APRIL 25 - MAY 21, 2017 | QUADRACCI POWERHOUSE

Play Guide

JANE EYRE

by **Charlotte Brontë**
Adapted by **Polly Teale**
Directed by **KJ Sanchez**

Originally Produced by
Shared Experience Theatre Company

A Co-Production with
Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park

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The Rep MILWAUKEE

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The Rep MILWAUKEE

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ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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* * *

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Synopsis

From the award-winning Shared Experience Theatre Company in the U.K. comes this engaging adaptation of Charlotte Brontë's epic story of a spirited young woman in a man's world searching for a sense of self. Orphaned, Jane overcomes a rough start in life to become an accomplished governess at the mysterious home of Mr. Rochester. Passions grow between them when a secret is revealed, threatening Jane's hopes for the future. Told by eight actors playing more than twenty roles, *The New York Times* raved that "this *Jane Eyre* provides a bite…think of it as Brontë unbuttoned."

Cast

Margaret Ivey
JANE

Rin Allen
BERTHA

Andy Paterson
JOHN REED, TEACHER, RICHARD MASON

Christine Toy Johnson
BESSIE, BLANCHE INGRAM, GRACE POOLE, DIANE RIVERS

Tina Stafford
MRS. REED, MRS. FAIRFAX

Rebecca Hirota
HELEN BURNS, ADELE, MARY RIVERS

Damian Baldet
MR. BROCKLEHURST, LORD INGRAM, SAINT JOHN RIVERS

Michael Sharon
ROCHESTER

Jesse Bhamrah
ENSEMBLE

Tanner Medding
ENSEMBLE

Creative Team

Polly Teale
PLAYWRIGHT

KJ Sanchez
DIRECTOR

Kris Stone
SCENIC DESIGNER

Rachel Healy
COSTUME DESIGNER

Jane Shaw
SOUND & COMPOSITION DESIGNER

Brian Lilienthal
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Kimberly Carolus*
STAGE MANAGER

Anthony Poston
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Marina Bergenstock
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Marguerite Frey
STAGE MANAGEMENT FELLOW

Charlotte Brontë was born on April 21, 1816 in Thornton, Yorkshire, England. She was raised in a strict Anglican home by her father, a clergyman, and a religious aunt after her mother and two older siblings died. Brontë and her sister, Emily, both attended the Clergy Daughter's School at Cowan Bridge, but were largely educated at home. Until finding success as a writer, Brontë worked as a teacher and a governess. As a very young woman, Brontë wrote to the poet laureate Robert Southey asking for his opinion on her writing and he wrote back urging her to give up writing as it was an unsuitable pursuit for women. Brontë disliked teaching and being a governess, but given that it was one of the only respectable occupations for a middle class woman, it was a necessary source of income for the Brontë family, and Brontë spent many years teaching. It was only the last ten years of her life that Brontë's writing was published. Brontë published her first novel, *Jane Eyre*, in 1847 under the pseudonym Currer Bell. Although considered controversial, the book found immediate success. In 1854, she married Arthur Bell Nichols, but died during her pregnancy the following year. Her novel *The Professor* was published posthumously in 1857.

On Adapting the Play

By Polly Teale

Returning to *Jane Eyre* fifteen years after I read it as a teenager I found, not the horror story I remembered, but a psychological drama of the most powerful kind. Everything and everyone in the story is seen, larger than life, through the magnifying glass of Jane's psyche. Why though, I asked myself, did she invent a madwoman locked in an attic to torment her heroine? Why is Jane Eyre, a supremely rational young woman, haunted by a vengeful she-devil? Why do these two women exist in the same story?

I had forgotten that the novel began with another image of incarceration: another female locked away for breaking the rules of allowed behaviour. Jane Eyre is shut up in the Red Room when, for the first time in her young life, she allows her temper to erupt, losing control of herself in an attack of rage. Jane is told that God will strike her dead "in the midst of one of her tantrums": She is so terrified she loses consciousness. The message is clear. For a Victorian woman to express her passionate nature is to invite the severest of punishment. Jane must keep her fiery spirit locked away if she is to survive. Could it be that Jane and the madwoman are not in fact opposites. That like all the most frightening ghosts Bertha Mason exists not in the real world but in Jane's imagination!

I have come to see the novel as a quest, a passionate enquiry. How is it possible for Jane as a woman to be true to herself in the world in which she lives? Each of the women in the novel suggests a possible role: from the excessive artificiality of Blanche Ingram, to the silent stoicism of Helen Burns, we see the range of choices available. Jane, like Charlotte Brontë, is 'poor, obscure and plain' and yet hidden inside is a 'secret self, the huge imagination glimpsed in Jane's visionary paintings of foreign lands. Although Brontë spent most of her life in a remote Yorkshire village, she had a great longing to overpass the horizon of her restricted existence. It is significant that Bertha is a foreigner. She comes from the land of Brontë's imagination, from a land of hot rain and hurricanes. She is both dangerous and exciting. She is passionate and sexual. She is angry and violent. She is the embodiment of everything that Jane, a Victorian woman, must never be. She is perhaps everything that Charlotte Brontë feared in herself and longed to express.

Example of Novel to Play Adaptation *from the Shared Experience Guide*

When Jane Eyre is sent up to the Red Room and locked in as a punishment for attacking John Reed, she experiences a 'mental battle'.

'Unjust! – unjust!' said my Reason, forced by the agonising stimulus into precocious though transitory power and resolve equally wrought up, instigated some strange expedient to achieve escape from insupportable oppression as running away, or, if that could not be effected, never eating or drinking more, and letting myself die....

How all my brain was in tumult, and all my heart in insurrection! Yet in what darkness, what dense ignorance, was the mental battle fought, I could not answer the ceaseless inward question why I thus suffered...I wiped my tears and hushed my sobs, fearful lest any sign of violent grief might waken a preternatural voice to comfort me, or elicit from the gloom some haloed face, bending over me with

NOVEL

BERTHA Unjust. Unjust.

JANE Why can I never please? Why is it useless to try and win anyone's favour?

BERTHA He is cruel and wicked. He should be punished, not me. He drowned a kitten in the stream. He set the dogs at the sheep. He snaps the heads off the flowers in the hothouse and laughs.

JANE I dare commit no fault. I strive to fulfil every duty and I am called naughty and sullen and sneaking and....

BERTHA Unjust. Unjust.

JANE I will run away. I will not eat or drink. I will let myself die.

BERTHA If Mr. Reed had been alive he would have treated me kindly.

JANE Ssh. Ssh. Ssh. *SHE TRIES TO STIFLE BERTHA.*

BERTHA I have read that dead men can come back. They come back to punish the living who have failed to do their bidding as Mrs. Reed has. She promised him to look after me and treat me as her own. He will come back and torment her.

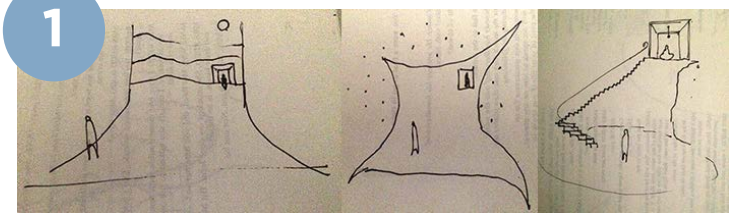
JANE Shut up. Shut up.

PLAY

Comments from Set Designer Kris Stone
from Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park

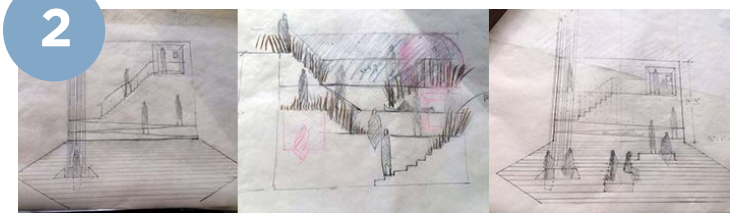
Set Designer Kris Stone invites us to explore her artistic perspective in creating the world of Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre. *The following is a curation of Stone's notes, sketches, and set renderings.*

1



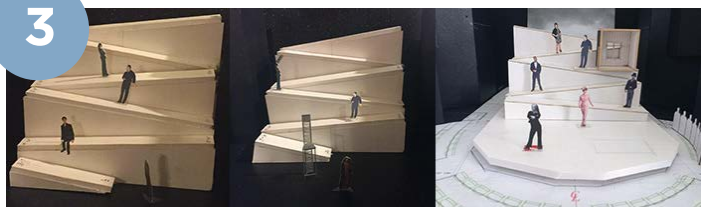
The remnants that the novel left in my psyche, and the isolation and abandonment Jane experiences, guided us. I always feel more of the psychological impact of stories than the literal places or details. For me, this script represents what it is to feel what Jane is going through more than seeing castles, horses, and school rooms.

2



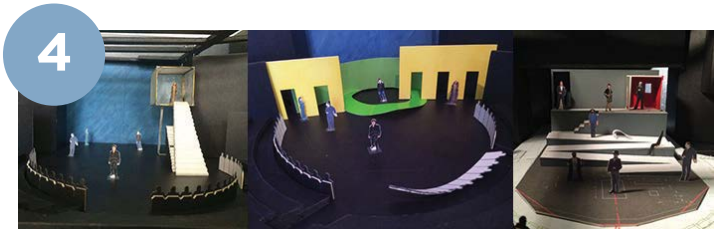
I said to myself, what do we really need to tell this story? What does the space allow for? We gravitated toward the endless walking Jane does throughout the story and I felt, too, there must be a million stairs she has to climb as well. So, creating a way to have her walk and walk and climb and climb was very important to me. And trapping Bertha in the red room was key—a little prison in reality but also of the mind.

3



I design a lot of Shakespeare and we trust the words to place us so we don't need millions of scenic pieces. We say Verona; we are there; we say what we see; allowing the audience to imagine further. I think great storytelling allows us to bring our own worlds into the room and doesn't tell us what to see but how to see.

4



Composer and Sound Designer Jane Shaw created a world where the actors as an ensemble create Jane's experience entirely. They are telling us a story and manipulating her world for us. So, the set became a giant percussive instrument. It is entirely created to amplify drumming, stomping and scratching.

If Bertha is a caged animal desperate to get out, she becomes a whirling dervish dressed like fire that physically creates the destruction of Thornfield. And in this destruction she also sets herself and Jane free. So, the clothes really informed me as well. Costume Designer Rachel Healy's period-perfect designs resonate and float in this world in a way that brings us back to the human. The characters are far more important than the space, so allowing them to have the power and the focus is very important to me.

5

I feel this adaptation gets to the underbelly of the tale. It's unapologetic and raw. I think that film and television often show us the reality of things, but theatre has a different role in this world. It is to unlock the subconscious and find ourselves entirely empathetic to Jane's life and tribulations by listening carefully and not being distracted by big scenic gestures.

Bringing Creative Nuance to a Timeless Heroine

By Natalie Hulla

Cincinnati Playhouse Associate Artist and director of Jane Eyre *KJ Sanchez shares her artistic perspective with the Playhouse on how this production resonated with her in the past and the creative opportunities she has in bringing the classic heroine to life for contemporary audiences:*

Charlotte Brontë's novel has seen several adaptations since its publication in the late 19th-century. As the director of this production, what inspires you to bring the story to life on stage today in 2017?

I have a very personal relationship to this book, adaptation and production: I read this book when I was 13 and it honestly changed my life. Jane Eyre was a heroine altogether different from any I had encountered. She was smart and strong and not afraid to speak her mind. She was most comfortable in nature, least comfortable when required to be charming. In fact, she's reviled, punished and mistreated because she is "plain" — yet Jane is essentially downright beautiful but hated because her beauty is unique and doesn't fit what is expected by social norms. Well…you can imagine as a 13-year-old girl…this meant everything. Wow! To read about a young woman who was more than just cute, who had substance, who was funny and fearless. Yet because she was not cute, not "likable," she had no place. It's heartbreaking, really, to say this still is relevant, right?

The design and tone of this production calls for a stylized combination of music, dance and choreography. How did you approach this artistic element? What kinds of opportunities and challenges has it posed?

I see it as a wonderful invitation to be as creative as I like. Polly Teale and I had a great meeting over Skype (she lives in London), and she invited me to bring my own style to the work. She's done an incredible job with the text – distilling the book, finding the most essential moments and adapting it so that the dramatic action is (forgive the pun) on fire. Because the adaptation is so strong, we (the design team, actors and me) can bring our own artistry to it. All of the actors will play musical instruments. I'm working with a great choreographer – Peter Kyle, who I have worked with and admired for years – and I'm thrilled that we have one of the best sound designers in theatre today – Jane Shaw – writing original music for this production.

Bertha plays a unique role in this play. She exists in both symbolic and physical spaces, representing an array of meanings in terms of character and theme. How did you approach Bertha's character in this way?

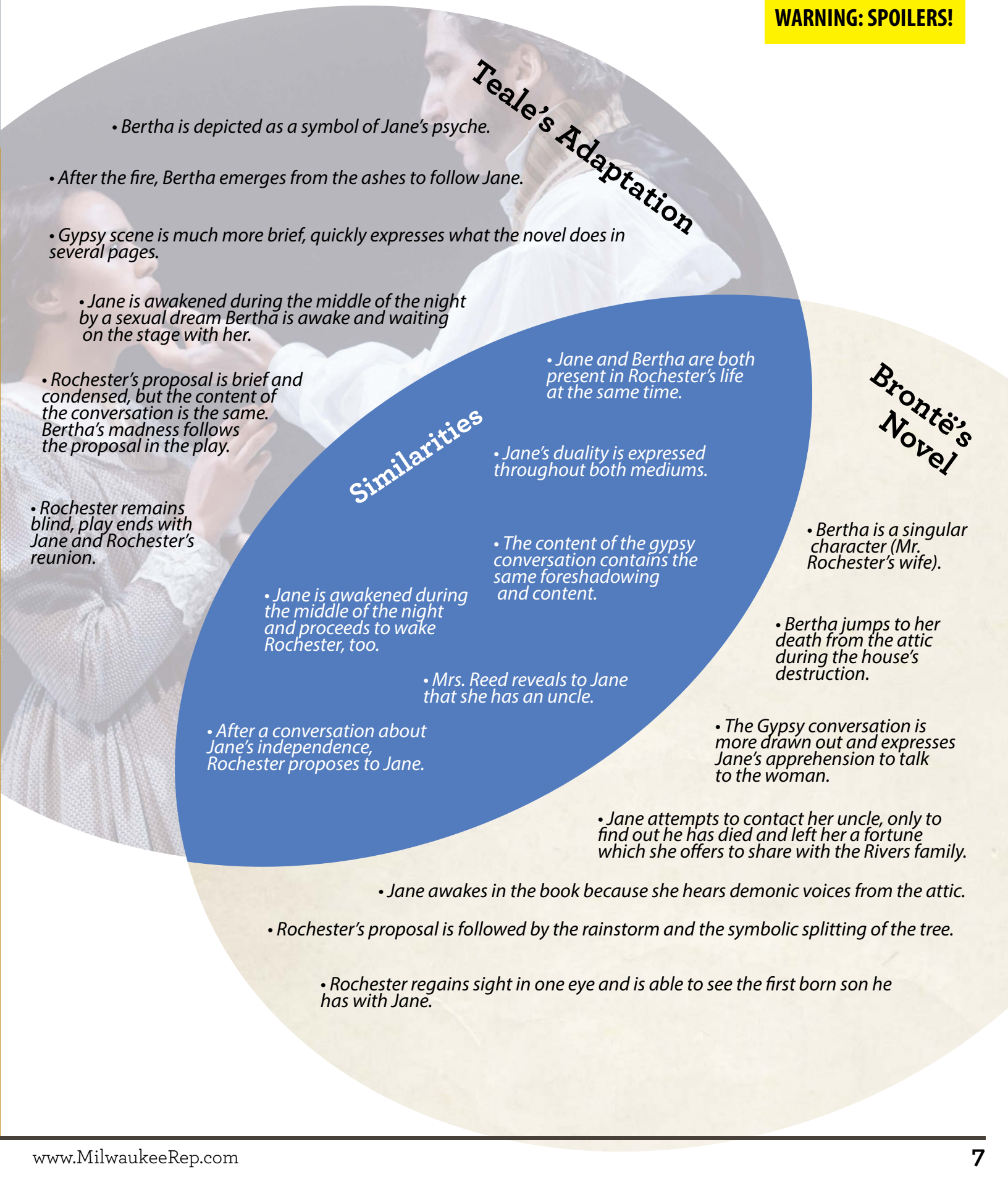
That's right. Bertha is the side of Jane that must be locked away – she is fearlessness, she is passion, she is autonomy. She is also – and this is the part that makes this adaptation a real work of art – she is also the first Mrs. Rochester – a very real woman whose madness is not only inherited but quite possibly also a symptom of a very sick underbelly of the great British Empire.

Imprisonment plays a significant thematic role in Jane Eyre and particularly so in Polly Teale's script. This symbolism goes hand in hand with women's roles and expectations of the story's setting, the Victorian era. How do you think audience members will relate to such symbolism today?

I think they will recognize issues we still face today. I think they will empathize with Jane's plight. I think they will experience catharsis. There is also a great love story within all of this. A beautiful love story, between two people who both feel they don't deserve to be loved. I think our audiences will love this story. As I do.

Novel to Play: Similarities & Differences

WARNING: SPOILERS!



Teale's Adaptation

- *Bertha is depicted as a symbol of Jane's psyche.*
- *After the fire, Bertha emerges from the ashes to follow Jane.*
- *Gypsy scene is much more brief, quickly expresses what the novel does in several pages.*
- *Jane is awakened during the middle of the night by a sexual dream Bertha is awake and waiting on the stage with her.*
- *Rochester's proposal is brief and condensed, but the content of the conversation is the same. Bertha's madness follows the proposal in the play.*
- *Rochester remains blind, play ends with Jane and Rochester's reunion.*

Similarities

- *Jane and Bertha are both present in Rochester's life at the same time.*
- *Jane's duality is expressed throughout both mediums.*
- *The content of the gypsy conversation contains the same foreshadowing and content.*
- *Jane is awakened during the middle of the night and proceeds to wake Rochester, too.*
- *Mrs. Reed reveals to Jane that she has an uncle.*
- *After a conversation about Jane's independence, Rochester proposes to Jane.*

Brontë's Novel

- *Bertha is a singular character (Mr. Rochester's wife).*
- *Bertha jumps to her death from the attic during the house's destruction.*
- *The Gypsy conversation is more drawn out and expresses Jane's apprehension to talk to the woman.*
- *Jane attempts to contact her uncle, only to find out he has died and left her a fortune which she offers to share with the Rivers family.*
- *Jane awakes in the book because she hears demonic voices from the attic.*
- *Rochester's proposal is followed by the rainstorm and the symbolic splitting of the tree.*
- *Rochester regains sight in one eye and is able to see the first born son he has with Jane.*

Victorian

A dedication plaque on the original Cowan Bridge building. Image courtesy of Creative Commons Attribution.

Boarding Schools

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane attends the Lowood Institute, a religious boarding school for orphans. Charlotte Brontë's experience at Cowan Bridge largely inspired the conditions of Lowood. Brontë attended the school with her two sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, where they were subjected to extremely harsh conditions including corporal punishment, routine humiliation, insufficient diet, and dangerous disease. Both Maria and Elizabeth died during the Typhus epidemic at Cowan, the character of Helen Burns inspired by Brontë's sister Maria.

Upper class families sent their sons to prestigious boarding schools at the age of ten. Curriculum at the upper class boarding schools included the core subjects as well as Greek and Roman classic literature, musical hymns, Bible study, prayer, and sports designed to 'build character'. Teaching methods included rigorous and repetitive note taking with chalk and metal-tipped pens.

Women's Roles

During the Victorian era, the woman's place was in the home. In the 19th century, households were large and often had multiple generations living under one roof. It was a woman's job to take care of all household responsibilities. While men were at work, women oversaw domestic duties and prepared the next generation to carry on this way of life. The perfect Victorian wife was referred to as "the angel in the house" and was graceful, charming, and unconditionally pure.

Jane faces many odds as a woman because she refuses to be passive and simply accept this way of life. Jane works hard and demands mutual respect, reminding Rochester that she is not a "machine without feelings."

St. Mary's Church, Studley Royal, in North Yorkshire, England. Image: EnglishHeritage.org

Missonaries

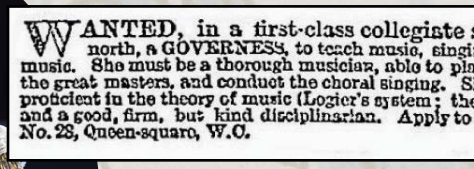
During the 19th century, Christianity wove itself into almost every aspect of English life. Church attendance was high (50 percent) and Christian values such as sin and ungodliness had significant influence on the decisions and actions of individuals. The Church of England, the country's established church, played a large role in shaping religious identities. However, this changed as industrialization increased and new cities with new denominations emerged, creating a large rise of missionary activity in England. Missionaries like Saint John believed they had a special and necessary role in Christianizing and civilizing the world. By 1900, there were more than 60,000 missionaries from Britain working overseas. Those who worked as missionaries devoted themselves to a life of religion, often sacrificing their own needs for what they believed to be the greater good.

In *Jane Eyre*, Saint John believes Jane would make the perfect missionary wife. However, him because she does not believe Saint John would be able to provide the emotional support she needs. While Jane sees missionary work as fulfilling in principle, she realizes it may be accompanied with loneliness and lack of passion if it is not her calling.

Working Women

Young people, especially women, migrated to cities in search of employment as opportunities in agriculture declined. Per BBC, 30-40 percent of women in working class families contributed to household incomes with most women working in domestic service or in the textile and clothing industry. Within domestic service, there were "lower" and "upper" classes of servants. Upper class domestic service included jobs such as governesses, skilled cooks, and housemaids. More commonly, small households hired women as lower class servants to perform jobs such as dishwashing, laundry, and other dirty work around the house.

Female employment in the 1850s, 60s, and 70s appears to be the highest recorded until World War II. Before the Industrial Revolution, women could earn money as secretaries, bookkeepers, shopkeepers, hairdressers, midwives, and pharmacists. However, in the years following, women's work was often not documented since they worked part-time, casual jobs not considered important enough to declare. Some women worked illegally in sweatshops or kept their earnings secret from their husbands. Essentially the only legal position for women to earn money was in a factory or as a servant/governess.


WANTED, in a first-class collegiate
north, a GOVERNESS, to teach music, singi
music. She must be a thorough musician, able to pl
the great masters, and conduct the choral singing. S
proficient in the theory of music (Logier's system; th
and a good, firm, but kind disciplinarian. Apply to
No. 28, Queen-square, W.C.

> "I wish you did not think me a woman… You will – I know – keep measuring me by some standard of what you deem becoming to my sex… Come what will – I cannot when I write think of what is elegant and charming in femininity – it is not on those terms or with such ideas I ever took pen in hand."
>
> *-Letter to George Lewes from Charlotte Brontë, Nov. 1849 (From Shared Experience)*

Charlotte Brontë worked as a governess, and in 1839 wrote to her sister Emily describing her experiences:

"The children are constantly with me and more riotous, perverse, unmanageable cubs never grew… I used to think I should like to be in the stir of grand folks' society but I have had enough of it – it is dreary work to look on and listen. I see more clearly than I have ever

England

Class & Status
The experiences and opportunities for women depended greatly on their class ranking. During the 19th century, women fell under three classes: upper, middle/working, and lower class.

Upper class women's primary responsibility was to instruct servants on how to groom younger girls. Women who were part of the nobility class attended tea parties and balls and enjoyed various pastimes like horseback riding and knitting.

Most middle class women worked as tradeswomen or as housekeepers for upper class households. Women in this class also helped in family businesses or were self-employed as nurses or writers. It was not uncommon for middle class women to try to marry into nobility. Jane, and other governesses, were considered part of the upper middle class. In addition to being a governess, those in the upper middle class earned their living through jobs like housekeepers or schoolmistresses.

Women in the lower class had few opportunities due to their lack of education. These women were forced to engage in physically demanding work like barmaids, waitresses, and chambermaids. Others sold goods such as flowers, ice cream, and oysters on the street. In some cases, lower class women resorted to prostitution

Governesses
For many middle class women, like Jane, working as a governess was one of the only respectable professions available to women. Wealthy households employed governesses to train and teach children, mainly girls, valuable lessons and skills. Governesses often taught girls to play piano, draw, and tutored them in French. These skills were taught with the goal of making girls more appealing to men to be more successful at finding a husband.

In many ways, the status of a governess was undefined. Governesses were required to be well educated but remained at a low status. They were not considered part of the family, but also not a servant. In fact, servants tended to not like governesses since they were far more educated. Governesses worked intimately with the children but kept their distance from the families to not undermine their status. The ambiguous role for governesses made it a very lonely, isolated, and often miserable existence.

done before that a private governess has no existence, is not considered as a living and rational being except as connected with the wearisome duties she has to fulfill… if she steals a moment for herself than she is a nuisance."
(SharedExperience.org)

Governess in Fiction
Charlotte Brontë drew from her own experience in the classroom as a teacher and as a governess when writing *Jane Eyre*. Similarly, many authors during the Victorian-era used a female protagonist who was a governess as it allowed many possibilities for plot. In 1847, *Jane Eyre*, Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey*, and William Makpeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* were all published.

The governess in fiction was, at one time, portrayed as a highly appreciated teacher. However, in the 1830s, many economic and social changes affected the position of governesses and there was a shift in this attitude. Plots started to focus on the working and social conditions of the governess heroine in a society where she was largely misunderstood.

From the 1840s to the end of the century, the position of the governess caused great debate focused on terms of employment, salaries, and socially intermediate positon of the governess. *Jane Eyre*, and other novels that were published during this time, played an important role in this debate, revealing some of the true nature of the life of a governess.

"What they really want is a maid-of-all-work, and they have the audacity to insult the educated portion of the female community by advertising for a 'governess.' Let things be called by their right names; and henceforth, let the words, 'WANTED A DOMESTIC DRUDGE!' be placed at the top of all similar advertisements."
– Charlotte Brontë *(SharedExperience.org)*

The details of Jane's life reflect Brontë's own Victorian-era upbringing. Much like her heroine, Brontë was intelligent, intense and unflinchingly authentic – everything a Victorian-era woman wasn't supposed to be. She grew up as a middle class girl without much hope for class mobility. She endured the tragic losses of her sisters to tuberculosis while growing up in the abusive hands of the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge in England. Brontë was immersed in violence in her early years, thus shaping her perspective of how the world mistreats women. The options for Brontë's life were narrow: marriage or a career path limited to teaching or being a governess. As such, Teale frames Jane Eyre with the theme of incarceration. How can Jane define happiness on her own terms if her options are so limited? Staying true to Brontë's novel, Teale allows her to confront these questions through a deeply dramatic love story.
-Natalie Hulla, Cincinnati Playhouse

Jane and Mr. Rochester: A Societal Scandal
As a middle class governess, Jane belonged in an entirely different social class from Mr. Rochester. For a gentleman of Mr. Rochester's class to marry Jane was a complete scandal, not only in the novel, but also in society at the time of the novel's publication. In 1847, when Brontë published the novel, *Jane Eyre* depicted Jane and Rochester as two human beings who were fundamentally equal while society insisted this to be categorically false in every way: class, gender, age, and power.

Symbolism in Polly Teale's *Jane Eyre*

Throughout the novel and play, Jane is in constant opposition of both class and gender expectations. The struggles allow her to prove herself as an imaginative, smart heroine rather than a poor governess and plain woman. The imagery in both the novel and the play help to create a more vivid, memorable, and complex psyche, allowing audiences to gain a clearer view of her struggle. The images highlight her desires and the oppressive ideals branded to Victorian lower class women.

Jane and Bertha

Consciously or unconsciously, Charlotte Brontë exploits the idea of psychological doubles in the novel. The characters of Jane and Bertha express respectively the socially acceptable self, and the untamed, uncensored self. A relationship between them is implied by the strong presence of Bertha when Jane is alone, by the many parallels drawn between them, and by Bertha's behavior when Jane is repressing intense feelings of emotion about Rochester. *SharedExperience.org*

The symbolism in Jane and Bertha's relationship is a direct commentary to many of the standards women were held to in the 19th century. Others view Bertha as a "madwoman" because she is open and expressive of her sexuality and womanhood— qualities a Victorian wife should not possess. Interestingly, Jane finds herself both frightened and drawn to her.

Fire

Fire plays an important role in *Jane Eyre*. The novel teems with the ambivalent presence of candles and fires; they symbolize both passion and danger, hell and desire, warmth and destruction. The fire at Thornfield is an intense moment of emotional, psychological and physical release. Polly Teale fuses the idea of fire as a physical reality and a symbolic reality and a symbolic expression of Jane and Bertha's rage. -*Cincinnati Playhouse Guide*

The Red Room

After Jane's aunt blames her for a childish quarrel, Jane is summoned to the Red Room. Mrs. Reed forces Jane to stay in the very same room where her uncle died, surrounded by its glaring red walls. The Red Room acts not only as a physical prison, but also an emotional prison. It is a reminder of Jane's limitations due to her gender, class, and desire to speak up. The trauma and humiliation Jane feels in this room is a memory that surfaces whenever Jane feels imprisoned and powerless in her life.

resources for further study

- http://www.sharedexperience.org.uk/media/education/jane-eyre_edpack.pdf
- http://www.cincyplay.com/images/PDF/JaneEyre_StudyGuide.pdf
- http://www.penguin.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/JaneEyreTG.pdf

works cited

AboutBritain.com
Academic.Brooklyn.cuny.edu
Biography.com
BBC.co.uk
Computer History.org (image source)
Fashion-Era.com
NewWorldEncyclopedia.org
PeopleOf.OurEverydayLife.com
Victorian-Era.org
VictorianWeb.org
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Computer History.org (image source)
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VISITING THE REP

Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Patty and Jay Baker Theater Complex is located in the Milwaukee Center downtown at the corner of Wells and Water Streets. The building was formerly the home of the Electric Railway and Light Company.

The Ticket Office is visible on the left upon entering the Wells Street doors. The Quadracci Powerhouse is located on the second level and can be accessed via the escalator or elevator.

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- ✯ Educate the next generation of theater professionals with our Emerging Artist Program which gives newly degreed artists a chance to hone their skills at The Rep as they begin to pursue their theatrical careers.

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