Charlotte Bronte was born in 1816, to Reverend Patrick and Maria Bronte, in Thornton of Yorkshire, England. She was the third of six children, including her sisters Emily and Anne who were born in 1818 and 1820. In 1820, the Bronte family moved to Haworth, a small town on the edge of the industrial Pennines, so that Patrick could secure a job as a curate. Shortly after in 1821, Maria Bronte took ill and died. After Marias death, her sister (Charlottes aunt) Elizabeth Branwell came to care for the children.

In 1824, the four eldest girls of the Bronte family (Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, and Emily) were enrolled as pupils at the Clergy Daughters School at Cowan Bridge, a boarding school for daughters of clergy. A year later in 1825, Maria and Elizabeth both took ill at school and returned home to die. Charlotte and Emily, understandably, followed their sisters home.

For the next six years, the remaining Bronte sisters, along with their brother Branwell, were educated at home. During this period of time, Charlottes imagination flourished. The children developed complex fantasy worlds of glass towns, and wrote of them in dozens of microscopically printed books. In 1834, Charlotte and Branwell conceived a complex world called Angria.

In 1831 Charlotte left home and became a pupil at Miss Wooler's Boarding School for Young Ladies at Roe's Head; she then taught there as a governess from 1835-1838. In 1839 Charlotte accepted a position as a private governess for the Sidgwick family, and in 1841 took up the same position in the White family. She left both positions after a few months time.

In 1841, upon Charlottes return to Haworth from being a governess, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Bronte decided to open their own school after the necessary and required preparations had been fulfilled. Charlotte and Emily traveled to Brussels in 1842 to complete their studies; Charlotte then, after a brief return home, remained in Brussels until 1844.

Charlotte returned home in late 1844, and her and her sisters attempted to found their own school, which was an utter failure. The following year, Charlotte decided to publicly publish a selection of the three sisters poems under pseudonyms: Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Action Bell. Charlottes first novel, The Professor, was initially rejected for publication (it was not published until 1857). In 1847 however, Charlotte’s Jane Eyre, published again under the name Bell, became an instant success. Emily’s Wuthering Heights and Ann’s Agnes Grey were also very popular.

Charlotte became engaged to Reverend Arthur Bell Nicholls, curate of Haworth and associate of her father, in 1854. Though Charlotte and Nicholls were married, it is clear that Charlotte only admired Nicholls and never truly loved him.

Emily and Branwell Bronte died in 1848, and Ann died in May of 1849. Later in 1854, Charlotte, expecting a child, caught pneumonia and never recovered. She died on March 31st 1855.

Autobiographical Elements in Jane Eyre

It is clear that Bronte pulled from her own life experiences while writing Jane Eyre. The Timeline above illustrates some of the major similarities between Bronte and Jane's lives. They were both motherless from a young age, and raised by an aunt. They both went to religious boarding school, and had loved ones die there. Furthermore, they both took up jobs as governesses and tried to establish their own schools. Jane and Bronte also share a thirst for traveling and a mutual restlessness; Jane is always restless and wishing to be elsewhere. Bronte did have the luxury of being able to travel to Brussels to study, but in a way it seems that she communicates feelings of unrest and the need for independence through Jane.Jane Eyre is not only an intimate look into the private life of a fictional character, but perhaps the personal life of Bronte as well.
Cast of Characters

Jane — narrator and heroine of the novel. Readers follow her growth from a child to a young lady to a woman, and from place to place as she constantly is moving around. Jane is characterized as witty, headstrong, and stubborn. She has a great personal sense of pride and a strong sense of right vs. wrong. Despite acting and wanting to be fiercely independent, Jane is always seeing approval and love from others (one of the great anomalies of her character). Jane also, despite having a strong personality, seems transient in her habits and values as she moves from one place to another; she absorbs qualities from others, and then casts them off in no time as she moves on to the next place. Moving from place to place was natural for Jane, for she is constantly restless and needing to find a change of setting to explore the world. Jane has a knack for telling stories - she tells the reader that herself. That skill, in combination with personal bias and emotion, can lead the reader to question throughout the novel. Jane was one of the most groundbreaking characters of Victorian Literature because she is a strong woman figure that challenges the social and economic restraints that were on women at the time. Jane's desire for independence, knowledge, and mobility set an example for progressive Victorian women everywhere. More on Progressivism in Jane Eyre

Gateshead

John Reed — Jane's cousin, son of Mrs. Reed and brother to Eliza and Georgina. He bullies Jane as a child.

Eliza Reed — Janes cousin, daughter of Mrs. Reed and sister to John and Georgina.

Georgina Reed — Jane's cousin, daughter of Mrs. Reed and sister to John and Eliza. Is seen as the pretty and spoiled child in the household.

Mrs. Aunt Reed — Wife of the late Mr. Uncle Reed, who was the brother to Jane’s Uncle; mother to Eliza, Georgina, and John Reed. After Mr. Reed died prematurely, Jane became Mrs. Reeds charge.

Bessie Lee — Bessie is the Reed childrens and Janes nanny; she is in charge of looking after the children. In the novel, the little solace that Jane does find is in Bessie.

Mr. Lloyd — Mr. Lloyd is the doctor that is called in to attend to Jane after the incident in the Red Room. He is the person who first proposes sending Jane to school to Mrs. Reed.

Full Character Descriptions and Quotations

Lowood

Mr. Brocklehurst — Brocklehurst is the superintendent of Lowood School for Girls, and is in charge of their wellbeing while at Lowood.

Helen Burns — Janes best friend as a pupil at Lowood. Helen is characterized by her angelic temperament and ability to be pious and forgiving.

Maria Temple — Maria Temple is the head teacher at Lowood School for girls. She is very kind with the pupils, and is a mentor, guide, and surrogate mother for Jane during her tenure at Lowood.

Miss Scatherd — A teacher at Lowood characterized by her harsh punishments and coarse temperaments, as seen through the eyes of Jane. Jane dislikes Miss Scatherd for disciplining Helen.

Full Character Descriptions and Quotations

Thornfield

Edward Rochester — Father to Adele Varens and Master of Thornfield. He has made his fortune working out in the West Indies, and travels so frequently that he rarely stays long at Thornfield.

Alice Fairfax — Head Manager of the Thornfield Estate, and direct supervisor of Jane while she is working with Adele.

Adele Varens — A little French girl who is Jane's pupil, and Edward Rochester’s charge.

Blanche Ingram — The dashing and beautiful daughter of Dowager Lady Ingram. She is thought by many and most to be the number one marriage prospect for Rochester.

Grace Poole — a very peculiar, elderly housemaid who takes care of Bertha Mason.

Bertha Mason — Edward Rochester's insane wife that he keeps in the attic. He met and wed her in the West Indies.

Full Character Descriptions and Quotations

Marsh End/Moor House

St. John Rivers — Jane’s cousin, Diana and Mary River’s brother John Rivers is characterized as being a very dedicated and reserved clergyman.

Diana and Mary Rivers — Jane's cousins and sisters to St. John Rivers. They become Jane's most favored and valued friends.
**Rosamond Oliver** – Beautiful woman who St. John Rivers is in love with. She is the daughter of Mr. Oliver, the sole wealthy proprietor in the area, and gave the money to open up the schoolhouse in town.

**Full Character Descriptions and Quotations**

**Others**

**Mr. Uncle Reed** – Jane’s Uncle, who took her into his house after her parents death and before he died; Jane was then left in the care of Mrs. Reed.

**John Eyre** – Jane’s wealthy uncle, who, after he dies, gives Jane his estate.

**Richard Mason** – Berta Mason’s brother who conspired with his father and Rochester’s father in order to marry Bertha off to Rochester for a profitable match.

**Celine Varens** – Rochester’s mistress and mother to Adele. It is questioned, however, if Adele is really Rochester’s daughter.

**Mr Briggs** - John Eyres affairs manager who communicates with Jane about her uncle.

**Sophie** – Adele Varen’s French nurse at Thornfield.

**Full Character Descriptions and Quotations**

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This map is located in England, which is the overall setting for Jane Eyre. The locations are taken from a walking tour website detailing the fictional sites in the novel. The first site is of Stone Gappe Hall located in Lothersdale, UK. Stone Gappe Hall represents Gateshead Hall, where a young Jane lived with her family, the Reeds. If Gateshead Hall was to be a real location, this is where the creators of the website would place it. The second location is the Clergy Daughters' School located at Cowan Bridge in the UK. Charlotte Bronte and her three sisters went to this school at Cowan Bridge for a year, and Lowood School is based off of it. The third location is North Lees Hall, which is near Hathersage, UK. This location represents Thornfield Manor. The fourth location is Moorseats located near Hathersage as well. Charlotte visited Moorseats in her life, and Marsh’s End/Moor House where Jane lives with the Rivers family is based off of this location. The last location is of Wycoller Hall located in Wycoller village in Lancashire. Wycoller Hall represents Ferndean Manor where Jane ends up with Rochester.

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Themes

1. Class: There is an exploration of social class by Bronte throughout the novel demonstrated by the huge class differences between the characters, such as poor individuals in a wealthy environment meaning the Reeds and Rochesters...
   Full Discussion of Class as a Theme

2. Gender Roles: Society in the Victorian Era put a great amount of pressure on the expectations of both genders. Women were supposed to be submissive to the men, who were expected to be dominant and aggressive. Jane Eyre is a governess and is projected to be passive and obedient to her employer, Mister Rochester....
   Full Discussion of Gender as a Theme

3. Nature
   Nature plays several roles in Jane Eyre both figuratively and literally. Human nature, how an individual is perceived through their "nature" and how they perceive their own "nature" shapes who they are as an individual. Physical nature as a motif is constantly conveying messages in the text to the reader. Class, Genetics, and Nature interplay to create the sense that heritable traits, such as madness and vanity, are acquired through parenthood and social upbringing. The supernatural is also prevalent throughout the book, which serves as a juxtaposition to the natural world and "normal" human nature.
   Full Discussion of Nature as a Theme

4. Jane as a Narrator: Jane Eyre as narrator portrays a very critical yet intelligent woman on a mission to fulfill her independence and self-worth. While on this mission, the reader eventually comes to the realization that Jane’s feelings and emotions get in the way of her ability to accurately portray events as they unfold.
   Full Discussion of Jane as a Narrator

Form as Content

Charlotte Bronte created Jane Eyre as a developing character throughout the novel demonstrated by the conflicts that arise from each new setting Jane is brought into.

Read more on Form as Content
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Influence Of Gothic on Jane Eyre

The Gothic and Jane Eyre

In the Victorian age, there was a sense of unease and confusion. It is the age when the so-called "Victorian values" were introduced in society, where women were supposed to keep their emotions and feelings under control, and where men were supposed to be the head of the household. In such a context, Bronte's novel Jane Eyre was a real shock to the system, as it portrayed a young woman who refused to submit to society's expectations. Jane Eyre is one of the first and most provocative fictional characters in literature to openly challenge the gender roles placed upon the shoulders of females in Victorian society – she was a model for progressive females everywhere. Throughout the novel, Jane challenges woman’s role in society in many modern and liberal ways which went against the grain of expectations. She pioneered the way for independent females everywhere, despite being a fictional character.

Read more on Blanche Ingram as a Character

Indirect Feminism — The “Misplaced Self Worth” of Blanche Ingram

The character of Jane herself directly communicated progressive feminist ideals. As if this was not enough, Bronte uses the character of Blanche Ingram to ridicule and further alienate Victorian women’s “places” especially when it comes to gentry formalities. Blanche is portrayed as being beautiful and smart, yes, but also vain, pretentious, and presumptuous. Jane sees that she is after social status, good marriage prospects, and proper decorum – all values of the Victorian day – but that she really isn’t invested in feeling or becoming an independent female individual, like the Jane readers have come to know and love. The portrayal of a gentry woman as weak and stupid (especially when the main male interest in the book is assumed to marry her) sends a strong message that a woman who conforms to the norms of dictated behavior in society is blind, and foolish.

Read more on Progressivism and Feminism in Jane Eyre

Women in the Victorian age were constantly under the burden of having to submit to and follow societal norms. Females were expected to stay in their “place” (wherever that was in society), and were often subjected to situations that compromised and jeopardized their independence and dignity. Jane Eyre is one of the first and most provocative fictional characters in literature to openly challenge the gender roles placed upon the shoulders of females in Victorian society – she was a model for progressive females everywhere. Throughout the novel, Jane challenges woman’s role in society in many modern and liberal ways which went against the grain of expectations. She pioneered the way for independent females everywhere, despite being a fictional character.

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Jane describes Ingram as such:

“She was very showy, but she was not genuine: she had a fine person, many brilliant attainments; but her mind was poor, her heart barren by nature; nothing bloomed spontaneously on that soil; no unforced natural fruit delighted by its freshness. She was not good; she was not original;...she never offended, or had an opinion of her own” (216).

Jane herself values independence, intelligence, and the ability to speak her mind - Ingram, even though she is a prime example of a lady for her day, seems to be the opposite of these ideals. Jane says that her “mind is poor” and that she never "has an opinion of her own", which reflects poorly in Ingram in the mind of the reader despite her social status, especially when we have come to know Jane's tendencies. Jane also dislikes Ingram because she is restrained by the rules of her social class when it comes to marriage.

“I had thought him a man unlikely to be influenced by motives so commonplace in his choice of a wife; but the longer I considered the position, education, etc., of the parties, the less I felt justified in judging and blaming either him or Miss Ingram for acting in conformity to ideas and principles instilled into them, doubtless, from their childhood. All their class held these principles...It seemed to me that, were I a gentleman like him, I would take to my bosom only such a wife as I could love” (218).

The portrayal of Ingram as a weak character despite her social status makes a statement against the societal norms and expectations of women Victorian society.

Read more on Blanche Ingram as a Character

Comments on the Pseudonym Currer Bell

Though Jane had a significant impact in literature for being the first woman character to openly question gender practices, in real society Jane’s reception was skeptical. She was feisty, headstrong, and unorthodox (despite her Catholic schooling) – things women were not supposed to be. Jane, in short, was controversial. Bronte, when she pitched Jane Eyre as a novel, knew that she would never get it published if she used her own female name. Jane was so different that if a lady had written the text, it would be completely taboo. Bronte published Jane Eyre under the pseudonym Currer Belle, a purposely vague but assumed male title. Even though Currer Belle was Christian and male, the general public speculated about whether the novel was really written by a man or a woman. The complexity of the dynamics between Jane and men, as well as ideas about Christianity and feminism, led readers to question what characterized an author as “masculine” or “feminine”. Some argued that no woman would have the guts to write the slang, crude humor and passion that comes through in Jane Eyre. Others say that the abundance of desire and tenderness, as well as the intricate understanding of a young woman’s lifestyle and emotions, pointed towards a female author. Either way, everyone agreed that Currer Belle, whoever he was, was an arresting writer.

The fact that Bronte had to publish her book under a male name just because of the way she portrays women speaks volumes about the expected roles and norms of Victorian Society in itself. It would not have been socially acceptable for a woman to publish such a strong female characters with such strong opinions on society. What would the repercussions have been if Bronte had published Jane Eyre as a woman? Would she have been shunned or physically harmed? Obviously Bronte was worried about such consequences, which led her to take up a pseudonym. Jane Eyre wasn’t published under the name Charlotte Bronte until 1847.

The Gothic and Jane Eyre

Influence Of Gothic on Jane Eyre
When the Gothic Era, a subcategory of Romantic Literature, was launched in the late 18th century, it featured ancient castles, dungeons, screams, ghosts, blood, and graveyards; the Gothic was meant to invoke the macabre, terrifying, grotesque, and supernatural. Characters were often at the mercy of forces that they could not understand or comprehend. Horace Walpole, who wrote The Castle of Oranto, is credited as the first author to "revive the Gothick" from a type of rudimentary medievalism, focusing on haunted castles, supernatural happenings, and a damsel in distress. Later in the Gothic period, often times novels focused on the pleasurably terrifying, including cruel eroticism, incestuous rape, and murderous seduction. Some of the more famous works to come out of the "Gothick" Era are Shelley's Frankenstien, Radcliffe's The Romance of the Forest and The Mysteries of Udolfo, Lewis' The Monk, Peacock's Nightmare Abbey, and Austen's Northanger Abbey.

Many Victorian authors were directly influenced by the supernatural story telling in the Gothic Era, including Charlotte Bronte. Bronte quite directly evokes the Gothic frequently in Jane Eyre, in things like setting, characters, and stories. At one point, Jane asks Mrs. Fairfax:

"You have no ghosts then? 'None that I have heard of.' 'Nor any traditions of one? No legends or ghost stories?' 'I believe not.' " (125).

Bronte often sets the tone with spooky settings that are very Gothic. While walking around upstairs in the attics of Thornfield, Jane describes her surroundings:

"I liked the hush, the gloom, the quaintness of these retreats in the day; but by no means coveted a nights repose on one of those wide and heavy beds shut in, some of them, with doors of oak; shaded, others, with wrought English old hangings crusted with thick work, portraying effigies of strange flowers, and stranger birds, and the strangest human beings – all which would have looked strange, indeed, by the pallid gleam of moonlight" (125).

Also, when Jane is in the Red Room at the start of the novel, her ghostly experience and the scary setting evoke the Gothic supernatural:

"I began to recall what I had heard of dead men, troubled in their graces by the violation of their last wishes, revisiting the earth to punish the perjured and avenge the oppressed. I thought Mr. Reed's spirit, harassed by the wrongs of his sisters child, might quit its abode... and rise before me in this chamber. I wiped my tears and hushed my sobs, fearful lest any sign of violent grief might awaken a preternatural voice to comfort me, or elicit from the gloom some haloed face... I lifted my head ...at this moment I saw a gleam on the wall...in all likelihood, a gleam from a lantern, carried by someone across the lawn" (20-21).

Characters, too, especially Bertha Mason, are portrayed as garish and scary. When Jane first hears Bertha laughing, it is described as "preternatural":

"It was a curious laugh – distinct, formal, mirthless. I stopped... it began again, louder... the laugh was as tragic, as preternatural a laugh as any I ever heard; and, but that it was high noon, and that no circumstances of ghostliness accompanied the curious cachinnation..." (127).

Later, when she actually sees Bertha, she is described as a supernatural, ghastly, and grotesque character that might be found in Gothic text:

"Fearful and ghostly to me - oh sir, I never saw a face like it! It was a discolored face - it was a savage face. I wished I could forget the roll of the red eyes and the fearful blackened inflation of the lineaments! 'Ghosts are usually pale, Jane.' 'This sir, was purple - the lips were swollen and dark; the brow furrowed: the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes. Shall I tell you of what it reminded me?' 'You may.' Of the foul German spectre - the vampire" (327).

Jane throughout the novel also frequently cites magic and fantasy creatures, and retells a children's story of a frightening creature called the Gytrash:

"In those days I was young, and all sorts of fancies bright and dark tenanted my mind: the memories of nursery stories were there amongst other rubbish; and when they recurred, maturing youth added to them a vigour and vividness beyond what childhood could give...I remembered a certain of Bessie's tales wherein figured North of England spirit, called a 'Gytrash'; which, in the form of a horse, mule or large dog, haunted solitary ways, and sometimes came upon belated travelers, as this horse was now coming upon me" (132).

Transition Away from the Gothic?

Though the influence of the Gothic can be seen clearly in Jane Eyre, Bronte also discredits the Gothic in some direct ways. One main defining characteristic of the Gothic is that the characters are up against forces of nature (or of the supernatural), that they do not understand. Though Bronte does evoke the Gothic quite frequently, she tempers all of her statements that might come off as "supernatural" by stating some kind of rational explanation for the happening. For example, after Jane finishes her story about seeing a ghost in the Red Room, she says directly after that the happening was "in all likelihood, a gleam from a lantern, carried by someone across the lawn" (20-21). While telling the story of the Gytrash, Jane cites that the memories of nursery stories "were there amongst other rubbish", as if the story is childish and of no value. Also, when Jane hears Bertha Mason "preternatural laugh", she says quickly that since it was daytime that "it was high noon" and that "no circumstances of ghostliness" accompanied the incident.

This discrediting of and finding an explanation for all thing supernatural indicates a transition away from things that are not understood to finding answers to unexplainable things through observation and science (Origin of Species, etc.). This works to discredit the Gothic and belief in the supernatural.
Gothic chair (this very chair looks like it could have been in the Red Room)
Public’s Reception

When *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847, it was an immediate popular and critical success. There were a number of issues with the novel during the time it was published that contradicted some of the cultural and gender codes and expectations.

Initially, the novel was harshly criticized because it represented a very realistic threat to the order of things regarding gender and class. Jane's narrative voice is very opinionated and critical of the upper class gentry. She portrays members of this elite class with much elegance and luxury, but portrays them all as naive, ignorant and snobby, and lacking in intellect, manners and social awareness. For instance, when the group of elite people that Rochester knew came to stay at Thornfield, Jane depicts everyone's behaviors in very childish ways. This was, of course, taken offensively by some people of the elite class during that time.

In a famous attack in the Quarterly Review of December 1848, Elizabeth Rigby called Jane a "personification of an unregenerate and undisciplined spirit" and the novel as a whole, "anti-Christian."
### Adaptations of Jane Eyre

Jane Eyre has been adapted into various motion pictures, musicals, television series and radio shows, as well as influencing a vast number of literary works.

Below is a list of film adaptations with the same title as the original novel:

- 1934 *Jane Eyre* starring Virginia Bruce and Colin Clive
- 1944 *Jane Eyre* starring Joan Fontaine and Orson Welles
- 1949 *Jane Eyre* starring Mary Sinclair and Charlton Heston
- 1952 *Jane Eyre* starring Katharine Bard and Kevin McCarthy
- 1957 *Jane Eyre* starring Joan Elam and Patrick MacNee
- 1970 *Jane Eyre* starring Susannah York and George C. Scott
- 1973 *Jane Eyre* starring Sorcha Cusack and Michael Jayston
- 1983 *Jane Eyre* starring Zelah Clarke and Timothy Dalton
- 1996 *Jane Eyre* starring Charlotte Gainsbourg and William Hurt
- 1997 *Jane Eyre* starring Samantha Morton and Ciaran Hinds
- 2006 *Jane Eyre* starring Ruth Wilson and Toby Stephens
- 2011 *Jane Eyre* starring Mia Wasikowska and Michael Fassbender

Below is a list of various other adaptations over the years:

- Several silent film adaptations from 1910-1926
- 1943 *I Walked with a Zombie* a horror movie based on Jane Eyre
- About 19 movie adaptations spanning across the world from Mexico to Hong Kong to India
- About 9 musical, opera and ballet adaptations
- In 2009 British radio aired a production of Jane Eyre
- Several television series, most popular in Europe on BBC
- 2003 graphic novel
- 4 sequels to the original novel, none by Charlotte Bronte, most deal with grown-up Jane
- 2010 *Jane Slayre* where Jane battles vampires
- *Wide Sargasso Sea* by Jean Rhys is a prequel to Jane Eyre
- *The Eyre Affair* by Jasper Fforde is a spin-off of the original novel
- 6 adaptations of the novel being told from a different character’s point of view; most are told from Adele’s point of view

### Hierarchy of Domestic Life

Finding a steady job was very difficult for women during the 19th century, due to the fact that they were entrapped in the overwhelming emphasis of a patriarchal society. Domestic service, one of the few options for women in need of work, was the most popular occupation in the 19th century, and thus the most sought after. The size of the family’s house and the extent of the family’s wealth determined the number of servants necessary, but there was usually no less than 3. That being said, the tasks assigned to each servant was also dependent on how many servants were employed in the household—if there was a greater number of servant, each servant was assigned more specific roles. If there were less servants, they were expected to take on a greater list of tasks.

#### Governesses

Governesses, the position that Jane Eyre held at Thornfield, fell into their own domestic service category. They were typically unmarried and therefore had to go into service to support themselves. They were looked down on by the house’s family as being from a failed family. In contrast, they were also looked down on by the service staff because they represented hypocrisy; they worked for wages like any other servant yet they were expected to be part of the genteel. The only thing that kept governesses from being considered part of the culturally elite is the salary and usually low family position. But they don’t lack potential or intellect anymore than the family in which they are working for. A governess would typically receive room and board but have to provide for her own laundry, travel and medical care. During the Victorian era in England, there were more applicants to be governesses than there were positions, because the only other options were marriage, domestic service, prostitution, or the poor house. The position was unenviable, but hiring a governess was a sign of culture and means. In 1850, there was an estimated 21,000 governesses in England. In the novel, the position of the governess allowed the audience to see life both from the servant’s point of view and the aristocracy’s point of view.
It was common for children to enter into domestic service at a young age. On average, children started this domestic work around the age of 10, but sometimes started as young as age 8.

The servants of a Victorian household were expected to work invisibly. It was required that the servants enter the house in their own entrance, which was usually below ground level in the back of the house. Generally, the philosophy of a smooth running household was that servants were out of sight and out of mind. This was enforced by the lady of the house, whom was typically responsible for the servants. She was not only responsible for hiring the servants, but for ensuring each member of the household maintained and acted in a way that wouldn't bring shame on her rank. Below is a typical set of rules that household servants were expected to follow:

1 - When being spoken to, stand still, keeping your hands quiet, and always look at the person speaking.

2 - Never let your voice be heard by the ladies and gentlemen of the household, unless they have spoken directly to you a question or statement which requires a response, at which time, speak as little as possible.

3 - In the presence of your mistress, never speak to another servant or person of your own rank, or to a child, unless only for necessity, and then as little as possible and as quietly as possible.

4 - Never begin to talk to the ladies or gentlemen, unless to deliver a message or to ask a necessary question, and then, do it in as few words as possible.

5 - Whenever possible, items that have been dropped, such as spectacles or handkerchiefs, and other small items, should be returned to their owners on a salver.

6 - Always respond when you have received an order, and always use the proper address: “Sir”, “Ma’am”, “Miss” or “Mrs,” as the case may be.

7 - Never offer your opinion to your employer.

8 - Always “give room”: that is, if you encounter one of your betters in the house or on the stairs, you are to make yourself as invisible as possible, turning yourself toward the wall and averting your eyes.

9 - Except in reply to a salutation offered, never say “good morning” or “good night” to your employer.

10 - If you are required to walk with a lady or gentleman in order to carry packages, or for any other reason, always keep a few paces back.

11 - You are expected to be punctual to your place at mealtime.

12 - You shall not receive any Relative, Visitor or Friend into the house, nor shall you introduce any person into the Servant’s Hall, without the consent of the Butler or Housekeeper.

13 - Followers are strictly forbidden. Any member of the female staff who is found to be fraternizing shall be immediately dismissed.

14 - Expect that any breakages or damages in the house shall be deducted from your wages.
A servants' entrance
Victorian Fashion

The style of the 19th century Victorian era was a vision of elegance and grace, particularly for women. As might be expected, these styles and trends pertained only the high and middle class citizens. Women wore intricate, luxurious gowns trimmed with frills, flounces, lace, braid, fringe, ruche and ribbons.

Arguably the most noticeable change in fashion trends at the beginning of the period was the dropping of the waistline of women’s clothing to the position of the woman’s natural waist. This adjustment in women’s apparel gave rise to the creation of the corset. This new trend experienced rapid popularity and eventually was recognized as a necessary and essential component of everyday apparel for Victorian women. The purpose of this fashionable silhouette was to portray an hourglass figure, which was achieved by reducing the thickness of the waist. In the 1840s and 1850s, tight lacing became popular. Tight lacing occurred when women tied their corsets increasing tight in an effort to make their figures increasingly small. This trend was eventually recognized as a characteristic of morality—lacing was thought to be a tangible way of teaching women moral restraint and seriousness.

The crinoline cage frame was another component of the Victorian woman’s wardrobe that was introduced during this era. The cage frame was introduced in 1856 by W.S. Thompson. It allowed women’s legs to move more freely underneath and freed them from excessive petticoat weight. (adding more on this)

As for the Victorian gentlemen, a coat, waistcoat (known today as a vest), and a hat were expected to be worn daily. The waistcoat was recognized as the centerpiece of the man’s outfit, and was usually made of silk. It was common for a Victorian gentleman of high or middle class status to own several silk waistcoats of a variety of colors to pair with one or two dark suits. The 1840s experienced a movement from the fall front trouser (featuring a front flap with a button side seam) to a fly front trouser, which still exists today.

The pocket watch was a trendy accessory for men that was nearly universal. Another common accessory for men was gloves; some etiquette books indicated that it was considered unseemly to allow man’s skin to touch a woman, so this made gloves a necessity.

As expected, similar fashions were mentioned the novel. For example,
brocaded and hooped petticoats
Resources and Links

*Jane Eyre* as a Childrens Story
Fictional World of Angria
Original and First Review of *Jane Eyre* by Quarterly Review
A Walking Tour of *Jane Eyre*
*Jane Eyre* Drinking Game

Image Gallery
Bibliography


