

Chapters 1–4

**Summary: Chapter 1**

The novel opens on a dreary November afternoon at Gateshead, the home of the wealthy Reed family. A young girl named Jane Eyre sits in the drawing room reading Bewick's *History of British Birds*. Jane's aunt, Mrs. Reed, has forbidden her niece to play with her cousins Eliza, Georgiana, and the bullying John. John chides Jane for being a lowly orphan who is only permitted to live with the Reeds because of his mother's charity. John then hurls a book at the young girl, pushing her to the end of her patience. Jane finally erupts, and the two cousins fight. Mrs. Reed holds Jane responsible for the scuffle and sends her to the "red-room"—the frightening chamber in which her Uncle Reed died—as punishment.

**Summary: Chapter 2**

Two servants, Miss Abbott and Bessie Lee, escort Jane to the red-room, and Jane resists them with all of her might. Once locked in the room, Jane catches a glimpse of her ghastly figure in the mirror, and, shocked by her meager presence, she begins to reflect on the events that have led her to such a state. She remembers her kind Uncle Reed bringing her to Gateshead after her parents' death, and she recalls his dying command that his wife promise to raise Jane as one of her own. Suddenly, Jane is struck with the impression that her Uncle Reed's ghost is in the room, and she imagines that he has come to take revenge on his wife for breaking her promise. Jane cries out in terror, but her aunt believes that she is just trying to escape her punishment, and she ignores her pleas. Jane faints in exhaustion and fear.

**Summary: Chapter 3**

When she wakes, Jane finds herself in her own bedroom, in the care of Mr. Lloyd, the family's kind apothecary. Bessie is also present, and she expresses disapproval of her mistress's treatment of Jane. Jane remains in bed the following day, and Bessie sings her a song. Mr. Lloyd speaks with Jane about her life at Gateshead, and he suggests to Jane's aunt that the girl be sent away to school, where she might find happiness. Jane is cautiously excited at the possibility of leaving Gateshead.

Soon after her own reflections on the past in the red-room, Jane learns more of her history when she overhears a conversation between Bessie and Miss Abbott. Jane's mother was a member of the wealthy Reed family, which strongly disapproved of Jane's father, an impoverished clergyman. When they married, Jane's wealthy maternal grandfather wrote his daughter out of his will. Not long after Jane was born, Jane's parents died from typhus, which Jane's father contracted while caring for the poor.

**Summary: Chapter 4**

About two months have passed, and Jane has been enduring even crueler treatment from her aunt and cousins while anxiously waiting for the arrangements to be made for her schooling. Now Jane is finally told she may attend the girls' school Lowood, and she is introduced to Mr. Brocklehurst, the stern-faced man who runs the school. Mr. Brocklehurst abrasively questions Jane about religion, and he reacts with indignation

when she declares that she finds the psalms uninteresting. Jane's aunt warns Mr. Brocklehurst that the girl also has a propensity for lying, a piece of information that Mr. Brocklehurst says he intends to publicize to Jane's teachers upon her arrival. When Mr. Brocklehurst leaves, Jane is so hurt by her aunt's accusation that she cannot stop herself from defending herself to her aunt. Mrs. Reed, for once, seems to concede defeat. Shortly thereafter, Bessie tells Jane that she prefers her to the Reed children. Before Jane leaves for school, Bessie tells her stories and sings her lovely songs.

Chapters 5–10

### **Summary: Chapter 5**

Four days after meeting Mr. Brocklehurst, Jane boards the 6 a.m. coach and travels alone to Lowood. When she arrives at the school, the day is dark and rainy, and she is led through a grim building that will be her new home. The following day, Jane is introduced to her classmates and learns the daily routine, which keeps the girls occupied from before dawn until dinner. Miss Temple, the superintendent of the school, is very kind, while one of Jane's teachers, Miss Scatcherd, is unpleasant, particularly in her harsh treatment of a young student named Helen Burns. Jane and Helen befriend one another, and Jane learns from Helen that Lowood is a charity school maintained for female orphans, which means that the Reeds have paid nothing to put her there. She also learns that Mr. Brocklehurst oversees every aspect of its operation: even Miss Temple must answer to him.

### **Summary: Chapter 6**

On Jane's second morning at Lowood, the girls are unable to wash, as the water in their pitchers is frozen. Jane quickly learns that life at the school is harsh. The girls are underfed, overworked, and forced to sit still during seemingly endless sermons. Still, she takes comfort in her new friendship with Helen, who impresses Jane with her expansive knowledge and her ability to patiently endure even the cruelest treatment from Miss Scatcherd. Helen tells Jane that she practices a doctrine of Christian endurance, which means loving her enemies and accepting her privation. Jane disagrees strongly with such meek tolerance of injustice, but Helen takes no heed of Jane's arguments. Helen is self-critical only because she sometimes fails to live up to her ascetic standards: she believes that she is a poor student and chastises herself for daydreaming about her home and family when she should be concentrating on her studies.

### **Summary: Chapter 7**

For most of Jane's first month at Lowood, Mr. Brocklehurst spends his time away from the school. When he returns, Jane becomes quite nervous because she remembers his promise to her aunt, Mrs. Reed, to warn the school about Jane's supposed habit of lying. When Jane inadvertently drops her slate in Mr. Brocklehurst's presence, he is furious and tells her she is careless. He orders Jane to stand on a stool while he tells the school that she is a liar, and he forbids the other students to speak to her for the rest of the day. Helen makes Jane's day of humiliation endurable by providing her friend with silent consolation—she covertly smiles at Jane every time she passes by.

### **Summary: Chapter 8**

Finally, at five o'clock, the students disperse, and Jane collapses to the floor. Deeply ashamed, she is certain that her reputation at Lowood has been ruined, but Helen assures her that most of the girls felt more pity for Jane than revulsion at her alleged deceitfulness. Jane tells Miss Temple that she is not a liar, and relates the story of her tormented childhood at Gateshead. Miss Temple seems to believe Jane and writes to Mr. Lloyd requesting confirmation of Jane's account of events. Miss Temple offers Jane and Helen tea and seed cake, endearing herself even further to Jane. When Mr. Lloyd's letter arrives and corroborates Jane's story, Miss Temple publicly declares Jane to be innocent. Relieved and contented, Jane devotes herself to her studies. She excels at drawing and makes progress in French.

### **Summary: Chapter 9**

In the spring, life at Lowood briefly seems happier, but the damp forest dell in which the school resides is a breeding-ground for typhus, and in the warm temperatures more than half the girls fall ill with the disease. Jane remains healthy and spends her time playing outdoors with a new friend, Mary Ann Wilson. Helen is sick, but not with typhus—Jane learns the horrific news that her friend is dying of consumption. One evening, Jane sneaks into Miss Temple's room to see Helen one last time. Helen promises Jane that she feels little pain and is happy to be leaving the world's suffering behind. Jane takes Helen into her arms, and the girls fall asleep. During the night, Helen dies. Her grave is originally unmarked, but fifteen years after her death, a gray marble tablet is placed over the spot (presumably by Jane), bearing the single word *Resurgam*, Latin for "I shall rise again."

### **Summary: Chapter 10**

After Mr. Brocklehurst's negligent treatment of the girls at Lowood is found to be one of the causes of the typhus epidemic, a new group of overseers is brought in to run the school. Conditions improve dramatically for the young girls, and Jane excels in her studies for the next six years. After spending two more years at Lowood as a teacher, Jane decides she is ready for a change, partly because Miss Temple gets married and leaves the school. She advertises in search of a post as a governess and accepts a position at a manor called Thornfield.

Before leaving, Jane receives a visit from Bessie, who tells her what has happened at Gateshead since Jane departed for Lowood. Georgiana attempted to run away in secret with a man named Lord Edwin Vere, but Eliza foiled the plan by revealing it to Mrs. Reed. John has fallen into a life of debauchery and dissolution. Bessie also tells Jane that her father's brother, John Eyre, appeared at Gateshead seven years ago, looking for Jane. He did not have the time to travel to Lowood and went away to Madeira (a Portuguese island west of Morocco) in search of wealth. Jane and Bessie part ways, Bessie returning to Gateshead, and Jane leaving for her new life at Thornfield.

Chapters 11–16

### **Summary: Chapter 11**

Jane's driver is late picking her up from the station at Millcote. When she finally arrives at Thornfield it is nighttime. Although she cannot distinguish much of the house's facade

from among the shadows, she finds the interior “cosy and agreeable.” Mrs. Fairfax, a prim, elderly woman, is waiting for Jane. It turns out that Mrs. Fairfax is not, as Jane had assumed from their correspondence, the owner of Thornfield, but rather the housekeeper. Thornfield’s owner, Mr. Rochester, travels regularly and leaves much of the manor’s management to Mrs. Fairfax. Jane learns that she will be tutoring Adèle, an eight-year-old French girl whose mother was a singer and dancer. Mrs. Fairfax also tells Jane about Rochester, saying that he is an eccentric man whose family has a history of extreme and violent behavior. Suddenly, Jane hears a peal of strange, eerie laughter echoing through the house, and Mrs. Fairfax summons someone named Grace, whom she orders to make less noise and to “remember directions.” When Grace leaves, Mrs. Fairfax explains that she is a rather unbalanced and unpredictable seamstress who works in the house.

### **Summary: Chapter 12**

Jane finds life at Thornfield pleasant and comfortable. Adèle proves to be exuberant and intelligent, though spoiled and at times a bit petulant. Nonetheless, Jane is frequently restless and collects her thoughts while pacing Thornfield’s top-story passageway. One evening a few months after her arrival at Thornfield, Jane is alone watching the moon rise when she perceives a horse approaching. It calls to her mind the story Bessie once told her of a spirit called a Gytrash, which disguises itself as a mule, dog, or horse to frighten “belated travellers.” Oddly enough, a dog then appears as well. Once she realizes that the horse has a rider, the uncanny moment ceases. Just after the horse passes her, it slips on a patch of ice, and its rider tumbles to the ground. Jane helps the man rise to his feet and introduces herself to him. She observes that he has a dark face, stern features, and a heavy brow. He is not quite middle-aged. Upon reentering Thornfield, Jane goes to Mrs. Fairfax’s room and sees the same dog—Pilot—resting on the rug. A servant answers Jane’s queries, explaining that the dog belongs to Mr. Rochester, who has just returned home with a sprained ankle, having fallen from his horse.

### **Summary: Chapter 13**

The day following his arrival, Mr. Rochester invites Jane and Adèle to have tea with him. He is abrupt and rather cold toward both of them, although he seems charmed by Jane’s drawings, which he asks to see. When Jane mentions to Mrs. Fairfax that she finds Rochester “changeable and abrupt,” Mrs. Fairfax suggests that his mannerisms are the result of a difficult personal history. Rochester was something of a family outcast, and when his father died, his older brother inherited Thornfield. Rochester has been Thornfield’s proprietor for nine years, since the death of his brother.

### **Summary: Chapter 14**

Jane sees little of Rochester during his first days at Thornfield. One night, however, in his “after-dinner mood,” Rochester sends for Jane and Adèle. He gives Adèle the present she has been anxiously awaiting, and while Adèle plays, Rochester is uncharacteristically chatty with Jane. When Rochester asks Jane whether she thinks him handsome, she answers “no” without thinking, and from Rochester’s voluble reaction Jane concludes that he is slightly drunk. Rochester’s command that she converse with him makes Jane feel awkward, especially because he goes on to argue that her relationship to him is not one of servitude. Their conversation turns to the concepts of sin, forgiveness, and

redemption. When Adèle mentions her mother, Jane is intrigued, and Rochester promises to explain more about the situation on a future occasion.

### **Summary: Chapter 15**

A while later, Rochester fulfills his promise to Jane to tell her about his and Adèle's pasts. He had a long affair with Adèle's mother, the French singer and dancer named Celine Varens. When he discovered that Celine was engaged in relations with another man, Rochester ended the relationship. Rochester has always denied Celine's claim that Adèle is his daughter, noting that the child looks utterly unlike him. Even so, when Celine abandoned her daughter, Rochester brought Adèle to England so that she would be properly cared for.

Jane lies awake brooding about the strange insights she has gained into her employer's past. She hears what sound like fingers brushing against the walls, and an eerie laugh soon emanates from the hallway. She hears a door opening and hurries out of her room to see smoke coming from Rochester's door. Jane dashes into his room and finds his bed curtains ablaze. She douses the bed with water, saving Rochester's life. Strangely, Rochester's reaction is to visit the third floor of the house. When he returns, he says mysteriously, "I have found it all out, it is just as I thought." He inquires whether Jane has ever heard the eerie laughter before, and she answers that she has heard Grace Poole laugh in the same way. "Just so. Grace Poole—you have guessed it," Rochester confirms. He thanks Jane for saving his life and cautions her to tell no one about the details of the night's events. He sleeps on the library sofa for the remainder of the night.

### **Summary: Chapter 16**

The next morning, Jane is shocked to learn that the near tragedy of the night before has caused no scandal. The servants believe Rochester to have fallen asleep with a lit candle by his bed, and even Grace Poole shows no sign of guilt or remorse. Jane cannot imagine why an attempted murderer is allowed to continue working at Thornfield. She realizes that she is beginning to have feelings for Rochester and is disappointed that he will be away from Thornfield for several days. He has left to attend a party where he will be in the company of Blanche Ingram, a beautiful lady. Jane scolds herself for being disappointed by the news, and she resolves to restrain her flights of imaginative fancy by comparing her own portrait to one she has drawn of Blanche Ingram, noting how much plainer she is than the beautiful Blanche.

Chapters 17–21

### **Summary: Chapter 17**

Rochester has been gone for a week, and Jane is dismayed to learn that he may choose to depart for continental Europe without returning to Thornfield—according to Mrs. Fairfax, he could be gone for more than a year. A week later, however, Mrs. Fairfax receives word that Rochester will arrive in three days with a large group of guests. While she waits, Jane continues to be amazed by the apparently normal relations the strange, self-isolated Grace Poole enjoys with the rest of the staff. Jane also overhears a conversation in which a few of the servants discuss Grace's high pay, and Jane is certain that she doesn't know the entire truth about Grace Poole's role at Thornfield.

Rochester arrives at last, accompanied by a party of elegant and aristocratic guests. Jane is forced to join the group but spends the evening watching them from a window seat. Blanche Ingram and her mother are among the party's members, and they treat Jane with disdain and cruelty. Jane tries to leave the party, but Rochester stops her. He grudgingly allows her to go when he sees the tears brimming in her eyes. He informs her that she must come into the drawing room every evening during his guests' stay at Thornfield. As they part, Rochester nearly lets slip more than he intends. "Good-night, my—" he says, before biting his lip.

### **Summary: Chapter 18**

The guests stay at Thornfield for several days. Rochester and Blanche compete as a team at charades. From watching their interaction, Jane believes that they will be married soon though they do not seem to love one another. Blanche would be marrying Rochester for his wealth, and he for her beauty and her social position. One day, a strange man named Mr. Mason arrives at Thornfield. Jane dislikes him at once because of his vacant eyes and his slowness, but she learns from him that Rochester once lived in the West Indies, as he himself has done. One evening, a gypsy woman comes to Thornfield to tell the guests' fortunes. Blanche Ingram goes first, and when she returns from her talk with the gypsy woman she looks keenly disappointed.

### **Summary: Chapter 19**

Jane goes in to the library to have her fortune read, and after overcoming her skepticism, she finds herself entranced by the old woman's speech. The gypsy woman seems to know a great deal about Jane and tells her that she is very close to happiness. She also says that she told Blanche Ingram that Rochester was not as wealthy as he seemed, thereby accounting for Blanche's sullen mood. As the woman reads Jane's fortune, her voice slowly deepens, and Jane realizes that the gypsy is Rochester in disguise. Jane reproaches Rochester for tricking her and remembers thinking that Grace Poole might have been the gypsy. When Rochester learns that Mr. Mason has arrived, he looks troubled.

### **Summary: Chapter 20**

The same night, Jane is startled by a sudden cry for help. She hurries into the hallway, where Rochester assures everyone that a servant has merely had a nightmare. After everyone returns to bed, Rochester knocks on Jane's door. He tells her that he can use her help and asks whether she is afraid of blood. He leads her to the third story of the house and shows her Mr. Mason, who has been stabbed in the arm. Rochester asks Jane to stanch the wound and then leaves, ordering Mason and Jane not to speak to one another. In the silence, Jane gazes at the image of the apostles and Christ's crucifixion that is painted on the cabinet across from her. Rochester returns with a surgeon, and as the men tend to Mason's wounds, Rochester sends Jane to find a potion downstairs. He gives some of it to Mason, saying that it will give him heart for an hour. Once Mason is gone, Jane and Rochester stroll in the orchard, and Rochester tells Jane a hypothetical story about a young man who commits a "capital error" in a foreign country and proceeds to lead a life of dissipation in an effort to "obtain relief." The young man then hopes to redeem himself and live morally with a wife, but convention prevents him from doing so. He asks whether the young man would be justified in "overleaping an obstacle of

custom.” Jane’s reply is that such a man should look to God for his redemption, not to another person. Rochester—who obviously has been describing his own situation—asks Jane to reassure him that marrying Blanche would bring him salvation. He then hurries away before she has a chance to answer.

### **Summary: Chapter 21**

Jane has heard that it is a bad omen to dream of children, and now she has dreams on seven consecutive nights involving babies. She learns that her cousin John Reed has committed suicide, and that her aunt, Mrs. Reed, has suffered a stroke and is nearing death. Jane goes to Gateshead, where she is reunited with Bessie. She also sees her cousins Eliza and Georgiana. Eliza is plain and plans to enter a convent, while Georgiana is as beautiful as ever. Ever since Eliza ruined Georgiana’s hopes of eloping with a young man, the two sisters have not gotten along. Jane tries to patch things up with Mrs. Reed, but the old woman is still full of hostility toward her late husband’s favorite. One day, Mrs. Reed gives Jane a letter from her father’s brother, John Eyre. He declares that he wishes to adopt Jane and bequeath her his fortune. The letter is three years old; out of malice, Mrs. Reed did not forward it to Jane when she received it. In spite of her aunt’s behavior, Jane tries once more to smooth relations with the dying woman. But Mrs. Reed refuses, and, at midnight, she dies.

Chapters 22–25

### **Summary: Chapter 22**

Jane remains at Gateshead for a month because Georgiana dreads being left alone with Eliza, with whom she does not get along. Eventually, Georgiana goes to London to live with her uncle, and Eliza joins a convent in France. Jane tells us that Eliza eventually becomes the Mother Superior of her convent, while Georgiana marries a wealthy man. At Gateshead, Jane receives a letter from Mrs. Fairfax, which says that Rochester’s guests have departed and that Rochester has gone to London to buy a new carriage—a sure sign of his intention to marry Blanche. As Jane travels toward Thornfield, she anxiously anticipates seeing Rochester again, and yet she worries about what will become of her after his marriage. To her surprise, as she walks from the station at Millcote, Jane encounters Rochester. When he asks her why she has stayed away from Thornfield so long, she replies, still a bit bewildered, “I have been with my aunt, sir, who is dead.” Rochester asks Jane whether she has heard about his new carriage, and he tells her: “You must see the carriage, Jane, and tell me if you don’t think it will suit Mrs. Rochester exactly.” After a few more words together, Jane surprises herself by expressing the happiness she feels in Rochester’s presence: “I am strangely glad to get back again to you; and wherever you are is my home—my only home.” Back at the manor, Mrs. Fairfax, Adèle, and the servants greet Jane warmly.

### **Summary: Chapter 23**

After a blissful two weeks, Jane encounters Rochester in the gardens. He invites her to walk with him, and Jane, caught off guard, accepts. Rochester confides that he has finally decided to marry Blanche Ingram and tells Jane that he knows of an available governess position in Ireland that she could take. Jane expresses her distress at the great distance that separates Ireland from Thornfield. The two seat themselves on a bench at the foot of

the chestnut tree, and Rochester says: “we will sit there in peace to-night, though we should never more be destined to sit there together.” He tells Jane that he feels as though they are connected by a “cord of communion.” Jane sobs—“for I could repress what I endured no longer,” she tells us, “I was obliged to yield.” Jane confesses her love for Rochester, and to her surprise, he asks her to be his wife. She suspects that he is teasing her, but he convinces her otherwise by admitting that he only brought up marrying Blanche in order to arouse Jane’s jealousy. Convinced and elated, Jane accepts his proposal. A storm breaks, and the newly engaged couple hurries indoors through the rain. Rochester helps Jane out of her wet coat, and he seizes the opportunity to kiss her. Jane looks up to see Mrs. Fairfax watching, astonished. That night, a bolt of lightning splits the same chestnut tree under which Rochester and Jane had been sitting that evening.

### **Summary: Chapter 24**

Preparations for Jane and Rochester’s wedding do not run smoothly. Mrs. Fairfax treats Jane coldly because she doesn’t realize that Jane was already engaged to Rochester when she allowed him to kiss her. But even after she learns the truth, Mrs. Fairfax maintains her disapproval of the marriage. Jane feels unsettled, almost fearful, when Rochester calls her by what will soon be her name, Jane Rochester. Jane explains that everything feels impossibly ideal, like a fairy-tale or a daydream. Rochester certainly tries to turn Jane into a Cinderella-like figure: he tells her he will dress her in jewels and in finery befitting her new social station, at which point Jane becomes terrified and self-protective. She has a premonitory feeling that the wedding will not happen, and she decides to write her uncle, John Eyre, who is in Madeira. Jane reasons that if John Eyre were to make her his heir, her inheritance might put her on more equal footing with Rochester, which would make her feel less uncomfortable about the marriage.

### **Summary: Chapter 25**

The night before her wedding, Jane waits for Rochester, who has left Thornfield for the evening. She grows restless and takes a walk in the orchard, where she sees the now-split chestnut tree. When Rochester arrives, Jane tells him about strange events that have occurred in his absence. The preceding evening, Jane’s wedding dress arrived, and underneath it was an expensive veil—Rochester’s wedding gift to Jane. In the night, Jane had a strange dream, in which a little child cried in her arms as Jane tried to make her way toward Rochester on a long, winding road. Rochester dismisses the dream as insignificant, but then she tells him about a second dream. This time, Jane loses her balance and the child falls from her knee. The dream was so disturbing that it roused Jane from her sleep, and she perceived “a form” rustling in her closet. It turned out to be a strange, savage-looking woman, who took Jane’s veil and tore it in two. Rochester tells her that the woman must have been Grace Poole and that what she experienced was really “half-dream, half-reality.” He tells her that he will give her a full explanation of events after they have been married for one year and one day. Jane sleeps with Adèle for the evening and cries because she will soon have to leave the sleeping girl.

## Chapter 26

### **Summary**



Sophie helps Jane dress for the wedding, and Rochester and Jane walk to the church. Jane notes a pair of strangers reading the headstones in the churchyard cemetery. When Jane and Rochester enter the church, the two strangers are also present. When the priest asks if anyone objects to the ceremony, one of the strangers answers: “The marriage cannot go on: I declare the existence of an impediment.” Rochester attempts to proceed with the ceremony, but the stranger explains that Rochester is already married—his wife is a Creole woman whom Rochester wed fifteen years earlier in Jamaica. The speaker explains that he is a solicitor from London, and he introduces himself as Mr. Briggs. He produces a signed letter from Richard Mason affirming that Rochester is married to Mason’s sister, Bertha. Mr. Mason himself then steps forward to corroborate the story. After a moment of inarticulate fury, Rochester admits that his wife is alive and that in marrying Jane he would have been knowingly taking a second wife. No one in the community knows of his wife because she is mad, and Rochester keeps her locked away under the care of Grace Poole. But, he promises them all, Jane is completely ignorant of Bertha’s existence. He orders the crowd to come to Thornfield to see her, so that they may understand what impelled him to his present course of action.

At Thornfield, the group climbs to the third story. Rochester points out the room where Bertha bit and stabbed her brother, and then he lifts a tapestry to uncover a second door. Inside the hidden room is Bertha Mason, under the care of Grace Poole. Jane writes: In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.

Bertha attempts to strangle Rochester, who reminds his audience, “this is the sole conjugal embrace I am ever to know.” Jane leaves the room with Mason and Briggs, who tells her that he learned of her intent to marry Jane via a letter from Jane’s uncle, John Eyre, to Mason. It turns out that the two men are acquaintances, and Mason had stopped in Madeira on his way back to Jamaica when John received Jane’s letter. Approaching death, John asked Mason to hurry to England to save his niece. After the wedding crowd disperses, Jane locks herself in her room and plunges into an inexpressible grief. She thinks about the almost calm manner in which the morning’s events unfolded and how it seems disproportionate to the immense effect those events will have on her life. She prays to God to be with her.

Chapters 27–28

### **Summary: Chapter 27**

After falling asleep for a short while, Jane awakes to the realization that she must leave Thornfield. When she steps out of her room, she finds Rochester waiting in a chair on the threshold. To Rochester’s assurances that he never meant to wound her, and to his pleas of forgiveness, Jane is silent, although she confides to the reader that she forgave him on the spot. Jane suddenly feels faint, and Rochester carries her to the library to revive her. He then offers her a new proposal—to leave England with him for the South of France, where they will live together as husband and wife. Jane refuses, explaining that no matter how Rochester chooses to view the situation, she will never be more than a mistress to

him while Bertha is alive. Rochester realizes that he must explain why he does not consider himself married, and he launches into the story of his past. Unwilling to divide his property, Rochester's father left his entire estate to his other son, Rowland, and sent Rochester to Jamaica to marry Bertha, who was to inherit a massive fortune—30,000 pounds. Bertha was beautiful, and although she and Rochester spent hardly any time alone, the stimulated, dazzled, and ignorant youth believed himself to be in love and agreed to the marriage. Shortly after the wedding, Rochester learned that Bertha's mother was not, as he had been led to believe, dead, but mad and living in an insane asylum. Bertha's younger brother was a mute idiot. Rochester's father and brother had known about the family's unpromising genetic legacy, but they had promoted the marriage for the sake of the money. Bertha soon revealed herself to be coarse, perverse, and prone to violent outbreaks of temper and unhealthy indulgences. These excesses only hastened the approach of what had been lurking on her horizon already: absolute madness. By this time, Rochester's father and brother had died, so Rochester found himself all alone with a maniacal wife and a huge fortune. He considered killing himself but returned to England instead. He resolved to place Bertha at Thornfield Hall "in safety and comfort: [to] shelter her degradation with secrecy, and leave her." Rochester then drifted around the continent from one city to the next, always in search of a woman to love. When he was met with disappointment, he sank into debauchery. He was always disappointed with his mistresses, because they were, as he puts it, "the next worse thing to buying a slave." Then he met Jane. Rochester retells the story of their introduction from his point of view, telling her that she enchanted him from the start. Jane feels torn. She doesn't want to condemn Rochester to further misery, and a voice within her asks, "Who in the world cares for you?" Jane wonders how she could ever find another man who values her the way Rochester does, and whether, after a life of loneliness and neglect, she should leave the first man who has ever loved her. Yet her conscience tells her that she will respect herself all the more if she bears her suffering alone and does what she believes to be right. She tells Rochester that she must go, but she kisses his cheek and prays aloud for God to bless him as she departs. That night, Jane has a dream in which her mother tells her to flee temptation. She grabs her purse, sneaks down the stairs, and leaves Thornfield.

### **Summary: Chapter 28**

Riding in a coach, Jane quickly exhausts her meager money supply and is forced to sleep outdoors. She spends much of the night in prayer, and the following day she begs for food or a job in the nearby town. No one helps her, except for one farmer who is willing to give her a slice of bread. After another day, Jane sees a light shining from across the moors. Following it, she comes to a house. Through the window, Jane sees two young women studying German while their servant knits. From their conversation Jane learns that the servant is named Hannah and that the graceful young women are Diana and Mary. The three women are waiting for someone named St. John (pronounced "Sinjin"). Jane knocks on the door, but Hannah refuses to let her in. Collapsing on the doorstep in anguish and weakness, Jane cries, "I can but die, and I believe in God. Let me try to wait His will in silence." A voice answers, "All men must die, but all are not condemned to meet a lingering and premature doom, such as yours would be if you perished here of want." The voice belongs to "St. John," who brings Jane into the house. He is the brother

of Diana and Mary, and the three siblings give Jane food and shelter. They ask her some questions, and she gives them a false name: “Jane Elliott.”

Chapters 29–32

**Summary: Chapter 29**

After she is taken in by the Rivers siblings, Jane spends three days recuperating in bed. On the fourth day, she feels well again and follows the smell of baking bread into the kitchen, where she finds Hannah. Jane criticizes Hannah for judging her unfairly when she asked for help, and Hannah apologizes. Hannah tells the story of Mr. Rivers, the siblings’ father, who lost most of the family fortune in a bad business deal. In turn, Diana and Mary were forced to work as governesses—they are only at Marsh End (or Moor House) now because their father died three weeks ago. Jane then relates some of her own story and admits that Jane Elliott is not her real name. St. John promises to find her a job.

**Summary: Chapter 30**

Jane befriends Diana and Mary, who admire her drawings and give her books to read. St. John, on the other hand, remains distant and cold, although he is never unkind. After a month, Diana and Mary must return to their posts as governesses. St. John has found a position for Jane, running a charity school for girls in the town of Morton. Jane accepts, but St. John presumes that she will soon leave the school out of restlessness, perhaps because he himself is quite restless. His sisters suspect he will soon leave England for a missionary post overseas. St. John tells his sisters that their Uncle John has died and left them nothing, because all his money went to another, unknown, relative. Jane learns that it was Uncle John who led Mr. Rivers into his disastrous business deal.

**Summary: Chapter 31**

At Morton, the wealthy heiress Rosamond Oliver provides Jane with a cottage in which to live. Jane begins teaching, but to her own regret, she finds the work degrading and disappointing. While on a visit to Jane, St. John reveals that he, too, used to feel that he had made the wrong career choice, until one day he heard God’s call. Now he plans to become a missionary. The beautiful Rosamond Oliver then appears, interrupting St. John and Jane’s conversation. From their interaction, Jane believes that Rosamond and St. John are in love.

**Summary: Chapter 32**

Jane’s students become more familiar and endeared to her, and Jane becomes quite popular among them. At night, though, she has troubling nightmares that involve Rochester. Jane continues to pay attention to the relationship between St. John and Rosamond, who often visits the school when she knows St. John will be there. Rosamond asks Jane to draw her portrait, and as she is working on it one day, St. John pays her a visit. He gives her a new book of poetry (Sir Walter Scott’s *Marmion*) and looks at the drawing. She offers to draw him a duplicate, and then boldly declares that he ought to marry Rosamond. St. John admits that he loves her and is tempted by her beauty, but he explains that he refuses to allow worldly affection to interfere with his holy duties. The

flirtatious, silly, and shallow Rosamond would make a terrible wife for a missionary. Suddenly, St. John notices something on the edge of Jane's paper and tears off a tiny piece—Jane is not certain why. With a peculiar look on his face, he hurries from the room.

Chapters 33–35

**Summary: Chapter 33**

One snowy night, Jane sits reading *Marmion* when St. John appears at the door. Appearing troubled, he tells Jane the story of an orphan girl who became the governess at Thornfield Hall, then disappeared after nearly marrying Edward Rochester: this runaway governess's name is Jane Eyre. Until this point, Jane has been cautious not to reveal her past and has given the Rivers a false name. Thus although it is clear that St. John suspects her of being the woman about whom he speaks, she does not immediately identify herself to him. He says that he has received a letter from a solicitor named Mr. Briggs intimating that it is extremely important that this Jane Eyre be found. Jane is only interested in whether Mr. Briggs has sent news of Rochester, but St. John says that Rochester's well-being is not at issue: Jane Eyre must be found because her uncle, John Eyre, has died, leaving her the vast fortune of 20,000 pounds.

Jane reveals herself to be Jane Eyre, knowing that St. John has guessed already. She asks him how he knew. He shows her the scrap of paper he tore from her drawing the previous day: it is her signature. She then asks why Mr. Briggs would have sent him a letter about her at all. St. John explains that though he did not realize it before, he is her cousin: her Uncle John was his Uncle John, and his name is St. John Eyre Rivers. Jane is overjoyed to have found a family at long last, and she decides to divide her inheritance between her cousins and herself evenly, so that they each will inherit 5,000 pounds.

**Summary: Chapter 34**

Jane closes her school for Christmas and spends a happy time with her newfound cousins at Moor House. Diana and Mary are delighted with the improvements Jane has made at the school, but St. John seems colder and more distant than ever. He tells Jane that Rosamond is engaged to a rich man named Mr. Granby. One day, he asks Jane to give up her study of German and instead to learn "Hindustani" with him—the language he is learning to prepare for missionary work in India. As time goes by, St. John exerts a greater and greater influence on Jane; his power over her is almost uncanny. This leaves Jane feeling empty, cold, and sad, but she follows his wishes. At last, he asks her to go to India with him to be a missionary—and to be his wife. She agrees to go to India as a missionary but says that she will not be his wife because they are not in love. St. John harshly insists that she marry him, declaring that to refuse his proposal is the same as to deny the Christian faith. He abruptly leaves the room.

**Summary: Chapter 35**

During the following week, St. John continues to pressure Jane to marry him. She resists as kindly as she can, but her kindness only makes him insist more bitterly and unyieldingly that she accompany him to India as his wife. Diana tells Jane that she would be a fool to go to India with St. John, who considers her merely a tool to aid his great cause. After dinner, St. John prays for Jane, and she is overcome with awe at his powers of speech and his influence. She almost feels compelled to marry him, but at that moment she hears what she thinks is Rochester's voice, calling her name as if from a great distance. Jane believes that something fateful has occurred, and St. John's spell over her is broken.

Chapters 36–38

**Summary: Chapter 36**

Jane contemplates her supernatural experience of the previous night, wondering whether it was really Rochester's voice that she heard calling to her and whether Rochester might actually be in trouble. She finds a note from St. John urging her to resist temptation, but nevertheless she boards a coach to Thornfield. She travels to the manor, anxious to see Rochester and reflecting on the ways in which her life has changed in the single year since she left. Once hopeless, alone, and impoverished, Jane now has friends, family, and a fortune. She hurries to the house after her coach arrives and is shocked to find Thornfield a charred ruin. She goes to an inn called the Rochester Arms to learn what has happened. Here, she learns that Bertha Mason set the house ablaze several months earlier. Rochester saved his servants and tried to save his wife, but she flung herself from the roof as the fire raged around her. In the fire, Rochester lost a hand and went blind. He has taken up residence in a house called Ferndean, located deep in the forest, with John and Mary, two elderly servants.

**Summary: Chapter 37**

Jane goes to Ferndean. From a distance, she sees Rochester reach a hand out of the door, testing for rain. His body looks the same, but his face is desperate and disconsolate. Rochester returns inside, and Jane approaches the house. She knocks, and Mary answers the door. Inside, Jane carries a tray to Rochester, who is unable to see her. When he realizes that Jane is in the room with him, he thinks she must be a ghost or spirit speaking to him. When he catches her hand, he takes her in his arms, and she promises never to leave him. The next morning they walk through the woods, and Jane tells Rochester about her experiences the previous year. She has to assure him that she is not in love with St. John. He asks her again to marry him, and she says yes—they are now free from the specter of Bertha Mason. Rochester tells Jane that a few nights earlier, in a moment of desperation, he called out her name and thought he heard her answer. She does not wish to upset him or excite him in his fragile condition, and so she does not tell him about hearing his voice at Moor House.

**Summary: Chapter 38**

Jane and Rochester marry with no witnesses other than the parson and the church clerk. Jane writes to her cousins with the news. St. John never acknowledges what has happened, but Mary and Diana write back with their good wishes. Jane visits Adèle at her

school, and finds her unhappy. Remembering her own childhood experience, Jane moves Adèle to a more congenial school, and Adèle grows up to be a very pleasant and mild-mannered young woman.

Jane writes that she is narrating her story after ten years of marriage to Rochester, which she describes as inexpressibly blissful. They live as equals, and she helps him to cope with his blindness. After two years, Rochester begins to regain his vision in one eye, and when their first child—a boy—is born, Rochester is able to see the baby. Jane writes that Diana and Mary have both found husbands and that St. John went to India as he had planned. She notes that in his last letter, St. John claimed to have had a premonition of his own approaching death. She does not believe that she will hear from St. John again, but she does not grieve for him, saying that he has fulfilled his promise and done God's work. She closes her book with a quote from his letter, in which he begs the Lord Jesus to come for him quickly.