

**BLA@KEYED**  
T H E A T R E



## Education Pack

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## About this Education Pack

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This education pack is designed to accompany Blackeyed Theatre's production of *Jane Eyre*, touring the UK throughout autumn 2019 and spring 2020. It contains information and resources to support students of English literature, drama and theatre studies and contains content suitable for both GCSE and A-Level. There are also creative and practical exercises, which can be used to unpick the play as well as the text.

The pack is comprised of three sections; section one is useful as a revision tool for students of English Literature, providing information about the text with specific reference to language, structure, themes and context. Section two has been designed with students of drama and theatre studies in mind, with special attention given to resources that support the live performance aspect of the exam.

Finally, section three contains a range of drama based exercises which will allow students, inspired by the play, to explore the characters and themes through active, participatory learning.

This pack was written by Lucy Fennell with contributions from the artistic team. The contents may be reproduced for educational purposes but not for commercial use without the prior consent of Blackeyed Theatre.

### Lucy Fennell

Lucy completed her English degree and PGCE in Canterbury and went on to teach English and Drama in secondary schools before becoming a theatre maker, director and performer. She has trained extensively in improvisation and is a founding member of Impromptu Shakespeare, with whom she has performed in a number of festivals and national tours. She recently completed a residency with The Bristol Improv Theatre where she devised and directed *Is it improvised, does it matter?:* an exploration of the divide between scripted theatre and improvisation.

Lucy is an experienced facilitator and has worked extensively as a director of young people in her role as Education officer at The Point and The Berry Theatre. She directed *The Tempest* and *Henry V* (as part of HLF funded Agincourt 600) and was the Youth Theatre Director at the Berry Theatre. Her directing credits include: *The Little Mermaid*, *The Secret Garden* and *James and the Giant Peach*. She also produced the 2018 sell out Edinburgh Fringe run of *Adventures of the Improvised Sherlock Holmes*.

Lucy has taught theatre and performance at a range of universities including University of Creative Arts, University of Kent and York University, and she currently teaches at Artemis College whilst also tutoring English for GCSE and A-Level.

## Charlotte Brontë

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Charlotte Brontë, born on 21<sup>st</sup> April 1816, in Thornton, West Riding of Yorkshire, was the third of six children born to Rev. Patrick and Maria Brontë. Charlotte had a unique childhood but one also tainted by tragedy. When she was just five years old, Charlotte's mother died and this was closely followed by the tragic deaths of her two elder sisters Maria and Elizabeth, aged just eleven and ten. They died from consumption in harsh conditions of the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge, Lancashire to which they were sent by their father. It was surely this, along with her own experiences when she was sent to the school in 1824, that contributed to Charlotte's portrayal of Lowood school in *Jane Eyre*.

Patrick Brontë continued the education of Charlotte, Emily, Anne and their brother Branwell at home, with the support of their aunt, Elizabeth. The children received a broad and stimulating education that allowed their creativity to flourish. Inspired by the tin soldiers given to them by their father, the siblings became adept at creating vast mythologies set in fictional and fantastical worlds. They chronicled these epic tales in diaries, homemade magazines and even on scrap paper such as sweetie bags, creating tiny books that they would give to the toy soldiers to read. In adolescence they went on to produce elaborate episodic sagas, which became their main preoccupation and prepared them for literary vocations in adulthood. Charlotte also wrote her first poem aged 13 and would go on to write over 200 poems in her life.

In 1831 Charlotte became a pupil at Roe Head School, but the maternal care she felt for her remaining younger sisters drove her to leave the school after just one year to teach them at home. She would return to Roe Head School as a teacher and go on to work as a governess for a number of different families, an experience she would report as unfulfilling. Charlotte's challenging experiences as a governess would inform *Jane Eyre's* experiences as a governess at Gateshead Hall.

In 1842 Charlotte and Emily moved to Brussels to complete their studies with a view to returning and setting up their own school. However, when Emily returned to England Charlotte remained in Brussels until 1844, perhaps influenced by an unrequited love for the school's headmaster, who provided Charlotte with essential literary training and guidance, though nothing more. The period in Brussels served as a crucial time of reflection and refinement, and provided all sorts of material for the novels Charlotte would go on to write.

Charlotte attempted to set up the school as planned, but the idea never came to fruition, perhaps an indication that her ambitions lay elsewhere. The discovery in 1845 of some of Emily's poetry resulted in the joint publication of a volume of poetry by Charlotte, Emily and Anne published under the pseudonyms Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. By concealing their gender it was hoped that the sisters would avoid the prejudice and scepticism levelled at female writers of the time. Charlotte would go on to publish her other novels, including *Jane Eyre* under the same *nom de plume*.

The publication of the volume of poetry opened the way for the sisters to put forward for publication novels they had written, and though Charlotte failed to place her novel *The Professor: A Tale*, she was able instead to interest the publishers with the almost complete *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography*, which was more appealing due to its greater level of action and excitement. The novel was published less than eight weeks after submission and was immediately popular. The unusually authentic first person female perspective set people talking and there was much speculation about the identity of the author, which was exacerbated by the publications of works by Ellis and Acton Bell. It was only when people

started to suspect that the author was female that '*Jane Eyre*' began to receive criticism that the content was 'coarse', as well as concerns that it set out to overthrow the natural order of society.

The commercial success of *Jane Eyre* brought with it Charlotte's introduction to a great many friends in prestigious literary social circles; Elizabeth Gaskell and William Makepeace Thackeray were among her associates. She had begun to work on the manuscript of her second novel *Shirley* when her writing was halted by the deaths, in quick succession, of her siblings. Branwell, Emily and Anne died within only eight months of each other and Charlotte only took up the pen again as a means of dealing with her grief.

This led to the creation of *Villette* in 1853, which was published just before Charlotte married her father's curate Arthur Bell Nichols, a proposal she had initially declined but later agreed to after advice given to her by Elizabeth Gaskell. It is thought that although she was initially not enamoured by the union, Charlotte went on to experience a previously unknown happiness. She fell pregnant soon after the wedding but sadly this happiness did not last. Charlotte and her unborn child died on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1855. Her death was thought to be due to dehydration and malnourishment brought about by severe morning sickness. She is buried in the Brontë family vault in St Michael's church in Haworth.

## Synopsis

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The novel is narrated in the past tense by protagonist Jane Eyre, ten years after her marriage to Rochester. She recounts the physical and emotional journey to her current stage of life. The tale begins with ten-year old Jane living a life of torment at the hands of her Aunt Reed and cousins Georgiana, Eliza and John. After one altercation, for which Jane is wrongly accused, she is sent to the terrifying 'Red Room' as a punishment. Convinced she has seen her uncle's ghost Jane faints in a fit of hysterical fear.

An apparent escape from her cruel aunt comes in the form of Lowood School, where Jane is sent at the suggestion of Mr Lloyd, the Apothecary. However, at Lowood Jane continues to suffer ill treatment at the hands of the headmaster Mr Brocklehurst, an abusive and hypocritical man who preaches the importance of a modest existence but provides an opulent and wealthy lifestyle for himself. However, Lowood also provides a great many positive experiences for Jane; it is here that she finds a close friend and confidante in Helen Burns, who begins to help Jane to temper her fiery nature. After a Typhus epidemic sweeps through the school Helen dies and the poor conditions of Lowood are exposed, leading to the replacement of Mr Brocklehurst with a more benevolent teacher. Jane goes on to spend a further eight years at the school, first as a student and then as a teacher.

Jane yearns for new experiences and accepts a governess position at Thornfield, where she is to tutor a lively French girl named Adèle. It is here that she meets and secretly falls in love with the master of Thornfield Hall, the brooding and mysterious Mr Rochester. Jane saves Rochester's life one night when a fire breaks out in his bedroom, an accident he attributes to a servant, Grace Poole. Jane begins to suspect there is more to Thornfield than meets the eye.

Jane hears that all is not well at Gateshead, following the news that her cousin John has committed suicide, prompting her to return to tend to her dying Aunt Reed. Aunt Reed tells Jane that she does not regret mistreating her and reveals that Jane's uncle has been trying to find her in order to leave her his fortune. In a final malicious act, Aunt Reed reveals she has led him to believe that Jane is dead.

Upon her return to Thornfield, Jane is hurt to discover Rochester is going to propose to Blanche Ingram, a beautiful but vicious socialite. Rochester confounds Jane's expectations by confessing his deeply held love and proposing to her instead. Jane is disbelieving at first but soon revels in her new found happiness.

However, in the lead up to wedding Jane is plagued by nightmares and premonitions that the ceremony will not happen. She wakes one night to see a savage looking woman tearing her wedding veil in two. Rochester convinces her that it must have been Grace Poole, a notorious drunkard. On the day of the wedding the ceremony is dramatically interrupted by a lawyer, who attests that Rochester is already married (and has been for fifteen years) to Bertha Mason, a Creole woman he met in Jamaica.

Rochester has to declare that this is indeed true but is quick to assure everyone present that Jane has no knowledge of it. He explains his wife is mad and that he has had no choice but to confine her in the attic of his home, under the watch of Grace Poole. He brings the congregation back to Thornfield to see Bertha for themselves, and they look on as the wild, frenzied woman attempts to strangle him.

Jane is inconsolable with grief and realises she must leave Thornfield immediately. As she leaves her room she is met by Rochester who attempts to explain how he came to be married to Bertha. He conveys how Bertha's mother and brother also suffered from lunacy and how he, as an ignorant youth, had been duped into marriage and only later recognised Bertha's illness. He had brought Bertha back to Thornfield and confined her for her own safety and to conceal his shameful mistake. Though Jane is forgiving of Rochester, she still feels compelled to leave.

Jane runs away, soon runs out of money and finds herself destitute. She is finally taken in by Mary, Diana and St John Rivers, who show her kindness and find her a teaching position. St John is a pragmatic, god-fearing man, quite the opposite of the passionate Rochester. When he asks Jane to marry him and move to India as a missionary, Jane refuses as she knows she cannot truly love him. One day St John shows her a letter from a lawyer, Mr Briggs, revealing that the Rivers siblings are in fact Jane's cousins and Jane has inherited her uncle's fortune. She decides to share the money equally amongst the cousins. As she continues to dream of Rochester and senses his voice calling her to him, she returns to Thornfield, despite warnings from St John to avoid temptation.

Arriving at Thornfield, Jane finds the manor is in charred ruins following a fire started by Bertha. She learns that Rochester managed to save his servants and attempted to save his wife, but she leapt to her death into the flames. Rochester, who is blinded and has lost a hand in the accident, has taken residence deep in the forest in a house called Ferndean. Jane goes to Ferndean and the two are reunited, Rochester admitting to calling her to him in a fit of desperation. The two are married and Jane sees to it that Adèle is sent to a pleasant school, where she grows up happily. The novel ends with Jane telling the reader that she has been married to Rochester for ten years. They have a child together and Jane confides that they have found mutual happiness living together as equals.

## Characters

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### Jane Eyre

*Honest \* Impassioned \* Strong \* Independent \* Principled*

Jane is the protagonist and narrator of the story. Authentic and intelligent, she endures considerable suffering to find freedom, as well as love and a sense of belonging. Though frequently oppressed, Jane repeatedly manages to assert herself and maintain autonomy despite the rigid Victorian social hierarchy and gender inequality imposed on her.

### Edward Rochester

*Brooding \* Secretive \* Stern \* Arrogant \* Intense*

Rochester is an unlikely but passionate match for Jane. He has a problematic and troubled past but his good looks and honesty, as well as his commitment to loving Jane's true self, make him well suited to her. Rochester is Jane's social and economic superior but she rebukes his advances when she finds out that he is already married to Bertha. By the end of the novel Rochester has paid penance for his irresponsible and lustful youth, and his new found humility, along with Bertha's death, mean that Jane and he can share happiness and love on an equal footing.

### St John Rivers

*Cold \* Religious \* Austere \* Ambitious \* Virtuous \* Holy*

Jane sees St John (pronounced Sinjin) as a good man but one who never allows himself to enjoy life or indulge in pleasure.

St John is in many ways the opposite of Rochester; where Rochester is expressive, St John is reserved and severe. When Jane is invited to marry St John and become a missionary in India she is given the chance to take on a meaningful, worthwhile role, but in exchange she must abandon her pursuit of love and give up on her passions. St John indirectly forces Jane to choose between duty and passion.

### Bertha Mason

*Tormented \* insane \* wild \* hysterical \* Misunderstood*

Bertha is an iconic character from literature whose presence in the novel is increasingly problematic in regards to issues of race and mental health. She is the 'mad woman in the attic', hidden there by Rochester when he marries her in an act of youthful folly. She is an obstacle in the way of Jane's marriage to Rochester and is feared as well as pitied.

Animalistic language used to describe Bertha is dehumanizing and is a reflection of Victorian attitudes towards race. Bertha is from Jamaica and is described as 'Creole', which means she may be of mixed race parentage.

### Mrs Reed

Jane's cruel and callous aunt. Aunt Reed takes Jane in when she is orphaned but never lets her forget that she is a burden on the family, and their social inferior.

**John Reed**

Jane's spoiled and spiteful cousin. John jeers at Jane and seeks to see her punished for things she didn't do. Later in the novel John commits suicide when his mother is unable to pay his debts for him.

**Georgiana Reed**

Jane's cousin Georgiana also behaves cruelly towards Jane at the beginning of the novel but later on she befriends her and confides in her.

**Eliza Reed**

Jane's cousin Eliza is unkind to Jane during childhood but becomes increasingly pious in adulthood, devoting herself to the church and even becoming a nun.

**Mr Brocklehurst**

Mr Brocklehurst is the tyrannical head master of Lowood school. He appears to derive pleasure from mistreating the students in his care. After a typhus epidemic in Lowood, his dishonest ways are exposed.

**Helen Burns**

Helen Burns is Jane's close friend and confidant at Lowood School. She is a devout Christian, keen to teach tolerance and temperance to Jane. Her appearance in the novel is fleeting but her impression on Jane is lasting. Before she dies of consumption, Helen emphasises to Jane the importance of trust in God's ultimate judgment, and that if justice cannot be found in this life it will be served in the next one.

**Maria Temple**

Maria Temple is a benevolent teacher at Lowood who bestows kindness and compassion on Jane and Helen. She is a maternal presence and one of Jane's first positive female influences.

**Alice Fairfax**

Alice Fairfax is the housekeeper at Thornfield Hall and significantly, she perpetuates Rochester's lies intended to conceal Bertha's existence. She informs Jane that the maniacal laughter heard in the house belongs to Grace Poole, and although she treats Jane with respect, she disapproves of her engagement to Rochester.

**Grace Poole**

Grace Poole's primary duty is to attend to, and control, Bertha Mason at Thornfield. However, her propensity for drinking and subsequent carelessness allows Bertha to escape regularly.

**Adèle Varens**

Jane is governess to Adèle, a spirited though rather precocious child from France. Rochester brought Adèle to Thornfield after she was abandoned by her mother, Rochester's one-time mistress.

**Blanche Ingram**

Blanche Ingram is the beautiful but bitter socialite who Jane mistakenly thinks Rochester will marry.

**Richard Mason**

Richard Mason is Bertha's brother. He sends his solicitor to oppose the wedding of Jane and Rochester and to reveal the truth of Rochester's existing marriage to Bertha.

**Diana Rivers**

Diana Rivers is revealed to be Jane's cousin, as well as the sister of St John and Mary. Diana is attentive and intuitive, counselling Jane to follow her instincts and not to go to India with St John. Her gentle and independent nature serves as inspiration to Jane.

**Mary Rivers**

Mary Rivers is Jane's cousin and the sister of St John and Diana. Much like Diana, Mary is kind to Jane and offers her comfort in a time of need.

**John Eyre**

John Eyre, Jane's uncle, is keen to provide for his niece and bequeaths to her a figure of twenty thousand pounds.

**Uncle Reed**

Jane often feels the presence of her uncle's ghost during her childhood years. Uncle Reed held particular fondness for Jane and made his wife, Mrs Reed, promise to provide for Jane as if she were her own child, a promise she doesn't keep.

## Context

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- **Changing social hierarchy**

Victorian England maintained a strict social hierarchy, ensuring social classes were clearly defined and separated and allowing little social mobility. When the novel was published in 1847 great social and political unrest was underway. The industrial revolution was a catalyst for change; opening up new avenues of work for the lower classes and especially lower class women, who could take on factory work instead of household positions.

This was not the case for single middle class women however, who instead often opted for the role of governess. This was a financially precarious and socially ambiguous position that stranded them between the status of family member and servant.

Jane, therefore, is a confusing figure for the other characters she encounters; she possesses the airs and graces of the aristocracy but retains the powerlessness and financial insecurity of the servant class. Nevertheless, she is set on bettering herself through hard work and strives to lift herself out of poverty and abandonment. Despite her hard work, Jane is all too aware that she will struggle to transcend the limitations of her class. Although she loves Rochester and is his intellectual equal, she is all too aware of her status as his social inferior. It is only when she inherits her uncle's fortune that Jane can become Rochester's wife and equal.

- **Position of women**

A passionate and intelligent Victorian woman such as Jane Eyre might have encountered difficulties fitting into the expectations placed on her gender in that period. When the novel was published it was seen to shake up the social order and disrupt the commonly held view that women should be meek and obedient to men. Women's skills, talents and independence were far from being valued despite increased interest in the debate around the position of women. Jane is a rebel, a great departure from the long-suffering heroines of other novels of the time. Female autonomy was restricted; unable to vote and limited in their access to university education, they were very much reliant upon their families for financial support and had to prioritise finding a husband to ensure long-term security. As Jane is orphaned she must follow one of the few paths available to her, that of governess, even though it was not thought respectable for a middle class woman to pursue a career.

- **Colonialism and the British empire**

The Victorian era saw a period of great prosperity and unparalleled imperial expansion. With the growth of the empire came Britain's view that it represented a superior civilization. Whilst it maintained a fervent interest in other 'exotic' cultures, it did not deem them equal. Bertha Mason is described as 'Creole', a term that has been interpreted as ambiguous by many who study the novel. Historically the term was used to describe white people of British and European descent who were born in the Caribbean, but when used by Europeans, the word Creole also hinted at the intermixing of white and black people, as many white plantation owners fathered children by their black female slaves. Certainly, the various allusions to Bertha's appearance and in particular her "*discoloured face*" and "*swelled*" lips would lean towards the latter interpretation of the word, as well as its use as a derogatory slur.

The treatment of Bertha Mason in the novel is an example of Britain's national pride; she represents the way Britain maintained power over the colonies and kept them under strict control much in the same way Rochester keeps Bertha locked in the attic. Worryingly, even Jane subscribes to this view, 'othering' Bertha by calling her '*it*' and characterising her as animal-like, almost a feral sub species. St John Rivers also embodies Britain's imperialism, with the notion that through his work as a missionary he must 'civilize the savages'.

- **Attitudes to madness**

Bertha is an ominous presence throughout the latter part of the novel. Presented initially as a ghostly or otherworldly presence, Jane (and we, the reader) soon find out the tragic truth; that Bertha is the rejected wife of Rochester, a shameful secret he keeps hidden in his attic.

The 1845 lunacy act stipulated that asylum must be provided for anyone with 'mental deficiencies' and this meant the number of insane asylums increased dramatically during this time. Treatments were offered but often had the affect of degrading and traumatizing. Many criticized the asylums, deeming them prisons disguised as hospitals. However, attitudes towards the treatment of the mentally ill were changing and professionals were beginning to recommend that patients no longer be treated as criminals. There was greater regard for the conditions in which the mentally ill were kept, and the 'Pauper houses' (akin to workhouses) came to be seen as unfit for the purpose of housing the disabled and mentally ill. Charlotte Brontë might have been aware of these changing views, which could account for Bertha being kept 'safely' in the attic rather than admitted to an asylum. On the other hand, it is made very clear that Rochester views his connection to Bertha as tarnishing his reputation, suggesting he didn't seek any formal care for her in order to preserve the secrecy of their union. Although Jane is quick to tell the reader that she immediately forgives Rochester's revelation, the modern reader might place him (and indeed Jane) under greater scrutiny.

## Themes, Motifs and Symbols

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### Themes

- **Love/hate**

*"Love me, then, or hate me, as you will," I said at last, "you have my full and free forgiveness: ask now for God's, and be at peace."*

As an orphan living with the cruel Reed family, Jane is the subject of hatred but it is this rejection and pain that spurs Jane on to seek a gentler life. At Lowood she continues to experience ill treatment but also meets Helen Burns from whom she learns the tenderness of love and friendship.

Jane pursues love in several forms; familial love as well as friendship and romantic love. The binaries of love and hate characterise Jane's journey through life and she learns that whilst she craves love in all its forms she must not sacrifice her own independence and worth to have it. Despite her ardent love for Rochester, she refuses to be his mistress and later she does not settle for a marriage of convenience with St John, instead yielding to her own authentic feelings and returning to Rochester.

- **Family/independence/identity**

*"I am not an angel," I asserted; "and I will not be one till I die: I will be myself."*

Jane is marred by her dependence on others. As an orphan her survival has relied solely on the charity of those who will endure her presence. Therefore, it is understandable that she craves autonomy and self-reliance, to find acceptance and her own distinct identity. She encounters other independent women such as Helen Burns and Miss Temple, who inspire Jane to cleave to her own values and beliefs. Jane's strong sense of self is refined as she matures and her experiences as a child inform the trajectory of her journey into a self-assured adult. Even so, Jane has a predisposition for servitude, especially in her relationships with men. She allows both Rochester and St John to be the master of her before she is eventually able to enter into a relationship with Rochester, where she is both his servant and his guide.

- **Religion**

*"Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this, when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigour; stringent are they; inviolate they shall be. If at my individual convenience I might break them, what would be their worth?"*

Many characters that surround Jane in the novel espouse strong religious beliefs. When Jane questions Brocklehurst's fierce doctrine, the reader can certainly relate to her cynicism about his hypocrisy. Jane questions all forms of religion she encounters. Even the unwavering faith of Helen Burns is under scrutiny. Jane refuses to accept the evangelical belief in the total depravity of humanity due to the fall of Eve in the Old Testament. Instead she believes in humankind's innate capacity for good. Jane insists on the pursuit of earthly delights and is concerned as much by her physical and emotional happiness as her spiritual and moral growth.

St John Rivers is a model of Christian ambition and righteousness and urges Jane to abandon her self-seeking path to offer herself for the work of the lord. But Jane cannot be disloyal to herself and ultimately continues to seek happiness on earth, rather than in heaven. Ultimately, she is able to find a middle ground, away from the over-zealous religion of St John but with the complete faith and trust of Helen Burns.

## **Motifs**

- **Fire and ice**

The gothic extremities of fire and ice are important motifs and indicators of the absence and presence of emotion in the novel. Passionate Rochester is defined by his fiery, uncontrollable character while in contrast St John Rivers is described in terms of ice and snow. Fire is present in a very real sense in the story. As well as symbolizing passion, the real fire demonstrates the destructive consequences of intemperance.

- **Doubles**

Brontë's narrative techniques distinguish Bertha as distinctly 'other', and in many ways Jane's polar opposite. However, many consider Jane and Bertha to be almost photo-negative copies of each other. Bertha's presence can be felt when Jane is tense or troubled, and Jane's confinement in the red room can be likened to Bertha's imprisonment in the attic. They both hold the role of Rochester's bride and both are oppressed by the British patriarchy. We see frenzied emotional outbreaks from both women as they grapple to find freedom and power in a society that seeks to control their liberty.

- **Substitute mothers**

At every stage in her journey Jane attaches herself to maternal figures who may fulfill the motherly role she has not benefitted from. At Gateshead it is Bessie who comforts Jane and provides a gentle and kind contrast to Aunt Reed. At Lowood Miss Temple stands up for Jane and Helen, even offering physical affection. The sterner and more assertive Mrs Fairfax provides a matronly figure in Jane's life, and finally Diana offers Jane companionship and acts as a confidante. Brontë depicts the evolution of the mother/daughter relationship, demonstrating the importance of female counsel during the difficulties of a woman's coming of age.

## **Symbols**

- **Portraits and pictures**

Portraits and drawings occur throughout the novel and seem to be a way for Jane to explore figuratively her feelings about a person's character or to demonstrate her unique perspective on the world around her. Jane has a portfolio of drawings that represent her journey through life and she goes on to compare her portrait with that of Blanche Ingram, highlighting the women's vastly differing social stations. Jane's own artwork proves to be one of the defining moments in her relationship with Rochester; it is only when he sees her skill that he is aware she is far from an average governess and instead possesses the skill of an artist.

- **Eyes**

The novel emphasises the prevalence of the 'mind's eye' through Jane's recurring flights of fancy and fertile imagination. Eyes are thought to be the 'windows to the soul' and Jane is certainly most attracted to Rochester's eyes, which represent his wild and passionate nature. It is significant also that by the end of the novel Rochester loses his sight and Jane becomes his eyes, perhaps symbolising his growing respect for Jane's perspective.

- **The Red Room**

Although Jane is just a child when she encounters the red room at Gateshead, the experience continues to be an important symbol throughout the rest of the novel. The red room represents confinement and lack of power, it symbolizes all that Jane must defeat in order to find freedom and belonging. Even though Jane is physically free of the room, in effect she brings with her that sense of being ostracized from family and society. Jane remembers the red room whenever she is demeaned, for example when she chooses to leave Thornfield rather than become Rochester's mistress.

## Form, Structure and Language

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### Form

- **Autobiography**

The full title of the novel is 'Jane Eyre. An Autobiography', an unusual title for something that is clearly a work of fiction. Nevertheless, there are obvious and specific parallels between Jane and Charlotte Brontë; from the description of Jane's appearance as "small" and "plain", echoing Charlotte herself, to the traumatic experiences they both have at school and their employment as governesses. The autobiographic style is a clever narrative technique employed by Brontë to ensure a consistent and vivid perspective. The narrative voice is that of Jane ten years after her marriage to Rochester and Brontë avoids the use of an oblique, omniscient storyteller, making Jane Eyre one of the first novels to demonstrate an authentic female voice as narrator.

- **Bildungsroman**

Bildungsroman is a German word that translates directly as 'education' and 'novel'. Jane Eyre fits this genre as it charts the coming of age of its protagonist, through her childhood years and into young adulthood. Also typical of the genre is the placing of a vulnerable child in an adult situation; when Jane witnesses the death of her friend Helen at Lowood school she is confronted with emotional suffering that a child should not have to experience. The bildungsroman genre is concerned with the personal growth of its main character and this is seen through Jane's search for identity, and her development from a penniless orphan to the respected wife of an upper class gentleman.

- **Elements of the Gothic and Romanticism**

Romanticism and the gothic novel go hand in hand and Jane Eyre contains many elements of both. Romanticism was an art and literary movement in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries focusing on imagination, emotion and freedom. Another element of the romantic genre is the presence of gothic occurrences, of which there are plenty in Jane Eyre. The horror of the red room, the ominous presence of Bertha and the references to the fearful third floor all convey feelings of gloom and doom. Jane Eyre is unusual as it fits the gothic genre whilst employing a unique female language; Brontë uses elements of the gothic to express the struggles of Victorian women. Enclosed spaces in the house represent the constrictions placed on the bodies of women as well as a woman's fear of losing her liberty and being confined to domestic roles.

### Structure

- **The importance of settings**

As Jane's journey continues, she moves to different physical settings. Brontë has made each location distinct and representative of the differing circumstances Jane finds herself in at each. Gateshead constitutes Jane's whole world when she is a child but it is here she finds herself trapped emotionally and physically. Lowood offers escape and is a place in which she learns a great deal, but it still represents control and confinement. Thornfield offers a completely new experience. The vast countryside hints at an increasing freedom but

of course the house hides a secret that will prove an obstacle to Jane's freedom. When she reaches the relative idyll of Ferndean Jane is able to come to rest in an eden-like paradise.

- **Repetition**

The otherwise linear structure of Jane's journey to adulthood and acceptance is punctuated by moments of repetition or parallel. The mirroring of Jane's relationship with Rochester and her brief relationship with St John Rivers allows the reader to see exactly what she has at stake and her struggle to choose between her head and her heart. The careful division of the novel into five parts, united by setting, creates a clear pathway for Jane's emotional development and maturation.

## Language

- **The importance of names**

Much can be inferred from the names in Jane Eyre. The name Jane is reminiscent of simplicity and plainness. And Eyre could of course be interpreted as 'heir' linking to Jane inheriting money. The name is also a homonym of 'air', which hints at the free and flighty characteristics of the protagonist. Another reading is 'err' to indicate Jane's fallible nature. The names of the locations in the novel are also quite evocative; Gateshead being the gateway to the rest of the world, Lowood being a low point for Jane, the imagery of thorns and Jane fighting through emotional struggles at Thornfield, and Moor House being a place of temporary mooring while Jane secures her inheritance. 'Rochester' means 'stony place' and this could indicate that while he acts as Jane's emotional rock and turns out to be a constant in her life, it could also be interpreted as a hazardous or dangerous obstacle to be traversed.

There are other names that connote an important idea; 'Rivers' indicates the pull of a strong current, 'Temple' is a place of worship and 'Reed', like the river plant suggests pliability and perhaps even a punitive, whip-like object.

- **Narrative tone and use of dialogue**

Brontë has carefully combined a range of narrative styles and cleverly employs dialogue to convey the humanity and realism of the characters in the novel, lending it a vivid realism throughout.

Brontë's upbringing influenced her to combine literary English, which can sound quite archaic, with the rural Yorkshire dialect, creating colloquialisms that draw us into the world of the novel. The descriptions in the novel can at times be matter of fact and journalistic in style; *"It was the fifteenth of January, about nine o'clock in the morning Bessie was gone down to breakfast"* and at other times dramatic and full of feeling; *'Terrible moment full of struggle, blackness, burning! Not a human being that ever lived could wish to be loved better than I was loved; and him who thus loved me I absolutely worshipped and I must renounce love and idol'*

The use of dialogue is especially useful in highlighting the social class, education and attitude of the characters; in particular Adèle's French and Jane's ability to speak it indicate her accomplishments and education. Jane and Rochester's exchanges are very intimate and conversational, demonstrating the authentic and easy nature of their relationship.

## Adapting Jane Eyre

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Playwright Nick Lane talks about the process of bringing Jane Eyre to the stage.

### On the character of Jane:

*From the outset the one thing I knew I had to do, or at least try to do, was get the protagonist right. There have been plenty of successful adaptations of Charlotte Brontë's book, and a great number of them have been written by tremendous female writers, so, rightly or wrongly I felt an amount of pressure (probably self-imposed) not to mess it up!*

*Jane is such an iconic character. What she stood for at the time of the novel's release as well as in the present day is a level of freedom and self-determination; the choice to love despite arising complications and not just settle dutifully is as empowering as it is romantic.*

*I know that opinions vary wildly and interpretation is, or can be, an immensely personal thing. I know the pitfalls of trying to please all of the people all of the time. That said, the portrayal of Jane still remained my first priority.*

### On the structure of the adaptation:

*Once the director Adrian and I had discussed details such as cast size and the stylistic elements, I was able to re-read the novel with those parameters in mind and fix on a way to tell the tale. My work has most often followed the "aural history" tradition, in the sense that the audiences are addressed directly by the characters in order to better communicate their emotional states or else transport them to different times and locations without the use of lots of blackouts and difficult scene-changes which can, in my opinion, break the flow and momentum of a story. I came up with about five different ways that this story could be approached. Adrian's desire was to have the protagonist as our window into the world and that's what we went with. Adrian and I favoured the purity and clarity of the single voice and so we focused on making Jane our sole storyteller.*

*With the structure and style intact, I began to map out the scenes. With a book as rich as this we had to find a way to show every raw emotion felt by Jane throughout the novel's passage, and yet do so in a way that didn't leave audience's legs numb by the interval.*

*To do this I sought the help of Tabitha Grove, a good friend and somewhat of a Jane Eyre and Charlotte Brontë expert, though she'd never admit it! She guided me towards which moments were most important and which others needed figurative representation. Other sections have been truncated and lines of dialogue occasionally reassigned, but all done with thought and care.*

### On Mr Rochester:

*My intention was to offer the audience as true a vision of Jane as I could muster, but there are other characters in the novel too, and in Mr Rochester we have one of the most fascinating characters in English literature; charming, self-defeating, earnest and flawed. My fear in not getting Jane right almost certainly stems from being a man and worrying about approaching an iconic female character without a woman's understanding of her. With Rochester it was about that delicate balance between what is spoken and what lies beneath; what his manner represents not always being tied to what his heart feels.*

### On the process of adapting a novel:

*The great thing about adaptation is that the story is there and the characters already created, and if you stray from the path for your own reasons then the novel can always lead you back. Once the scenes are mapped out and you work out the complications of multi-rolling and who is playing who, you get to ride the story; finding which of the author's lines of dialogue you like and interweaving them with lines of your own, always hoping that they measure up, of course.*

*This story is the hidden jewel in Brontë's crown. Readers speak of the romance between Jane and Rochester and of Bertha in the attic, They may even mention St John Rivers and the time Jane spends at Moor House. Experts, however, and I'd never count myself among them (I'm merely a fan), will tell you that the book's subtleties, complexities, its socio-political subtext, its light and shade are very much the equal of its peers. Picking out moments that illustrate that is, for me, the real pleasure of adaptation.*

*I genuinely hope that translates when you see the show.*

Nick Lane

## Creating the Music for Jane Eyre

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Composer George Jennings talks about the inspiration behind his musical score.

*As the composer of a theatre show, I have to do everything I can to support the action taking place, to help set the mood of the scene, and to give life to the songs written in the script.*

*Jane Eyre was published in 1847 and I wanted to stay relatively faithful to that era of music for my compositions. This period in western classical musical history was known as the Romantic period; characterised by its much more explicitly expressive nature. It dealt with the literary, artistic, and philosophical themes of the time. This is incredibly helpful to use as inspiration for a theatrical adaptation, being more dramatic than the previous or later musical periods. Being focused on the spiritual nature of the world goes hand in hand with Brontë's revolutionary, intimate first-person narrative, full of Jane's private consciousness. I wanted the music to reflect Jane's inner world. Many of my influences came from the works of Chopin, Schumann, Liszt, and Debussy.*

*I wanted the songs of the show to feel like they were of the standard of the time, with pieces such as 'Poor Orphan Child' and 'Speak of the North!' evocative of Christian hymns or imperial British songs. Jane and Brontë would have been very familiar with this style of music. All the songs in the show feature words written by Brontë herself, either taken straight from the novel in the case of 'Poor Orphan Child', or from individual poems she wrote, such as 'Speak of the North!'. The director, writer and I wanted to open the show with a song sung by the cast, and I chose this particular poem to set to music as the novel is set in the north of England, and the words give a lovely sense of location, setting and overall feeling for the story about to be told. I tried to implement as much word painting as I could for this particular song, to heighten and support the imagery within the poem.*

### Speak of the North!

Speak of the North! A lonely moor  
Silent and dark and tractless swells,  
The waves of some wild streamlet pour  
Hurriedly through its ferny dells.

Profoundly still the twilight air,  
Lifeless the landscape; so we deem  
Till like a phantom gliding near  
A stag bends down to drink the stream.

And far away a mountain zone,  
A cold, white waste of snow-drifts lies,  
And one star, large and soft and lone,  
Silently lights the unclouded skies.

Have a look at appendix A to see the music George wrote to go with the poem.

## Directing Jane Eyre

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Director Adrian McDougall talks about the directing process and his hopes for the production.

### **On creating work that's relevant for today's audience:**

*Directing an adaptation of a classic text such as Jane Eyre is at once incredibly exciting and challenging. There is a temptation as a director to seek ways to make your work relevant, but for me that's ignoring the mastery of the novel. The relevance of Jane Eyre for today's audience is in the original writing. It's all there. Our job is to tell the story in a way that serves Charlotte Brontë's work as truthfully as possible.*

*There's also a temptation to go out of your way to make what you do unique, to stand out from previous productions. For me the starting point has to be the source material. Inevitably my interpretation of the novel will be different to the next person's. The uniqueness of our retelling of this timeless tale will come from that, as well as the individual interpretations of the actors and the artistic team. I always encourage artists to be brave enough to trust their own instincts rather than refer to previous interpretations. It's tempting to assume that famous interpretations of the characters and previous ground-breaking productions are in some way definitive. But it's so important to have faith in your own perspective and commit to that.*

*To a certain extent, of course, telling the story with a cast of five forces you to be creative. As an audience member, I love seeing the mechanics of theatre, and presenting an ensemble of performers who play different characters, provide music and song, and create the world we see through movement and sound – and not being afraid to show it - gives us licence to be endlessly creative and innovative.*

### **On casting:**

*Get the right cast and you're half way there! It's just so important to have actors who not only engage an audience by bringing these characters to life, but also work together, collaborate and support each other, both on and off stage.*

*We received over 2,000 applications for the five parts in Jane Eyre, and half of those were for the role of Jane. Shortlisting actors therefore becomes an incredibly important part of the process. You have to consider skills, look, height, experience, as well as the level of enthusiasm an applicant demonstrates for the project. Those actors and actresses who send individual, personalised applications are more likely to be seen than those who don't.*

*In the audition room, so much comes down to how I feel when I hear someone read, and in the end the decision to cast Kelsey as Jane was actually quite an easy one. Kelsey made me care about Jane in a way no one else did. Then it was a case of casting a Rochester who would complement Kelsey and help create this fascinating love story, which really is the beating heart of the novel.*

Have a look at appendix B to see a sample of Adrian's script notes.

# Creating the Costumes for Jane Eyre

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By Costume Designer, Naomi Gibbs

## On preparation and research:

*The first and foremost reference for a costume designer is always the script, so I begin my process reading it for pleasure as though I were the 'audience', after which I revisit it many times, layering on notes that occur to me as I go. An important tool for a costume designer is a costume plot, noting everything costume-related from the script. It details who wears what in which scene and any anomalies.*

*Research is, next to the script, the most invaluable resource for inspiration when designing for a show. For 'Jane Eyre' I looked at other productions set during the relevant eras, historical references from books and actual Regency and Victorian garments. To fire my imagination, I also read the original novel - no hardship as it has been a favourite since I was a teen.*

*I always like to refresh my knowledge when researching a period for a show, but sometimes choose to disregard my findings if I feel another idea serves the text or character better. As a designer, I am generally not slavish to period but try to be respectful of it. My favourite art teacher once told me: "You have to learn all of the rules before you can break them." It's okay to make a design choice that flouts the norm of the period as long as you can explain why it works. You'll notice perhaps, that as our actors multi-role, some details have become 'shorthand' for certain types of character, such as a cap or pinnny for a child, or a different type of cap, shawl and apron for an older woman such as Mrs Fairfax. This helps avoid any ambiguity for the audience as actors re-enter the performance space as another character. The actors do the majority of the work with characterisation and my work supports this.*

*The period of this piece was, for us, open to interpretation. Many adaptations seem to anchor Jane's story predominantly in the 1820s to 1840s, making her a contemporary of her creator, Charlotte Brontë. This I believe to be so because the author drew on so much of her own life experience to augment the story, so perhaps it makes sense for fictional Jane and Charlotte Brontë to be from similar worlds.*

## On period dress:

*Writer Nick Lane and director Adrian McDougall were open to suggestions from the creative team for the period in which we would base our production. I had previously found hints among the original source material that the story could have been set as early as late 18th century. As such, there was considerable scope to settle together on the fashion to style after. Great leaps and bounds were made in terms of silhouette for both men and women in the 50 years between the story's earliest possible beginning and the period we decided upon. If we'd used the earlier time period, the characters would have worn a neoclassical regency silhouette, but as you can see, the setting advanced as far as the early Victorian Belle shape for us.*

*Women's corsets were firmer than the preceding regency period, changing from a high bust with soft quilted body, like the full figured statues of antiquity, to waspish waists with a very neat, restricted style. Kelsey, who plays Jane, needs to be able to work in her costume every day on tour, so I decided not to put her into a corset, but to instead use 'boning' (stiff rods that are sewn into dresses and corsets) to reinforce her gown.*

*A self-respecting gentleman of the time would always be outfitted properly, with a full complement of dress including a high collar shirt, stock (a type of scarf-like tie from that era), formal trousers, waistcoat and jacket and for outings, always a hat in addition to this. Colours were generally sober for gentlemen due to desire for practicality, economy and general good taste as well as longevity of wear. Men had the benefit of affording slightly more comfort than women in their attire, but still suffered through the wearing of high collars and many layers, for the appearance of style and propriety.*

### **On believability:**

*My job is primarily to help the actors tell the story. Their clothes have to be completely believable, so believable in fact, that that audience had better not be thinking of them too much while watching the performance. They should simply be engrossed in the story. To this end, I make sure I ask myself key questions about the characters such as: How wealthy are they? What is their standing in society? How much does this person care about their appearance? What is their profession or occupation? What are their personal tastes? The clothes have to suit each of these criteria. Then, I must meet additional criteria such as: Can this actor move freely in their costume? Is it fit for purpose? For each question I can take my cues from the script.*

### **On Jane's costume:**

*For Jane Eyre, I felt that a sombre palette of colour built up with varying textures would best suit the mood of the show. Therefore, I chose mostly dark colours for Jane, which absorb the light and at some points during the play use light-catching fabrics to draw focus on the contrast between her and Blanche and Adèle, who draw a sharp contrast to Jane's simplicity. There are some key moments in the script which the use of costume can really enhance, such as a dramatic vignette of Bertha and Jane silhouetted together.*

*All of my choices carry subliminal messages about the characters, inspired directly from clues Nick has laid within the script. For example, Jane is modest, not a follower of fashion but she must also present herself as she would be expected to. She wears the dark, practical shades indicative of a governess, but shows a flourish of individuality and sass with the subtle woven check pattern used throughout her dress. I have deliberately juxtaposed both straight and diagonal directions of the weave to add interest to her costume. In addition, Jane's costume is what we call 'rigged' for quick-change. It looks like a regular Victorian gown outside but can be added to and removed extremely quickly with quick-release fastenings.*

*All of the female cast member's gowns are rigged for quick change to assist them to very quickly swing between their different characters.*



### On Rochester's costume:

Rochester seems a self-assured type, or at least wants to appear that way even if he is insecure. The cut of his suit is designed with a Victorian look but with a cut which is more appealing to modern eyes with slightly narrower than traditional trousers and a more fitted waistline. He is also a man of advancing years compared to Jane, so a warm brown made more sense for his character as a country noble. Brown was almost as popular for daily wear as black during Victorian times.



You may notice that in these original designs, the role of Rochester is doubled with John Reed. In a subsequent rewrite of the script, the actor playing Rochester doubles to play Mr Brocklehurst instead.

### On Blanche and Adèle's costumes:

It was intended that Blanche and Adèle would display more frippery in contrast to Jane. They are bold in a plaid taffeta of striking colours, which will really 'pop' against the rest of the palette. The adventurousness of the fashions of these characters speaks of their difference in personality and contrast in social standing compared to Jane.



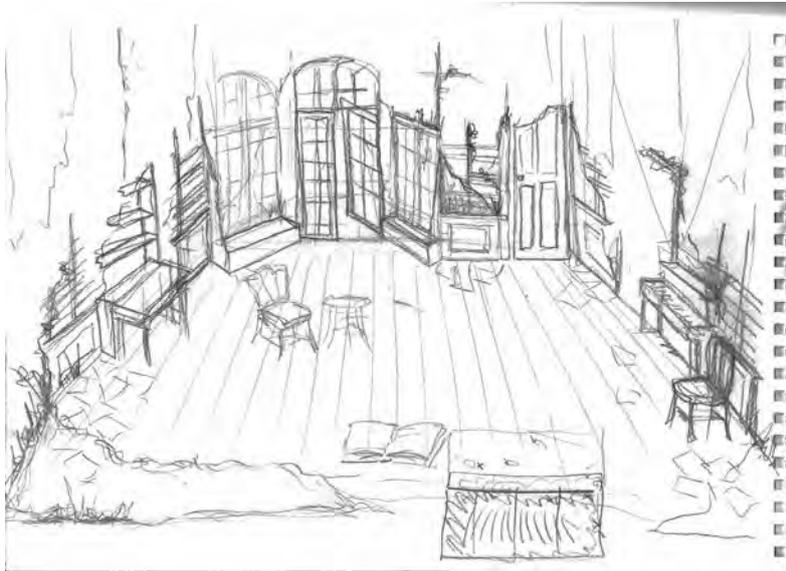
### On the process of creating the costumes:

As a designer I am really motivated by sustainability and I am aiming to eventually run a zero or low waste costume department. As such, I pick and choose between which pieces need to be designed and built from scratch and which it would be more economical to source. I try to source as much usable vintage or high quality ex costume hire stock as possible, so long as it fits my vision and is durable enough to tour. Some of the men's pieces are former wedding hire pieces that have been adapted to make more 'period' or unique. Almost every show I design has a blend of pre-worn items, vintage pieces, vintage and antique textiles from my own collection along with new costume builds. For this show I have incorporated some genuine antique Victorian lace (handmade) from my personal collection to add special authenticity to the gowns. Jane's dress, simple as it is, has three different handmade antique laces at the collar and cuffs.

## Set Design

By Set Designer, Victoria Spearing

*When the director and I first talked about the design for the production, one of the themes we wanted to focus on was the burnt out remains of Thornfield Hall.*



The original set design sketch for Jane Eyre

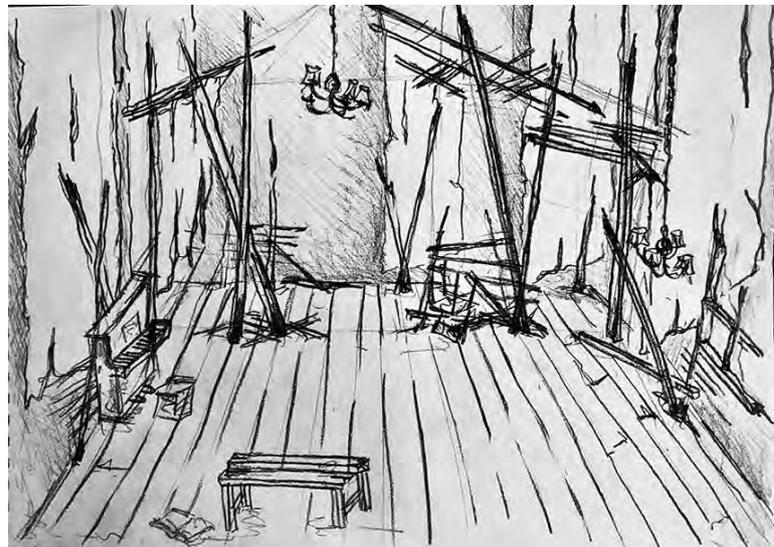
*After an initial meeting looking at the first sketch, which was a relatively recognisable burnt out room, we discussed creating a less structured space by removing the solid doors and windows, allowing a more open structure made from the burnt wooden remains of the building.*

*We spoke about having burnt cloths hanging in the space to give a softer edge to the playing space but still reflecting what could be burnt window dressing from the former building. I also added some hanging light fittings*

*which might have remained from the fire but can be used to define playing spaces in our relatively non-specific, abstract space.*

*As there are so many locations in the production, a more abstract, burnt structure will give the actors a free space to create different locations using a careful selection of furniture. We may use a certain chair for Jane's Aunt and another for Rochester's library.*

*The structure is the ghostly skeleton of Thornfield Hall, a framing device within which the locations Jane once knew so well are just sketches created with a few objects and items of furniture. What we see within this space are moments and experiences as Jane*



The second set design sketch

*remembers them, created through narration, movement, music, sound scapes and lighting.*

## Performing Jane Eyre

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Kelsey Short talks about her portrayal of Jane Eyre.

### **What's your take on the character of Jane and how do you approach such an iconic role?**

I believe I have a lot of similar qualities to Jane, and although of a different time, much of what she says of her experiences resonates with me as a result of my own life experiences. The challenges she faces are so relevant today, and so for me, portraying her on stage is about understanding her. She's a strong, independent woman who is struggling with her insecurities and a need to be loved. For me that's the basis from which I can explore the character further.

### **What are the challenges of performing a play over such a long period of time, and how do you deal with that?**

Keeping everything fresh and organic! Hard though it is over a long period of time, it's so important to be in the moment, reacting and listening as if it's the first and only performance. Then beauty of theatre, of course, is that a difference in intonation can change the dynamic of a scene, and of course the audience is different every night too. I guess the idea is to never get complacent, always be willing to keep playing.

### **What do you love most about bringing a piece like Jane Eyre to the stage?**

I love the fact that she is a woman all people - young and old – are likely to know about or at least have heard of. It's a timeless story and will always be relatable. I also love that it isn't your stereotypical love story. For me the Gothic element is such a pivotal factor in the story and will help make this a unique piece of theatre.

## CAST

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**Kelsey Short**  
*Jane Eyre*

Kelsey trained at Rose Bruford.

Theatre credits include *Class* (Spur of the Moment), *F\*cking Life Mate* (JamesArts Productions), *Interrupted* (JW3), *Teeth*, *Shoes* (Theatre 503), *Between a Man and a Woman* (JamesArts Productions), *Broken* (The White Bear), *Another Day* (A Friend of a Friend Productions)

Screen credits include *Between a Man and a Woman* (JamesArts Productions), *Chip* (JamesArts Productions)

Kelsey writes spoken word poetry and is a skilled puppeteer.

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**Ben Warwick**  
*Mr Rochester / Mr Brocklehurst*

Ben trained at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He last appeared with Blackeyed Theatre as Victor Frankenstein. Other credits include *Hamlet* (English Touring Theatre); *The Deep Blue Sea* (Watford Palace); *Pentecost*; *The Oedipus Plays* (Royal National Theatre); *Les Liaisons Dangereuse*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Theatre Royal York); *House And Garden* (Royal Theatre Northampton); *Look Back In Anger* (Lichfield Garrick); *Arms & The Man*, *The Captain's Tiger*, *Saint's Day*, *The Road To Ruin*, *Skeletons* (Orange Tree); *The Trench* (Les Enfants Terribles – National and International tours and Southwark Playhouse); *The Marquise* (Bill Kenwright); *Macbeth* (US Tour); *Miss Julie* (Soho Theatre); *Moliere Or The League Of Hypocrites* (Finborough); *Cock* (Folktearten Gothenberg); *The Seagull*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (tour of Russia for Arterie); *Great Expectations*, *She Stoops to Conquer*, *The Bandwagon*, *Charley's Aunt*, *Henry IV pt.1*, *Hard Times*, *Our Town*, *Room Service*, *Tons Of Money*, *David Copperfield* (Farnham Rep). Feature films include *Blood Moon*, *War Game*, *Canakkale Yolun Sonu*. TV includes *Mary Queen of Scots* (BBC) *Emmerdale* (ITV), *The Big Picture*, *Five Years*.

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**Camilla Simson**

*Mrs Fairfax / Bertha Mason / Aunt Reed / Mary Rivers*

Camilla trained at Elmhurst Ballet School and Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art.

Her theatre credits include *The Merchant of Venice* (Bedouin Shakespeare Company at the Globe, Rome) *The Little Things* (The Latchmere Theatre), *Hounds of the Baskervilles* (Greenwich Theatre with Sell a Door), *Blithe Spirit* (Hever Castle Festival), *Fred and Gladys* (The Landor), *Thin Toes* (The Pleasance), *The Treason Show* (The Komedia, Brighton), *Valparaiso* (The Old Red Lion), *Crystal Clear* (The Landor and Edinburgh Festival), *Talking Heads – Her Big Chance* (Wimbledon Theatre), *Dick Whittington* (Cambridge Arts Theatre), *Lady Windermere’s Fan* (Bill Kenwright, National Tour), *Love Off The Shelf* (Harrogate and Nuffield Theatres), *Alice in Wonderland* (Nuffield Theatre), *Shakers* (Liverpool Playhouse), *Bertie*, *The Life of Vesta Tilley* (Alexandra Theatre Birmingham). Camilla’s Television and Film credits include *King Of Chaos* (Stone City Films C4), *London’s Burning* (ITV), *Are You Ready For Love* (Carnaby Films) and *Funny Bones* (Suntrust Films).



**Eleanor Toms**

*Blanche Ingram / Georgianna Reed / Helen Burns / Adele Varens / Diana Rivers*

Since graduating from Guildford School of Acting, Eleanor has enjoyed appearing in a variety of theatrical productions such as *The Secret Garden* (The Minack Theatre), *Macbeth* (This is my Theatre), *A Dickensian Christmas* (Ha-Hum-Ah Theatre) *Astley’s Astounding Adventures* (New Vic), *Fiddler on the Roof* (Frinton Summer Theatre), *Treasure Island* (New Vic), *Blue Stockings* (Cockpit Theatre), *Peter Pan*, *Lost Boy* (Catford Broadway, for Action to the Word), *A Little Night Music* (Frinton Summer Theatre) *Paper Hearts* (Upstairs at the Gatehouse and Hamburg).



**Oliver Hamilton**

*St John Rivers / John Reed / Mr Mason*

Oliver graduated with an MA in acting from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama having previously graduated from Manchester University. Previous theatre includes *Maggie May* (Liverpool Everyman), *Crossroads* (Actors Church, Covent Garden), *A Christmas Carol* (Windsor Castle) and *Blue Into Gold* (Collfest, London). Theatre whilst training included *The Wonderful World of Dissocia*, *Parade*, *A Bomb on Broadway*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Beweeep Outcast*, *A Clockwork Orange* and *Kiss of the Spider Woman*.

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## Drama Activities

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### Scene Painting

Working in groups of three or four, students must choose one of the many settings from the story. One at a time they must come forward and 'paint' a picture with words and physical mime, until the audience has a vivid mental picture of the place.

For example:

**Student 1:** We are in an attic with a low, sloping roof (*marks the level of the roof with their hands and by ducking under a beam*)

**Student 2:** There is a single window (*outlines shape and size of window with their hands.*) The panes of glass are dirty and there are cobwebs.

**Student 3:** The floor is covered in dirty rugs, which were once beautiful and ornate but are now faded and thick with dust.

**Student 4:** In this corner there is a box, it is locked (*tries to open the box*) but the outside of it is covered in detailed painting, it is colourful, the only beautiful thing in the room.

**Student 1:** There is a loose floorboard here (*prises up floorboard*) underneath there is a key, (*goes to mimed box and opens it with the key*) inside the box is a dried up wedding bouquet (*smells it*).

Encourage students to be very precise with their miming; prompt them to show exactly how large the object they are describing is. Can they interact with it? Or show it to the audience in more detail?

As an extension to this, you could then choose to play a scene in this space, interacting with the space and the objects in it as they have been described.

### Bertha's voice, a word at a time

In this exercise students are asked to imagine the views and feelings of Bertha Mason, who remains voiceless throughout the narrative. Students will work in pairs to devise poetic dialogue made up in the moment, one word at a time. Students should begin the exercise by making eye contact with their partner and saying at the same time "I am Bertha Mason". They then begin one word at a time, speaking in role as Bertha. The dialogue may be in sentences or might be more loose and figurative. For example:

**Student 1:** This

**Student 2:** house,

**Student 1:** This

**Student 2:** attic

**Student 1:** makes

**Student 2:** me

**Student 1:** shudder.

**Student 2:** Spiralling

**Student 1:** into

**Student 2:** memories

**Student 1:** falling

**Student 2:** tumbling

**Student 1:** echoing

And so on... the poetic form allows for looseness and changes of direction. Encourage the use of simile and imagery and advise that things don't have to make sense! When both students feel their piece is complete they must once again simultaneously say, "I am Bertha Mason" to conclude.

As an extension to this, students could record their workshopping of poems and use them to write a monologue that Bertha could speak and perform. They may choose to keep the loose form of the poem or use it as a starting point for more formal dialogue.

### **The central character**

Working in groups, students are assigned a different character from the story, but not the character of Jane herself. They must all source significant quotations that link their character to Jane. This could include things that character has said to or about Jane, or quotations that imply a connection to the title character.

At this stage a student can also volunteer to be Jane Eyre. 'Jane' stands at the centre of the room and the groups take it in turns to step forward, read one of their quotations out loud and then decide where in the space they should be in relation to Jane. For example; Some one in the Mr Rochester group might deliver the line "*Jane! Will you hear reason? Because, if you won't, I'll try violence*" and they may position themselves very closely to Jane and slightly behind her. They should justify their decision. 'Jane' then has the opportunity to have her say and may speak in role about how she feels distanced from Rochester by this threat. A group discussion about these negotiations can lead to interesting comments on Jane's relationship to other significant characters at different points in the story, as well as a discussion of the quotations, their tone and meaning.

## Evaluating the Performance

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We hope that you are looking forward to your visit to see Blackeyed Theatre's production of *Jane Eyre*.

In order to maximise your students' understanding of the show we have created a number of questions about the different 'lenses' through which your students can watch the it. These lenses allow the students to focus in on the performance elements, and analyse them in the moment.

Some students may find it helpful to make notes during the show, others may prefer to concentrate fully on the production and make notes afterwards. You can also choose whether to allocate groups to look specifically through different 'lenses' during the show, or ask all students to cover all areas.

### **Performances**

How do the actors share the roles?  
How does the audience identify the characters?  
How would you describe the acting style/s?  
Is there a particular performer that stands out and why?  
How do the actors physicalise the characters?  
Are some characters more stylised than others, and why?  
Observe the choreography within the piece.  
How is the 'ensemble' used?  
How have the cast created the 'visual' images within the piece?

### **Lighting**

How does the lighting create atmosphere? How is lighting used to help tell the story? Can you identify lighting techniques used in the show?

### **Costume**

How have costumes been used to help indicate different characters? Where and when do the characters change costumes?

### **Story**

What happens in each scene?  
Is the story clear?  
Break the story down into different sections.  
What happens during the transitions?  
What themes are apparent?  
Identify moments of tension, suspense, conflict, how did these engage you as an audience member?

### **Visual Design/ Set**

Sketch the main scenic elements.  
How are the different places created?  
Why does the set look the way it does?  
What are the visual qualities of the set?  
What moves and what is static? How are the projections being used?

### **Music and Song**

Where is music used within the show and why has the composer chosen these moments?  
What effect does this have on your understanding of the story?  
How would you describe the style of music?  
Which actors play which instruments?  
What does live music add to the production?  
What are the logistical challenges to using live and recorded music in a theatre production?

## **Blackeyed Theatre**

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Blackeyed Theatre is one of the UK's leading touring theatre companies. Since 2004 we have been creating exciting opportunities for artists and audiences by producing theatre that's audacious, accessible and memorable. Blackeyed Theatre has two principal objectives through the work it produces; to provide audiences and artists with fresh, challenging work; and to make that work sustainable by reaching as wide and diverse an audience as possible. Over the past few years, Blackeyed Theatre has balanced these artistic and business objectives by creating new, exciting versions of established classics in unique ways and by identifying relevance with today's audiences.

### **Production Team**

Writer	Nick Lane
Composer	George Jennings
Director	Adrian McDougall
Assistant Director	Lucy Fennell
Movement Director	Sammy Fonfe
Set Designer	Victoria Spearing
Costume Designer	Naomi Gibbs
Lighting Designer	Alan Valentine

### **Workshops**

Practical workshops, facilitated by practitioners from Blackeyed Theatre, are available for schools. These cover the technique of multi role-playing and explore the themes within the piece.

To book or to enquire about a workshop, please contact [adrian@blackeyedtheatre.co.uk](mailto:adrian@blackeyedtheatre.co.uk)

### **Contact Us**

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# Appendix A

*Written in the style of a hymn or an imperial British song.*

## Speak Of The North!

Charlotte Bronte George Jennings

*Start with a single voice* *+ 1 voice*

*More fleshed out score to accompany. Possibly a copella?*

*Harmony & more voices*

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**Lead**

*♩ = 85*

Speak of the North! A lone lymoor Si-lent and dark and tract-less swells, The waves of

**Piano**

*♩ = 85*

Gm F/A Bb F/A Gm F Eb Eb/G F/A Gm F/A

5

**L**

some wild stream-let pour Hur-ried-ly through its fern-y dells. Pro-found-ly still the twi-light

**Pno.**

Bb F/A Gm F Eb Bb/D F/C Bb F/A

10

**L**

air, Life-less the land-scape; so wedeem Till like a phan-tom glid-ing near A stag bends

**Pno.**

Gm F<sup>6</sup> Gm F<sup>6</sup> Gm F/A Bb F/A Gm F

15

L

down\_ to drink the stream. And far a-way a mount-ain zone, A cold white waste\_ of snow-drift

Pno.

Chords: Eb Gm7 F/A Gm F/A Bb F/A Gm F Eb Gm7

20

L

lies, And one star, large and soft and lone, Si-lent-ly lights\_ the un-cloud-ed skies.

Pno.

*Softly leading into 'Memory'*

Chords: F/A Gm F/A Bb F/A Gm F6 Gm F6 Gm

Performance markings: *rall.*, *rit.*, *cont.*

# Appendix B

Jane Eyre

I'm glad you are. Mrs. Fairfax too. And foolish little Adele is fairly frothing at the mouth.

JANE smiles weakly.

Now, are you still set on seeking a new situation?

Rochester - what game is he playing?

JANE I fear I must, sir.

ROCHESTER Then I have some news that may please you.

JANE smiles again. She's regained herself somewhat.

Distance between them.

JANE When the order to march comes, I'll be ready. (defeat)

ROCHESTER I must give that order tonight.

JANE Oh. — what's the thought here?

A beat.

ROCHESTER Have you been happy at Thornfield?

JANE Of course. I have been well-treated there. Never persecuted; never shunned. It's been my home. I have lived a... a full and delightful life within its... walls.

A beat. JANE steels herself. This has got to be said.

Gradual  
LX  
change here.

Jane's only chance to say this! Change in tone here.

And I have talked - face to face - with one who has treated me as an equal. It strikes me with... with *terror* to feel I must be torn from you forever.

Why does she reveal this?

ROCHESTER What is this "must?" Why *must* you?

JANE Because you are to marry Miss Ingram! A noble and beautiful woman will be your bride, and I... I... won't... (see you again) Vulnerability

She turns away from him, distraught.

ROCHESTER My bride will never turn anyone away. It's not her nature.

He comes up close behind her.

Stay.

JANE I cannot.

ROCHESTER If it's your home...

Strength

*She turns on him, passions roused.*

*Pace / attack / outpouring*

**JANE** I tell you I cannot! How could I? Do you think I want to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton? A machine without feelings? Do you think because I am poor, plain and little, I have no soul, no heart? I have as much soul as you and full as much heart and if I had beauty and wealth, I would make it as hard for you to leave me as it is for me to leave you. But you are as good as married to a woman I know you don't love and I scorn you for it.

*ROCHESTER kisses her but JANE shoves him forcefully away. - why does Rochester choose this moment?*

No! I am no bird and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you.

*ROCHESTER catches her as she tries to leave.*

*Balance anger and heartbreak.*

Let me go! Marry Miss Ingram and let me go.

**ROCHESTER** I have not been speaking of Miss Ingram.

*He lets JANE go and stares at her.*

I spoke of you. I love you.

*Must see a new level of strength/empowerment here.*

**JANE** I will not be made a fool of.

**ROCHESTER** I would never do that. Certainly not here, of all places.

*He urges JANE to look around.*

I have visited this copse more times than I can count. It is the most important place in the world to me. Just there; where you're standing... is where I first saw you. And here - the spot where I fell.

*Music underscore here?*

*JANE looks at him.*

I fell.

*A beat.*

*Intention here to protect, preserve*

My heart is bonded to yours. It's you I wish to marry.

*|| vulnerability.*

**JANE** Stop.

**ROCHESTER** The carriage was for you; the new situation by my side.

**JANE** Stop this farce! *(Intention?)*