

BBC BITESIZE – JANE EYRE Episode 8

Carl: Hello, and welcome to the Bitesize English literature podcast.

Jean: We're here today to help you dive a little deeper into some of the texts in GCSE English literature.

In this series, we've been exploring Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre. I'm Jean Menzies.

Carl: I'm Carl Anka, and this episode we're testing everything we've learned so far with a recap quiz.

We're going to ask questions about Jane Eyre with multiple choice answers.

Jean: Question number one: At the beginning of the book, we find Jane as a penniless orphan living with her cruel aunt. What is her aunt's name? Is it...

- A. Mrs. Thornfield
- B. Mrs. Reed
- C. Mrs. Fairfax

MUSIC

It is Mrs. Reed – Jane's aunt. They live together at Gateshead Hall. You can recap that in episode one where we explore the plot of Jane Eyre, or in episode four where we look at Mrs. Reed's character in particular.

Extract:

I learned, for the first time, from Miss Abbot's communications to Bessie, that my father had been a poor clergyman; that my mother had married him against the wishes of her friends, who considered the match beneath her; that my grandfather Reed was so irritated at her disobedience, he cut her off without a shilling; that after my mother and father had been married a year, the latter caught the typhus fever while visiting among the poor of a large manufacturing town where his curacy was situated, and where that disease was then prevalent: that my mother took the infection from him, and both died within a month of each other.

Carl: What does "considered the match beneath her" mean in that extract?

- A. Jane's father was not rich enough
- B. Jane's father was not tall enough
- C. Jane's father was not kind enough

MUSIC

Carl: Option A. He's not rich enough. There was a strict social class structure in the Victorian period and that structure determined who people could marry. Jane's mother married below her social class.

That wasn't very well received by friends and family. If you'd like to know more about this, you can recap it in episode five of this podcast series, all about the themes of Jane Eyre, including social class.

Jean: Let's stick with that theme with this question: What was a dowry? Was it..

- A. A place on the moors?
- B. An amount of money paid by a bride's family to a groom?
- C. Was it a disease that swept through Lowood School?

MUSIC

Jean: It was a sum of money that the groom received from the bride's family through marriage. Men and their families often chose a suitable wife based on that dowry.

Carl: What is a bildungsroman?

- A. A type of novel
- B. A type of character
- C. A type of medicine

Carl: A bildungsroman is a type of novel that follows a protagonist through their struggles from childhood to adulthood as they learn from their experiences. Typically, bildungsromans have the main character succeed in later life and have a happy ending. You can find a good recap of this in episode one, where we discuss the plot and also in episode six about the form, structure and language of Jane Eyre.

Extract:

His chest heaved once, as if his large heart weary of despotic constriction had expanded despite the will and made a vigorous bound for the attainment of liberty. But he curbed it, I think, as a resolute rider would curb a rearing steed.

Jean: Why does St John Rivers not act upon his love for Rosamond Oliver? As Jane describes, he instead curbs it.

- A. He doesn't find her attractive
- B. He does not think she is a suitable missionary's wife
- C. He has fallen in love with Jane.

MUSIC

Jean: The answer is that despite being in love with her, St John believes that God has called him to become a missionary in India. He doesn't believe that Rosamond would make a good missionary's wife. So he refuses to act on his feelings and instead removes himself from Rosamond and becomes cold-hearted and distant.

We also mentioned how India was a British colony at the time and the British were forcibly introducing religion and customs. Many Indian people wanted independence and had their own religion and customs already, you can recap more on this and St. John Rivers character in episode three.

Extract:

Reader. I married him.

Carl: Jane Eyre addresses the reader directly on a number of occasions. Why does Charlotte Bronte do that? This one's not multiple choice.

MUSIC

Carl: By directly addressing the reader, Charlotte Bronte gives more of a personal link between the character of Jane Eyre, the story and the reader. If you want to know more about the form, structure and language of Jane Eyre, make sure you head to episode six of this podcast series.

Jean: Why can Mr. Rochester and Jane not get married the first time they plan their wedding?

- A. Jane is a different social class
- B. Mr. Rochester is already married
- C. Jane is marrying St John Rivers

MUSIC

Jean: If you said that Mr. Rochester is already married, then you would be correct because he is married to Bertha and Jane did not know of her existence before the wedding. Once she finds out that Mr. Rochester is already married, she decides that even though she loves him, she cannot go against her principles and be with a man who's already married.

Bonus points if you did also mentioned the housekeeper, Mrs. Fairfax, who is shocked by Mr. Rochester and Jane's engagement and believes Jane is marrying above her station. But it isn't that difference in social class that stops the wedding, though it's certainly mentioned. You can find out more about this in episode one, looking at the plot of Jane Eyre.

Carl: A pseudonym is another term for a fake name. Earlier on in this series we mentioned to you how Charlotte Bronte published Jane Eyre under a pseudonym. What pseudonym was that?

- A. Emily Bronte
- B. Currer Bell
- C. William Shakespeare

Bonus question - Why did Charlotte Bronte published Jane Eyre under a pseudonym?

MUSIC

Carl: Yes, Charlotte Bronte published Jane Eyre in 1847, under the pseudonym of Currer Bell. As for that bonus question, it was because to publish as a woman in the 19th century was extremely difficult. Charlotte Bronte deliberately chose an ambiguous pseudonym, so that she didn't feel like she was pretending to be a man. At the same time she could avoid some of the prejudice that women writers received at the time.

You can find out loads more about this in episode seven of this podcast where we talk about the context of Jane Eyre.

Jean: If you did recognise the name Emily, it's because she also was an author and a sister of Charlotte Bronte. Final question:

Extract:

I hated it the first time I set my eyes on it -- a sickly, whining, pining thing! It would wail in its cradle all night long -- not screaming heartily like any other child, but whimpering and moaning. Reed pitied it; and he used to nurse it and notice it as if it had been his own: more, indeed, than he ever noticed his own at that age.

Jean: Who is Mrs. Reed talking about and what characteristic of hers does it show?

- A. Is she talking about Jane whilst showing the characteristic of jealousy?
- B. Is she talking about Helen and showing the characteristic of kindness?
- C. Or is she talking about Mr. Rochester and the characteristic of determination?

MUSIC

Jean: Answer: A. Jane and jealousy. She's talking about Jane as a baby and we learn that she was jealous of her husband who was Jane's uncle and his love for Jane and how he seemingly cared for her more than he did his own children. You can learn more about this and Mrs. Reid's character in episode four.

Carl: That's the end of our recap quiz. It also brings the end of our series on Jane Eyre. Thank you for listening to this series of the Bitesize English podcast, all about this wonderful book.

Jean: Remember, you can listen back to any episodes at any time if you need to on BBC Sounds, and you'll find loads on there to help with your studies.

Carl: You can find more BBC Bitesize podcasts. They help with different English literature, texts, and other subjects, revision playlists and plenty of audiobooks, music or podcasts to help you relax between your revision sessions. We hope you'll join us for more. Just search for Bitesize on the BBC Sounds app.

Jean: Bitesize English literature podcast, listen on BBC Sounds.