

Jane Eyre - Summary

Charlotte Brontë, using her pen name Currer Bell, added a preface to the second edition of *Jane Eyre*. First she thanks those who have "aided and approved" her: her public, the press, and her publishers and their reviewers. Then she has a few choice words to say about her critics. She refutes those who claim that the questioning of conventions and self-righteousness in *Jane Eyre* is an attack on morality and religion. It is important, she says, to expose the bigotry and hypocrisy that often underlie human interpretations of Christianity. Finally she launches into praise for William Thackeray and his new work, *Vanity Fair*. She regards Thackeray as a brilliant satirist who, by revealing the "warped system of things," will help to restore true morality. She ends by dedicating the second edition of *Jane Eyre* to Thackeray.

Brontë, still using the name Currer Bell, appended a new note to the third edition. In this note she disavows authorship of any works but *Jane Eyre*.

Chapter 1

The story opens on a rainy November day at Gateshead Hall. Jane Eyre, age 10, is banished from the company of the three Reed children, Eliza, John, and Georgiana, who are gathered happily around their mother in the drawing room. Jane settles down in a window seat to enjoy making up stories about the pictures in a nature book. Constantly terrorized by John's bullying, Jane hopes to avoid being hit by him, but he hits her in the face. John tells her she has no right to read their books because she's poor and dependent on the Reeds, and then he throws the heavy book at her head, drawing blood. Provoked, Jane calls him "wicked and cruel." Then John charges at her, pulling her hair and grabbing her shoulder. Pushed to her limit, Jane fights back. Brought in by Georgiana and Eliza, Mrs. Reed intervenes and blames Jane for the incident. She orders her servants, Bessie and Abbot, to lock Jane in the red-room for punishment.

Chapter 2

While she and Abbot are locking Jane in the red-room, Bessie comments that Jane has never behaved like this before. She advises Jane that "if [she] become[s] passionate and rude, [Mrs. Reed] will send [her] away" and she will have nothing. Locked in the cold, seldom-used red-room, Jane is upset because she tries so hard to be good, yet she's always accused of being "naughty and tiresome, sullen and sneaking." As evening approaches the room grows dark and cold, rain beats on the windows, and the wind howls. Jane's anger fades and she thinks of her uncle, who took her in as an infant when her parents died. On his deathbed, in this very red-room, he had asked Mrs. Reed to promise to keep Jane as one of her own children. Jane knows "that if [her uncle] had been alive he would have treated [her] kindly." Soon she begins to fear that her uncle, troubled because his last wishes have been ignored, might appear in the room as a ghost. When she sees a gleam of light on the wall, she thinks a spirit is in the room. In a panic Jane screams, tries to open the door, and begs to be let out. Bessie and another servant arrive, and Bessie tries to defend Jane, but Mrs. Reed declares that the girl must stay in the room another hour. Forced back into the room, Jane faints.

Chapter 3

Jane awakens that night in her own bed, being tended by Mr. Lloyd, the apothecary, and talks briefly to Bessie. The next morning Jane is tearful and depressed. Bessie tries to cheer her up, bringing her a tart on a plate she long admired, but Jane won't eat it. Bessie asks if she would like a book, and Jane quickly asks for *Gulliver's Travels*, a favorite. It does not lift her mood either. Mr. Lloyd returns and gently coaxes Jane to tell him what has made her so unhappy. She tells him about being bullied by John Reed, about having no family, and about her desire to get away from Gateshead. Mr. Lloyd suggests that going away to school might be just the change she needs. After weighing the pros and cons of this idea, Jane agrees. Later she overhears the servants talking about her parents and learns that Mrs. Reed, happy to be rid of Jane, has agreed to Mr. Lloyd's suggestion.

Chapter 4

After the red-room incident, Mrs. Reed isolates Jane more than ever, particularly after Jane reproaches her: "What would Uncle Reed say to you, if he were alive?" Bessie continues to help her, however. In mid-January, Mr. Brocklehurst, headmaster of Lowood Institution (the school Mrs. Reed plans to send Jane to), arrives at Gateshead to meet Jane. The stern clergyman is not pleased that, although Jane readily lists the parts of the Bible she likes, she pronounces the Psalms "not interesting." Mrs. Reed warns Mr. Brocklehurst that Jane has a "tendency to deceit" and should be closely watched. Jane is stunned. She realizes that Mrs. Reed has poisoned the headmaster's mind against her, dashing her hopes that, once she is away from Gateshead, people will see her as she really is and like her.

When Brocklehurst leaves (after giving Jane a pamphlet, the "Child's Guide"), Jane lashes out at her aunt. She denies being deceitful and declares how much she dislikes Mrs. Reed and her children. Mrs. Reed is taken aback by the outburst, and for a moment Jane savors her victory. However, she feels a curious letdown afterward and sees the folly of her behavior. In Jane's last few days at Gateshead, Bessie shows kindness and sympathy for her, and Jane is heartened by the attention.

Ch-5

A coach comes, and Jane clings to Bessie's neck until she is put on the vehicle, with the servant telling the coach's guard to take care of the girl. Jane then travels by herself for a full day on a coach to Lowood, where she meets Miss Temple and another teacher. Jane describes her first evening and day at Lowood. The sprawling building houses about 80 students. Daily activities, from meals to prayers to classes, are highly regimented. The dormitories are cold; the girls are dressed in old-fashioned, cheap uniforms; and the meals are insubstantial and of poor quality.

Jane observes classes, and Miss Temple replaces the poor breakfast with lunch she pays for herself. This lunch is eaten in the garden. In the garden Jane meets an older girl, Helen Burns, who answers Jane's many questions about the school and the teachers. Helen agrees with Jane that the school superintendent, Miss Temple, is the best teacher at Lowood. Later that day a teacher, Miss Scatcherd, makes Helen Burns stand in the middle of the schoolroom as punishment for some infraction in class. Jane is impressed and puzzled by the way Helen accepts her punishment—not with "distress and shame," as Jane would have done, but with serene composure.

Chapter 6

On her second day at Lowood, Jane begins classes, noting how cold the classroom is. She notices that Miss Scatcherd frequently targets Helen Burns for punishment over minor infractions; she beats Helen "a dozen strokes with the bunch of twigs." Jane asks Helen how she can endure such treatment without becoming angry and rebellious. Helen explains that she benefits from the criticisms because Miss Scatcherd is right about her "faults." Helen admits to being disorganized and undisciplined, "careless" and forgetful. Miss Scatcherd, Helen says, is only trying to improve her. Jane says she dislikes people who dislike her and feels compelled to defy anyone who punishes her unjustly. Helen advises Jane to "read the New Testament" and follow Christ's advice to "love your enemies." When Jane tells Helen why she can't love Mrs. Reed and John, Helen responds that Jane will be "happier if [she] trie[s] to forget" both Mrs. Reed's cruelty and her own "passionate emotions."

Chapter 7

Jane describes in more detail the hardships of life at Lowood during her "first quarter." The girls are always hungry because of the small portions and poor quality of the food, and they don't have warm clothing for the long trek to church in the cold and snow. After Jane has been at Lowood for three weeks, Brocklehurst visits the school. Brocklehurst reprimands Miss Temple for spending too much money on food and clothing for the students. Then he demands that girls with abundant or curly hair have it cut off completely to make them look modest and plain. Brocklehurst's very well dressed wife and two daughters come in. Jane drops her slate, breaking it, and for punishment Brocklehurst has her stand on a stool at the front of the room for 40 minutes. Then he warns the entire school to shun Jane because she is a liar. Mortified, Jane's emotions begin to get the better of her. As her emotions begin to rise again, Helen comes near her to talk to the teacher and meets her eyes in a silent signal of support. When Helen returns to her seat, she smiles warmly at Jane, "like a reflection from the aspect of an angel."

Ch-8

When her punishment is over, Jane crouches in a corner, overcome with grief because she's sure everyone will shun her. Helen arrives and tries to comfort Jane, pointing out that, because Mr. Brocklehurst is disliked, the other students are unlikely to believe him. She advises Jane not to worry about what others think of her as long as her conscience is without guilt. Jane says, "If others don't love [her, she'd] rather die." Helen tells Jane to focus less on "the love of human beings" and more on the "kingdom of spirits." Angels, Helen says, "recognize our innocence." Jane "calm[s]" but feels "concern" when Helen coughs.

Miss Temple invites Jane and Helen to her room, where they later have tea. At Miss Temple's prompting, Jane recounts the tale of her childhood with Mrs. Reed including Mr. Lloyd's visit after the incident in the red-room. Miss Temple, who knows Mr. Lloyd, says she'll write to him, and, should he confirm Jane's account, she'll tell the school of Jane's innocence. At her request a kitchen servant brings tea for her and the two girls, and she treats them to some seed cake. Afterward Miss Temple and Helen Burns discuss several topics, including history and nature, in a conversation that dazzles Jane. That night Miss Scatcherd finds Helen's belongings in disarray, and the next day she punishes Helen for being disorganized. She tapes a paper with the word *slattern* on it to Helen's head and makes her wear it all day. When Miss Scatcherd leaves for the day, Jane tears off the paper and throws it into the fire. A week later, having heard from Mr. Lloyd, Miss Temple announces that Jane has been completely cleared of the charges made against her. Jane plunges forward with her studies with renewed enthusiasm, happier at Lowood, despite its flaws and deprivations, than she ever was at Gateshead.

Ch-9

The forbidding winter landscape gives way to flowers and sunshine, but spring also brings a typhus epidemic. More than half the students fall ill, and Lowood is transformed into a hospital. Helen Burns is stricken with consumption (tuberculosis). Jane underestimates the severity of Helen's condition until one night, when she learns that Helen is dying and is being cared for in Miss Temple's room. Longing to see Helen, Jane finds her way to Miss Temple's room, guided by the light of the moon through the windows. Helen assures Jane that she's "very happy" and ready to die. Jane asks if Helen is "sure ... there is such a place as heaven,

and that our souls can get to it when we die" and whether she will see Helen again there. Helen assures Jane that she one day "will come to the same region of happiness" and "be received by the same mighty, universal Parent." Privately Jane doubts whether such a "region" exists, but she clasps her arms around her friend and they fall asleep. When Jane awakens in the morning, a nurse is carrying her back to her room. She later learns that Helen died during the night. Fifteen years later a gravestone is placed on Helen's grave, presumably by Jane, inscribed with Helen's name and the word *resurgam*.

Ch-10

The passage of eight years has brought many changes at Lowood. After the typhus epidemic, an investigation was made into conditions at the school. Mr. Brocklehurst's power was reduced, and a committee of benefactors formed to make many changes, improving students' lives. Jane has stayed on through all the changes—as a student for six years and as a teacher for two years.

For Jane's eight years at Lowood, Miss Temple filled the roles of "mother, governess, and ... companion." By modeling herself after Miss Temple, the impulsive, angry 10-year-old who arrived at Lowood has become a "disciplined and subdued character." When Miss Temple marries and moves away, however, Jane begins to want change, praying "for a new servitude," and advertises independently and secretly for a governess position. A response arrives from Mrs. Fairfax, offering Jane a position at Thornfield, where her pupil will be a 10-year-old girl. Jane asks the new superintendent of teachers for permission to leave. She passes the request to Mr. Brocklehurst, who writes to ask Mrs. Reed if she will agree to the change. Mrs. Reed replies that she cares not, as she "had long relinquished all interference" in Jane's life. Accordingly the school committee grants Jane permission to go and provides her with a testimonial to her character and ability.

About two months later, the night before she is to leave for Thornfield, Jane receives a surprise visit from Bessie, who is now married, with two children, Bobby and Jane. Bessie brings Jane up to date on the Reed family: the sisters are always quarreling; John failed at college and is living a degenerate life pursuing pleasure; and Mrs. Reed is unhappy about how much money John spends. Bessie is delighted with Jane's success. She mentions that "nearly seven years ago, a Mr. Eyre came to Gateshead" looking for Jane. Learning that Jane was 50 miles (80 kilometers) away, he said he had to leave for Madeira and wouldn't have time to visit her. Bessie thinks Mr. Eyre is Jane's uncle. The next morning they see each other briefly before Bessie sets off to return to Gateshead and Jane leaves for Thornfield and her next adventure.

Ch-11: Jane starts the chapter by speaking to the reader and calling out the setting, first saying, "A new chapter in a novel is something like a new scene in a play; and when I draw up the curtain this time, reader," she asks the reader to picture her room at the inn. The passage is also briefly in the present tense. Then Jane describes the final segment of her journey to Thornfield.

Jane arrives at Thornfield on a cold October evening, and Mrs. Fairfax gives her a warm welcome. The next day Jane discovers that Mr. Rochester, who is away, is the owner of Thornfield, not Mrs. Fairfax. Jane's pupil is his ward, a young French girl named Adèle Varens (Adèle has a nurse, Sophie). Following lessons Mrs. Fairfax gives Jane a tour of the manor house, from the richly decorated first-floor rooms to the "dark and low," old-fashioned third-floor rooms. When Jane hears strange laughter coming from one of the third-floor rooms, Mrs. Fairfax explains that it must be Grace Poole, a servant.

Chapter 12 : Over the next months, from October to January, Jane settles in at Thornfield. She finds some satisfaction in her daily routine but feels restless as well. She had hoped for a more exciting environment, where she could meet interesting people and have new experiences.

One cold December day, Jane walks to the town of Hay to post a letter. En route she stops to rest and observe "the rising moon." Suddenly a huge dog and a man on horseback come thundering along the road. The horse slips on ice in the road and falls, and Jane helps the man, who has injured his ankle. Before he rides off, he questions her briefly, learning that she is the governess at Thornfield. As Jane walks on, she can't shake the image of the stranger's face, although it's not a handsome one. Returning to Thornfield, she notes the moon's progress over the hilltops. Once inside she learns that Mr. Rochester has returned home and the surgeon is tending to the ankle he sprained when his horse fell.

Chapter 13 : The next day Thornfield becomes a lively place as people come and go to do business with Mr. Rochester. In the evening he asks Jane, Mrs. Fairfax, and Adèle to have tea with him. Mr. Rochester says his first sight of Jane on the road made him think of fairy tales and suggests that she "had bewitched [his] horse" to make it fall. He questions Jane about her family, Lowood, and her accomplishments, having her play piano and taking particular interest in her drawings, including a "bird and mast ... [and] a drowned corpse," a "woman's shape" as "the Evening Star," and "an iceberg ... [and] colossal head" with a crown. Mr. Rochester adopts a bantering tone with Jane, and she falls in with it. Jane is intrigued by him. She learns later from Mrs. Fairfax that Mr. Rochester was the younger son of his family and he inherited Thornfield nine years ago. Before that he'd been estranged from his father and brother because they put him in a "painful position" for the sake of money.

Ch-14 One evening Mr. Rochester invites Jane and Adèle to the dining room after dinner. After giving Adèle a present, he invites Mrs. Fairfax to join them and asks her to amuse Adèle while he talks with Jane. After he and Jane discuss beauty and appearance, Rochester mentions that "Fortune has knocked [him] about" so much that he's as "tough as an India-rubber ball," but he hopes to be transformed "back to flesh." They speak of class and equality, and the words *command* and *subordinate* appear in their conversation.

Jane reminds him he pays her a salary, signaling the distance between them. He says he regrets having given in to a life of "dissipations." Something is preventing him from reforming his life, but he hopes to have the help of an "inspiration," something that "is no devil" but "has put on the robes of an angel of light." Jane, seeing in his face the idea troubles him, warns him to "distrust" the false angel. She advises him to simply become the person he would respect. Although Jane enjoys their conversation, she doesn't completely understand what troubles him. Jane tries to end the conversation by saying it is time to put Adèle to bed and is relieved when the girl becomes the center of attention by doing an impromptu brief dance in a new dress that Rochester has given her.

Chapter 15 : Later on Rochester tells Jane "one afternoon" how Adèle came to be his ward. He'd had an affair with Céline Varens, a French opera-dancer, which he broke off when he discovered she'd been unfaithful. Céline claimed that Adèle was his child. He knew this was probably untrue—"I see no proofs of such grim paternity written in her countenance," he tells Jane—but he took Adèle in when Céline "abandoned" the girl in Paris.

Jane thinks about how she and Rochester have begun to have more frequent evening conversations and developed an ease with each other. Jane looks forward to the time they spend together. She sees a lot of good qualities in him, although he can sometimes be proud or harsh. He seems to be nursing a secret grief that prevents him from being completely happy.

At two in the morning, unable to sleep, Jane is disturbed by a "demoniac laugh" outside her door and hears footsteps going up the third-floor staircase. She cautiously opens her door and sees smoke coming from Rochester's room. He's asleep, with his bed curtains and sheets in flames. Jane douses the fire and tells him about the laugh. Rochester goes to the third floor and returns to explain that Grace Poole was responsible for the fire. He instructs Jane to "say nothing about" the fire: he will explain what happened to the servants. Rochester emotionally thanks Jane for saving his life with "strange energy ... in his voice, strange fire in his look."

Ch-16: The following morning, Jane speaks with Grace Poole and is amazed the woman hasn't been dismissed or punished for setting the fire. Rochester has told everyone that he accidentally set the fire. At her dinner with Mrs. Fairfax, Jane wonders what hold Poole has over Rochester. At tea Jane is disappointed to learn from Mrs. Fairfax that he has left for a party at a neighbor's estate and will likely be away for "a week or more." Mrs. Fairfax chats about the ladies who will be at the party, especially the "beautiful and accomplished" Blanche Ingram. Jane immediately begins to worry about a possible match between Rochester and Miss Ingram. She realizes she has fallen in love with Rochester, with whom she has no hope of marriage. In an attempt to rein in her emotions, Jane draws a harsh self-portrait, labeling it "Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain." Then, using her imagination, she draws a portrait of the lovely Blanche Ingram, labeled "Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank."

Ch-17: In Rochester's absence Jane continues to observe Grace Poole's habits and feels she acts suspiciously, noticing that Poole comes through the third-floor staircase door, for instance. She overhears a conversation between two servants that suggests she is being "purposely excluded" from knowing the secret related to Poole. Steeling herself in further demonstration of her self-control, she starts to consider her future without Rochester. After more than two weeks, he sends word that he will be returning to Thornfield with guests "in three days."

Blanche Ingram is one of the guests who arrive at Thornfield with Rochester. A day later Miss Ingram and Rochester pair up when they go horseback riding, and Mrs. Fairfax comments to Jane that he seems to admire Miss Ingram. At Rochester's request, Adèle and Jane go to the drawing room where the guests gather after dinner (Adèle and Jane have eaten separately). From a perch on the window seat, Jane observes that Miss Ingram is indeed beautiful, but she is also "haughty" and "self-conscious." When Jane first sees Rochester, all of her passionate feelings for him rush back, though she tries to hide them. Knowing that Jane can hear them, Miss Ingram talks with the other guests, including her mother, in an insulting way about governesses.

At the first opportunity, after listening to Rochester sing, Jane "slip[s] away" from the drawing room, but Rochester follows and tries to persuade her to come back. He notices that she seems depressed and, when tears fill her eyes, he allows her to go. He tells her that she and Adèle must come to the drawing room every night while the guests are there. He then says, "Good-night, my—" and bites his lip before turning away abruptly.

Chapter 18

The guests pursue various amusements at Thornfield, including a game of charades. When Rochester and a male guest invite Jane to join the game, Jane declines, and Miss Ingram's mother declares that Jane "looks too stupid" to play. During the game Rochester and Miss Ingram pantomime a marriage ceremony. Jane notices that Miss Ingram seems to be pursuing Mr. Rochester, and, although he seems somewhat receptive, he doesn't seem captivated by her. Miss Ingram seems unkind, small-minded, and cold. Jane doesn't feel jealous because she knows that Miss Ingram will never have the kind of connection with Rochester that Jane has, or could have, with him.

One evening while Rochester is away on business, Mr. Mason arrives and explains that he knew Rochester in the West Indies. Jane takes an instant dislike to the man, seeing something weak or unstable in him. Then an old gypsy woman arrives and insists on telling the guests their fortunes in the library. Miss Ingram goes first. When she returns she is subdued and withdrawn. After the other young women in the party have their fortunes told, the gypsy insists on telling Jane's fortune. Curious, Jane agrees.

Chapter 19

Jane tells the gypsy that she doesn't believe in fortune-telling, but she'll agree to listen. She says she wants to "save" and "set up a school." The gypsy presses Jane to find out what she thinks of the talk of marriage between Rochester and Miss Ingram. Jane asks if the marriage is planned, and the gypsy says it is. But she says she's told Miss Ingram that she'll be disappointed that Rochester's wealth is not as vast as she has hoped. Eventually Jane realizes that the gypsy is Rochester in disguise. Jane tells him about the arrival of Mr. Mason, and he's startled by the news, saying he'd like to be with her away from "trouble, and danger, and hideous recollections." At Jane's request, Rochester has her aid him by observing Mason and the other guests. He speaks with Mr. Mason in the library before everyone retires for the night.

Ch-20

As the light of the full moon shines into Jane's room in the middle of the night, awakening her, a frightening shriek rings out from the third floor. Jane hears a struggle in the room above hers and a call for help, followed by a call for Rochester. Rochester calms his frightened guests by telling them that "a servant has had a nightmare." In fact it is another incident that may be related to Grace Poole. Rochester asks Jane to come to the third floor and stay with Mason, who is bleeding, while Rochester fetches a surgeon. Before he goes Jane hears snarling behind a hidden door that she assumes is Grace Poole. Jane tends Mason's knife and bite wounds. After Rochester returns with the surgeon and Mason is patched up, Rochester arranges for him to leave with the surgeon before the guests awaken.

Rochester walks in the garden with Jane and assures her that the danger is past and she doesn't need to be afraid of Grace Poole. He tells Jane a story about a young man who makes a serious mistake in a foreign land that now casts a shadow on his life. After years of trying to find happiness in the pursuit of pleasure, the man goes home. There he meets someone who can help him redeem himself and lead a moral life. Rochester asks Jane if she thinks the man is justified in ignoring a moral "obstacle of custom" and convention in order to be with this person, who can reform him. Jane responds that true reformation should depend on a higher power, not on a mortal person. Then Rochester admits that he himself is in this situation and he believes he has found "the instrument" of his redemption. He asks Jane if she doesn't think Miss Ingram, if he marries her, "would regenerate [him] with a vengeance." Before they return to the house, he asks Jane to sit watch with him the night before his marriage.

Ch-21

Jane begins the chapter by reflecting on the value of "presentiments," or premonitions, and signs. The day after the incident with Mason, Jane receives the news that John Reed has died, a possible suicide, after leading a "wild" life. Mrs. Reed has had a stroke and wants to speak to Jane. Before Jane leaves she requests permission to do so from Rochester. As they talk Jane asks about Adèle's future when Rochester marries (she thinks to Miss Ingram).

Jane goes to Gateshead and has a pleasant reunion with Bessie. Georgiana and Eliza are as cold as ever, but this no longer upsets Jane. Mrs. Reed is expected to live only for a few weeks. Ten-plus days pass before Jane learns why her aunt sent for her. In the meantime Jane and her cousins develop a more tolerable relationship, though the two of them despise each other. When she finally speaks with Mrs. Reed, her aunt expresses no regret for the way she treated Jane. She shows Jane a letter she received three years earlier from John Eyre, Jane's uncle. He wanted to find Jane so he could adopt her and have her come to Madeira. He has been successful in business and wants to leave his fortune to Jane. Not wanting to see Jane become wealthy, Mrs. Reed replied to John Eyre that Jane had died of typhus at Lowood. This, she says, was her revenge for Jane's outburst against her before she left Gateshead. Jane asks for Mrs. Reed's forgiveness but is refused. Nevertheless Jane forgives her aunt, who dies just a few hours later.

Ch-22

After her aunt's funeral, Jane stays two more weeks to help her cousins until Georgiana departs to live with an uncle in London and Eliza leaves for a convent. Back at Thornfield after a month, Jane (who dreamed about Miss Ingram during her journey back) encounters Rochester in the garden. He greets her joyfully, teasing her about her elfish, fairy ways, and welcoming her home. Impulsively, before quickly walking past him, Jane blurts out, "I am strangely glad to get back again to you: and wherever you are is my home—my only home."

Two weeks go by and there is no evidence of Miss Ingram's and Rochester's marriage plans. Rochester spends more time than ever with Jane. She sometimes becomes dejected at thoughts of the pending marriage, but at such times Rochester's spirits seem to improve even more.

Ch-23

On Midsummer Eve Jane wanders in the orchard under the rising moon, describing the scene in the present tense. Rochester joins her and tells her he will soon marry (he implies, and Jane thinks he means, to Miss Ingram); Adèle will be leaving Thornfield; and he has found a new situation for Jane in Ireland. They sit under the huge chestnut tree, and Jane is overwhelmed by sadness. Through sobs she speaks of her love for Thornfield. Then she passionately admits her feelings for Rochester. He suddenly asks her to be his wife,

but, sure that he intends to marry Miss Ingram, Jane thinks he is mocking her. Rochester finally convinces her that he has no interest in the other woman, emphasizing his and Jane's equality: "my equal is here, and my likeness." Jane accepts his proposal. They sit under the chestnut tree until a storm begins to blow in. A heavy rain falls and thunder and lightning boom and crackle through the sky. During the storm the chestnut tree is struck by lightning, splitting it in half.

Chapter 24

The next day, Rochester is full of plans for their life together. He wants to shower Jane with jewels and expensive clothing, but she objects. She has a short discussion with Mrs. Fairfax, who doesn't seem pleased with the news of the impending marriage and warns her off, even though she clearly likes Jane. While Jane is out shopping with Rochester and Adèle, he once again compares her to a fairy, building a fanciful story around the idea. Jane feels uncomfortable about making purchases using Rochester's money and, suddenly recalling her uncle's letter, thinks how much more at ease she would feel if she had an independent fortune. She tells Rochester that she wants to continue as Adèle's governess and she'll use her pay to purchase her own clothing.

Much as Jane loves Rochester, she doesn't want to fall into a sentimental type of relationship with him, which, she thinks, will soon become boring. "Lamb-like submission and turtle-dove sensibility" don't suit her personality. Both Jane and Rochester enjoy the element of teasing banter that marks much of their conversation. The chapter closes with Jane observing irreverently that Rochester "stood between me and every thought of religion," adding "I could not, in those days, see God for this creature: of whom I had made an idol."

Chapter 25

Two nights before the wedding, a disturbing incident occurs while Rochester is away from home. Before Jane relates what took place, she provides another incident. The following night, troubled by what she had seen, she walked in the garden, in the moonlight, drawn to the lightning-split tree, where she reflects on how, though the tree is dead, the two sundered sections still cling to each other. The moon appears again, but this time it is red.

When Rochester returns, Jane tells him about the incident that had troubled her. Jane had awakened from a disturbing dream only to see a candle on her dressing table and hear someone in her closet. The figure that emerges from the closet was a tall woman with a "savage" and "discolored" face. She was wearing the exquisite veil Rochester had ordered for Jane for her wedding day. The figure removed the veil, ripped it in half, and stomped on it. Before leaving Jane's room, the woman came close to her bed, glaring at her with bloodshot eyes and blowing out her candle. Terrified, Jane passed out. Rochester offers an explanation for the mysterious events. The woman, he says, must have been Grace Poole. She wasn't recognizable because Jane was experiencing a mixture of fevered dreams and actual events. He tells Jane that "when [they] have been married a year and a day" he'll explain why he keeps Grace Poole in his house. At Rochester's suggestion, Jane sleeps in Adèle's room that night.

Ch-26

Jane and Rochester go to church without any guests. As Jane and Rochester are about to say their wedding vows, a solicitor, Mr. Briggs, appears and objects, saying that Rochester is already married. With Briggs is Mason, who attests that Rochester married Mason's sister, Bertha, in Jamaica and that she is sequestered away on the third floor of Thornfield Manor. After some resistance, Rochester admits the basic truth of Bertha Mason's existence and his entrapment. He takes the priest, Mr. Briggs, Mr. Mason, and Jane to the third-floor room to see Bertha for themselves. There, attended by Grace Poole, Bertha is behaving like a wild animal, growling and running back and forth on all fours. She attacks Rochester and tries to bite him. With Grace Poole's help, he ties the madwoman to a chair. When they leave the room, Briggs tells Jane that her uncle in Madeira is dying. He explains that, when her uncle had received her letter about her upcoming marriage to Rochester, he happened to mention it to Mason, who knew the truth. Concerned for his niece, but too near his end to travel, her uncle asked Mason to stop the false marriage.

Stunned at the turn of events, Jane shuts herself in her room. She doesn't know what to think of Rochester, but she does know that she must leave Thornfield. Feeling completely alone, she prays for God's help.

Ch-27

Jane struggles with what to do next, self-control and moral principles contending with passion. When she finally leaves her room, she finds Rochester waiting by her door. He begs for her forgiveness and she sees that he's truly sorry. In her heart she forgives him completely, but she doesn't admit this to him. He says he'll send Adèle to school, shut up Thornfield, and take Jane to France, where they can live as a married couple. Rochester explains that his father and brother deceived him when they arranged his marriage to Bertha in Jamaica. The marriage benefited them financially, so they didn't tell him about the madness in Bertha's family. After a few years, Rochester inherited Thornfield. Because no one outside of Jamaica knew about his marriage to Bertha, he hid her in hopes of finding a new life for himself. Then he began to search, unsuccessfully, for the ideal woman with whom he could share a real relationship—the woman who, after he had three mistresses, he found in Jane. Rochester recaps their early relationship and explains how he fell in love with her. He begs her to consider staying with him.

Jane is tempted to give in to Rochester, but in the end says she must leave him. That night she recalls the torment of the red-room scene recounted early in the book. She sees the moon and it transforms into the vision of a woman who sends a message to her heart: "My daughter, flee temptation!" Early the next morning, she steals away and arranges with a coachman to get as far away from Thornfield as her last 20 shillings will take her.

Chapter 28 : Jane opens the chapter using the present tense, explaining that the coach takes her as far as Whitcross, a remote area of moors and mountains. She seeks solace in nature and wanders on the moor, where the narration shifts to the past. She has the consoling thought that God will watch over Rochester, protecting him, and then sleeps the night on the moor. Having spent all of her money on the coach, she walks to a village where she tries, unsuccessfully, to find work. She begs for food and sleeps outdoors at night. On the third night in the area, in pouring rain, she approaches a house in the woods. After observing the people inside, Jane knocks at the door and asks if she can have shelter in an outbuilding and something to eat. Hannah, the servant, tells Jane to go away. Jane collapses on the doorstep, where St. John Rivers finds her. He has overheard the exchange with Hannah, and he asks Jane to come inside, where she meets his sisters, Diana and Mary. She tells them her name is Jane Elliott, and they give her some food and a warm bed to sleep in.

Chapter 29 : The Rivers siblings nurse Jane back to health at their home (called both Marsh End and Moor House). Hannah tells her about the Rivers siblings: St. John is the parson at a parish in Morton, a nearby village. Mary and Diana are governesses on leave after the death of their father. Jane tells her rescuers as much of her history as she can, without revealing anything about Thornfield. St. John offers to try to find work for her.

Ch-30

Jane, Diana, and Mary find that they have many interests in common, and they become close friends over the next month. St. John, more reserved than his sisters, is often away, tending to his parishioners; Jane hears one of his powerful sermons, which reveals a strict, almost harsh set of beliefs. After a month St. John explains that his sisters will soon be leaving and he will return to his parsonage, where he will remain for a year or so before departing it. He then offers Jane a position as teacher in the school in the village of Morton that he intends to open; a building has been made ready, but there is no teacher in place. Her pupils will be the daughters of farmers and villagers. Jane gratefully accepts the position, which comes with a small cottage in Morton. The Rivers siblings then receive word that their Uncle John has died and left his fortune of 20,000 pounds to an unknown relative. They'd hoped he would leave some of his fortune to them, because he was responsible for losing most of their father's fortune in a speculation scheme. Soon Diana and Mary go back to the city, Moor House is shut up, and St. John returns to his parsonage.

Ch-31: Jane describes her home, using the present tense. After her first day of teaching at the village school, she feels depressed about the task ahead of her. Her students have so much to learn, and some are rough and undisciplined. She resolves to focus on the satisfaction she'll feel when her students make progress. St. John visits and, detecting her sorrowful mood, tells her that there was a time when he was unhappy with his ministry duties and craved a more exciting career. Heaven, he says, sent him a solution—he decided to find action by going to Asia on a godly "errand" as a missionary. While Jane and St. John talk, the beautiful young Rosamond Oliver appears at the gate. She is the benefactress who funds Jane's school. Rosamond invites St. John to come with her to visit her father right away, but he declines, "Not to-night." Jane detects a romantic tension between them. St. John, however, seems to be trying to resist Rosamond.

Ch-32

Jane begins to take pride in the positive changes she sees in her students. She is accepted and well-liked by the villagers. Rosamond and Jane interact. Rosamond sees and admires Jane's paintings, and Jane draws her. The heiress introduces Jane to her father at their home. Jane's nights are troubled by vivid dreams of being with Rochester. Rosamond continues to flirt with St. John, and although it's obvious he's attracted to her, he doesn't reciprocate. St. John visits Jane, and after they talk and he prepares to leave, Jane attempts to play matchmaker by suggesting that marrying Rosamond and staying in Morton could make him a happy man. He responds that Rosamond would not enjoy being the wife of a missionary, and he will not give up his ambition to become one. Before St. John leaves the cottage, he seems startled by something he sees on a scrap of Jane's drawing paper, which covers her sketch of Rosamond (a sketch he has admired). He tears a strip off the paper and takes it with him, leaving Jane puzzled about what he found.

Ch-33

The following day, in the midst of a whirling snowstorm, St. John returns to Jane's cottage. He tells her a story about a rich man's daughter who married a poor curate and was disowned by her family. Less than two years later, both were dead. Their infant daughter was taken in by rich relations and raised by Mrs. Reed. He goes on to tell Jane's own story, up to her flight from Thornfield. St. John explains that the scrap of paper he had taken from Jane's cottage the previous day contained the signature "Jane Eyre," and he had recently received a letter from Mr. Briggs inquiring about Jane Eyre. Briggs wants to inform Jane that her uncle John Eyre has died in Madeira and left his fortune of 20,000 pounds to her. Her first reaction is to lament the loss of the possibility of a relationship with a relative—she had hoped to get to know her uncle. Her second is to recognize the benefit of such a sum: "independence would be glorious," she thinks. Jane asks St. John why Briggs had thought to write to him about Jane. After some persuasion St. John tells Jane that "[his] mother's name was Eyre, and she had two brothers." One brother married Jane Reed (Jane's mother), and the other was John Eyre of Madeira, a merchant. Jane is overjoyed to learn that the Rivers siblings are her cousins. She immediately decides that she will divide her inheritance four ways and share it with them and plans to stop teaching.

Chapter 34

Before the Christmas holidays, Jane shuts the village school and prepares to move into Moor House with the Rivers siblings. She and Hannah prepare the house for the arrival of Mary and Diana. St. John is critical of the pleasure Jane takes in "domestic endearments and household joys." He expects her to devote her time and talents to higher pursuits. A week later Mary, Jane, and Diana are spending their time studying languages, reading, and drawing. Rosamond has chosen a new suitor; St. John has lost her, due to his self-control. St. John persuades Jane to give up her study of German to help him in his study of Hindostanee, an Asian language. Jane has become closer to the Rivers siblings; at Diana's urging, St. John kisses Jane, as he would a sister.

Jane constantly worries that Rochester might have gone back to a life of pleasure-seeking. She writes letters to Mrs. Fairfax, but there's no response. Six months have passed since Christmas, and Jane sinks into a kind of despair. One day St. John asks her to go for a walk with him. He says he will leave for India in six weeks and wants her to go with him as his wife. Jane objects that she knows nothing about the missionary life, but he assures her he will direct her "from hour to hour." Jane knows he doesn't love her—he loves only his work—and he had loved Rosamond. She doesn't love him either, much as she tries to please him. Jane tells St. John she'll consider going with him as his sister but not as his wife. Their handshake at the end of the chapter reveals his lack of passion and the hurt it causes Jane.

Chapter 35: St. John plans to leave in a week to see friends in Cambridge, and during that time he treats Jane politely but with a certain coldness and distance. She's deeply saddened that he seems so angry with her. The evening before his departure, Jane approaches him in the garden and attempts to patch up their friendship. He questions her refusal of his proposal. Again she offers to go with him as his assistant but not as his wife, an offer St. John rejects "bitterly." Jane realizes that before she can leave England she must know what has become of Rochester.

After dinner Jane and St. John speak again. Jane is on the verge of agreeing to marry him, after receiving encouragement from Diana earlier, almost hypnotized by his religious "sublime moment." Then something extraordinary happens. As the room is bathed in moonlight, she hears the voice of Rochester, calling "Jane! Jane! Jane!" She runs outside shouting, "I am coming! ... Wait for me!" She can't find the source of the sound and concludes that it must have been some quirk of nature. Jane tells St. John she needs to be alone, and in her room she prays and offers thanks.

Ch-36: The next day, after getting a note from St. John containing a request for her "clear decision," Jane travels to Whitcross and by coach to the vicinity of Thornfield. A day and a half later, she finds that Thornfield Hall is no longer the stately mansion she remembers; it is a "blackened ruin." Jane returns to the Rochester Arms (the inn where the coach stopped) and learns that Thornfield burned down in the autumn, two months after she had fled. Rochester, despondent, had been living "like a hermit" at Thornfield. He'd sent Adèle off to school, and Mrs. Fairfax had gone to live with friends. Late one night Bertha escaped from her room and set fire to Thornfield. Rochester attempted to save her, but she jumped from the roof to her death. Rochester helped the servants get out of the building, but the main staircase collapsed as he came down it. He lost his eyesight ("one eye was knocked out" and the other became sightless) and his left hand as a result. Jane learns that Rochester is now living at Ferndean, his remote manor house. She immediately arranges for a chaise to go there.

Ch-37: Jane arrives at Ferndean, deep in the woods, at dusk. Rochester is living a solitary life, attended by two servants. Jane interacts with one of the servants and arranges to surprise Rochester. He seems subdued and resigned when she first sees him, but when he realizes she is there, he's delighted: "I cannot be so blest, after all my misery; it is a dream." Jane states her intention to "stay with him" and tells him about inheriting her uncle's fortune. Rochester thinks his injuries will prevent Jane from wanting to marry him; she has to reassure him. They dine together. He says he missed her more than he cared about his physical condition: "Yes: for her restoration I longed, far more than for that of my lost sight." A day later, as Jane narrates her experiences since their separation, Rochester assures Jane that he never could have made her his mistress; he wanted their relationship to be one of equality and respect. He compares himself to the chestnut tree and proposes to Jane again. They decide to marry in three days.

Rochester tells Jane that religion has become more important to him and he's begun to pray, in his own way. On the past Monday night, he says, he asked God to take him from this life to a world where he might reunite with Jane. He stood by the window, with the moon shining in, and suddenly shouted, "Jane! Jane! Jane!" He thought he heard her voice reply: "I am coming: wait for me."

Ch-38: Jane and Rochester marry and settle down at Ferndean. Mary and Diana are pleased about Jane's marriage and plan to visit. St. John never mentions Jane's marriage, but he continues to write to her now and then. Jane finds a boarding school nearby for Adèle, who often comes to visit.

Ten years after marrying Rochester, Jane writes that they are happier and closer than ever. They have a son, and Rochester has regained partial sight in one eye. Diana and Mary are both happily married. St. John Rivers, who followed his missionary path, never married. He writes to Jane that he expects to be called soon to "his sure reward"—he is dying.