

CHARLOTTE BRONTË

LIFE (1816 - 1855)

Charlotte Brontë was born in 1816 in Thornton. She was the eldest sister of two other novelists, Emily and Anne. Charlotte received her education at the Clergy Daughters School in Kirksby where the regime was harsh. From 1831-32 Charlotte attended Miss Whooler's School near Dewsbury, before becoming a teacher herself. She taught at Miss Whooler's school from 1835-38, and then, she moved to Brussels to give English lessons and perfect her German and French. She stayed there until 1844, though it was a deeply unhappy time for her. Eventually literature provide an avenue of escape from profession she regarded as humiliating. Together with Emily and Anne, she published *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell*. Charlotte finally came to notice in 1847 with the publication of the best-know work, **Jane Eyre**. Despite this literary success, her family life was still far from happy. In September 1848 her brother died of alcoholism. Emily died of tuberculosis in the same year, and Anne also died of the disease a year later. In 1854 she married her father's curate and in 1855 she died of complications which set in during her first pregnancy.

JANE EYRE

When it first appeared, **Jane Eyre** was regarded as a revolutionary in spirit. Charlotte Brontë turned the novel into a vehicle for expressing the subjective view of women, and she poured all her anger, frustration, and humiliation into it. At one level it express the secret desire and passions that women were expected to conceal, while at another level, it's a protest novel, full of resentment at women's inferior social position. There was something new about the way Brontë portrayed a woman. Contemporary male writers, like Dickens and Thackeray, generally depicted them as stereotypes. Charlotte Brontë breaks this mould. She reveals women as angry, rebellious, passionate and intelligent.

It has been said that **Jane Eyre** marks the appearance of the first fully rounded female character in English novel. Jane is an emotional, intelligent, competitive, and jealous young woman. As Jane Eyre tells her story, she reveals the strength of her feelings. However she doesn't allow herself to be overwhelmed by the strength of her feelings. In this she is very much a Victorian. Although she initially joyfully accepts Rochester's offer of marriage, she preserves her sense of personal integrity: she leaves him when she discovers his wife is still alive; she will only return when his wife is dead.

Mr Rochester is very much in the Byronic mould: dark, handsome, and haunted by a mysterious past. A true Romantic, he deliberately goes against social conventions in the desire to marry Jane and he also defies the laws of God by seeking to marry her while his first wife is still alive. As a Romantic hero, Rochester's behavior is influenced by the strength of his inner feelings rather than the suggestions of a calculating mind, or the rules of society.

PLOT. Jane Eyre is an orphan. She is brought up by her unloving aunt, Mrs Reed, who sends her away to Lowood Charity School at the age of ten. After eight years of the school's inhuman regime, Jane leaves Lowood to take charge of the ward of a gentleman by the name of Mr Rochester, at Thornfield Hall. After an initial lonely period at Thornfield, in the company of her ward Adele, and the housekeeper, the master, Mr Rochester arrives. He is intrigued by the spirit and intelligence of his new governess and a bond gradually forms between them. Then Jane accepts a proposal of marriage, bur the wedding service is interrupted by claims that Rochester's first wife is still living and imprisoned in Thornfield Hall itself, because she is mad. Jane's sense of

self-respect forces her to leave Rochester. She is taken by a clergyman, who is impressed by Jane's character and proposes to her. Jane wavers between fidelity to her old lover and a sense of duty to the man who has helped her. She is on the point of accepting, when she hears Rochester's voice calling out of her. Believing he needs her, she returns to Thornfield Hall only to find that he has been blinded in the vain attempt to save his wife from the fire she herself had started. There is no longer any reason why she should not marry Rochester. The union is a happy one, a child is born, and Rochester later partly regains his sight.

Notebook