

Introductory Lesson

Before Reading

- ① Look at the cover of the book and give a detailed description of the people and the house on it.
- ② Look at the pictures in the book and try to make up a story based on them.
- ③ Read the blurb on the back cover of the book and try to guess the outcome of the story.
- ④ Read about Charlotte Brontë and answer the questions.

Charlotte Brontë



*Charlotte Brontë was born in 1816 in Yorkshire, England. It was her novel *Jane Eyre*, written in 1847, that gained her recognition as a writer. The main themes of her novels involve the experiences of women in early Victorian England.*

Charlotte Brontë's Irish-born father, Patrick Brontë was an Anglican clergyman. He changed his name from the more common Brunty to Brontë. Charlotte was from a family of six children. Her mother and two eldest sisters died when she was young, and she went to a boarding school in the North of England where the conditions were unpleasant. She returned home to complete her schooling shortly afterwards. Her home was on the Yorkshire moors; a place that inspired the Brontë children to tell and write romantic stories.

Charlotte wanted to start her own school and went to Brussels to further her studies. There she met a teacher who inspired her, a married man called Heger. She returned to England and later went on to write two more novels, *Shirley* (1849) and *Villette* (1853). In 1854 she married an Irish clergyman who worked with her father, but in 1855 Charlotte Brontë died, shortly before giving birth to her first child. It is believed that many of her novels were based on her own life experiences.

- a. Where and when was Charlotte Brontë born?
- b. What did her father do?
- c. What was the family's original surname?
- d. Where did she first go to school and what was it like there?
- e. Why did she travel abroad?
- f. Name her other two novels.



Jane
Eyre



Edward
Rochester



6

Aunt
Reed



Adele

Gateshead

Eliza! Georgiana! Tell Mamma that Jane has run out into the rain!"

I heard John Reed's harsh voice as he called to his sisters, Eliza and Georgiana. I was reading on the window seat behind the curtains in the breakfast room and watched the rain that cold November day. When John Reed called my name again, I obeyed him and came out of my sanctuary.

"What were you doing – hiding?"

"I was reading."

John Reed snatched the book from me.

"You have no right to touch **anything** in this house, orphan! Nothing belongs to you here! You are less than a servant!"

When I stayed silent, he threw the book at my head. Blood trickled down my face and suddenly I felt very angry.

"You're a murderer, John Reed! A slave-driver ..." and I would have continued, but John grabbed me by the hair and began to hit me. This had happened many times before, but this time I fought back and kicked him just as Aunt Reed entered the room with Bessie, the maid. Aunt Reed listened as John told his mother how I attacked him, but when I began to offer my explanation, she interrupted.

"Take that ungrateful child to the Red Room and lock her up until she can behave like a human being!"

The Red Room! I was afraid to go into that room. Uncle Reed had died there. It was cold and dark and nobody slept there anymore. Bessie took my arm and I screamed as she dragged me up the stairs and pushed me into the Red Room. The curtains were open, but it was still dark. Bessie took the candle away with her as she locked the door and left me alone.

As it got darker, I began to see things. Was that Uncle Reed's reflection in the old mirror? Or was it my imagination? Then a light appeared and began to move along the wall and ceiling of the room. This was Uncle Reed's ghost for sure! I began to feel really afraid and ran to the door. I pulled at the doorknob trying to open the door. But it was useless! It was locked! I started to bang on the door and screamed that Uncle Reed's ghost was coming for me. At last I heard the sound of Bessie coming up the stairs. As she opened the door, I fell into her arms, but Aunt Reed was close behind her and pushed me back into the dark room.

"What is all this noise? Lock her in again, Bessie, and come downstairs. If Jane wants to behave like an animal, she shall be treated like one."

I don't remember what happened next. I think I fainted because I woke up in the nursery in my own bed. The first thing I saw was the kind face of Mr Lloyd, the doctor, and I began to tell him of all the terrible things the Reeds did to me.

"Perhaps it is time you left Gateshead and went away to school, Jane."

School sounded like an excellent idea to me and I thought of nothing else while I recovered from my illness.

One day, as I was looking out of the window, a carriage arrived. As nobody ever came to see me, I thought no more about it, until Bessie came upstairs and told me to put on my best dress as I had a visitor. Who could this be? I knew nobody outside Gateshead.

I entered the parlour and saw Aunt Reed and a man dressed in black. He stood up as I came into the room and towered over me like a huge black pillar.

"So, this is the girl you told me about. She is very small, Mrs Reed. How old is she?"

"Ten years."

"Well, Jane Eyre, are you a good girl?"

But before I had a chance to reply, Aunt Reed spoke for me.

"The less said about that the better, Mr Brocklehurst."

"There is nothing so bad as a naughty girl! Come here."

He sat down and now I looked straight into his terrible face.

"Do you read your Bible, Jane?"

"Sometimes. But some parts are not interesting."

"This is shocking! This proves you have a wicked heart!"

I was about to speak when Aunt Reed again interrupted.

"Mr Brocklehurst, I think you can see that this child needs the discipline of Lowood School."

"And she will be disciplined, don't worry, Mrs Reed. She will be taught how to obey her betters and become good and useful."

"I wish her to stay at school in the holidays, too, Mr Brocklehurst. It is best if she does not return to Gateshead. She is a deceitful child and does not fit in with my family."

Mr Brocklehurst looked at me and took out a small book from his pocket.

"Read this, child, before you come to Lowood. And now, Mrs Reed, I must go. I have other visits to make."

Bessie showed Mr Brocklehurst out and I turned to Aunt Reed.

"I am not the deceitful person here, Aunt Reed. I shall be glad to leave this dreadful house! After I leave, I shall never return and I shall tell everyone how cruel you and your children have been to me!"

