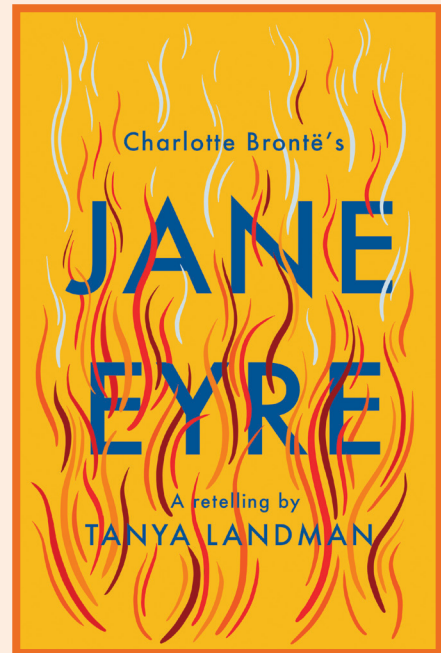




Barrington Stoke

CLASSROOM RESOURCES



JANE EYRE: A RETELLING

Tanya Landman

- PART 1** Synopsis and Themes
- PART 2** Character Study
- PART 3** Suggested Questions to Develop Reading Strategies
- PART 4** Creative Writing Exercises

PART I SYNOPSIS AND THEMES

SYNOPSIS AND THEMES

This guide has been produced to provide ideas for guiding readers through Tanya Landman's **Jane Eyre**, a brilliantly accessible retelling of Charlotte Brontë's beloved classic of the same name. The guide is written to be used after reading the full text in order to discuss the book, its characters and its overarching themes as a whole.

A synopsis is followed by quotes from the book with suggestions for discussion points designed to help young readers engage with the complex topics the book covers. The questions assigned to each quote are intended to further understanding of the text and provide opportunities for classroom discussion or written work. There are also suggestions for creative writing exercises and a brief author biography.

We hope you enjoy using these materials with your students.

Jane Eyre: A Retelling is a short novel that follows the story of the eponymous Jane Eyre as she tells the reader of her life from childhood to Thornfield Hall.

Jane's story begins with her sad, lonely and isolated childhood, first as an orphaned ward of her cruel aunt and then in the grim conditions of Lowood school. At Lowood Jane is subject to more abuse and loses her only friend Helen to tuberculosis. This experience greatly shapes her religious and world view.

Jane stays on as a teacher at Lowood before accepting a position as Governess at Thornfield Hall. Here she begins to feel as if she finally has a home. But something strange is lurking in the shadows at Thornfield and when Jane meets the owner– the enigmatic, brooding Mr Rochester – her life is changed forever.

Jane Eyre: A Retelling is written in an engaging, powerful and truly accessible style, remaining true to the themes, scenes and characters of the original text. The perfect stepping stone to Charlotte Brontë's original novel, this book is perfect for class discussions and offers a brilliant starting point for readers of all abilities.

Before starting the novel with the group ask them the following questions:

- Have you heard of Jane Eyre before?

No:

- What impression do you get of the novel from its front cover and title?
- What do you think a retelling of the original will change?

Yes:

- What do you know about the original novel? (Try not to give away any of the plot!)
- What do you think a retelling of the original will change?

PART 2 CHARACTER STUDY

JANE EYRE

I did not have one foot in heaven – both of mine were rooted to the earth. I wanted excitement. I was restless. A hunger awoke in me – it itched under my skin. The world was wide and wonderful and I had seen so little of it. I wanted freedom. I was desperate to stretch my wings, to fly. [page 17]

- What sort of character is Jane? Do you like her?
 - Did you feel the same way about Jane all the way through the book?
 - Were there any points in the book where your feelings about Jane changed?
- Do you think Jane is a sympathetic character? Why?
- What about the time period in which the book is set, makes Jane such an unusual heroine?
- What are Jane's most prominent characteristics? List them and support with evidence.
- What are Jane's beliefs or ideals? What is important to her? How is this shown in the book?
- What is Jane's character arc?
 - How does she change from the start of the book to the ending?
 - What causes her to change? Use specific scenes as evidence.
 - What language does the author use to show how she has changed? Give evidence.

Because the book is written in the first person, we never really get a full description of Jane from herself or from the other characters.

- Pull evidence from the book and create a description for Jane in your own words.
- What three words would you use to describe Jane?
- What language does the author use that supports your description of Jane?

MR ROCHESTER

He was an ugly brute of a man with a great jutting forehead, a hooked nose and a square jaw. It looked like a bold, determined face, yet he seemed to burn with some mysterious torment.

[...]

I could see he was deeply troubled and that some secret sorrow haunted him. But he couldn't or wouldn't tell me what it was and so how could I help? He talked of error and regret, of guilt and reform. He asked me if he might be saved. [page 40–42]

- Look at the above quote. What impression does this give the reader of Mr Rochester? What does the author's choice of language tell us about how Jane views Mr Rochester?
- What sort of character is Rochester? Do you like him?
 - Did you feel the same way about Rochester all the way through the book?
 - Were there any points in the book where your feelings about him changed?
- Do you think Rochester is a sympathetic character? Why?
- Do you think Rochester is a tragic character? Why?
- What are Rochester's most prominent characteristics? List them and support with evidence.
- What are Rochester's beliefs or ideals? What is important to him? How is this shown in the book?
- What is Rochester's character arc?
 - How does he change from the start of the book to the ending?
 - What causes him to change? Use specific scenes as evidence.
 - What language does the author use to show how he has changed? Give evidence.



PART 3 SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO DEVELOP READING STRATEGIES

Discuss Jane and Rochester's relationship:

"You're not my master any more. My spirit is speaking directly to yours now as if we'd both passed through the grave and were standing at God's feet, equal – as we are!"

[...]

"I love you as my own flesh [...] You and I are twin souls, Jane. Equals. But the world doesn't see it that way. I'm your master, but I can't command you to love me. I don't want you to feel obliged to marry me – I want you to do it of your own free will. I want you to choose me." [page 88–89]

- What makes a friendship or relationship with Rochester inconceivable for Jane at the start?
- What social elements are barriers to Jane and Rochester being together?
- In what ways are Jane and Rochester equal and unequal? Give evidence.
- How would you describe Jane and Rochester's relationship in three words?
- Take Jane and Rochester in turn. Find examples from the text that show how they feel about each other. What language does the author use to show and describe their feelings?
- What does Jane and Rochester coming together at the end of the book tell us about their change in character? Why is it an important resolution for each character and the story?
- Do you like Jane and Rochester's relationship? Why?
- How important is this relationship to each character's happiness?
- Do you think Jane and Rochester are unconventional romantic heroes? Why?

Examine the theme of freedom and independence:

"I'm no bird. Nothing holds me. I'm a free human being with a free will" [page 88]

- How is this theme conveyed throughout the book?
- Find three more examples from the book that show this theme in action
 - What imagery and language does the author use to highlight this theme?
 - What characters are being affected by this theme?
- How does the search for freedom and independence shape Jane's character? How does it direct the plot of the story?

- What other characters are searching for freedom? How is their freedom different from Jane's?
- What differing ideas of freedom and independence are shown in the book? (Examples could include: financial independence, freedom from guilt, freedom from abuse or cruelty, autonomy in love)

Discuss the role of religion and give evidence from the text to support your answers:

Heaven wasn't a matter of hope or faith with her. It was a matter of solid, rational fact. It was as if Helen could see the gates of heaven right there, open wide, ready to receive her. And perhaps she could. She had a soft glow to her, a blissful happiness I could not understand. [page 14]

- How is religion presented in the novel?
- What scenes in the novel highlight the importance of religion to the central characters?
- How does religion impact Jane's journey to happiness?
- How does religion impact Jane's relationship with the other characters?
- How does the religious piety of Helen Burns affect Jane? What does it teach her?
- How does religion impact Jane's relationship with Rochester?
- What role does religion play in Jane's rejection of marriage to both Rochester and the Clergyman?

Discuss the role of social class and give evidence from the text to support your answers:

Know your place, my aunt's voice rang inside my head. Know your place, Mr Brocklehurst's words echoed in my chest. Know your place, eight years of Lowood's teaching poured through my veins. [page 50]

"That's a servant's answer. Hired hands must do as they are told, mustn't they? [...] Can friendship really exist between master and servant? Or does the difference in status make it impossible, I wonder?" [page 77]

- How is social class presented in the novel?
- What scenes in the novel highlight the social classes of characters?
- How does social class impact Jane's journey to happiness?
- How does social class impact Jane's relationship with the other characters?
- What does the importance of social class tell us about the time period in which the story is set?
- How does social class impact Jane's relationship with Rochester?

Examine the first and last lines of the book:

I was not loved. I was not wanted. I did not belong.

[...]

And I am loved. And I am wanted. And I belong.

- Why do you think the author chooses to create this mirror image in the first and last lines?
- What does this tell us about Jane's journey through the novel and how she has changed?
- What themes from the novel does this emphasise?
- Is this effective in dramatizing the character arc of Jane? Why?



PART 4 CREATIVE WRITING EXERCISES

Rewrite a scene from the book from the perspective of Rochester

Choose an important scene from the book that contains Mr Rochester, like his proposal to Jane or the first time they meet, and write it as if it was Mr Rochester addressing the reader and not Jane.

Write a 'missing scene' from the book

Imagine and write a scene from the book that Jane and the reader are not privy to. Some options to consider could be the climactic end to Mr Rochester's wife or the attack of Mr Mason.

Take a scene from the book and reimagine it as a scene in a play

Choose your scene. Write stage directions and pull out the dialogue. Think about how the scene would be presented on the stage, how the characters would be positioned, what the staging would look like. If you have time, work in groups to perform your chosen scenes.



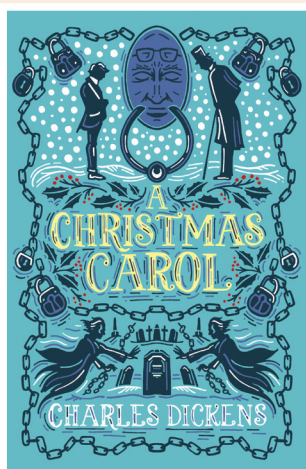
ABOUT THE AUTHOR



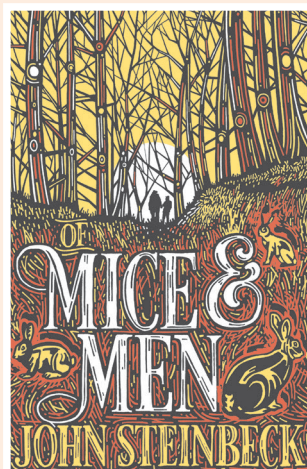
Tanya Landman is renowned for her thought-provoking, prize-winning novels including the beautifully “deft and dark” *Buffalo Soldier* and the critically acclaimed *One Shot*. Tanya has been nominated for and won several prestigious awards including the Carnegie Medal. In 2019 she was shortlisted for the Scottish Teenage Book Prize.

Tanya says that she loves how writing allows her to daydream – something she was always in trouble for at school! She lives in Devon with her sons, a Siamese cat and two Labradors.

ENJOYED *JANE EYRE*: A RETELLING? TRY OUR DYSLEXIA-FRIENDLY CLASSICS



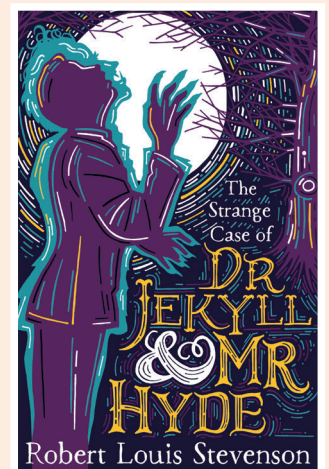
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