

**With which reviewer do you agree the most? Why? Be prepared to summarize each review's criticism and praise for the novel.**

When *Jane Eyre* was published in 1847, it became a bestseller. The reviews were on the whole favorable. There was much speculation about whether the writer was a man or a woman and whether the Bells were really three persons, two persons, or just one person. When it became known that a woman had written such a passionate novel and seemed so knowing sexually, the reviews became more negative.

The reviewer for the *Atlas* praised the novel:

"This is not merely a work of great promise; it is one of absolute performance. It is one of the most powerful domestic romances which have been published for many years. It has little or nothing of the old conventional stamp upon it ... but it is full of youthful vigour, of freshness and originality, of nervous diction and concentrated interest. The incidents are sometimes melo-dramatic, and, it might be added, improbable; but these incidents, though striking, are subordinate to the main purpose of the piece, which is a tale of passion, not of intensity which is most sublime. It is a book to make the pulses gallop and the heart beat, and to fill the eyes with tears" (1847).

The reviewer for the *Rambler* expressed a criticism that was made against all the Bronte novels--coarseness. The reference to "grosser and more animal passions" is a roundabout way of saying "sex." "*Jane Eyre* is, indeed, one of the coarsest books which we ever perused. It is not that the professed sentiments of the writer are absolutely wrong or forbidding, or that the odd sort of religious notions which she puts forth are much worse than is usual in popular tales. It is rather that there is a tendency to relapse into that class of ideas, expressions, and circumstances, which is most connected with the grosser and more animal portion of our nature; and that the detestable morality of the most prominent character in the story is accompanied with every sort of palliation short of unblushing justification" (1848).

The conservative Eliza Rigby, writing for the *Quarterly Review*, assumed a connection between unrestrained passion and political rebellion:

"*Jane Eyre* is throughout the personification of the unregenerate and undisciplined spirit, the more dangerous to exhibit from that prestige of principle and self-control which is liable to dazzle the eye too much for it to observe the inefficient and unsound foundation on which it rests. It is true Jane does right, and exerts great moral strength, but it is the strength of a mere heathen mind which is a law unto itself. No Christian grace is perceptible upon her."

Altogether the autobiography of *Jane Eyre* is preeminently an anti-Christian composition. There is throughout it a murmuring against the comforts of the rich and against the privations of the poor, which, as far as each individual is concerned, is a murmuring against God's appointment--there is a proud and perpetual assertion of the rights of man, for which we find no authority either in God's word or in God's providence--there is that pervading tone of ungodly discontent which is at once the most prominent and the most subtle evil which the law and the pulpit, which all civilized society in fact, has at the present day to contend with. We do not hesitate to say that the tone of mind and thought which has overthrown authority and violated every code human and divine abroad, and fostered Chartism and rebellion at home is the same which has also written *Jane Eyre*" (1847).

Underlying this harsh criticism is a fear of social unrest. In 1847, the working classes were organizing political protests in England, as well as on the Continent. The Chartists, regarded by the affluent classes as revolutionaries threatening the foundation of government and order, were demanding such rights as the vote for working men, a shorter work week, and a secret ballot. In 1848, political protest erupted in so many revolutions on the Continent that historians call it the Year of Revolutions.

Fully analyze the passage below. For you to receive full credit, you will have to do the following:

- \* Contextualize the passage (During which part of Jane's journey does this passage occur?)
- \* Identify some figures of speech and fully describe what they do in the passage
- \* Describe what effects the figures of speech you identified have on furthering your understanding of Jane's character development
- \* Organize your response in paragraphs that deal with specific sections of the passage and connect specific details to general themes in the novel.

Your response should be written in a formal tone. Pay careful attention to such mechanics of the English language as syntax, word choice, spelling, grammar and paragraph cohesion. The more developed your response, the better.

**Warning: producing a lengthy plot summary is NOT what this task requires of you. Give only as much of the plot as is necessary to put the passage into context.**

You will have approximately 40 minutes in which to compose, proofread, and minimally revise your response. Use your time wisely.

“Ware!” cried Grace. The three gentlemen retreated simultaneously. Mr. Rochester flung me behind him: the lunatic sprang and grappled his throat viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek: they struggled. She was a big woman, in stature almost equalling her husband, and corpulent besides: she showed virile force in the contest—more than once she almost throttled him, athletic as he was. He could have settled her with a well-planted blow; but he would not strike: he would only wrestle. At last he mastered her arms; Grace Poole gave him a cord, and he pinioned them behind her: with more rope, which was at hand, he bound her to a chair. The operation was performed amidst the fiercest yells and the most convulsive plunges. Mr. Rochester then turned to the spectators: he looked at them with a smile both acrid and desolate.