

The language of Charlotte Brontë's time

Charlotte Brontë wrote *Jane Eyre* in 1847. The English that people spoke then was a little different from modern English. Here are some of the differences in *Jane Eyre*.

Charlotte Brontë's language modern English

do not, are not = **don't, aren't**
Do not speak of it. *Don't speak of it.*
You are not a servant. *You aren't a servant.*

must = **have to**
Must I go? *Do I have to go?*

no = **not ... any**
Make no noise. *Don't make any noise.*
I had no visitors. *I didn't have any visitors.*

a handsome man = **a good-looking man**

drawing room = **a large sitting room
for guests**

Mamma = **Mummy, Mum**

People only used first names for children, families or for loved ones. So Mr Rochester usually calls Jane Eyre *Miss Eyre*. Jane calls Edward Rochester *Sir* and his friends call him *Rochester*. Servants, however, are usually called by their first names.

Jane tells her own story. Sometimes she speaks to the person who is reading. For example, she says, 'I was eighteen, reader, and alone in the world.'

JANE EYRE

CHAPTER 1 The red room

'Where is she?' shouted John Reed. I did not move.

'She is behind the chair,' said his sister, Eliza.

I came out from my hiding place.

'What do you want?' I asked.

'Come here and stand in front of me,' he answered.

John Reed was a large boy of fourteen. I was ten.

I stood in front of him and waited.

'What were you doing behind that chair?'

'I was reading,' I answered.

'Show me the book.'



I gave it to him. It had pictures of beautiful places.

'This is not your book. Your parents are dead and you have no money. This is our book. My mother feeds and clothes you. Everything in this house will be mine one

day. Now I will teach you a lesson. Stand by the door.'

He lifted the book. I moved away but I was not quick enough. The book hit me. I fell back and my head hit the door. I screamed. Blood ran down my face.

'Horrible boy!' I shouted.

He ran at me and pulled my hair. I fought him with my hands.

'Ow!' he shouted. 'Mamma, she is killing me.'

Eliza and her sister Georgiana ran for their mother. Mrs Reed soon arrived, followed by two servants, Abbot and Bessie. They pulled me away from him.

'Stop!' cried Abbot. 'Why did you hit Master Reed?'

'She's like a mad cat,' said Bessie.

'Take her to the red room,' said Mrs Reed. 'Lock her in.'

* * *

The red room was a bedroom that nobody used. In the centre of the room there was a large bed. My uncle, Mr Reed, died in this bed nine years before.

I sat in that cold room and thought of my life at Gateshead. I was not like anyone there. Nobody loved me and I loved nobody.

I listened to the rain outside as it started to get dark.

'They all tell me I am bad,' I thought. 'Perhaps they are right.'

I did not remember my uncle. When my mother died, he brought me into his home. He loved me but his wife did not. And then he died.

Suddenly a light appeared on the wall. It moved around the room. Was it Mr Reed's ghost? I was very frightened. I ran to the door and pulled at it. I screamed. Bessie unlocked the door. I took her hands.

'Miss Eyre, are you ill?' said Bessie.

'Take me out!' I cried.

'Why? Have you seen something?'

'There was a light. I thought it was a ghost,' I cried.

Mrs Reed appeared. 'What is all this? Let go of Bessie, child. Your tricks will not work with me. You will now stay in the room one hour longer.'

'Oh, aunt! Please let me out. I cannot stay here!'

'Quiet!'

I was crying madly now. She pushed me back into the room and locked the door again. I heard them walk away, and then I fainted.

* * *

I woke up in my own bed. The doctor was there. He took my hand and smiled.

'Well, I think you will live,' said Dr Lloyd. 'You look sad. Can you tell me why?'

'I am unhappy,' I answered and I told him about my unkind cousins.

'Would you like to go to school?'

I did not know much about school. John Reed hated his school. But I wanted to learn drawing and singing and French. Anywhere was better than Gateshead.

'Yes, I would like to go to school,' I decided.

* * *

That night Bessie and Abbot sat near my bed and talked. They thought I was asleep.

'Mrs Reed will be happy when this child goes to school,' said Abbot.

'Do you know anything about Miss Jane's family?' asked Bessie.

'Her father was a poor clergyman*, I believe. When her mother married him, her family was very angry. A year after they married, Miss Jane's father died of typhoid fever**. Then her mother caught it and she died a month later.'

'Poor Miss Jane,' answered Bessie. 'I feel sorry for her.'

'But she is not pretty,' Abbot said. 'I cannot care for such a girl, Bessie.'

They left, talking and laughing.

* * *

Some weeks later, I waited with Bessie for the coach to my school. It was a cold January morning, but I was happy to leave. 'Goodbye to Gateshead!' I called.

The coach stopped at the gates and my bag was put on the top.

'This is Jane Eyre for Lowood School,' Bessie said to the driver.

'Is she going alone?' he answered, surprised.

'Take care of her,' said Bessie.

The coach door shut loudly and we drove away to a new world.

* A clergyman works for the church and teaches people about God.

** People can get typhoid fever by drinking dirty water. It can kill you.



Children in Victorian* England

Victorian England wasn't a good time to be a child. Poor children had to work and richer children worked hard at school. For all children, rich and poor, there wasn't much time for fun.

The world of work

In the early and middle 1800s, most children from poor families had to work. Their families needed the money.

Factories and mines

Country children usually worked outside in the fields. Children from the cities often worked in mines or factories. They were dirty and dangerous jobs and children often became ill. There were often accidents. The hours were long and children did not get much money.

The workhouse child

Very poor people with no home or job lived in 'workhouses'. Some children didn't have families. They had to live in the workhouses. Life there was very hard. There was not enough food and nobody really cared for the children. The workhouse owners often sold the children to men who needed workers. Chimney sweeps used children to climb up chimneys and clean them.



Slowly, things started to change. By 1874, no child under the age of ten could work in a factory or mine. And after 1875, children stopped going up chimneys. But when Queen Victoria died in 1901, there were still lots of older children working in England.

1870 – school for everyone!

For most of the 1800s, very few children went to school. But in 1870, a new law changed children's lives. Every child from the age of five had to go to school.

Victorian schools were very different from schools today. Pupils spent a lot of time copying from the blackboard. Often they didn't understand what they were writing!

All children learnt reading, writing and maths. People thought school was more important for boys than girls. Boys had

more maths lessons than girls and studied science. Girls had housework lessons.



Teachers often hit children who didn't listen or who did something wrong. There were often problems with children who didn't want to go to school.

How have schools changed since Victorian times?

Talk to a partner.

Away from home

Some children left home and went away to school. These schools could be terrible places, like Lowood School in *Jane Eyre*. The pupils had to sit in very cold classrooms and didn't have good food to eat. They were often unhappy and ill – but the school owners made lots of money.

Home study

Children from rich families had their own private teacher – a governess. *Jane Eyre* is Adèle's governess. Richer children had easier lives than other children, but they did not often meet or play with other children.

* Queen Victoria was queen of England from 1819–1901. We call this time 'Victorian'.



What do these words mean? You can use a dictionary.

mine factory chimney sweep blackboard maths science