

11/12 English - Summer Read
Jane Eyre by Emily Brontë
Study Questions

Direction: Answer each question as a complete sentence. Points will be deducted for fragments.

1. Rochester tells Jane, "If you are cast in a different mould to the majority, it is no merit of yours; Nature did it". Are we intended to agree or disagree with this statement?
2. After Mason's visit to Thornfield, Jane asks herself, "What crime was this, that lived incarnate in this sequestered mansion, and could neither be expelled nor subdued by the owner?" What crime does Bertha represent? Why does Rochester keep her at Thornfield?
3. Does Rochester ever actually intend to marry Blanche Ingram? If so, when does he change his mind? If not, why does he go to such lengths to make Jane believe he does?
4. Rochester's disastrous marriage to Bertha was based on passion, while St. John refuses to marry Rosamund because of his passion for her. What is Brontë saying about the role passion should play in marriage?
5. What does St. John feel for Jane? Why does Jane end her story with his prayer?
6. Jane asserts her equality to Rochester, and St. John. What does Jane mean by equality, and why is it so important to her?
7. When Jane first appears at Moor House, Hannah assumes she is a prostitute, but St. John and his sisters do not. What distinguishes the characters who misjudge Jane from those who recognize her true nature?
8. When Jane hears Rochester's voice calling while he is miles away, she says the phenomenon "is the work of nature". What does she mean by this? What are we intended to conclude about the meaning of this experience?
9. Brontë populates the novel with many female characters roughly the same age as Jane—Georgiana and Eliza Reed, Helen Burns, Blanche Ingram, Mary and Diana Rivers, and Rosamund Oliver. How do comparisons with these characters shape the reader's understanding of Jane's character?
10. What is the balance of power between Jane and Rochester when they marry? Does this balance change from the beginning of the marriage to the time ten years later that Jane describes at the end of the novel?

12. Should an individual who holds a position of authority be granted the respect of others, regardless of his or her character?
13. At Gateshead, Jane is a rank outsider. What factors alienate Jane from the rest of the household, even the servants and the other children? How does the reader respond to Jane in consequence of her social isolation?
14. Explain how the dual narrative point-of-view (Jane as an adult recounting the story of Jane as a child) affects the presentation of the experience in the Red Room, and of Mrs. Reed's subsequent reaction to Jane's screaming.
15. Contrast the curriculum and discipline of Lowood School with that of the typical North American public school. Consider such matters as the number and types of teachers, subjects taught, length of school day, the number of students, the age range among the students, and the central place of Christian dogma at Lowood.
16. The importance of fire imagery throughout the novel is evident. For example, in "as if I had been wandering amongst volcanic-looking hills, and had suddenly felt the ground quiver" (Ch. 18) we have an image that suggests one of the novel's major themes. How does Brontë employ fire both literally and figuratively in the Thornfield section?
17. Jane's 'preternatural' dreams are intended to suggest her extrasensory perception, which of course is vital to her eventual reunion with Rochester. In Chapter 25, how does Brontë anticipate the dream psychology of Freud and Jung? Notice that these dreams are comments on Jane's situation as well as presentiments.
18. How does the manner in which Brontë communicates the "facts" surrounding Rochester's marriage to Bertha Mason influence our perception of that relationship? What arguments might have Rochester promulgated if he wished to obtain a divorce from Parliament? Why did Rochester keep Bertha a virtual prisoner at Thornfield for ten years? Why does he refer to Bertha as his "Indian Messalina"?
19. Interpret Jane Eyre's dreams at Thornfield (Part Three: Chapter 25). What literary and psychological purposes do they serve? Explain whether you find them plausible or implausible, and why.
20. Explain the multiple ironies of Rochester's conversation with Jane in Part Three: Chapter 23. What is Brontë's purpose here? What dramatic techniques does she employ?
21. The literary device of the mystically heard cry in the night can be traced back to the Old Testament account of an incident in the prophet Samuel's childhood (1 Samuel 3: 4). Why does Charlotte Brontë employ this device in Chapter 35?

22. How do Jane's experiences at Moorhouse offer a complete contrast to her experiences at Thornfield?

23. What considerations — other than the proverbial happy ending — do you suspect provoked Charlotte Brontë to restore Rochester's sight at the end of the Ferndean section of the novel?

24. The action of the book may be said to be dominated or overshadowed by four strong male characters: John Reed, the Reverend Mr. Brocklehurst, Edward Rochester, and St. John Rivers. What influence or effect does each of these males have on Jane Eyre's moral development? To what extent do these characters constitute Charlotte Brontë's construction of the male gender?