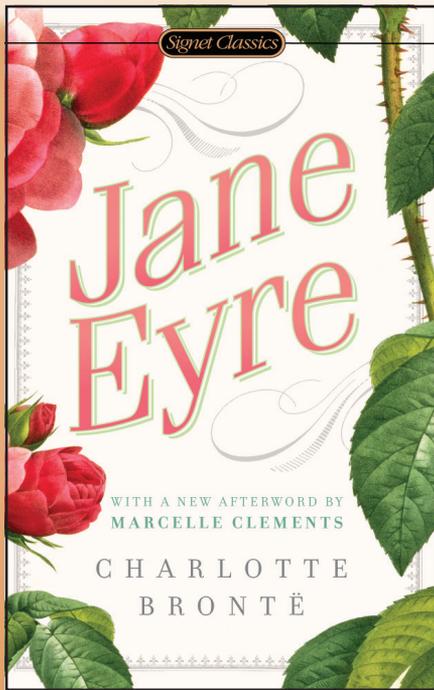


*Signet Classics*

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO THE SIGNET CLASSICS EDITION OF  
CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S  
**JANE EYRE**



By **COLLEEN A. RUGGIERI**

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S E R I E S   E D I T O R S

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## INTRODUCTION

*Jane Eyre* is a Victorian novel that will enable students to authentically appreciate a woman's quest for love and search for identity. First published in 1847, the book became a bestseller and established a platform for feminist writing in the nineteenth century. The novel would be appropriate for any curriculum thematically based on topics of heroism, dreams, women's studies, or social standing. It would also be an important unit of study for a course in British literature. Though written during the Victorian Age, *Jane Eyre* exemplifies many of the qualities of Romantic literature. The presence of supernatural elements, emotional connections, individual journeys, and idealistic attitudes make the Romantic elements easy to spot in this piece of Victorian literature. Dreary settings and a brooding male protagonist also establish the foundations on which many Gothic novels were set.

Much of *Jane Eyre* is autobiographical. Mirroring the heroine she created, Charlotte Brontë lost her mother at an early age, spent part of her youth in a boarding school, and worked as a governess. Like her protagonist, Brontë was unmarried and considered plain in appearance. In developing Jane, Brontë created the quintessential underdog, a character to which students will relate with ease.

While *Jane Eyre* is shorter than the typical Victorian novel, it is a challenging literary work for high school readers as they are transported to the Victorian Age through rich narrative and vocabulary. Readers will relate to the book's universal themes including: suffering through social class prejudice, exhibiting loyalty to those we love, longing for family, appreciating gender issues, and surviving a difficult childhood.

This teacher's guide utilizes a hands-on, active learning approach for the study of the novel. It emphasizes the historical relevance of the Victorian Age, along with the Romantic and Gothic qualities of novels written during this literary period. The first section will enable teachers to scaffold and design lesson plans. It provides an overview which includes a general plot synopsis, background of the author, a description of the literary period in which Brontë wrote, a brief historical overview, and a list of characters in the novel. The second section contains suggestions for teaching *Jane Eyre*. Questions and assignment suggestions are arranged according to the order in which they could be completed as students read and study the book. Activating schema and tapping into prior knowledge are essential for building comprehension, and materials in this section will provide help for sparking student interest and establishing connections prior to reading the book. Vocabulary words and a list of allusions are also included to assist students in their studies. Activities while reading are presented next; these materials include discussion questions, writing prompts, quotations from the text, and creative lesson ideas. Questions and assignments are written so that they may be presented directly to students, eliminating the need for additional work from teachers. Honors students could be assigned all of the items for each section of reading, and instructors might differentiate instruction further by choosing specific assignments for less skilled readers. Finally, activities for post-reading are also included. These activities focus on the book as a whole, including questions for discussion and writing, research topics, and suggestions for projects. The guide concludes with a bibliography of resources.

## BRONTË'S LIFE

Charlotte Brontë was born in Yorkshire, England on April 21, 1816. One of six children of an impoverished country clergyman, Charlotte suffered the early death of her mother, Maria Brontë, soon after the family moved to Haworth, England. Along with her sisters, Charlotte was sent to the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowen Bridge, a place with harsh conditions that contributed to the deaths of Maria and Elizabeth, her two older sisters. Fortunately, Charlotte and her younger sister, Emily, were able to return home and escape the horrible living conditions.

Upon her return, Charlotte and her three surviving siblings (her brother, Branwell; her sister, Emily; and her youngest sister, Anne) created their own literary community in Reverend Brontë's parsonage. In 1831, Charlotte went to school at Roe Head, where she became a teacher. Before completing finishing school in Brussels, she went on to serve in various governess positions.

After recovering from unrequited love for a married professor, she returned to England and collaborated with her sisters in publishing *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell* (the pseudonyms of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne) in 1846. The book sold only two copies, but Charlotte published *Jane Eyre* in 1847. The novel became an instant success, and her pseudonym caused a stir as to who may have written the book.

Sadly, Charlotte was unable to enjoy the fame and attention garnered from having written a successful novel. All her siblings died in quick succession, leaving her and her father the sole survivors of the Brontë family. Charlotte later wrote *Shirley* (1849), and *Villette* (1853). She became the wife of her father's curate, Arthur Bell Nichols in 1853 but died a few months after the marriage.

## THE LITERARY PERIOD

Brontë wrote during the Victorian Age of British literature, which lasted from 1833-1901, named in connection with the reign of Queen Victoria. The social, political, and historical influences of the Victorian Age permeated its literature. At the forefront was the ever-changing role of women. In the 1840's petitions began circulating for the advocacy of women's suffrage. The Married Women's Property Acts in 1882 secured women's rights to maintain property ownership after marriage. The Industrial Revolution opened doors for lower class women to take jobs in factories, most of which paid low wages and offered terrible working conditions. The plight of the educated but impoverished woman makes *Jane Eyre* a reflection of the times in which it was written.

The Victorian Age brought an increase in literacy, and reading novels became a popular pastime. The typical Victorian novel was directly connected to issues and concerns of contemporary society; authors strove to create realistic views of nineteenth century living. Stories were often published in serial form; readers anxiously awaited the monthly installments of single chapters. Along with Brontë, authors such as Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Anthony Trollope, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy penned works that became popular.

**A TIMELINE OF BRITISH LITERATURE FOR THE VICTORIAN AGE**

- 1837 Queen Victoria becomes the Queen of England.  
Charles Dickens publishes *The Pickwick Papers* and *Oliver Twist*.  
Thomas Carlyle writes *The French Revolution*.
- 1840 Victoria marries her cousin, Prince Albert.  
The Penny Post goes into effect.
- 1843 Charles Dickens publishes *A Christmas Carol*, which sells out in six days.  
William Wordsworth becomes poet laureate.
- 1844 The potato famine begins in Ireland.  
George Williams founds the YMCA.
- 1847 The Factory Act passes.  
Charlotte Brontë publishes *Jane Eyre*.  
Emily Brontë publishes *Wuthering Heights*.
- 1848 First Public Health Act.  
Women begin attending University of London.
- 1850 Public Libraries Act.  
Elizabeth Barrett Browning publishes *Sonnets from the Portugese*.
- 1854 Britain enters the Crimean War.
- 1855 Robert Browning publishes *Men and Women*.
- 1856 Henry Bessemer introduces process for making steel.
- 1859 Charles Darwin publishes *On the Origin of Species*.
- 1860 Florence Nightingale founds school for nurses.  
Food and Drug Act passes.
- 1867 Matthew Arnold publishes "Dover Beach."
- 1869 John Stewart Mill publishes *On the Subjection of Women*.
- 1872 George Eliot publishes *Middlemarch*.
- 1876 Queen Victoria becomes Empress of India.
- 1883 Robert Louis Stevenson publishes *Treasure Island*.
- 1894 Oscar Wilde publishes *The Importance of Being Ernest*.
- 1901 Death of Victoria.
-

**CHARACTERS IN *JANE EYRE***

**Miss Abbot:** The maid at Gateshead (25).

**Mr. Briggs:** The attorney of Jane's Uncle who helps Mr. Mason prevent Jane's wedding to Rochester and ultimately informs her of her inheritance (388).

**Mr. Brocklehurst:** The "treasurer and manager" of the Lowood School (50) who hypocritically preaches Christian beliefs while providing poor living conditions for the students.

**Helen Burns:** Jane's friend at Lowood School who submits to cruelty from her teacher. She is at peace with the thought of going to heaven, and she dies of consumption (81).

**Jane Eyre:** The orphaned protagonist and narrator of the novel. She is ten years old when the story begins (8), and she grows up to become an educated, independent woman.

**John Eyre:** Jane's uncle who leaves her an inheritance of 20,000 pounds (388).

**Blanche Ingram:** The beautiful socialite who hopes to marry Rochester to secure her position in society (175).

**Bessie Lee:** The nurse at Gateshead described as a "slim young woman...with a hasty temper" (29) who shows Jane kindness. She eventually marries Robert Leaven, the Reed family coachman.

**Mr. Lloyd:** The apothecary for the Reed family who was called in when the "servants were ailing" (18). He later validates Jane's difficulties while living with her aunt and indirectly helps Jane's situation at Lowood.

**Bertha Mason:** Rochester's secret wife, the woman ultimately revealed as the insane woman in the attic (297).

**Richard Mason:** Bertha's brother who foiled Jane's marriage to Rochester (194).

**Rosamond Oliver:** St. John's original love interest, who went on to marry Mr. Granby, "one of the best connected and estimable" men (402).

**Grace Poole:** Bertha's caregiver whose drunkenness often enables Bertha to escape (109).

**Eliza Reed:** Mrs. Reed's daughter and Jane's cousin, described as "headstrong and selfish" (14). After her mother's death, she enters a convent in France.

**Georgiana Reed:** Mrs. Reed's daughter and Jane's cousin, described as "a very acrid sprite" (14). With pink cheeks and golden curls, she was the beauty in the family. She is kinder to Jane when Mrs. Reed dies, and she ultimately marries a wealthy man.

**John Reed:** Mrs. Reed's son and Jane's cousin who regularly "bullied and punished" her (9). He grew up to become a drunken gambler, and he committed suicide when his mother refused to pay his debts.

**Mrs. Sarah Reed:** Jane's aunt who is described as a woman with "robust frame, square-shouldered and strong-limbed" (35). She resents Jane's presence in her home at Gateshead, partially due to her jealousy of the love her husband had for Jane. She sends Jane away to the Lowood School, and later tries to prevent Jane from receiving an inheritance. Before Mrs. Reed dies, she is forgiven by Jane.

**Uncle Reed:** The brother of Jane's mother who took her in upon her parents' death (15).

**Diana Rivers:** Jane's attractive cousin whom she meets at Moor House (356); she ultimately supports Jane's decision not to marry St. John. She goes on to marry a navy captain and sees Jane every year.

**Mary Rivers:** Jane's cousin who cares. They meet at Moor House (442); Jane instructs her in art. She marries a clergyman and sees Jane every year.

**St. John Rivers:** Jane's cousin who takes her in at Moor House and eventually proposes to her. Jane rejects him and observes his sense of detachment, despite his religious fervor (415).

**Edward Rochester:** Jane's brooding employer and the owner of Thornfield (122) with whom she ultimately falls in love.

**Miss Scatcherd:** A harsh instructor at Lowood School who targets Helen Burns with her cruelty (55).

**Miss Smith:** The red-cheeked sewing instructor at Lowood (50).

**Sophie:** The nurse who takes care of Adèle at Thornfield (103).

**Miss Temple:** The superintendent of Lowood School. Described as "tall, fair, and shapely" (47) and being "full of goodness" (56), she is a kind and sympathetic presence at Lowood. She becomes Jane's friend after Jane grows up and becomes an instructor, and when Miss Temple marries and leaves the school, Jane decides to seek a life beyond Lowood.

**Adèle Varens:** Mr. Rochester's ward, the little girl who was the daughter of Mr. Rochester's mistress, Celine, and for whom Jane is hired to be a governess. She was described as a "lively child, who had been spoilt and indulged," but she became a good student who was "obedient and teachable" (110).

**Celine Varens:** A French opera dancer for whom Rochester once felt a "grande passion" (143). They broke up after Rochester realized that she was interested only in his money. She abandoned her daughter, Adèle.

## SYNOPSIS

## CHAPTERS I-XV

*Jane Eyre* begins on a cold November day at Gateshead with somber wind and penetrating rain (6). Jane is ten years old; she is reading *Bewick's History of British Birds* in the same room as her cousins John, Eliza, and Georgiana. An orphan, Jane is reminded regularly that she is not from the same station in life as her cousins, with whom she now resides. "You are a dependent...you have no money," she is told by her bullying cousin John (10). John attacks Jane in front of his sisters, but Jane's aunt blames her for the incident and has her locked in the "red-room," the place in which her uncle died. While in the red-room, Jane reflects on her life. She remembers her uncle, who brought her to his home at Gateshead after her parents died—and states that he made his wife promise to care for Jane as "one of her own children (15).

She imagines that her Uncle Reed's ghost has entered the room because his wife did not keep the promise and she begins to scream. The servants, Bessie and Abbot, come to her rescue, but Mrs. Reed orders Jane back into the room where she falls unconscious.

Jane awakes with the feeling that she's had a nightmare. Mr. Lloyd, the family doctor, is there. He leaves the room and Jane overhears Bessie and Sarah talking about her condition. Jane declares that the incident gave her nerves a shock, and that she feels the "reverberation to this day" (19). After talking to Jane about her life at Gateshead, Mr. Lloyd suggests to Mrs. Reed that Jane should be sent away to school. Through Abbot and Bessie's discussion, Jane learns that before she was born, her mother married a poor clergyman and was cut off by her father. Her mother and father died within a month of each other from typhoid fever (25).

November, December, and half of January pass, while Jane still hopes to be sent away to school. Meanwhile, she continues to endure cruel treatment from her aunt. Mr. Brocklehurst, the director of the Lowood School, arrives and speaks to Jane about religion. Mrs. Reed tells him that she wants Jane to be raised with humility and consistency (34); she adds that Jane has a tendency to be a liar. When Brocklehurst leaves, Jane confronts her aunt about the hardships she has endured and in doing so feels as if she has experienced a sense of vengeance (37). Four days later, Jane begins her fifty-mile journey to Lowood School, and on a dark and rainy day, she arrives at her new home. The next day she meets her classmates and teachers. Jane soon realizes that the living conditions will be harsh at Lowood, as the girls are overworked and given scant meals. Mr. Brocklehurst arrives at the school and informs the teachers and students that Jane is a liar (67). Thankfully, she is later vindicated (75). While Brocklehurst preaches humility and poverty to the girls, he misappropriates the school's money to fund a posh life for his family. Jane endures several months at Lowood, and as spring arrives, so does an outbreak of typhoid fever. Helen dies, and when a doctor arrives, he finds Jane sleeping next to her (81). His cruelty exposed, Mr. Brocklehurst is discharged from his duties (84).

Jane spends six more years at Lowood, and then she stays and teaches there for two more years. She decides to seek a position as a governess and applies for a position at Thornfield. She accepts the position and learns that she will care for a young French girl named Adèle who is the ward of Mr. Rochester (102). Rochester tells Jane that Adèle is the daughter of a girlfriend for whom he once felt grand passion; sadly, the woman ran off and left her child.

Though she sees little of Rochester and describes him as "changeable and abrupt," Jane realizes that she is falling in love with him (129). One evening, after hearing a demonic laugh, Jane gets out of bed and discovers that Rochester's room is on fire (151). He tells her that it must have been started by his drunken servant Grace Poole.

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## CHAPTERS XVI-XXX

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Jane is surprised that the fire causes no reaction; Rochester's servants believe that he fell asleep with a candle by his bed, and Grace Poole shows no signs of guilt or remorse (156). Rochester leaves Thornfield for a few weeks, and when he returns he brings a group of wealthy guests. Among the party is a woman named Blanche Ingram,

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to whom Jane believes Rochester will offer his hand in marriage. Jane is lovesick, lamenting that “he made me love him without even looking at me” (177). The guests remain at Thornfield for several days. Meanwhile, a man named Mr. Mason appears, saying that he is an old friend. A gypsy also arrives and begins telling fortunes. Blanche’s mood visibly changes after spending time with “Sybil,” the gypsy. When it is Jane’s turn to have her fortune read, she is told that Blanche’s mood changed after the gypsy told her that Rochester’s estate may not be as grand as she had hoped (203). Eventually, Rochester reveals that he had disguised himself as the gypsy.

News arrives that Jane’s cousin John has died, and as a result her aunt, Mrs. Reed, has had a stroke and is requesting that she return to Gateshead. Upon her arrival, she hopes to reconcile with Mrs. Reed. To pass the time, she sketches portraits of her cousins, Eliza and Georgiana, and they are impressed by her talent. During the visit, Jane learns the root of her aunt’s animosity toward her—Mrs. Reed believed that her husband had more affection for Jane than he had for his own children. Before her death she gives Jane a letter that had arrived three years earlier from Jane’s uncle John Eyre. From the letter Jane learns that her uncle intended to adopt her and leave her his fortune (242).

Upon her return to Thornfield after her aunt’s death, Jane anticipates an engagement between Rochester and Blanche; much to her surprise, he proposes to her (258). Jane and Rochester prepare to exchange vows, but they are interrupted when a man shouts that Rochester is already married. The man introduces himself as Mr. Mason and states that he is the brother of Rochester’s wife Bertha Mason (296). Rochester announces that Bertha has gone mad, and when the wedding party returns to Thornfield, they witness Bertha behaving crazily (298). It is revealed that Bertha was behind the fire that occurred earlier and that Rochester keeps Bertha hidden upstairs under the care of Grace Poole. Jane then learns that Mr. Mason was sent to Thornfield with the news that the uncle who had planned to adopt her is now on his deathbed.

Rochester suggests that he and Jane should sneak away and live a life together, but Jane realizes that she would not be happy as his mistress. She makes the decision to leave Thornfield. Jane roams without direction, and a coachman eventually carries her to Whitcross. With no money she is forced to beg. She is nourished by the charity of a farmer who gives her a piece of bread (334). After spending a night in the woods, Jane follows a road that leads to the house of three siblings—Mary, Diana, and St. John Rivers (345)—and initially introduces herself as Jane “Elliot.” St. John tells Jane that he will try to find her a job.

### XXX-XXXVIII

A month passes and Jane spends time recovering with Mary and Diana as they prepare to return to their positions as governesses. St. John finds Jane a humble position as a teacher of poor girls at the Morton School. St. John tells his sisters that their uncle has died and that he has left his fortune to another relative.

Jane begins her teaching position at Morton, and she initially feels disappointed in her working conditions. St. John visits Jane, and they are interrupted by the arrival of Rosamond Oliver, whom Jane describes as an “earthly angel” (369). She realizes that St. John is in love with Rosamond. After discovering Jane’s real name, St. John

reveals to her that her uncle has died and left her twenty thousand pounds. She learns that St. John's full name is actually St. John Eyre Rivers, and that they are actually cousins. Though she has become an heiress, Jane revels in the fact that she has newfound relatives considers this true "wealth to the heart," (391) and decides to split her inheritance with St. John, Mary, and Diana (394).

St. John decides to become a missionary in India, and much to Jane's surprise, he proposes that she accompany him as his wife. Jane repeatedly rejects St. John, and he reacts coldly toward her. Ultimately, Jane decides that she must return to Thornfield, and when she arrives, she discovers "a silence of death" about it (432). She learns that Bertha Mason burned the house to the ground. In his attempt to save Bertha, who jumped to her death, and his servants, Rochester lost his sight and one of his hands (437). Jane goes to Rochester's current home, Ferndean, where he lives with two servants named John and Mary.

Rochester proposes to Jane, and she accepts. Time has passed; Jane and Rochester have been happily married for ten years. Rochester has regained sight in one of his eyes, and he was able to see the birth of their son. Jane closes the novel by telling her readers that cousins Mary and Diana have married, but St. John still remains single and serves as a missionary in India.

## PREPARING TO READ

Prior to reading the novel, it is important to activate schema and provide students with connections to what they will be studying. Have learners complete any (or all) of the following activities in preparation for reading *Jane Eyre*.

**Activity 1:** In order to introduce students to relevant themes in the novel, ask them to write brief responses to each of the following statements. Discuss student responses in class. This set of anticipatory prompts will provide a beginning activity that will serve to pique student interest in the novel.

1. Charity begins at home.
2. A woman's place begins at home.
3. People are often judged based on their social class or level of wealth.
4. Having a loving family can be worth more than being rich.
5. Young women should not marry men who are much older than they are.

**Activity 2:** In order to build background knowledge of the setting and historical period in which *Jane Eyre* was written, have students research elements of the Victorian Age. Topics such as fashion, etiquette, women's roles, art, music, religion, family life, child labor, and orphanages might be explored. Have students create PowerPoint presentations or stage a Victorian "museum" project in which each student brings in a display and serves as a curator for the topic investigated.

**Activity 3:** Throughout *Jane Eyre*, the issue of appearance is repeatedly mentioned. In order for students to appreciate the universal theme connected with beauty, have them review teen or pop culture magazines (*People*, *BOP/Tiger Beat*, *Seventeen*) and

analyze the importance of appearance for the women included in these publications. In addition to photographs or stories, have students also examine the advertisements present in the magazines they are viewing. As a class, discuss the pressure on women to be beautiful, and how contemporary society defines beauty.

**Activity 4:** Select quotes from several characters in the novel and put them on slips of paper. Have students draw slips randomly, and then have each student complete a free-write based on the thoughts that come to mind from the passage received. When encountering the quotes within the passages of *Jane Eyre*, have students revisit their free-writes and make further connections with the characters.

**Activity 5:** Read an interesting passage from *Jane Eyre* to the class, and have students predict what will happen in the novel.

## VOCABULARY LISTS

*Jane Eyre* is filled with rich vocabulary; many of the words may be unfamiliar to high school readers. Rather than requiring rote memorization of all words for testing, teachers should maximize vocabulary instruction by selecting words for student mastery. Classes might be given a glossary with a more extensive list for reference purposes.

Definitions provided in this section originate from Merriam-Webster's online edition, located at: <http://www.merriamwebster.com/>. Page numbers in parenthesis are used for easy reference to the novel.

In an effort to maximize exposure to vocabulary, create a word wall in the classroom. Using regular typing or construction paper, place each word and its definition on a sheet of paper. Consider using categories such as "adjectives," "verbs," and "nouns," or "SAT Study." If categorizing, you might use a different color paper for each set of words. For example, blue paper might be used for the words that will be stacked in the SAT category. Word walls can be teacher created, or students can do them. They may be placed on bulletin boards or simply placed on available wall or chalkboard space.

The following additional activities offer creative approaches to making meaning with words. For optimum learning, students should be given choices when directing their learning. Students may be asked to include any number of words for each of the following assignments:

1. Create a want ad that might appear in the local classified section of a newspaper.
2. Create an advertisement for a magazine such as *Seventeen* or *Sports Illustrated* that uses vocabulary in its text.
3. Using a sheet of construction or typing paper, create a collage of newspaper or magazine images that represent the meaning of the word. Write the word on the backside of the paper.
4. Using crayons, colored pencils or markers, draw the representation of the word's definition.
5. Look up synonyms for the word. Write or type the synonyms and cut them out in

- strips. Place the vocabulary word in the center, and attach the synonyms around it.
6. Create a comic strip of four panels, using vocabulary words in the dialogue of the strip's characters.
  7. Mark off four boxes on a regular sheet of paper. In the center of the paper, write the word. In the top left box, write a definition for the word. In the right box, write a situation in which the word might be used. In the bottom left box, write a synonym for the word. In the bottom right box, write an example of how the word might personally connect with your life.
  8. With a few classmates, reenact a scene from the book, using vocabulary words from the assigned reading.

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## CHAPTERS 1-12:

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**Lamentable:** *adjective*, that is to be regretted (7)

**Torpid:** *adjective*, sluggish in functioning or act (8)

**Bilious:** *adjective*, of or indicative of a peevish, ill-natured disposition (9)

**Antipathy:** *noun*, settled aversion or dislike (9, 234)

**Impudence:** *noun*, a state of being marked by contemptuous boldness or disregard of others (9)

**Pungent:** *adjective*, a sharp, stinging, or biting quality especially of odors (10)

**Trifle:** *noun*, something of little value, substance, or importance (11)

**Benefactress:** *noun*, a woman who confers a benefit; *especially*: one that makes a gift (11)

**Ignominy:** *noun*, deep personal humiliation and disgrace (11)

**Consecration:** *transitive verb*, to make or declare sacred (13)

**Opprobrium:** *noun*, something that brings disgrace (14)

**Reviled:** *transitive verb*, subjected to verbal abuse (14)

**Consternation:** *noun*, amazement or dismay that hinders or throws into confusion (14)

**Tumult:** *noun*, disorderly agitation or milling about of a crowd, usually with confusion of voices (14)

**Noxious:** *adjective*, physically harmful or destructive to living beings (15)

**Propensity:** *noun*, an often intense natural inclination or preference (15)

**Sanguine:** *adjective*, having temperament marked by sturdiness, high color, and cheerfulness (15)

**Interloper:** *noun*, one that intrudes in a place or sphere of activity (15)

**Abhor:** *transitive verb*, to regard with extreme dislike (17)

**Artifice:** *noun*, clever or artful skill; *also*: false or insincere behavior (17)

**Precocious:** *adjective*, exhibiting mature qualities at an unusually early age (17)

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**Parley:** *intransitive verb*, to speak with another (17)

**Cadence:** *noun*, a rhythmic sequence or flow of sounds in language (21)

**Insuperable:** *adjective*, incapable of being surmounted, passed over, or solved (26)

**Aversion:** *noun*, a feeling of repugnance toward something with a desire to avoid it (26)

**Audacious:** *adjective*, contemptuous of law, religion, or decorum (27)

**Capricious:** *adjective*, governed by impulsive and seemingly unmotivated notion or action (29)

**Usurious:** *adjective*, practicing usury: the lending of money at exorbitant interest rates (29)

**Preternatural:** *adjective*, exceeding what is natural or regular (41)

**Cessation:** *noun*, to delay, be idle (42, 121)

**Refectory:** *noun*, a dining hall (45)

**Ravenous:** *adjective*, very eager or greedy for food, satisfaction, or gratification (45)

**Throng:** *noun*, a multitude of assembled persons (45)

**Ewer:** *noun*, a vase-shaped pitcher or jug (52)

**Assiduity:** *noun*, marked by careful unremitting attention or persistent application (56, 240, 356)

**Truculent:** *adjective*, feeling or displaying ferocity (58)

**Penurious:** *adjective*, marked or suffering from a cramping and oppressive lack of resources (60)

**Solace:** *noun*, alleviation of grief or anxiety (61)

**Perfidious:** *adjective*, the quality or state of being faithless or disloyal (62)

**Ameliorated:** *transitive verb*, to make better or more tolerable (76)

**Effluvia:** *noun*, an invisible emanation; *especially*: an offensive exhalation or smell (78)

**Scourge:** *noun*, a cause of wide or great affliction (84)

**Ostensible:** *adjective*, intended for display: open to view (89)

**Soporific:** *adjective*, causing or tending to cause sleep (89)

**Effaced:** *transitive verb*, eliminated or made indistinct by or as if by wearing away a surface (99)

**Docile:** *adjective*, easily taught, led or managed (105)

**Injudicious:** *adjective*, not judicious: indiscreet, unwise (105)

**Fastidious:** *adjective*, very attentive to matters of cleanliness or detail (106)

**Stile:** *noun*, a step or set of steps for passing over a fence or wall (113)

**CHAPTERS 13-21**

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**Conjecture:** *verb*, to arrive at or deduce by conjecture: guess (121)

**Affability:** *adjective*, being pleasant and at ease in talking to others (131)

**Gregarious:** *adjective*, fond of company, sociable (134)

**Salubrious:** *adjective*, favorable to or promoting health or well-being (138)

**Assuage:** *transitive verb*, to lessen the intensity of (something that pains or distresses) (150)

**Lugubrious:** *adjective*, exaggeratedly or affectedly mournful (150)

**Confabulation:** *noun*, informal talk or discussion (151)

**Harangue:** *noun*, a ranting speech or writing (157)

**Anathema:** *noun*, something or someone that one vehemently dislikes (179)

**Traverse:** *verb*, to go or travel across or over (184, 248)

**Sagacity:** *adjective*, being keen in sense perception (189)

**Meretricious:** *adjective*, tawdrily and falsely attractive (190)

**Supercilious:** *adjective*, coolly and patronizingly haughty (191)

**Physiognomy:** *noun*, facial features held to show qualities of character by their configuration (193)

**Propitious:** *adjective*, favorably disposed (204)

**Impetuous:** *adjective*, marked by impulsive vehemence or passion (214)

**Presentiments:** *noun*, intuitive feelings about the future (223)

**Augment:** *verb*, to make greater, more numerous, larger, or more intense (231)

**Ascetic:** *adjective*, strict self-denial as a measure of personal and especially spiritual discipline (231)

**Eradicated:** *transitive verb*, done away with as completely as if by pulling up by the roots (234)

**Industrious:** *adjective*, constantly, regularly, or habitually active or occupied (240)

**CHAPTERS 22-29:**

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**Vicinage:** *noun*, a neighboring or surrounding district (248)

**Acumen:** *noun*, keenness of perception or discrimination, especially in practical matters (249)

**Automaton:** *noun*, an individual who acts in a mechanical fashion (257)

**Talisman:** *noun*, an object held to act as a charm to avert evil and bring good fortune (272)

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**Impediment:** *noun*, something that impedes; especially an organic obstruction to speech (294)

**Inanition:** *noun*, the exhausted condition that results from lack of food and water (302)

**Expostulate:** *intransitive verb*, to reason earnestly for purposes of dissuasion or remonstrance (304)

**Impetus:** *noun*, a driving force: impulse (307, 426)

**Avaricious:** *adjective*, greedy; excessively acquisitive in seeking to hoard riches (309)

**Eschew:** *transitive verb*, to avoid habitually; especially on moral or practical grounds (311)

**Remonstrance:** *noun*, an earnest presentation of reasons for opposition or grievance (311)

**Odious:** *adjective*, arousing or deserving hatred or repugnance (312)

**Emaciated:** *adjective*, abnormally thin or weak; especially because of illness or a lack of food (344)

**Pallid:** *adjective*, deficient in color (344)

**Quiescent:** *adjective*, marked by inactivity or repose: tranquilly at rest (351)

**Remuneration:** *noun*, something that pays an equivalent to for a service, loss, or expense (352)

## CHAPTERS 30-38

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**Elysium:** *noun*, the abode of the blessed after death in classical mythology (358)

**Morass:** *noun*, marsh, swamp; figurative, a complicated or confused situation (362)

**Ebullition:** *noun*, a sudden violent outburst or display (395)

**Coadjutor:** *noun*, one who works together with another (421)

**Superfluity:** *noun*, excess, oversupply (423)

**Veneration:** *noun*, respect or awe inspired by the dignity, wisdom, or talent of a person (425)

**Diffidence:** *noun*, state of being hesitant in acting or speaking through lack of self-confidence (431)

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**A GUIDE TO ALLUSIONS IN *JANE EYRE***

*Jane Eyre* has an abundance of Biblical, literary, and historical allusions. To enrich their comprehension, students might be asked to track allusions as they study the novel. A sampling of allusions, along with an explanation for each, is provided here for reference.

***Bewick's History of British Birds:*** A book that provides details about various species of birds, along with engraved illustrations. Jane enjoys the book as an escape from her life with her cruel aunt and cousins (7).

***Nero and Caligula:*** Mentioned in connection with John Reed, these notorious Roman leaders were known for excessive spending and evil deeds (10).

***Gulliver's Travels:*** Jane requests Bessie to fetch this novel written by Jonathan Swift. The story uses the form of a traveler's narrative to develop a satire about human nature (20).

***Guy Fawkes:*** Jane tells readers that Abbot compared her to Guy Fawkes. As part of the famous "Gunpowder Plot," Fawkes, along with fellow conspirators, attempted to blow up King James I and the Houses of Parliament in London in 1605. The reference is made in connection with Jane's status as an "ill-conditioned child" (25).

***Babel:*** A Biblical city in Shinar where the building of a tower is held in Genesis to have been halted by the confusion of tongues; Jane makes this reference to describe the chaos at Lowood School (46).

***Rasselas:*** An essay being read by Helen Burns; this work by Samuel Johnson contends that happiness may not always be within one's grasp (49).

***Bluebeard's castle:*** A fairy-tale in which a young wife has access to all the rooms in a castle except for the one that contains the bodies of her dead predecessors. Jane mentions this in connection to her lingering by a passage near the attic (108).

***Dian:*** A Celtic deity, Jane uses this name when she refers to Blanche's appearance with this name (175).

***Eliezer and Rebecca:*** Rochester and Blanche Ingram dress up as Eliezer and Rebecca during a game of charades. In the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis, Eliezer, Abraham's servant, is sent to find a bride for Abraham's son, Isaac. Eliezer does not marry Rebecca, just as Rochester will not marry Blanche (186).

***King Ahasuerus:*** The Persian king who is found in the Book of Esther and promises to give Esther what she wants, just as Rochester promises Jane (265).

***Samson:*** From the Bible in Judges 16, Samson reveals to his lover Delilah that his hair, the source of his strength, has never been cut; she uses this secret against him to bring about his destruction (265).

***Marmion:*** A book of Romantic poetry written by Sir Walter Scott that is read by Jane while St. John examines her drawings (377).

**Medusa:** From a Greek myth, Medusa is the mortal Gorgon who is slain when decapitated by Perseus. A person would turn to stone if looking at her. The allusion is made in connection to Jane's demeanor after she has learned that she is an heiress (389).

**Paul and Silas's prison:** Paul, the apostle, was thrown into prison with Silas for serving Jesus. After suffering severely, they were miraculously freed. Jane makes reference to this as she reflects on the voice she had heard that seems like an inspiration (429).

**Nebuchadnezzar:** The proud king of the Babylonian Empire who experienced a fall. His deterioration is described in The Bible as "he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws." Jane makes a reference to Nebuchadnezzar when she returns to Rochester and finds him in seclusion (444).

**Apollo:** The Greek god of sun and music. Rochester uses this reference in response to Jane's description of St. John (449).

## DURING READING

The following questions may be answered as a whole class, in small groups, or in individual journals. Rather than asking students to recall rote details, the prompts are designed so that students may analyze the novel with a higher level of thinking. If answers are developed individually, it would be helpful for students to share their ideas in class discussion or on a blog so that they may appreciate different answers and interpretations of the text.

## CHAPTERS 1-4

1. Review the details Brontë provides about the weather in the opening chapter of the novel. How does this establish the mood of the story when it begins?
2. Why is it ironic that Jane is seen as the guilty party in the incident with John Reed? To whom does she compare John? What is she implying in this comparison?
3. Review the following passage: "I began to recall what I had heard of dead men, troubled in their graves by the violation of their last wishes, revisiting the earth to punish the perjured and avenge the oppressed; and I thought Mr. Reed's spirit, harassed by the wrongs of his sister's child, might quit its abode—whether in the church vault or in the unknown world of the departed—and rise before me in this chamber. I wiped my tears and hushed my sobs, fearful lest any sign of violent grief might waken a preternatural voice to comfort me, or elicit from the gloom some haloed face, bending over me with strange pity" (16). How does this passage contribute to the gothic effects in the novel? Remember that Jane is ten years old. How typical are these insights for a child this age? Later, Jane comments that the incident gave her nerves such a shock that she feels the "reverberation to this day" (19). Analyze the thought of a frightening childhood incident and its ability to imprint itself on a person's long-term memory.

4. Review the following quotation: "I always took my doll; human beings must love something, and in the dearth of worthier objects of affection, I contrived to find a pleasure in loving and cherishing a faded graven image, shabby as a miniature scarecrow" (28). In your own words, what is Jane saying about the need for love?
5. Explain why the first person point of view is effective thus far.
6. Throughout the novel, fairytale imagery unfolds. How might Jane be compared to Cinderella in this early section of the novel? Use specific examples to support your answer.

## CHAPTERS 5-8

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1. Compare the religious attitudes of Helen Burns to those of Mr. Brocklehurst. With which views does Jane want her readers to agree or sympathize? Cite text to support your answer.
2. How do Miss Temple and Helen Burns affect Jane's attitudes about life? Give examples to support your ideas.
3. Examine the harsh living conditions present at Lowood. What are some of the difficulties encountered by Jane and the other girls? What message does this send about the life of orphaned children? What statement does this make about those who are commissioned to run organizations that provide for the care of others?
4. How is the weather used again to establish mood?
5. Review the following passage: "If people were always kind and obedient to those who are cruel and unjust, the wicked people would have it all their own way: they would never feel afraid, and so they would never alter, but would grow worse and worse" (57). Do you agree with this philosophy? Why or why not? How might this be applicable in today's society?

## CHAPTERS 9-12

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1. Jane's appearance is alluded to in this section. How important do you think Jane feels that physical beauty is? While Jane may lack in physical beauty, what other qualities are emerging as her strengths?
2. Jane comments: "It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquility: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it" (111). Analyze her statement in terms of politics, women's roles, and contemporary society.

## CHAPTERS 13-17

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1. How does Rochester treat Jane during their initial encounter? What might this foretell about how their relationship will develop?
  2. Rochester comments, "Most things free-born will submit to anything for a salary" (137). Do you agree with his philosophy? Why or why not? From what you know of Jane, will it be true of her? Use text-based examples to support your views.
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3. Rochester states, "Remorse is the poison of life" (138). To what extent do you agree or disagree with Rochester? Support your opinion.
4. Why might the events of Rochester's life (143) have seemed shocking to Victorian readers?
5. Explain whether or not Blanche Ingram might be considered an ideal catch for Rochester. How might men of today's world view her?
6. On page 163 more reference is made to the description of Jane's appearance. Why do you think these comments are a continuing thread throughout the story?

## CHAPTERS 18-22

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1. Describe the gypsy who appears in this section. What is the relevance of her conversation with Blanche? What does it reveal?
2. Jane states: "It is a happy thing that time quells the longings of vengeance, and hushes the promptings of rage and aversion" (234). Describe how this passage relates to her feelings toward her aunt, and analyze whether or not it presents a universal truth.
3. Explain the significance of the following quotation: "What is so headstrong of youth? What so blind of inexperience?" (247).

## CHAPTERS 23-28

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1. What messages or symbolism might be inferred from Bertha Mason, often described as the "madwoman in the attic"?
2. Why might Jane's decision to leave Thornfield be the most important one she makes in the novel?
3. How does St. John refer to Jane's appearance on page 345? Why did Brontë reiterate this description of Jane's physical appearance?

## CHAPTERS 29-32

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1. How does Jane's stay at Marsh End and the Moor House affect her state of mind?
2. Why would Jane use the pseudonym Jane Elliot?
3. Describe the friendship Jane develops with Diana and Mary.

## CHAPTERS 33-38

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1. St. John refers to Jane as "unfeminine." On what grounds does he make this statement? How fair is his comment?
  2. How is St. John's intensity in opposition to his religious intentions?
  3. Based on the way the novel ends, why might Jane be considered the first modern fictional heroine?
-

4. When Jane chooses to be with Rochester, their relationship is on equal terms. This would have been quite a revolutionary relationship in Victorian times. Would a relationship like Jane and Rochester's be similar to the ideal partnership in today's times? Are there still relationships in which husbands take a more controlling role as provider and protector? How might *Jane Eyre* have established a new precedent for looking at a woman's role in society?
5. Some critics believe the ending of the novel implied that a woman in Victorian times could only find true happiness through marriage. Do you agree with this interpretation, or not? How has this attitude evolved through time?

## AFTER READING

### DEALING WITH THE NOVEL AS A WHOLE

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Upon completion of the novel, some instructors might choose to administer a traditional objective or essay exam. Activities for alternative assessment are offered here. Specific items might be assigned to students, or students could be given the option to pick one or several of these assignments. These options could also be included in addition to a traditional test, based on the instructional time allowed for the unit or on the skill levels of students.

### TOPICS TO DEMONSTRATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE NOVEL

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1. Write a composition in which you compare the role and social standing of a governess in the Victorian Age to a nanny in today's society.
  2. Many critics consider *Jane Eyre* to be a treatise on gender equality. Explain how the male characters in the novel's patriarchal society threaten her quest for equality. Consider the words and actions of Mr. Brocklehurst, Rochester, and St. John Rivers.
  3. Review passages in the novel that include descriptions of the weather. How does the use of weather help establish mood? Is the weather part of a Gothic element? Why or why not?
  4. Discuss the different settings: Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Moor House, and Ferndean Manor. Explain the impact each locale has on Jane's growth and development as a character.
  5. Review the definition of a doppelganger. How might Rochester's wife Bertha be Jane's doppelganger?
  6. Throughout the book, Jane is described as "plain" or unattractive. Despite this, Erica Jong refers to her as "the first modern heroine in fiction." Explain the heroic qualities possessed by Jane that matter more than appearance. How could Jane's life serve as a model for female readers in today's world?
  7. Find at least two instances in the novel in which dreams and visions play an important role in the characters' lives and decisions. Reflect on other pieces of
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literature in which characters also rely on dreams or visions in their decision making.

8. *Jane Eyre* tells her own story in the novel. How important is point of view in the book? How might the story have been different if it had been told from a third person point of view? From another character's point of view?
9. Cite at least three themes or central messages from *Jane Eyre* and explain how they are developed.
10. Fairytales are alluded to throughout *Jane Eyre*. Explain the links between at least two passages to fairytales.
11. Review the fires that occur in the novel. Explain the importance of each on the development of plot, symbolism, and themes.
12. Trace the bird imagery used in the novel.

## ACTIVITIES TO EXTEND LEARNING

At the conclusion of class study of *Jane Eyre*, students may select from these suggested activities to enrich their study of the novel. They may work individually or as part of a team. Choices should be made depending upon students' individual strengths and interests. Instructors may wish to design rubrics so that students will have a clear understanding of evaluation.

1. Create a podcast in which you make connections between *Jane Eyre* and today's world.
2. Write a multi-genre paper in which you present the major elements of the novel. Include at least ten different genres. These might include genres such as: a diary entry, a newspaper article, a poem, a wanted poster, an advice column, a bumper sticker, a shopping list, a menu, a CD liner, a eulogy, an invitation, or an interview.
3. Create a time capsule containing ten artifacts symbolic of *Jane Eyre*. Present your time capsule to the class, providing text-based links to justify your choices of each artifact.
4. Choose your favorite section of the book and rewrite it as a graphic novel.
5. Suppose that the characters from *Jane Eyre* could travel through time to make an appearance on *Oprah*. Write a dialogue for at least five characters appearing on the show.
6. Setting plays a key role in the development of *Jane Eyre*. Create a travel brochure in which you present the various components of setting. Invite tourists to visit particular places and include suggested itineraries and activities.
7. Imagine that you are on a team competing on *The Apprentice*. Create a campaign in which you convince high school students across the country to read *Jane Eyre*. You might include, for example, a billboard design, a print ad, a radio spot, or a commercial.
8. Create a map in which you track Jane's journeys in the novel.

9. Create a list of ten poignant quotations (not already discussed in class) from the novel. At the top of each page, present the quotation using creative font choices. Write a journal entry reflecting on each.
10. Review the sentiments and designs of Victorian greeting cards. Create a series of five greeting cards that might have been sent by the characters in the novel.
11. Watch a film version of *Jane Eyre*. Compare it to the novel. Describe the similarities and differences, and decide if the movie enriches or hinders one's appreciation of the story.
12. Create a set of trading cards for the characters in *Jane Eyre*. On the front of each card, provide an image of the character. On the back, provide a profile. Your profile might include physical appearance, personality traits, connections to other characters, or memorable quotations.
13. Examine the elements of Gothic and Romantic novels (help is available at <http://www.virtualsalt.com/gothic.htm>). Write an essay in which you analyze these elements as they appear (or don't appear) in the novel.
14. In honor of Jane's sketches and watercolors, design your own art exhibit in which you pay tribute to the novel. Reread the descriptions she provides of her work, and create original art that reflects your interpretations of the pieces.
15. Develop a dramatic interpretation of an important scene in the book. Prepare for and present a performance in class.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

### THE LIFE OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË

<http://www.bronte.org.uk/>

The Brontë parsonage museum.

<http://www.bronteparsonage.blogspot.com/>

The Brontë parsonage blog.

<http://www.online-literature.com/brontec/>

The Literature Network's biography, which includes additional links to other British authors.

<http://www.online-literature.com/brontec/>

The Victorian Web: Literature, history and culture in the age of Victoria.

<http://www.haworth-village.org.uk/brontes/charlotte/charlotte.asp>

Haworth Village's site provides an overview of Brontë's life.

## JANE EYRE RESOURCES

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<http://www.nd.edu/~cvandenb/jefamtree.htm>

Jane Eyre's Family Tree

[http://www.aetv.com/class/admin/study\\_guide/archives/aetv\\_guide.0362.html](http://www.aetv.com/class/admin/study_guide/archives/aetv_guide.0362.html)

Support site for the A&E film version of *Jane Eyre*

<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/bronte/cbronte/eyreov.html>

A wide range of information about the author and the novel.

<http://www2.sbbs.se/hp/cfalk/novels.htm#janeeyre>

A site that offers rich comparisons between *Jane Eyre* and other works.

<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/lessons/20070427friday.html>

The New York Times Learning Network presents steps for adapting the classic novel for study as readers' theater.

## THE VICTORIAN AGE

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[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian\\_britain/women\\_home/ideals\\_womanhood\\_01.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/victorian_britain/women_home/ideals_womanhood_01.shtml)

An article titled "Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britain" by Lynn Abrams.

<http://www.logicmgmt.com/1876/etiquette/etiquette.htm>

Victorian Etiquette

<http://www2.wwnorton.com/college/english/nael/victorian/welcome.htm>

An overview of the time period.

<http://www.logicmgmt.com/1876/etiquette/etiquette.htm>

Daily life in Victorian England.

<http://www.victorianamagazine.com/>

A free online magazine for Victorian enthusiasts.

<http://www.palettesofvision.com/victorian/>

Art in Victorian England.

<http://www.palettesofvision.com/victorian/>

Victorian Fashions.

<http://www.victoriantradingco.com/cards/cardselect.html>

Free e-cards with Victorian sentiments.

<http://www.geocities.com/victorianmedicine/entire.html>

Victorian Medicine.

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## RELATED TITLES

### ***Wuthering Heights*** (1847), Emily Brontë

Through the passionate and ultimately self-destructive love of Catherine and Heathcliff, this novel explores questions of identity and the individual's relationship with society.

### ***The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*** (1848), Anne Brontë

Carries strong feminist themes.

### ***The Woman in White*** (1860), Wilkie Collins

This prime exemplar of the "sensation novel" uses mistaken identity, wrongful imprisonment in an insane asylum, and other Gothic conventions in a plot that also addresses the theme of women's place in society.

***The Portrait of a Lady*** (1881), Henry James

Isabel Archer, the intelligent and independent heroine of James's novel, suffers a fate that contrasts sharply with Jane's when she succumbs to a stifling marriage.

***Rebecca*** (1938), Daphne du Maurier

Du Maurier's novel features a mysterious and destructive first wife, a brooding romantic hero with secrets, and a young heroine of equivocal social position.

***Wide Sargasso Sea*** (1966), Jean Rhys

A revisionist telling of *Jane Eyre*, this short novel is narrated by Bertha Mason and explicitly treats the issues of West Indian slavery and English racism dealt with obliquely in Brontë's book.

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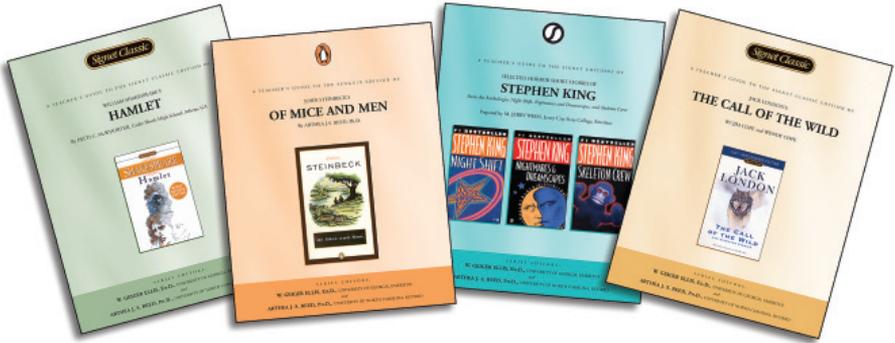
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