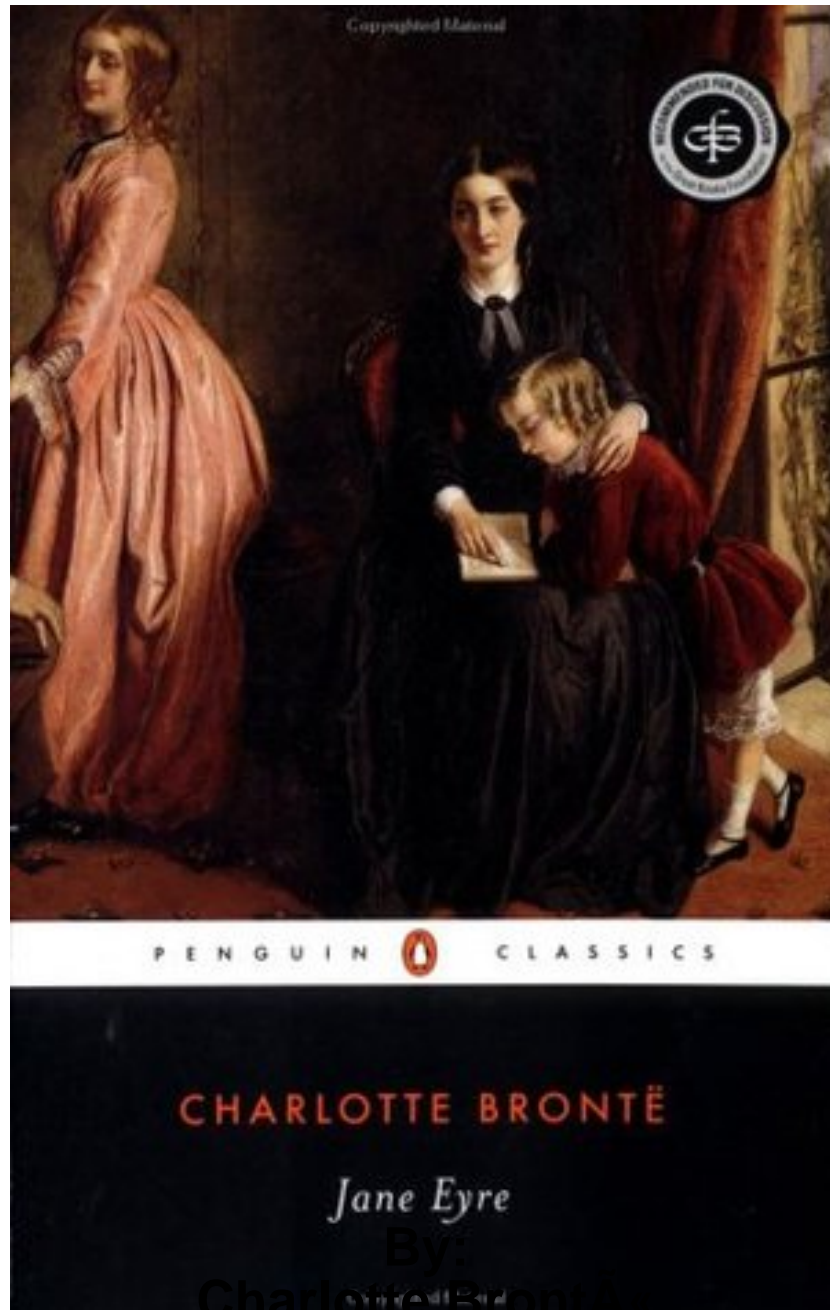


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What people Say:

Nataliya

Yes, I suppose you can view this book mostly as a love story. That's what I did at age 13 - but that's why I was left disappointed back then.

Or you can view this as an story of formation of a

, a nineteenth-century feminist, light-years ahead of its time. And that's what left my now-closer-to-thirty-than-twenty self very satisfied and, quite frankly, rather impressed.Â²

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When I read it for the first time as a young and opinionated teen, I thought Jane Eyre was a boring and meek protagonist, too clingy to her 'outdated' morals, too afraid to do what I thought was a brave thing to do - say 'yes' to the apparent happiness that poor tragic Mr. Rochester was offering.

Sometimes life experience does matter indeed.

Jane Eyre has a good idea of her self-worth. And she has a good idea about her own morals.

Cristin

I could bang Mr. Rochester like a screen door 'till next Tuesday. That's not all I got from this book, honestly...

Vinaya

5. Four hundred-odd pages of purely descriptive writing
4. Overt religious themes and moral preaching
3. A plain-Jane heroine who stays plain. No makeovers to reveal a hitherto hidden prettiness that only needed an application of hydrogen peroxide and some eyebrow plucking to emerge full-blown.
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2. The world is not well-lost for love. In the war between self-respect and grand passion, principles win hands down. Rousing, yet tender speeches do not make our heroine forsake her creed to fall swooning and submissive into her alpha's arms.
1. NO SEX!!!

When I was a little girl, I had a doll named Saloni. Now Saloni wasn't a particularly attractive specimen as dolls go, especially since, over the years, I had drilled a hole in her little rosebud mouth in order to 'feed' her, I had 'brushed' her hair till all the poor synthetic threads had fallen out and I had dragged her around with me so much, one of her big blue eyes had fallen off. But in my eyes, Saloni was the best doll ever created. She was my comfort, my mainstay in a world filled with confusing new things like school and daycare and other little people. Jane Eyre is my grown-up version of Saloni. Comfort food for my brain.

Bookdragon Sean

Jane Eyre is the quintessential Victorian novel. It literally has everything that was typical of the period, but, unlike other novels, it has all the elements in one story. At the centre is the romance between Jane and Rochester, which is enhanced by gothic elements such as the uncanniness of the doppelganger and the spectre like qualities of Bertha. In addition, it is also a governess novel; these were an incredibly popular type of stor

Jane Eyre is the quintessential Victorian novel. It literally has everything that was typical of the period, but, unlike other novels, it has all the elements in one story. At the centre is the romance between Jane and Rochester, which is enhanced by gothic elements such as the uncanniness of the doppelganger and the spectre like qualities of Bertha. In addition, it is also a governess novel; these were an incredibly popular type of storytelling in the age and for it to be combined with gothic elements, which are interposed with a dualistic relationship between realism and romance, is really quite unique. The correct term for this is a hybrid, in which no genre voice is dominant; they exist alongside each other creating one rather special book.

And this is so, so, special; it's an excellent piece of literature. Jane's journey is gut wrenching and emotional. Through her life she experiences real sorrow, the kind that would make a lesser person give up. She also experiences real friendship, the type that comes across perhaps once in a lifetime. But, most significantly, she experiences true love and the development of independence to form her own ending. I really do love this book. Bronte utilises the first person narrative, which creates a high degree of intimacy with her character; it makes me feel like I know Jane as well as she comes to know her own self.

Jane's a strong willed individual. From a very young age she had the clarity of intelligence to recognise the injustice that was her life; yes, she is narrating her story retrospectively, though she still had the perceptiveness to realise how mistreated she was. I love the pathetic fallacy Bronte uses at the beginning. The child Jane looks out the window, shielded by the curtain, and witnesses the horrible weather. It is cold and bleak; it is windy and morose; thus, we can immediately see the internal workings of Jane's mind. The weather reflects her feelings throughout the novel, and at the very beginning the situation was at its worse. This can also be seen with the fire imagery that represents her rage when she is shoved in the red room; it later mirrors that of Bertha's fury.

Everybody needs love, children especially so. These early experiences help to define her later character, and, ultimately influence how she sees the world; she still hides behind a curtain in Rochester's house when he flirts with Miss Ingram. These experiences set her on an almost perpetual quest for love, for belonging and for the independence to make her own decisions. She finds friendship in the form of Helen Burns; she gives her some sound advice, but Jane cannot fully accept such religious fatalism. However, it does inspire her, a little, to continue with life; she realises, no matter what happens, she will always have the love of her greatest friend. Jane clings to this idea, but, ultimately, has to seek a more permanent solution to her loneliness. She needs a vocation, one that will fulfil her and give her life meaning; thus, she becomes a governess and crosses paths with the downtrodden, miserable wretch that is Mr Rochester.

Sometimes I feel like Rochester didn't know quite what he wanted. When he sees Jane he sees a woman with strength, blunt honesty and integrity: he sees an emotional equal. This attracts her to him, which develops into love. However, when he tries to express his love he does it through trying to claim her as his own. Through doing so, not only does he show the nature of Victorian marriage, he shows his own deep vulnerability. He loves her mind, her intelligence, and he too wants to be loved. He longs for it with a frightening passion. So, instead of doing things the way Jane would have wanted him to do, he overwhelms her with expensive affection. By doing so he almost loses

her. All Jane wanted was his heart, nothing more nothing less.

By showering her with such flattery and expensive items, he insults her independence. He risks destroying the thing that attracted him to her in the first place, their equality; their mutual respect and love. He takes away her dignity. I really don't think the original marriage would have worked. Ignore the existence of the mad woman in the attic; I just think Rochester would have spoiled it. It would have become too awkward. They needed to be on the same societal level as well as one of intellect and character. The ending is touching and a little sad, but it is the only one that could ever have worked for these two characters. Without the tragedy there could never have been rejuvenation and the chance for them to be together on equal terms, no matter what it cost to get there.

If that wasn't enough reason for me to love this book, there are also elements of fantasy and desire. This is a realism novel, it pertains to credible events, but the suggestions of fantasy only add to the strong romantic notions. Rochester is enamoured by Jane; he cannot believe that a woman like her actually exists. All his misguided notions are brushed away in an instant. Whilst he views Jane as special, it is clear that he realises that other women may also have a similar rebellious voice, only hidden. He considers her an elf, a witch, an improbable woman that has captured his desire, his heart, his soul, his life. He knows he will never be the same again. From Jane's point of view, her first encounter with him is otherworldly. She had grown bored with her governess role, and when she sees the approach of Rochester and his dog Pilot, she sees the gytrash myth; she wants to see something fantastical instead she finds her heart, which is something much rarer.

Then there are also the feminist elements. Jane transgresses the boundary associated with her gender in the Victorian age. For a woman to be recognised as having equal intellect to that of a man was sadly a rare thing. Women could actually attend university, but the downside was they could never get the full degree. They could spend months studying, though never be recognised as actually having gained the qualification. It was just another attempt to keep women under the thumb, so for Bronte to portray the truth of Jane's equal intellect is a great step for the recognition of women, and women writers. This book received a whole host of negative reviews at the time of its publication for this element alone. Stupid really, but that's misogyny for you.

Reader, I love this book. I really could go on, but this is getting kind of long. I hope I've made it clear why I love this story so much. I shall be reading this again later this year to correspond with my exams, which I'm already looking forward to- the reading that is, not the exams. I don't think I will ever have read this story enough though.

Hailey (HaileyInBookland)

Loooooooooove!!!