



Jane Eyre

Study Guide

by Jill Marie Wilson

For the novel by
Charlotte Brontë

CD Version



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Jane Eyre Study Guide

A Progeny Press Study Guide

by Jill Marie Wilson

with Andrew Clausen, Rebecca Gilleland

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Synopsis

Jane Eyre is the story of a mistreated orphan who learns to rise above her adversities by relying on God's grace and the intelligent and independent spirit He has given her. The path of Jane's life is lined with temptations and difficulties: her desires war with her conscience and her faith is sorely tested. But though Jane sorrows, she is not broken. She learns and grows, and she rises above life's storm.

Jane's first ten years are unhappy ones. She is raised in the home of her aunt where she is unloved and despised. After a passionate outcry against her condition, Jane is sent to a charitable institution where she spends eight years. She moves up through the classes and eventually becomes a teacher. At 18, Jane's desire for expansion calls her to move on.

Jane finds a position as governess at Thornfield Hall, where her employer takes a lively interest in her. Jane's vigor and purity answer some yearning of his soul. Just when it seems that bliss is within Jane's reach, a dark secret is uncovered that causes her to flee from the one that is precious to her. It seems Jane is doomed to be forever separated from her love; but, after a year of suffering, God's providence and a familiar voice call her to return to the one she loves.

Chapters 11–12

Vocabulary:

Explain the meaning of the underlined word in each sentence below based on its context. You may consult a dictionary.

1. . . . she ushered me into a room whose double illumination of fire and candle at first dazzled me, contrasting as it did with the darkness to which my eyes had been for two hours inured. . . .
2. . . . they flew over the lawn and ground to alight in a great meadow, from which these were separated by a sunk fence, and where an array of mighty old thorn trees . . . at once explained the etymology of the mansion's designation.
3. The enigma then was explained: this affable and kind little widow was no great dame, but a dependent like myself.
4. There are people who seem to have no notion of sketching a character, or observing and describing salient points either in persons or things: the good lady evidently belonged to this class. . . .
5. . . . with wrought old English hangings crusted with thick work, portraying effigies of strange flowers, and stranger birds, and the strangest human beings. . . .

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6. “You live just below—do you mean at that house with the battlements?”—pointing to Thornfield Hall, on which the moon cast a hoary gleam

7. What good it would have done me at that time to have been tossed in the storms of an uncertain struggling life, and to have been taught by rough and bitter experience to long for the calm amidst which I now repined!

Questions:

1. What assumption does Jane make about Mrs. Fairfax that she later discovers to be false?

2. Who is the owner of the manor? Who is to be Jane’s student? What is the relationship between the student and the owner of the manor?

3. What unsettling noise does Jane hear while touring the manor with Mrs. Fairfax? How does Mrs. Fairfax explain the noise? Is there any evidence to the contrary? If so, explain.

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4. As Jane, walking alone at night, hears something approach, what jumps to her mind?

5. What is it about the stranger that makes Jane bold to approach him? What does Jane discover about the stranger when she reaches Thornfield?

6. During chapters 11 and 12, Mr. Rochester is absent from Thornfield. Yet, his presence, his spirit, dominates. What have we learned about Mr. Rochester before we even meet him?

Analysis:

7. When Jane discovers Mrs. Fairfax's identity, she says, "I felt better pleased than ever. The equality between her and me was real; not the mere result of condescension on her part: . . ." Explain what Jane means by this. Why does this mean that Jane's position is, as she says, "all the freer."

8. What things about Thornfield seem strange or unexplained?

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9. An *allusion* is a reference to an historical or literary person, place, or event with which the reader is assumed to be familiar. *Jane Eyre* contains many allusions, some of which will probably be lost on the modern reader.

Jane refers to one corridor in the manor as looking “like a corridor in some Bluebeard’s Castle.” What might the author be suggesting by the use of the allusion to Bluebeard?

10. What things occupy Jane’s thoughts when she is by herself?
11. Summarize Jane’s thoughts about the role of women in English society. Would you agree with Jane? Why or why not?

Dig Deeper:

12. It is obvious even thus far into the book, that Britain, in the 1800s, had a distinct, fairly rigid social structure. What roles have others, thus far, expected Jane to fill?

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10. Jane refuses to show the love for him that she still feels. She will not let him comfort her or caress her. She tells him she must leave. Inwardly she becomes stronger. She struggles with her resolution to leave him, and her conscience wins. She realizes it would be wicked “to obey him.” She places her trust in God.

11. Answers will vary.

12. Answers will vary. Rochester believes that Jane’s scruples come from the culture around her. Jane says they come from the Word of God. Rochester respects Jane; he does not violate her wishes.

13. Answers will vary. Clearly Rochester does not acknowledge the divine origin of many human commandments, such as “thou shall not commit adultery.” He has not given up his quest for happiness at any price.

Dig Deeper:

14. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness and prays for us, “with groans that words cannot express.” When we are grieved and senseless, God is always with us. God guides us, and when our flesh and heart fail, God is our strength. These verses may have comforted Jane, reminding her that when we are too overcome with grief or hardship to pray, God and the Holy Spirit are always with us, providing prayers and strength.

15. Jane speaks to herself, “I will keep the law given by God . . . I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad—as I am now. Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this. . . . If at my individual convenience I might break them, what would be their worth? . . . preconceived notions, foregone determinations, are all I have at this hour to stand by: there I plant my foot.” Jane relies on what she has always believed *prior* to this hour. Proverbs 16:25 and Psalm 119:25–31 tell us not to rely on what we think is right, but on God’s word, laws, and commands. This is exactly what Jane falls back on when she can no longer trust herself to do the right thing.

Chapters 28–30

Vocabulary:

1. trouble; 2. beggarly; 3. facial features; 4. saturation; 5. harmony; 6. abundance; 7. paradise; 8. current officer

Questions:

1. The mighty milky-way spread above Jane reminds her of God’s omnipotence; He, the Savior of Spirits, will guard Edward Rochester.

2. The servant, Hannah, distrusts Jane and sends her away, but St. John intercedes on Jane’s behalf.

3. Hannah is suspicious and dislikes Jane initially. Mary responds with a gentle reserve. Diana is warm and charming. Both sisters exude a curious sympathy. St. John’s attitude is cold interest and speculation. By the end of chapter 30, Hannah has come to trust Jane. Diana and Mary both exhibit a mutual affection and intimacy with Jane. St. John still seems distant, observing Jane.

4. The death of their father has brought the three Rivers children back to Marsh End.

5. St. John is cool, distant, and uncommunicative. St. John’s sermon reveals to Jane that, although he is pious, and zealous, St. John does not possess the peace which passeth understanding.

6. Their estranged uncle had died and left all his riches to an unknown relative. The siblings’ father had lost his money following the counsel of this uncle. Their father had hoped this man would redeem himself by providing for the children in his will. Mary, Diana, and St. John express a bit of sadness, but Mary says “it makes us no worse off than we were before.” Diana says St. John could have used the money “for the good it would have enabled him to do.”

Analysis:

7. Answers will vary. Jane knew that if she lingered a moment at Thornfield, she would never leave. Still, it seems that it would have been wise of her to take a few articles of jewelry or other valuables Rochester had given her to sell or at least prove that she was no ordinary beggar. Answers will vary.

8. Answers will vary. A leader of God’s flock should be forgiving and willing to mediate; he should be wise and sympathetic and gentle. St. John does not appear to be a gentle and forgiving man. He seems inexorable and unrelenting. Answers will vary.

9. Answers will vary. Jane’s destitution makes her throw herself upon God’s mercy and call for His blessing and protection. She recognizes her extreme dependence upon Him in a way that she never before has.

10. Answers will vary. It will be revealed later that St. John wishes to go to India as a missionary.