorian time. Jane's thirst for adventure also reveals her passionate nature; although her time at Lowood has taught her to control her emotions beneath a calm exterior, the fiery and passionate Jane Eyre from her childhood at Gateshead still exists and yearns to escape a life of passivity.

In this chapter, Jane also meets Mr. Rochester for the first time. He is instantly cloaked in mystery by his refusal to identify himself to her when they meet along the road. In fact, it is

only through the dog that Jane is able to assign an identity to the master of Thornfield Manor. Still, Jane asserts some power at the beginning of their relationship, since Rochester is placed in a weakened position because of his sprained ankle and is reliant on Jane for aid. Another physical impediment forcing Rochester's dependence on Jane will arise later in the novel.

Volume I, Chapter 13 Summary:

With Mr. Rochester home, Thornfield becomes a noisier, busier place, much to Jane's liking. He invites Jane and Adèle to have tea with him and Mrs. Fairfax. Adèle immediately asks if he has a gift for Jane; Jane asserts that the best gift that he can give her is praise of Adele's progress. Mr. Rochester coldly interrogates her about her background but demonstrates more warmth when he looks at Jane's watercolor sketches. After the meal, Jane and Mrs. Fairfax discuss Mr. Rochester. His older brother died nine years ago, whereupon Mr. Rochester inherited the estate, though he avoids the place as much as possible. Mrs. Fairfax's justification that Mr. Rochester finds the place "gloomy" does not satisfy Jane, and Mrs. Fairfax is evasive about Rochester's other "family troubles."

Analysis:

The mystery concerning Mr. Rochester deepens, and this constitutes the major dramatic thrust of the novel. Gothic novels usually have a romantic component that revolves around passionate, unrequited love; as a stereotypical Byronic hero with a dark, brooding nature and secretive past, Mr. Rochester is an ideal candidate for such a love.

Part of Jane's struggle with Mr. Rochester over the course of the novel will be the assertion of her independence and equality. As we can already see, Rochester only begrudgingly admits Jane's positive qualities, criticizing her even when praising her watercolors. Nevertheless, he demonstrates an obvious interest in her and seems to appreciate her intellectual. As Jane continues to grow in terms of self-reliance and begins to develop feelings for Mr. Rochester, she will undergo a constant struggle between her position as Mr. Rochester's servant and her desire to be something more.

Volume I, Chapter 14 Summary:

During the next few days, Jane sees little of Mr. Rochester as he deals with business and acquaintances. His moods shift rapidly, but Jane cannot figure out their source. One night, during one of his warmer moods, Mr. Rochester gives Adèle her long-awaited gift and is more genial while talking with Jane. Jane keeps scrutinizing his face, a fact he notes; he asks if she finds him handsome, but she gives the honest answer: "No, sir." Mr. Rochester seems to be amused by Jane's answer, and she concludes that he must be slightly drunk. Although the conversation continues, Jane begins to feel increasingly awkward because of Mr. Rochester's position of superiority as her master. Mr. Rochester claims that their relationship should not be one of servitude. Moreover, he does not mean to condescend to her, but his air of superiority comes from his being much older and more experienced. Jane disagrees, arguing that age and experience should automatically confer authority. The conversation moves to the topic of sin and redemption, and Mr. Rochester promises to explain more about Adèle's mother in the future.

Analysis:

Regardless of what Mr. Rochester says about his superiority in regards to experience with Jane, it is clear from his lengthy, involved discussion with her that he views her as his intellectual equal. Though she has a fraction of his worldly experience, Jane acquits herself well with the complicated topics Mr. Rochester brings up and even earns his approval at points for her thoughts. Their flirtation also unofficially begins, as Jane admits to herself that though "most people would have thought him an ugly man," he carries himself with a charismatic, detached confidence.

However, despite his assertion that their relationship is not one in which she is the servant, Mr. Rochester cannot change the social expectations of the time period. Even with their intellectual equality, Jane remains Mr. Rochester's inferior, first as the governess to his ward, but primarily because she is a woman. Still, Mr. Rochester's social domination over Jane will be far more pleasant and affectionate than the submissive position that she assumed with Mr. Brocklehurst or will take up with St. John Rivers at a later point in the novel.

Volume I, Chapter 15 Summary:

One afternoon, while Adèle plays elsewhere, Mr. Rochester takes the opportunity to fulfill his promise to Jane and explain his relationship to Adèle. He was once passionately devoted to her mother, a French opera-dancer named Céline Varens, and despite her superior beauty, she seemed to return his ardor. He spent a fortune treating her to a luxurious lifestyle in Paris until he discovered that he was being cuckolded in a rather humiliating fashion. Mr. Rochester shot the other man in his arm and ended his relationship with Céline, believing that he was entirely done with the affair. However, Céline claimed that the six-month-old Adèle was his daughter and then abandoned her a few years later so that she could run off with an Italian musician. Mr. Rochester was certain that the child was not his, but took responsibility for Adèle anyway and brought her to live as his ward at Thornfield.

Mr. Rochester expects that Jane will be appalled at the prospect of tutoring an illegitimate child, but Jane actually has more sympathy and affection for Adèle after learning of her background. As for Mr. Rochester, these revelations and his confidence in Jane make him seem handsomer and more amiable to her, and she is worried that he will soon leave Thornfield, as Mrs. Fairfax says he always does. That night, as Jane lays awake thinking about everything that Mr. Rochester has told her, she thinks the she hears movement outside her door, then hears a "demoniac" laugh. When she leaves her bedroom, she finds a candle burning in the hallway, sees that Mr. Rochester's door is open, and finds his curtains on fire. He is stupefied by the smoky air, but she wakes him by extinguishing the flames and dousing him with water. She relates what she knows, and he goes into the attic. He returns a few minutes later and says the cause of the fire was Grace Poole, as Jane suspected from the laugh. Mr. Rochester tells her not to speak about the matter to anyone, and then thanks her sincerely for saving his life; he is reluctant for her to leave him. Jane is unable to sleep that night, thinking instead pleasurably of the "hills of Beulah" which, unfortunately, she is not able to reach.

Analysis:

This extended discussion about Céline Varens reveals more of Mr. Rochester's inner character and personality. Significantly, it is this description of Mr. Rochester's flaws that

make him seem more attractive to Jane; the jealous anger and desire that he describes mirror Jane's passionate interior and are a welcome contrast from Mr. Brocklehurst's evangelical purity. Even though the discussion of a mistress and an illegitimate child would be deemed inappropriate for a young woman during the time, Mr. Rochester's confidence in Jane heightens the sense of their intellectual (and growing emotional) equality. The fact that Adèle is essentially an orphan is also particularly appealing to Jane; she hopes to take on the same role as surrogate mother that Bessie and Miss Temple had performed for her.

When Jane douses the fire in Mr. Rochester's bedroom, he is again placed in a position of vulnerability that allows her to seize control and independence in the situation. This is also another example of the positive nature of fire; although the fire is potentially destructive, the incident ultimately brings Mr. Rochester and Jane much closer together. However, Jane still recognizes something mysterious about Mr. Rochester: he is quick to blame Grace Poole for causing the fire, and his desire to pin it on her comes across as disingenuous.

However, there is nothing disingenuous about Mr. Rochester's gratitude for Jane having saved his life, and his reluctance for her to leave tells something about his wounded heart. After his bitter betrayal by Céline, he is yearning for a constant love based on more than mere physical attraction, and Jane seems to provide that. Interestingly, when Jane is unable to sleep after saving Mr. Rochester, she is preoccupied by the hills of "Beulah," a term which means "marriage" in Hebrew. Bronte suggests that Jane is already subconsciously thinking of marriage to Mr. Rochester. However, Jane still feels that there is a "counteracting breeze" that would make such a union impossible.

Volume II, Chapters 1-5

Volume II, Chapter 1 Summary:

The day after the fire in Mr. Rochester's bedroom, Jane is shocked to find Grace, who had presumably tried to murder Mr. Rochester, mending the curtains. Grace tells Jane that Rochester fell asleep while his candle was lit, but he awoke before the fire spread too far. Both Jane and Grace seem to know more than each lets on, and they test the other's story; Jane accordingly changes part of her account. Jane is flummoxed by Grace's version of the event, especially because she shows no sign of guilt for what has occurred. Jane is also confused by Mr. Rochester's desire for her not to tell her side of what happened.

When Jane looks for Mr. Rochester to answer her questions about Grace Poole, she discovers that he has left for a social engagement at someone's estate and will be gone for a week or more. Jane already feels his absence from Thornfield and is distressed when she learns that Mr. Rochester is quite a favorite of the ladies he is visiting, particularly the young and beautiful Blanche Ingram. Jane feels foolish for having thought that a plain, poor governess such as herself could ever be of interest to Mr. Rochester. In order to suppress any further romantic inclinations and remind herself of her position in life, she sketches an ugly portrait of herself and then compares it to a gorgeous picture of what she imagines Miss Ingram looks like.

Analysis:

The chapter is split into two sections: the plot developments surrounding the fire, and Jane's preoccupation with Mr. Rochester. After her odd conversation with Grace, Jane realizes that Grace is probably not the culprit of the fire. Not only does she demonstrate

little guilt or remorse for her behavior, Mr. Rochester did not even have her removed from Thornfield. Yet, Jane is still not able to figure out the mystery of Grace Poole's presence on the estate. Her only conclusion is that Grace is somehow involved with the fire but is also under direct orders from Mr. Rochester not to reveal her role.

Jane's attempts to find Mr. Rochester and clear up the mystery about Grace lead to the introduction of Blanche Ingram as a character. Jane's sense of inadequacy compared to Blanche Ingram pivots around appearance but also has to do with class. Though Mr. Rochester is not handsome, his high position in society and noble manners determine that his wife must be of an equally high station. Jane's personality, for all its sparkle, cannot make up for her relative poverty and plainness, especially when compared to the beautiful Miss Ingram.

Volume II, Chapter 2 Summary:

Jane is concerned that Mr. Rochester will leave for Europe without returning to Thornfield, something that Mrs. Fairfax acknowledges that he frequently does. However, Jane's fears are allayed when Mr. Rochester sends word that he will be returning to Thornfield in a few days with guests. The servants busily prepare the house for his arrival, and Jane takes the opportunity to observe Grace Poole. She notices that Grace spends nearly all her time on the third-floor and also overhears the servants discussing Grace's high salary and difficult job

Mr. Rochester finally arrives in the company of Miss Ingram and several other men and women. Jane and Adèle keep out of their way as they socialize and dine, and Jane feels particularly out of place among the elegance and sophistication of the visitors. She also notices with increasing dismay that Mr. Rochester appears to prefer the company of Miss Ingram to that of the other ladies. That night, Mr. Rochester invites Jane and Adèle to socialize with the guests after dinner. Jane observes the scene from a distance, paying special attention to Miss Ingram, as Adèle charms the crowd. Miss Ingram and the others speak dismissively of Jane and governesses in general. Miss Ingram goes on to criticize male vanity; beauty should be the domain solely of women, and her future husband will not be her aesthetic equal. She then plays piano, commanding Mr. Rochester to sing. He does, beautifully, and Jane leaves inconspicuously. Rochester meets her outside and beseeches her to return, as she seems "depressed," but Jane declines and turns away before he can see the tears in her eyes. Although he finally allows her to leave, Mr. Rochester informs her that she must come into the drawing room to socialize with the guests every night. He then bids her goodnight, nearly using a term of endearment before stopping himself.

Analysis:

Although Miss Ingram's beauty and confident manner take center stage in the drawing room, the attraction between Mr. Rochester and Jane is evident, especially in his parting words to her. Mr. Rochester cannot help but notice Jane's distress, but he perhaps does not realize that it is because of his attention to Miss Ingram. Similarly, Jane seems to be unwilling to accept the fact that Mr. Rochester nearly said "Good-night, my love." Jane's biggest obstacle to Mr. Rochester remains her own insecurity about her social position and class. Mr. Rochester seems to have feelings for Jane, it is still unclear if he will ever be able to act on them.

Miss Ingram demonstrates the snobbery and classism that strikes at the heart of Jane's curious position that she holds both at Thornfield and previously at Gateshead: poverty in the midst of great wealth. The flip comments of the society ladies about their governesses - and their casual ignorance of Jane in the room - make Jane a virtual prisoner of her social standing. Miss Ingram's lack of intelligence and personal cruelty are particularly upsetting to Jane because she believes that Mr. Rochester deserves better.

This chapter also continues with the mystery of Grace Poole and the third-story attic. Although Jane accumulates some additional clues about Grace's presence at Thornfield, she is still largely ignorant of the role that Grace plays. Yet, she begins to think of Grace with some pity because of her constant presence on the third floor: she is "as companionless as a prisoner in his dungeon." "Prisoner" is a loaded word, suggesting imprisonment far beyond physical confines. However, the mysterious events and hints surrounding Grace suggest that she may not be companionless, after all.

Volume II, Chapter 3 Summary:

The guests stay for several stays, and Thornfield becomes a fun and vibrant place. One night the group plays charades; Mr. Rochester pairs off with Miss Ingram, while Miss Ingram's mother says that Jane "looks too stupid" to play. Mr. Rochester and Miss Ingram pantomime a marriage ceremony, among other scenes, until one of the gentlemen solves the charade: Bridewell (a London prison). Jane watches the two of them flirt after their mutual success and is unable to still her growing love for Rochester. However, she realizes that she is not jealous of Miss Ingram, whom she views as disingenuous, dim, and rude, and she hopes that Mr. Rochester will resist Miss Ingram's attempts to woo him. Rochester's desire to marry for social connections surprises Jane, though she does not hold it against him.

One day while Mr. Rochester is out on business, a handsome man named Richard Mason arrives looking for Mr. Rochester, whom he knows from the West Indies. While he waits for Mr. Rochester's return, Mason joins the party. That night a gypsy fortune-teller comes to Thornfield; after much debate, the visitors allow her to tell the fortunes of the young ladies in private. Miss Ingram is first and promptly dismisses the teller as a charlatan after returning to the room. Jane notices that she seems upset and suspects that Miss Ingram is disturbed by whatever her fortune was. The three other young ladies have their fortunes told, and report, with glee, that the woman seemed to know everything about them. The fortune-teller insists that she will not leave until she has read Jane's fortune.

Analysis:

The marriage pantomime has obvious parallels to Jane's romantic anxieties. While she cannot believe that Mr. Rochester could prefer the vapid Miss Ingram to her, she does believe that he must marry someone of Miss Ingram's elevated social position. After careful observation of the pair, Jane concludes that the pair will never love each other, but is uncertain that a marriage will not take place nonetheless. Jane is no bride, but a "Bridewell," imprisoned by her social class and confined to limited romantic possibilities.

The arrival of Richard Mason is significant for the plot as another clue to the mystery of the demonic laugh in the third-story attic. Bronte also gives Jane an opportunity to demonstrate her good sense and morality with Mason's introduction: although Mason is

technically a very handsome man, Jane automatically dislikes him, a sentiment that foreshadows his later role in the novel. Bronte also perpetuates the Gothic theme of the novel by introducing the gypsy fortune-teller. She creates suspense both by ending the chapter on a cliffhanger - what will Jane's fortune reveal? - and by not revealing the nature of Miss Ingram's disturbing fortune.

Volume II, Chapter 4 Summary:

Jane joins the fortune-teller in the library. Although she is initially skeptical of the old woman, Jane becomes entranced by the gypsy's words. The fortune-teller, who admits she has an inside source in Grace Poole, tells Jane several truths, focusing on her feelings toward Mr. Rochester. The fortune-teller predicts that Mr. Rochester will marry Miss Ingram; her previous implication to Miss Ingram that she wants Mr. Rochester only for his money is what disturbed the young lady. She then gives Jane her own fortune, which revolves around Jane's power of reasoning over her emotions.

Suddenly, the old woman reveals her disguise: it is none other than Mr. Rochester. Jane, who had suspected something was amiss from the start, that perhaps the woman was Grace in disguise, is not too upset. When she tells him that Mason has come to Thornfield, Mr. Rochester is shocked and nearly faints. He asks Jane to go into the dining-room and find out what Mason is doing. She reports that the party, Mason included, is socializing. Mr. Rochester, after assuring himself of Jane's loyalty, asks her to whisper an invitation to Mason to see him. She does so, and goes up to bed; late at night she hears Mr. Rochester cheerfully show Mason to his room.

Analysis:

The Gothic element of fortune-teller mingles with the novel's Gothic romance once Mr. Rochester reveals his disguise; mysticism and the supernatural give way to Mr. Rochester's burgeoning love for Jane. The reader is also delighted to see that he is well aware of Miss Ingram's mercenary designs on his estate. Rochester's ability to disguise himself also speaks of his hidden, secretive identity. The disguise of the gypsy is also significant in the way that it plays with inequalities of social class. Not only is Mr. Rochester no longer superior to Jane when he is disguised as the gypsy, he becomes her inferior in class and social position and is barely able to gain access to Thornfield Manor.

In a novel that otherwise focuses on Jane's internal world, Brontë keeps the action moving by constantly introducing new pieces of the mystery of Mr. Rochester's past. Mason's arrival seems innocent, but Jane is unable to shake ominous feelings about him. Moreover, he admits that he is a friend from Mr. Rochester's past, something that even Jane still knows very little about. As if paralleling Jane's uncertainty about the unexpected visitor, Mr. Rochester's feelings concerning Mason change from anxiety to happiness without any explanation. Still, Mr. Rochester's insistence of Jane's loyalty suggests that his seeming ease around Mason later in the evening is only another disguise.

Volume II, Chapter 5 Summary:

During the night, Jane hears a shrill cry from the third story, then someone shouting for Mr. Rochester's help. Jane hears the sounds of someone opening a door and running upstairs. Jane leaves her room, as has everyone else. Mr. Rochester descends from the third story and reassures everyone that a servant has merely had a nightmare. Everyone

retires to bed, but Jane goes back and dresses. She thinks she is the only one who heard the words after the scream and is certain that Mr. Rochester's story is false.

After Jane waits for an hour in her room for another sound, Mr. Rochester knocks on her door and asks her to come quietly with him upstairs. He has her bring a sponge and some smelling salts, and then shows her the tapestry-room Mrs. Fairfax had once shown her. He opens a door hidden behind the tapestry, from which again emanates the curious laughter Jane sometimes hears, speaks with whomever is inside, and then emerges and closes the door. Rochester then shows Jane what he has brought her up for: a dazed Mason lies on a chair in the tapestry-room, soaked in blood. Mr. Rochester promises him that Jane will care for him while he fetches the surgeon. He then orders Jane to tend to Mason without any conversation between the two.

Jane is frightened by the baffling circumstances, especially by the thought of Grace in the next room. After two hours, Mr. Rochester returns with a surgeon, Carter, and begins a confusing conversation with Mason. Mason says that "she" bit him when "Rochester got the knife from her," while Mr. Rochester blames Mason for going to see "her" without him; had he waited until tomorrow, Mr. Rochester would have accompanied him. After Carter completes his work, Jane and Mr. Rochester help Mason into a carriage waiting outside. Mr. Rochester instructs Carter to take him home; he will visit in a day or two.

After Mason and Carter leave, Mr. Rochester takes Jane on a walk around the garden. He assures her that neither he nor she is in any danger; the only thing that he has to fear is Mason's saying a certain thing. He asks her to consider the following "hypothetical" situation: a young man made an error - not a crime or an illegal act - that has haunted him forever. No measures he took to deal with it alleviated his misery. He traveled copiously, hoping that would help him, but not until he returned home and met someone new did he feel comforted. He wants to marry this woman, but feels that convention is against him. Is this man, who seeks repentance and salvation in this woman, justified in overturning custom, he asks Jane? Mr. Rochester then admits he is the man and says the woman is - after a long pause - Miss Ingram.

Analysis:

At this point in the novel, it is becoming increasingly difficult for Mr. Rochester to maintain the secret of the third-story attic. Mr. Rochester needs Jane’s help after the sudden attack on Mason and, though he is able to take her into his confidence to care for Mason, Mr. Rochester still cannot reveal the truth of what has happened. It is only a matter of time before the truth comes out, but Mr. Rochester exhibits a certain desperation to hide his mystery from Jane for as long as possible.

Significantly, the source of the attack on Mason is female. Although Jane does not know who the woman is (other than possibly Grace Poole), she is both terrified and intrigued by the idea of a female that is uncontrollable by normal social conventions. With her bestial and even carnivorous nature, the mysterious woman in the room seems to have thrown off all of the oppressive ties of the male dominated society.

While Bronte continues to complicate the mystery of Mr. Rochester’s past, she also clarifies some of his feelings toward Jane. During his hypothetical story, he is obviously discussing Jane before he changes his position and reveals that Miss Ingram is the object of

his desire. Jane describes Mr. Rochester's face as "losing all its softness and gravity, and becoming harsh and sarcastic" when he names Miss Ingram. There is little doubt now that Rochester prefers Jane to Miss Ingram, but there is still an obstacle to the romantic plot. Whoever is in the third-story room - and how it relates to the "error" Rochester committed in his youth - is preventing Rochester's marrying Jane, much more so than the presence of Miss Ingram.

Volume II, Chapters 6-11

Volume II, Chapter 6 Summary:

Robert Leaven, the coachman at Gateshead who is now married to Bessie, visits Jane. He brings news that Jane's cousin, John, has committed suicide. Mrs. Reed has suffered a stroke from shock and is close to death and asking for Jane. Mr. Rochester grants his permission for Jane to leave Thornfield for a week and gives her some money. Jane arrives at Gateshead in the early evening and reunites with Bessie, who tells her that Mrs. Reed is expected to last only another week or two. Jane also talks with Eliza and Georgiana, who are as cold as ever, though their rudeness no longer hurt Jane's feelings. The girls are reluctant to let Jane see their ailing mother, but Jane insists and Bessie arranges a meeting.

Mrs. Reed, her mind clearly elsewhere, does not recognize Jane and speaks harshly of Jane's character. Jane prompts her to discuss her feelings, and Mrs. Reed reveals that she always disliked Jane's mother, her husband's sister, because Mr. Reed always favored her and, subsequently, the orphaned Jane. Mrs. Reed is also under the impression that John is still alive. Jane leaves her bedside.

For ten days Jane does not see Mrs. Reed again, and busies herself with sketching. One day she sketches a portrait of Mr. Rochester that attracts the attention of the Reed girls, whom she also sketches. The episode fosters new intimacy between Jane and Georgiana, who is hung up on her former life in high society London. Eliza maintains her distance from both of them; one night she lashes out at Georgiana for her immaturity and slothfulness, and vows that they will have nothing to do with each other after their mother's death.

Jane visits Mrs. Reed one afternoon while no one is around and reveals her identity. Mrs. Reed apologizes for not bringing her up as one of her own but is still extremely resentful to her because of the late Mr. Reed's preference. Mrs. Reed also gives Jane a letter from her uncle, John Eyre. Mr. Eyre had wanted to adopt Jane and bring him to Madeira with him, but Mrs. Reed had withheld the letter from Jane out of spite. Though Jane offers her forgiveness, Mrs. Reed is unable to let go of her hatred for Jane, and she dies later that night.

Analysis:

The extent of Jane's development over the course of the novel is demonstrated when she returns to Gateshead. Whereas John Reed fell into a dissolute lifestyle of gambling and debauchery, Georgiana became a spoiled debutante, and Eliza became aloof and emotionless, Jane has transformed into a patient and compassionate woman, dedicated to helping others with humility. The initial cold reception from the Reed girls, then, does not disturb Jane as it once might have, nor does Mrs. Reed's unforgiving hatred on her deathbed.

In fact, Jane openly forgives her aunt, telling her that "you have my full and free forgiveness: ask now for God's; and be at peace." Jane seems to have found a third kind of religion, far from the evangelical posturing of Mr. Brocklehurst but still removed from the all-encompassing and self-destructive tolerance of Helen Burns. Jane is forgiving for the past ills done to her by Mrs. Reed; they did not destroy her, but made her stronger. In Jane's version of Christianity, the meek shall not inherit the earth, but neither will the powerful.

In the midst of this emotional chapter, Brontë throws in a twist with the letter from John Eyre. He hints at having accumulated a fortune in Madeira, so Jane's economic status is again complicated. Although she has existed as a poor governess dependent on others for her keeping, perhaps now she has the possibility of achieving personal independence.

Volume II, Chapter 7 Summary:

Jane stays at Gateshead for a month in order to help Georgiana and Eliza. Jane tells us that after her departure, Georgiana moves back to the London and marries a wealthy man, while Eliza enters a convent in France and eventually becomes Mother Superior. Jane returns to Thornfield and is surprised to see Mr. Rochester, who has just returned from London, where he bought a new carriage - most likely to prepare for his wedding. Mr. Rochester is in an infectiously good mood, but Jane worries that he will no longer need her services after his marriage to Miss Ingram. However, the wedding is never mentioned and no preparations are made, and Jane hopes it has been called off.

Analysis:

Jane's time at Gateshead reminds her how important Thornfield and Mr. Rochester have become to her. While Gateshead was her original home, she realizes that now only Thornfield will feel as a home to her, primarily because of her feelings for Mr. Rochester. Jane's interactions with Eliza and Georgiana also remind her how much she has grown over the past nine years. No longer an angry child, resentful of her cruel relatives, Jane is the clear superior in the Reed household and ultimately serves as the peace-keeping mediator between her unhappy cousins.

Upon Jane's return to Thornfield, there are many questions about Mr. Rochester's true intentions with Miss Ingram. Although he purchases a carriage, Mr. Rochester makes no other mention of his impending marriage. Moreover, he refuses to answer any questions about it, and only says that his carriage "will suit Mrs. Rochester exactly." The name could apply to any woman who marries him and, as such, leaves open the possibility that he intends to marry Jane.

Volume II, Chapter 8 Summary:

The summer is glorious at Thornfield, and Jane is happy to be back at her home. One evening Jane runs into Mr. Rochester in the gardens. He reveals that he will marry Miss Ingram in a month and Jane must leave Thornfield; he already has another governess position lined up for her in Ireland. Jane is devastated at the prospect of being so far away from Mr. Rochester, but admits that Miss Ingram's presence will make such a separation necessary.

Mr. Rochester and Jane sit on a bench under a chestnut tree, and Mr. Rochester suddenly changes emotional positions. He tells her that he feels as if they are connected by a cord

attached at the heart and asks her to stay at Thornfield. Jane refuses, bringing up the topic of his bride. She also argues that she must mean little to him if he is willing to marry someone so inferior to him as Miss Ingram. Admonishing him for his thoughtless cruelty to her, Jane confesses that she loves him. To her surprise, Mr. Rochester asks her to marry him. At first she believes that he is only mocking her, but he convinces her that he does not love Miss Ingram and could never marry someone who was only interested in his money. After Jane is convinced of his earnestness, she accepts his proposal. Rain forces the overjoyed lovers inside, where they kiss briefly before retiring to their separate quarters. Mrs. Fairfax observes their kiss, but Jane ignores her shocked expression and decides to provide her with an explanation later. That night, a bolt of lightning strikes the tree under which Jane and Mr. Rochester were sitting and splits it in half.

Analysis:

The long build-up to Jane and Rochester's romance culminates in Rochester's marriage proposal, but a greater change comes about within Jane. Oppressed much of her life because of her poverty, she asserts her validity as a person to Rochester, regardless of her material wealth: "Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? - You think wrong! - I have as much soul as you, - and full as much heart!" The extent of Jane's insecurity is revealed by her inability to believe that Mr. Rochester actually wants to marry her. Although the proposal makes her extremely happy, even Jane wonders about Mr. Rochester's decision to marry someone so beneath his social station.

Jane is also anxious about the prospect of subverting her desires for those of someone else. While her search for love is a driving force in her life, Jane understands that attachment to others comes at a price, and she is not willing to sacrifice her autonomy. A marriage to Mr. Rochester would be one of love and passion, but it might also automatically force her into yet another position of inferiority. Moreover, Bronte will not allow the readers to think that Mr. Rochester's marriage to Jane will proceed without obstacles; when the lightning strikes the chestnut tree, it is hint that the love that Mr. Rochester and Jane share will soon be torn apart.

Volume II, Chapter 9 Summary:

The next morning, Jane is radiant in her love for Mr. Rochester. She feels that she looks prettier, and Mr. Rochester gladly compliments her. He has the wedding for four weeks and tells Jane that he is sending for jewels from London for her to wear. Jane is immediately anxious about the prospect of wearing such ostentation and makes him rescind the order. Mr. Rochester acquiesces but then vows to take her traveling with him around Europe. Once again pledging his love to her, Mr. Rochester finally confesses that he feigned interest in Miss Ingram in order to make Jane jealous.

Jane gets ready to drive to Millcote with Mr. Rochester, and he tells Mrs. Fairfax about their upcoming marriage. Mrs. Fairfax expresses her shock to Jane and warns her to be on her guard, as wealthy men rarely marry their governesses. Jane is hurt by Mrs. Fairfax's insinuations and feels even more unsettled when Mr. Rochester refers to her as Jane Rochester. Adèle wants to go to Millcote with them, and Jane convinces Rochester to bring her along. They ride off, and Rochester jokes to Adèle that he is bringing Jane with him to the moon, and makes a veiled reference to their marriage that Adèle does not understand.

In Millcote, the clothing and jewelry that Mr. Rochester lavishes on Jane embarrasses her. She tells Mr. Rochester that she will not be his "English Céline Varens," but will continue to work as Adèle's governess and maintain her financial independence. She also declines his dinner invitation, though she spends time with him in the evening as he sings and plays piano. He sings a love song and advances toward her, but she refuses to submit to his charms. Jane maintains this distance between them as she falls deeper in love with Mr. Rochester, believing it will serve them better in the weeks before their wedding. Jane also decides to write to her uncle in Madeira, hoping that being John Eyre's heir might make her feel more equal to Mr. Rochester.

Analysis:

Jane already feels somewhat uneasy about her upcoming marriage to Mr. Rochester. Although she loves Mr. Rochester desperately, she is puzzled and hurt by Mrs. Fairfax's disapproval and somehow fears that the wedding will not take place. She also dislikes being dressed in jewels and elegant clothes by Mr. Rochester, feeling as if his presents to her are steadily stripping away her independence. Moreover, Jane wants to ensure that she is not just another mistress in Mr. Rochester's long line of lovers. She also wants to maintain her power over Mr. Rochester as a demonstration of her independence. By rebuffing his passionate advances, Jane is able to hold on to some semblance of control, while simultaneously guaranteeing that she does not become a submissive mistress.

Bronte chooses to highlight Jane's shock at hearing Mr. Rochester call her "Mrs. Rochester." She reminds us that the title of the book is Jane Eyre, and that this name will always define Jane's identity as an independent woman. Interestingly, "Eyre" is a 14th-century word that means "a circuit traveled by an itinerant justice in medieval England or the court he presided over," and derives from the Old French word "errer," "to travel." If this etymology was Brontë's intention, then the name is ironic. While Jane travels far mentally as she develops into a woman - she is an avid reader, an artist, a musician - her physical journeys are quite circumscribed compared to those of the globe-trotting Mr. Rochester. However, Jane clings to her name, and worries that her independence and perhaps even her identity will be lost when she assumes Mr. Rochester's name.

Volume II, Chapter 10 Summary:

A month passes, and the household has finished preparing for Jane and Mr. Rochester's marriage, which is to take place the following day. Jane is preoccupied for most of the day because of a disturbing incident that occurred during the night. She waits for Mr. Rochester to return from business and tells him about it. While she lay in bed, she seemed to hear a strange howling. She then had a series of dreams revolving around a small child who cries in her arms. Jane woke from her nightmare to see a strange woman in her room. After looking through her closet, the woman found Jane's wedding veil and ripped it in half. The woman then looked at Jane, who fainted.

Mr. Rochester tries to convince Jane that the episode was nothing more than a dream, but she insists that it happened and shows him her wedding veil, ripped in two. Mr. Rochester is horrified and expresses his gratitude that nothing more harmful happened to Jane. He tells her that the woman must have been Grace Poole and promises that he will explain why he keeps her in the house after they have been married for a year and a day. Jane

accepts Mr. Rochester's promise, though she is not satisfied with his explanation. Jane sleeps in Adèle's room that night, though she does not fall asleep.

Analysis:

After the previous mysterious incidents at Thornfield, it is clear that the woman who entered Jane's room is related to the laughter from the third story and the fire in Rochester's room (especially because the woman uses a candle as she investigates Jane's closet). It is also clear from the ripped wedding veil that the woman harbors hostility toward the marriage between Mr. Rochester and Jane. However, Mr. Rochester is still unwilling to explain the strange incidents to Jane and continues to use Grace Poole as the scapegoat. Although Jane does not accept his explanations, she realizes that she is unable to force him to divulge secrets about his past.

Jane's nightmares about the crying child speak to her anxiety about leaving her childhood identity of Jane Eyre and ascending to married adulthood as Jane Rochester. The dream could also be read as a bad omen: Jane remembers Bessie telling her that a nightmare about children was a sign of trouble for the dreamer. At this point in the novel, however, Jane is still optimistic about her marriage to Mr. Rochester and hopes that her anxieties will soon dissipate.

Volume II, Chapter 11 Summary:

The next morning, Jane prepares for the marriage ceremony. Instead of wearing the elegant veil that was destroyed by the strange woman, Jane wears a plain veil that she made herself; still, Jane is unable to recognize herself in her wedding dress. She and Mr. Rochester head to the nearby church, but Jane notices that Mr. Rochester looks grim rather that happy about the upcoming ceremony. Jane notices that two strangers enter the church before they do. The priest begins the ceremony, but when he asks Rochester if he will take Jane as his wife, one of the strangers declares an "impediment" to the marriage. The man, Mr. Briggs, introduces himself as a solicitor from London and claims that Mr. Rochester already has a living wife from a previous marriage 15 years ago. Moreover, Briggs asserts that he has a witness to attest to the wife's being alive: Richard Mason. Mason steps forward and reveals that Mr. Rochester's wife was living at Thornfield when he visited three months before, and that he is her brother. Mr. Rochester confesses that the accusation is true, and that his insane wife, Bertha Antoinette Mason, lives in his attic under the careful watch of Grace Poole. He commands that everyone return to the estate to see Bertha and judge for themselves whether or not he was justified in seeking remarriage.

The group goes to Thornfield and up to the third-story attic. In the room where Mason was stabbed and bitten, Grace cooks food while the crazed Bertha runs around like an animal. Bertha lunges at Mr. Rochester and almost strangles him until he ties her to a chair. They all leave the room. Briggs informs Jane that her uncle, John Eyre, is on his sickbed in Madeira but wanted to prevent the marriage, having heard about it from Jane's letter and then from Mason. He suggests that Jane stay in England until she hears more from her uncle. Briggs and Mason leave, and Jane goes into her room alone, reflecting on her sudden change of fortune. All of her hopes have been destroyed, and she no longer knows how she can love Mr. Rochester. She prays to God for help, but is too devastated to even speak the words aloud.

Analysis:

With the revelation of Mr. Rochester's marriage to Bertha, Bronte is able to uncover all of the mysteries of Thornfield and Mr. Rochester's past: the laughter from the third story, Rochester's early error in life and desire for a new wife, Mrs. Fairfax's warning to Jane, the fire in Mr. Rochester's room, and the interloper in Jane's room. Just as Jane has trouble deciding how to judge Rochester, the reader, too, is in a difficult position. Because Mr. Rochester was unaware of Bertha Mason's hereditary madness, he was essentially victimized by the Mason family. Moreover, considering Bertha's propensity for violence, he had little choice but to confine her to the room in the attic, especially when an insane asylum during the time period would have been much more barbaric.

Still, Mr. Rochester would gladly have married Jane despite his preexisting marriage, and Jane would have been diminished to the inferior position of mistress without even realizing it. The biggest difficulty for Jane is that she still loves Mr. Rochester, but her innate sense of right and wrong demand that she cast him aside forever. As evidence of Jane's personal despair, Bronte narrates the bad turn of events with the relentless imagery of ice: "A Christmas frost had come at midsummer; a white December storm had whirled over June; ice glazed the ripe apples…" As in other places in the novel, ice symbolizes destruction, cruelty, hopelessness, and death. In this moment of despair, Jane reaches out to God. While she does not have blind faith in Him (as evidenced by her inability to speak the prayer), God is her last salvation and her last chance (so she believes) to be loved by another.

Volume III, Chapters 1-6

Volume III, Chapter 1 Summary:

After the revelation of Mr. Rochester's previous marriage, Jane returns to her bedroom and wrestles over whether or not she should leave Thornfield. When she leaves her room, Mr. Rochester is waiting for her and earnestly asks for her forgiveness. Jane privately grants it to him, but remains silent. Moreover, she does not allow him to kiss her, as he already has a wife. She begins to feel faint, and Mr. Rochester takes her into the library to recover and apologizes for bringing Jane to Thornfield and for concealing his wife from her. He then proposes that they move to the south of France and live together as man and wife. Adèle will be sent off to school and Grace will remain at Thornfield to watch over Bertha. Jane refuses and begins to cry, saying that though she loves him, she will never be more than a mistress as long as Bertha is alive.

Mr. Rochester explains the conditions surrounding his union to Bertha in order to explain why he does not consider their marriage to be valid. His father left his entire estate to Mr. Rochester's older brother, Rowland, but did not want to leave his second son completely penniless. He sent Mr. Rochester to Jamaica to marry Bertha Mason, the daughter of an old acquaintance, and thus gain her inheritance of 30,000 pounds. Bertha was beautiful and desirable, and although he spent little time alone with her, Mr. Rochester was overwhelmed by her beauty and promptly agreed to the marriage. Soon after the wedding, Mr. Rochester discovered Bertha's mother was in an insane asylum, while her younger brother was a mute idiot. He also realized that his father and brother had been aware of the hereditary madness in the Mason family but had ignored it for the sake of Bertha Mason's vast fortune. Over the four years, Mr. Rochester lived with Bertha in Jamaica and

watched her grow increasingly insane, perverse, and violent. In the meantime, Mr. Rochester's father and brother died, leaving him with their fortune. Despairing of his life, Mr. Rochester's contemplated suicide but decided to return to England instead and situated Bertha in the attic cell of Thornfield Manor. Mr. Rochester then traveled the world, searching for a woman to love and being met with disappointment time after time. Finally, he met Jane and instantly knew that she was the one for him.

Jane is torn by Mr. Rochester's confession. She does not want to increase Mr. Rochester's unhappiness, and she doubts that she will ever find anyone who loves her as much as he does. Yet, she realizes that she will always be unhappy with herself if she decides to stay at Thornfield under these circumstances. She kisses Mr. Rochester on the cheek and leaves him, incensed and desperate, in the room alone. That night, Jane dreams that her mother urges her to resist temptation. When she wakes up, she quickly packs her things and leaves Thornfield, all the while resisting the temptation to express her love to Mr. Rochester and stay.

Analysis:

Although Jane's departure from Thornfield is her third major exit from a place after Gateshead and Lowood, it is by far her hardest decision. If she stays, she enjoys the love of a man whom she admits that she worships, as well as the luxury that his wealth affords. However, if she stays and becomes his mistress, she feels that she will lose self-respect. As we have seen throughout the novel, Jane's quest is for self-love and independence as much as it is to attain the love of others. As she puts it to herself, "I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself."

Why will marriage destroy Jane's independence? Jane continually uses the excuse of Mr. Rochester's marriage to Bertha, but this is most likely not the true reason; after all, she was at times hesitant about marriage before she learned about Bertha. Rather, we can view Mr. Rochester's marriage to Bertha as a symbol of the inequalities of Victorian marriage, especially in the way it imprisons (literally, in Bertha's case) the female. Jane is worried about similar imprisonment, particularly because of Rochester's higher social standing and the proprietary feelings he has for her (note his frequent pet names for her).

Volume III, Chapter 2 Summary:

Jane remains on the coach for as long as her small supply of money will allow her; she is ultimately forced to get off at the desolate crossroads of Whitcross, ten miles from the nearest town. Finding nature to be her only ally, she heads deep into the heath and seeks protection under a crag. Filled with longing for Mr. Rochester, Jane is unable to sleep. Eventually, she finds comfort in prayer and sees God's presence in the majesty of nature. The next day, Jane sets out on the road in order to find a village. She looks for work, but there is none available, and she is reduced to begging for food.

As night falls, Jane walks toward a lit house in the distance among the marshes. She looks through the windows and sees two young ladies, Diana and Mary, and their elderly servant, Hannah. She listens in on their conversation, and discovers that they are awaiting someone named St. John, and that the ladies' father has recently died. Jane knocks on the door and begs Hannah to let her stay for the night, but Hannah fears that Jane will bring others with her. St. John arrives at the same time and rescues her, bringing her into the house. After

being revived with some bread and milk, Jane gives them a false name (“Jane Elliott) but is too exhausted to give any additional details, and says she puts herself in their hands. The members of the household privately discuss the matter, and then put Jane to bed.

Analysis:

After seeking autonomy throughout the novel, Jane finally receives it when she leaves Thornfield. However, she soon learns that truly independent living means sleeping outdoors, scavenging for food, and giving up all dignity. She relies more heavily on God in this chapter than in any others, and, indeed, it is a religious man, St. John, who proves to be her salvation. At the chapter's end, Jane relinquishes whatever independence she had previously claimed: "'I will trust you. If I were a masterless and stray dog, I know that you would not turn me from your hearth tonight: as it is, I really have no fear. Do with me and for me as you like." She willfully succumbs to the identity of a stray dog, putting her faith in others rather than in herself.

Volume III, Chapter 3 Summary:

Jane spends the next three days in bed at the house, attended by Hannah and occasionally seeing Diana and Mary. On the fourth day, Jane gets out of bed and goes downstairs to the kitchen. She assures Hannah that she is not a beggar and discovers that the house is called Marsh End or Moor House, and that the ladies' brother, the parson St. John Rivers, lives in his parish in nearby Morton. Jane reprimands Hannah for passing judgment on her for her poverty, and Hannah apologizes. She then tells Jane the history of Marsh End, which has been in the Rivers family for generations. Although the family used to be wealthy, the late Mr. Rivers lost the family fortune in a business deal, and Diana and Mary were forced to work as governesses to make ends meet. Because of Mr. Rivers’ recent death, the ladies have returned to the house for a few weeks.

Diana, Mary, and St. John soon return, and the sisters direct Jane to keep out of the kitchen and sit into the parlor. St. John is there, and Jane examines his classically handsome face. Jane tells them that she has no home or friends and refuses to reveal her last residence. Instead, she provides a bare-bones history of her life, admitting that the name "Jane Elliott" is not her real name. She asks to stay with them until she is able to find work, and St. John promises to find her a job.

Analysis:

Brontë draws an obvious contrast between the altruistic and kindly Rivers children - Diana, Mary, and St. John - and the spoiled and cruel Reed children - Eliza, Georgiana, and the far from holy John. Although she does not reveal Jane’s true relationship with the Rivers’ siblings, Brontë does provide another model of family and familial connection for Jane to aspire toward.

The fact that St. John is a parson also suggests that Jane's view of religion will undergo further revision in the following chapters. At this point in the text, she is still searching for a model of Christianity that is applicable to her own life; the Christianity of both Mr. Brocklehurst and Helen Burns was incompatible with Jane’s passionate nature.

Interestingly, Jane is once again in a financially difficult position, compared to those around her. Whereas before she was consistently a poor figure in a rich environment (in the Reed house and at Thornfield), she is here identified as a beggar. The Rivers siblings are in

the midst of financial difficulties themselves, but Jane is still inferior to them in terms of her economic stability. Moreover, although she has indeed been begging, Jane resists this definition, seeking an identity that is divorced from money.

Volume III, Chapter 4 Summary:

Over the next few days, Jane grows closer to Diana and Mary; she is especially drawn to Diana's charisma. St. John, however, remains a detached figure and is generally reserved and brooding on the few occasions that she sees him. However, one day, Jane hears him preach in his church, and his stern Calvinist oration about predestination has a profound, thrilling effect on her, although it leaves her saddened. Despite his eloquence, she feels he has not "found that peace of God which passeth all understanding" anymore than Jane has.

After a month, Diana and Mary prepare to return to their positions as governesses elsewhere in England. St. John plans to shut up the house after his sisters leave, but he is able to offer Jane the position of headmistress for a girls' school he is establishing in Morton. Jane gladly accepts, but St. John suspects that Jane will grow bored of the job and soon leave. Before Mary and Diana leave, St. John tells them that their uncle John is dead. They are relieved by this news, and Diana explains that their father and uncle quarreled, and Mr. Rivers lost most of his fortune while their uncle profited greatly. The uncle has left almost all his 20,000 pounds to an unknown relation, while giving a pittance to the Rivers children. Over the next few days, all of the inhabitants of the house leave.

Analysis:

Jane finds greater intimacy with the residents at Marsh End, especially the two sisters. Significantly, Jane had very few female friends during her life; only Helen Burns and Miss Temple even fall in the category. Although she has left her home at Thornfield, Jane has gained enough self-assurance to become friends with other self-reliant women. The growing friendship between Jane and Diana and Mary also serves as yet another of Brontë's hints about their relationship to Jane. The astute reader will notice some connections between the fortune left by the Rivers's uncle and that of Jane's own uncle John Eyre.

St. John's calculated, somewhat cold Calvinism is not an ideal Christian model for Jane, as she finds in it "a strange bitterness; an absence of consolatory gentleness." While Helen Burns's doctrine of tolerance and forgiveness was too meek for Jane, St. John's is far too intolerant and unforgiving. Still, Jane cannot help but be intrigued by St. John's strikingly handsome face and passionate sermon.

Volume III, Chapter 5 Summary:

Jane is installed in a cottage at Morton and immediately starts teaching as the headmistress of the school. Her students are largely uneducated, but many are eager learners, and Jane resolves to discard her self-pity over her situation and work hard to help her students achieve academic heights. She maintains that her decision was right: she is better off being free and in somewhat difficult conditions than staying with Mr. Rochester as a beloved slave in luxury.

During a brief visit, St. John finally opens up to Jane and tells her that a year ago he was unhappy as a priest and was looking for a more exciting lifestyle. He was close to picking a new career until he heard a call from God to become a missionary. A beautiful, angelic young lady, Rosamond Oliver, interrupts them; her father has told her that St. John's new

school has opened, and she wants to know how the first day was. Jane realizes that Miss Oliver is the wealthy benefactress of the school. Miss Oliver invites St. John to visit her father, but he stolidly declines and the two part ways. As she observes St. John's interactions with Miss Oliver, Jane comes to the conclusion that the two are in love.

Analysis:

Jane has come full circle; she was once a neglected, poor orphan at Lowood and is now headmistress of her own school. Following in the mold of the kindly Miss Temple, she resolves to help her students who, while not orphans, are poor and largely uneducated. In fact, Jane nearly turns to snobbishness when describing the students and must remind herself that "these coarsely clad little peasants are of flesh and blood as good as the scions of gentlest genealogy." She admits that she is unhappy in her situation, but Jane continues to rationalize her decision to leave Mr. Rochester as fulfillment of her quest for independence.

Miss Oliver serves as the first example in the novel of someone who is rich, beauty, and good-natured (everyone else has only one or two of the qualities). Jane is quick to realize that St. John and Miss Oliver are in love, but she is unable to see how love fits into St. John's plans to become a missionary.

Volume III, Chapter 6 Summary:

Jane adjusts to the rigors of teaching and eventually finds her students to be able and amiable. She becomes a well-liked fixture in the community and finally feels that she has found a place to prosper. Still, some nights, Jane still dreams being with Mr. Rochester. Miss Oliver frequently visits her, and Jane can see the effect that she has on St. John, who does his best to conceal his feelings; though he clearly desires her, he has devoted himself to his religion. Jane visits her and Mr. Oliver at Vale Hall and learns that Mr. Oliver wants his daughter to marry St. John.

One day, St. John visits while Jane is working on a portrait of Miss Oliver she has been asked to do. He is transfixed by the portrait, and Jane tells him of Miss Oliver's affection for him before boldly suggesting that he marry her. St. John confesses that he loves Miss Oliver but cannot relinquish his calling from God. Miss Oliver may be beautiful, but she would be a terrible missionary, and thus, St. John cannot even consider her to be his wife. Suddenly, St. John notices something on the edge of the portrait's canvas – Jane is not sure what it is - and furtively rips it off and leaves.

Analysis:

St. John is similar to Jane in that he is unwilling to give up his independence for love. Although Miss Oliver loves him, her beauty and higher social status would hamper his quest to be a missionary; he would rather seek his own calling in life than be beholden to someone else, even someone he might love passionately. However, when she discovers St. John's love for Miss Oliver, Jane's first impulse is not to support St. John's decision to reject love, but rather to urge St. John to marry her. She believes that a couple with such passionate love for one another should ultimately be together, a belief that clearly speaks to Jane's subconscious feelings for Mr. Rochester.

Volume III, Chapters 7-12

Volume III, Chapter 7 Summary:

One night in winter, St. John visits Jane at her cottage. He tells her a story of a poor curate who, twenty years ago, fell in love with a rich man's daughter and married her; her friends disowned her after the wedding. They both died within two years, leaving behind a daughter, who was raised by her aunt-in-law, Mrs. Reed of Gateshead. St. John recounts the rest of Jane's life up until her departure from Thornfield, after which everyone searched for her to no avail. Although Jane realizes that St. John is talking about her, she still does not identify herself as "Jane Eyre." St. John informs her that he has just received a letter from Mr. Briggs, in which the solicitor asserts the importance of finding the missing Jane Eyre.

The reason Briggs sought Jane, St. John says, is because Jane's uncle, Mr. John Eyre of Madeira, has died and left her his great fortune of 20,000 pounds. Jane is stunned and reveals her true identity to St. John. Still, she does not understand why Briggs attempted to reach her through St. John. St. John reveals that his full name is St. John Eyre Rivers, and his mother's brother is Jane's uncle. St. John also admits that he tore the scrap of paper from Miss Rosamond's portrait because it was her legal signature and allowed her to corroborate the story. Jane is as overjoyed to discover that she has cousins as she is by the fortune. Jane decides to split the fortune four ways among the cousins and live to at Moor House with Diana and Mary, but St. John urges her to reconsider; the fortune was left solely to her, and she should not feel obliged to share it. Jane refuses to change her decision, asserting that having close relations is more important to her than the money; she also discards the notion of ever marrying. St. John pledges to treat her as his sister, and Jane promises to remain headmistress until he finds a replacement at the Morton school. Eventually, Jane persuades her cousins to share her fortune, and they each inherit 5,000 pounds.

Analysis:

In this chapter, Brontë incorporates various hints scattered throughout the novel – including the existence of Jane's wealthy uncle John Eyre and the scrap of paper St. John tore from Jane's portrait – to finally establish Jane's financial independence. Moreover, Jane finally discovers her real family: coming across her long-lost cousins, purely by accident. Although the fortune is a deus ex machina plot twist that, as Jane says, gives her a victory she "never earned and do[es] not merit," she has, in many ways, earned it. By being selfless, humble, and eschewing the fortune Rochester would have given her in return for her virtual servitude, Jane is most deserving of a gift that will finally give her true independence. This particular plot conclusion is perhaps the most improbably of the plot, but it allows Brontë to overcome several of the difficulties that were obstructing the relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester.

Volume III, Chapter 8 Summary:

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.

Analysis:

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'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.

Volume III, Chapter 9 Summary:

Over the several days, St. John continues to insist that Jane marry him and travel to India as his wife. Although she is upset by his coldness to her, Jane still will not accept his proposal, and St. John rejects the possibility of taking her along as his unmarried assistant. Diana supports Jane’s decision, arguing that St. John will only ever treat her as a tool that he can use to achieve his calling to God. Later, St. John is his usual polite and aloof self to Jane while reading from “Revelations,” though he insinuates that Jane will end up in Hell for her refusal to marry him. The next morning, he leaves for Cambridge, and in a sincere moment, again tells Jane she should reconsider her decision while he is gone. She is so moved by his warmth and power of speaking that she is tempted to yield to his desires. Just when she is about to accept him, she has a mystical vision and hears Mr. Rochester's voice from a great distance, calling: "Jane! Jane! Jane!" St. John’s influence over her is broken, and Jane announces that she is going to seek out Mr. Rochester. In her room alone, she prays and feels rejuvenated.

Analysis:

The debate between Jane's need for autonomy and her desire to succumb to St. John's powers continue, but the outcome is rarely in doubt. Instead, Jane's love for Mr. Rochester deepens, and she now has the tools needed for a liberated marriage: self-esteem, the love of others (including relatives), financial independence, and an identity that she has carved out on her own. While St. John would oppress these traits as he led Jane through his missionary work in India, a marriage to Rochester would no longer squelch these qualities.

With such assurance, Jane can now also turn to religion in a positive, healthy manner, one different from all other models she has observed: "I...prayed in my way - a different way to St. John's, but effective in its own fashion. I seemed to penetrate near a Might Spirit; and my soul rushed out in gratitude at His feet." Jane's spirituality has neither the hypocritical postures of Brocklehurst's evangelism, the meekness of Helen Burns's forgiveness, nor the detachment of St. John's proselytizing, but attains a transcendence of love and connection lacking in the philosophies of those three.

Volume III, Chapter 10 Summary:

The next morning, Jane wonders if she really heard Mr. Rochester's voice calling to her or if she was merely imagining it. She finds a note from St. John requesting her final decision when he returns from Cambridge, but Jane's mind is on Rochester, and she leaves that afternoon for Thornfield. Although only a year has passed, Jane feels as if she has a new identity and anxiously awaits the sight of Mr. Rochester at the Manor. After two days on the couch, Jane arrives, only to find Thornfield in ruins, destroyed by a fire. At a nearby inn, Jane learns what happened: one night Bertha Mason escaped from Grace's watch and set fire to the governess's old bed. Mr. Rochester was able to get all of the servants out of the burning house, and tried to save his wife, but he was too late: Bertha jumped to her death from the roof. Mr. Rochester lost his eyesight and a hand during the fire and has since been relegated to Ferndean, a nearby manor house, staffed by the elderly John and Mary.

Analysis:

While the fire at Thornfield destroyed both Mr. Rochester's estate and his eyesight, fire continues to be a positive force even in its destruction. Bertha Mason was the one remaining obstacle to a marriage between Mr. Rochester and Jane. With her death, Mr. Rochester is finally a free man and has the ability to marry Jane without forcing her to sacrifice her morality. The fire also equalizes the relationship between Jane and Mr. Rochester. While she has recently gained her own fortune, he has lost much of his. Moreover, Mr. Rochester's blindness and lost hand place him in a position of vulnerability in which the social expectations of male domination in marriage no longer exist.

Volume III, Chapter 11 Summary:

Jane travels to the desolate Ferndean and observes Mr. Rochester from a distance. Although his body is unchanged, his face seems so much more tortured and despairing than it was before. Jane knocks on the door, and Mary invites her in. Jane brings a tray to Mr. Rochester, and he eventually realizes who she is. He is overjoyed by her return, and she tells him that she is now independently wealthy and offers to stay with him as his nurse; she contends she does not care about marrying anyone. Mr. Rochester anxiously asks if she is revolted by his blindness and by the loss of one of his hands, but she assures him that she is not and promises never to leave him.

The next day, Jane tells Mr. Rochester of everything that had happened to her in the past year, including St. John's marriage proposal. Mr. Rochester is obviously jealous of St. John, and insists that he would never have treated her as his subjugated mistress, but as his equal. Jane assures him that she does not love her cousin, and that her heart belongs only to Mr. Rochester. He asks her to marry him, and she agrees. As they walk together, finally able to achieve happiness together, Mr. Rochester reveals that four nights before, he had

prayed to God for a reunion with Jane and involuntarily recited Jane's name three times. Jane admits that she heard his voice in her own mystical vision that night and answered him in turn.

Analysis:

Jane's search for religion culminates with the mystical union between her and Mr. Rochester. Their bond is based on a profound, spiritual connection that passes through God and is formed by love. Mr. Rochester's spiritual development over the course of the novel also helps to make him a more suitable match for Jane; now he possesses much of the same reverence toward God that Jane had always exhibited. Together in their love, Jane and Mr. Rochester are able to fulfill God's calling while simultaneously attaining their own happiness.

Brontë also takes this opportunity to assert Jane's independence once again. Jane proudly admits to her autonomy, asserting: "I am an independent woman now," but also demonstrates it by a symbolic action at the end of the chapter: "I took that dear hand, held it a moment to my lips, then let it pass round my shoulder: being so much lower of stature than he, I served both for his prop and guide." Though Jane is of "much lower stature" than Rochester - she comes from humbler origins - she now has sufficient strength and independence to lead Rochester and, indeed, he is dependent on her for it. Her quest for autonomy is complete, and it does not exclude a happy marriage to someone she loves.

Volume III, Chapter 12 Summary:

Jane and Rochester have a quiet marriage. She writes to Moor House and Cambridge to tells her cousins the news; Diana and Mary send their joyful congratulations, but St. John never acknowledges her marriage. Finding Adèle unhappy at her strict boarding school, Jane enrolls her in a better school closer to home, and she is able to blossom into a lovely young woman. Jane writes that she is writing this narrative after ten years of marriage to Mr. Rochester, and she is still enthralled with her union to her husband. Their marriage is one of joy and equality, and Jane never faces the inferiority that she feared married life would bring. Two years into their marriage, Mr. Rochester regained vision in one of his eyes and he is able to see their newborn son. Jane also reports that Diana and Mary both married happily, while St. John remained a "faithful servant" to God and became a missionary in India. In his last letter to Jane, St. John reiterates that he has done his duty to God and hopes that the Lord Jesus will come for him soon.

Analysis:

Two major themes - Jane's desire for love and her search for religion - mingle with her greatest preoccupation, her need for independence, in different ways. As we have already seen, she has blended love with independence in her marriage with Rochester: "To be together is for us to be at once as free as in solitude, as gay as in company."

However, Jane is also able to maintain a spiritual relationship with God without sacrificing her independence. St. John, on the other hand, is not, as his letter to Jane reveals: "My Master…has forewarned me. Daily he announces more distinctly, 'Surely I come quickly!' and hour I more eagerly respond, 'Amen; even so come, Lord Jesus!'" Brontë ends the novel on this note to underscore the connections between St. John's religious devotion and her concern with female subjugation. Unlike St. John, Jane fears yielding her will to her

"Master" (or husband), and Brontë has used Bertha's imprisonment in the attic and Jane's imprisonment in the red-room as symbols for the ways in which Victorian society can confine women in marriage or in any other regard. Thus, Brontë concludes the novel on a critique of religion while demonstrating that marriage need not incorporate its restrictions of individual will. This ending also serves as a reminder of the importance of love in a relationship with God: St. John believed that love had no play in a life meant for God, and he ultimately dies alone. Jane, on the other hand, is able to combine her love with her religion and achieve all of her heart’s desires.