

JANE EYRE- QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

****Warning:** the questions below contain spoilers, so don't read them until you have finished the novel.**

After you have read the novel, read and reflect on the questions below. Then, choose one question from Jane's early life, three questions from the Rochester and St. John section, and then one of the concluding questions and answer each in a paragraph or two. Your answers should be turned in on the first day of school.

Early Life

1. How does the stormy weather in the opening scene reflect Jane's state of mind? What do we learn about Jane's position in the household? Why is the scene of her punishment in the red room so emotional (Chapter II)? How does the narration secure the reader's sympathy for Jane?
2. At the Lowood School, Jane's most beloved friend is Helen Burns, who with great dignity endures frequent punishment and humiliation by Miss Scatcherd. Jane admires Helen but realizes that she cannot emulate her (Chapters VII–IX). Why not? What aspect of Jane's character doesn't allow her to be as saintly as Helen?

Rochester and St. John

3. When Jane takes in the view from the roof of Rochester's house, she dreams of freedom and travel. Is it significant that this is the place where she first hears a strange and frightening laughter? Many readers and critics have sought to understand the connection between Jane and Bertha Mason. Are they similar in their anger toward their perceived and actual imprisonments? Are they similar in other ways?
4. Why does Rochester deceive Jane by openly courting Blanche Ingram? What motivates him to masquerade as a fortune-teller? Is he too manipulative and self-indulgent to deserve the honest Jane Eyre as his wife?
5. Reread Rochester's tale of his marriage to Bertha Mason in Jamaica, noting particularly the terms he uses. How does he characterize his wife? Does his description of his ill luck in marrying Bertha—"a nature the most gross, impure, depraved I ever saw, was associated with mine, and called by the law and by society a part of me" (2:88)—provoke sympathy? Who is responsible for the monstrous person Bertha has become—heredity, her own vice and depravity, fate, or perhaps Rochester himself?
6. Jane refuses to go live with Rochester in the south of France as his mistress, choosing instead to lose him forever. Do her reasons have to do with her Christian morality, or with the lack of equality and respect she foresees in such an arrangement? He is older than she, and a member of the landed aristocracy, while she is young, penniless, and has no friends or family in the world. Discuss the complicated chapter in which he tries to explain himself for attempting to lure her into a bigamous marriage, and the scene in which she takes leave of him (Chapter XXVII).
7. St. John Rivers is a stern, ambitious man. He is also extremely handsome—far more handsome than Mr. Rochester. How does Jane feel about St. John? Do you think that as readers we are meant

to like him, to admire him, or to distrust him? Why does she deny himself a marriage to Rosamond Oliver (2:178–79)?

8. Is the theme of Christian salvation in *Jane Eyre* at odds with Jane's desire for emancipation and self-realization? Is she submissive or rebellious? How do Jane's efforts toward self-fulfillment relate to her desire to be good? Why does she end her narrative with St. John Rivers's prayer, instead of with the conclusion of her own tale?

Conclusion

9. Jane's life takes the form of a quest or journey, and with each phase of her life she finds herself in a new place. What would you say the ultimate goal of her quest is? When she ends her story, married to Mr. Rochester and the mother of a young son, is she finally at rest in her true home?
10. How do you interpret the tone of Jane's famous statement, "Reader, I married him" (2:279)? Some readers have long been troubled by what happens to Rochester after Jane leaves Thornfield, and even more so by the fact that his maiming and blinding—his severe diminishment of power and virility and pride—seem to be the harsh conditions necessary for their reunion and marriage. What sort of ending does Brontë offer: a logically and romantically satisfying one, or an obscurely disturbing and punitive one?