

## KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER:

### Jane Eyre (1847)



## Core Knowledge

### Prejudice in the Victorian era

- Many people were prejudiced against the poor because they believed the poor were lazy and deserving of poverty, without truly understanding how the poor suffered.
- There was also prejudice against women as society was **patriarchal**: men had most power.
- A poor young girl like Jane Eyre would have suffered a lot of prejudice.

### Oppression in the Victorian era

- Prejudice often led to oppression, so the poor and women were often oppressed.
- Children were sometimes the victims of oppression at schools, particularly at strictly religious institutions.
- Brontë presents Jane as a victim of oppression at Gateshead, including physical oppression from John Reed and emotional oppression from his mother, Mrs Reed. She is later oppressed at Lowood by characters such as Mr Brocklehurst. Jane shows a determination to break free from this oppression.

### Writers use settings to convey their ideas

A setting might be used by a writer:

- to establish a **tone** (e.g. the description of Lowood creates a bleak tone).
- as part of conveying a **didactic** message (e.g. oppressive settings to teach the reader about the rights people should have).
- to highlight something about a character (e.g. the isolated settings reflecting Jane's emotions and lack of relationships).
- to reflect the features of a genre (e.g. **gothic** features in the red-room).

### Christmas in the Victorian era

- Christmas was a special occasion in the Victorian era and it was during this time when it moved from being a purely religious day to a celebration with family involving food, drink, music and gifts.
- Christmas was typically enjoyed by children. They often received presents.

### Attitudes to religion in the Victorian era

- Many Victorians were Christian and believed that good people would go to Heaven after death. However, just like today, people had different interpretations of their religion.
  - Some people believed that God is kind and forgiving, which is what Jesus taught according to the Bible. Helen Burns has this attitude in the novel.
  - Other people believed that humans are born sinful. This is why Mr Brocklehurst believes children must be punished – so they avoid going to Hell.
  - People believed that sins such as lying and pride would lead to Hell.
- Jane's experience is that religion can be both a source of abuse and comfort, because of different interpretations of God.

### Attitudes to children in the Victorian era

- Children were often threatened with terrifying consequences to make them behave. This is reflected in Mr Brocklehurst's attitudes to raising children.
- Children were often given severe punishments for behaving in unchristian ways. These punishments were sometimes **humiliating** or physically painful.
- Children read stories and instructional books about how to behave in **obedient** ways; they were expected to be **meek** and **submissive** – particularly girls.

### Writers create sympathy for characters in different ways and for different reasons

- Writers often create sympathy for characters to help the reader or audience understand certain situations. For example, Shakespeare creates pathos for Caliban to show the suffering experienced by native people during colonisation. Brontë creates sympathy for Jane so we can understand the issues Jane faced – these were often similar to Brontë's own experiences.
- Writers often use language to create these effects, but they can also be achieved through methods such as juxtaposition.

## Plot

### At Gateshead:

- On a bitter day, Jane is curled up with a book when her cousin, John Reed, discovers her and hits her. She fights back and is sent to the red-room.
- Jane is locked in the red-room. She sits in turmoil until she hears and sees something odd. She begs to be let out. She faints.
- Jane wakes up in the nursery. Bessie and Mr Lloyd are there. Jane is miserable. Mr Lloyd talks to Jane about going to school.
- Jane is visited by Mr Brocklehurst, the headteacher at Lowood School. After his visit, Jane and Mrs Reed argue. Jane says she will never call her 'aunt' again.

### At Lowood School:

- Jane travels to Lowood School. She meets Miss Temple, the kind teacher, and Helen Burns, another pupil.
- Helen is thrashed for having dirty hands. Later, she talks with Jane and explains that it is better to forgive and be patient than to get angry and seek revenge.
- Mr Brocklehurst visits Lowood School. He calls Jane to the front of the classroom and calls her a liar in front of all the teachers and pupils. Helen smiles at Jane, bringing Jane hope.
- Afterwards, Jane and Helen visit Miss Temple. Miss Temple says she believes that Jane is not a liar. Jane listens to Miss Temple and Helen's fascinating conversations. Miss Temple hears from Mr Lloyd that Jane is not a liar, and tells the school.
- Jane enjoys the area around Lowood in the spring. Typhus breaks out at Lowood School. Lots of girls get sick. Many die. Helen Burns dies of tuberculosis.
- Eight years pass. Jane has become a teacher at Lowood School. Mr Brocklehurst had his power removed when his treatment at the school was discovered. Jane applies to be a governess for a family at Milcote.

## Key Vocabulary

Word	Meaning	Image
apothecary	A person who made and sold medicines.	
awe	A great amount of respect or admiration for someone or something.	
bleak	Describes an area that is cold and miserable. It is full of open spaces and exposed to the elements.	
comeuppance	When a villain receives some form of punishment for what they did.	
cowardly	Describes a person who behaves in a way that shows they are not brave.	
facetious	Describes someone who treats serious issues with deliberately inappropriate humour.	
foreshadowing	When a writer hints about something that happens later on in the story.	
formative	Describes something that has a big influence on a person's development.	

humiliate	To make someone feel stupid or ashamed.	
hypocrite	Someone who says one thing, but does the opposite at another time.	
imply	When a writer asks a reader to work out some information for themselves.	
isolated	Far away from other places, buildings or people.	
justified	Having (or done for) a good reason.	
juxtaposition	A literary technique where a writer places very different things or people close to each other.	
malicious	Describes someone who deliberately tries to hurt or upset people.	
meek	Describes someone who is gentle and quiet, and likely to do what other people say.	
narrative voice	The perspective the story is told from.	
obedient	Being willing to do what you are told by someone with authority.	
oppress	To treat a group of people in an unfair way, often by limiting their freedom.	
passionate	Describes someone who has very strong beliefs and emotions and isn't afraid to show them.	
prejudice	An unfair opinion or belief against a person or group, which is not based in truth or real experience.	
protagonist	The main character. They often have heroic characteristics.	
rebel	To take action against a government or ruler.	
stoic	Enduring pain or hardship without showing feelings or complaining.	
submissive	Describes someone who always obeys others without arguing.	
temperament	The usual attitude, mood or behaviour of a person.	
unjust	Describes something that is unfair or undeserved.	

\* Also revise and use key vocabulary from previous units!