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**Literary Analysis of The Book Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë Through a Sociocultural Approach**

Student: Dashlin Fariñas Sequeira

Thesis Tutor: Keren Muñoz Ramírez

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## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, who have been an essential source of support for me throughout these years and during this research. To my mom, who has always been there for me. She is an incredible source of strength and support, not only throughout this process but in my life. To my dad, who has always taught me the importance of studying, persevering, and moving forward with determination.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to explore how Victorian society influenced individuals and shaped their lives through established norms, roles, and expectations. This study centers on the novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, aiming to analyze how the protagonist's experiences reflect the societal pressures of the time. Using a sociological lens, the research examines key themes, symbols, and characters that reflect the lived experiences of individuals during the Victorian era.

## **Summary**

This dissertation analyzes *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë from a sociocultural perspective, focusing on how Victorian social structures such as class hierarchy, gender roles, religion, and family norms shape the characters. The study explores how the protagonist's personal growth reflects broader issues of social injustice and inequality in 19th-century England. The research highlights Brontë's critique of patriarchal oppression and class limitations, emphasizing how Jane's resilience and moral strength challenge the restrictive norms of her society. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that *Jane Eyre* remains a relevant work for understanding social inequality, social roles, and the position of women within society.

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# Chapter I

## Introductory Framework

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë is a classic Victorian novel that offers a profound exploration of 19th-century English society through the personal journey of its protagonist. Set in a time marked by rigid class structures and limited social mobility, the novel reflects how individuals, particularly women and the poor, were often confined by the expectations and norms imposed by a hierarchical social order. Rather than focusing solely on individual empowerment, Jane Eyre examines how broader social institutions such as class divisions, gender roles, religious authority, and family structures directly shape personal identity, moral values, and life opportunities.

Through Jane's experiences in places like Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, and Moor House, the novel exposes the stratified nature of Victorian society, where birth, wealth, and gender determine one's position and possibilities. The protagonist, as an orphaned, working-class woman, navigates these social boundaries with resilience and moral integrity, challenging societal expectations while remaining deeply affected by them.

Furthermore, this research describes the main and secondary characters, analyzing how the author uses each of them to critique various aspects of Victorian society. Many of these characters embody the social issues and constraints of the time. In addition, key events in the novel are examined to understand how they shape the protagonist's reality and development.

This project analyzes how these social systems operate within the narrative and how they influence the formation of character, particularly Jane's. It also explores how Jane Eyre reflects

the broader social tensions of the 19th century such as inequality, institutional control, and the evolving roles of women, making it not only a personal story of growth but a literary critique of a deeply divided society.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

The problem addressed through this investigation is social injustice; this occurs when a person or a group of people are treated cruelly, unfairly, or even discriminately. All these actions are caused by people who feel they have power, rights, or more privileges than others. This immoral treatment provokes the existence of unequal opportunities and rights among people in society. In Charlotte Brontë's novel, social injustice is massive since the story is set in the Victorian era. In that particular period, people from the lower class, commonly known as the working class, faced tremendous inequality. According to Ziady (2023), they had poor living conditions, meager pay at their jobs, and almost no chance to improve their lives. This not only explains the inequality they faced but also highlights the many hardships they endured, as they were regarded as unskilled laborers without any privileges.

Moreover, the unfair society not only affected men from the working class, but also women, regardless of their status. Following Xiaojie (2011), in the Victorian Age, women lived in a world where they were expected to follow men's orders without question in order to maintain the patriarchal order. Women in those years had a specific way of acting and were expected to demonstrate certain virtues to be considered "ladies." A woman had to be sympathetic, charming, and unselfish, among other "virtues," to be regarded as the ideal Victorian lady. In addition, men continuously oppressed women during the period: they could not choose whom to marry and had to live under their husband's shadow. Furthermore, women

were confined to domestic roles and required to embody feminine qualities to be seen as suitable for marriage.

The social injustice presented in *Jane Eyre* affects the protagonist in many ways. For instance, Jane's parents did not have much money, so when they died, she was left with nothing. As an orphan from a modest background, she continued to be seen as lower class, which shaped how society perceived her. Jane suffers greatly because of society's stereotypes during that period, and even more so because her character constantly resists societal expectations and beliefs.

Additionally, there is now a significant difference between modern society and that of the Victorian era. Today, more people are aware of their rights and individuality. There are many individuals like Jane, who fight against enduring norms, roles, and stereotypes. People have advocated for their rights in pursuit of a more peaceful and equal life; however, this remains an ongoing process of improvement. This research exposes the problems found in *Jane Eyre* and raises awareness of the injustices people endured during that era some of which, unfortunately, still persist today.

To conclude with this part of the study, the research question is How can a sociocultural approach to the characters in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* enrich our understanding of the narrative and the influence of Victorian values on their actions and identities?

## **1.2 Objectives of the Investigation**

The objectives of the investigation are presented to guide the reader through the research about what is expected in the literary analysis of the novel *Jane Eyre* with a feminist

approach and its importance because many of the problems introduced in the novel are still happening in these times. All these permit the reader to create a critical analysis of the project.

### **1.2.1 General Objective**

To analyze the novel Jane Eyre from a sociocultural approach, focusing on how the protagonist's experiences reflect the social structures, gender roles, and power dynamics that shaped women's lives in the Victorian era.

### **1.2.2 Specific Objectives**

**1.2.2.1** To examine the construction of gender roles in the Victorian era through the experiences and challenges faced by the protagonist in Jane Eyre.

**1.2.2.2** To analyze the social hierarchies, particularly the dynamics between servants and masters, and the upper and lower classes, to understand how these structures shape the protagonist's role in society

**1.2.2.3** To explore the role of religion as a social institution in Jane Eyre, and how it regulates moral conduct, gender expectations, and class behavior within Victorian society.

### **1.3 Justification of the Study**

Jane Eyre is a romantic novel centered on the Victorian era in England during 1837-1901. The book is about the life of Jane Eyre, a young and independent woman who has had a difficult life since she was a child. The book's setting is in England, where, at that time, many social changes were taking place. Jane's mother was a middle-class woman; when she married Jane's

dad, who was from the working class, her father disinherited her since she got married against the family's wishes, and that marriage lowered her from the class she was born into. At the novel's beginning, Jane's parents pass away because of typhus, leaving Jane as an orphan; after the parents' incident, she starts living with her mother's family. Jane does not have a good relationship with any of them since they never approve of their parent's marriage, and because of this, she is treated awfully by everyone.

So, since they did not like her and did not want Jane to live with them, they sent her away. That is why Jane was sent to an internship during her training period. She had a miserable life entire of oppression. After her internship, the protagonist found a job as a governess at Thornfield Hall. Jane has to overcome many challenges; her primary responsibility is Adele's education. She teaches her history, languages, and art, among other things. Jane, in Thornfield, meets Mr. Rochester; their relationship is between employee and employer. She is almost 18 years old, and he is 40, but after some time, they both develop feelings for each other. However, Mr Rochester hides secrets that Jane is about to discover.

Jane Eyre's life throughout the novel is so lonely and sad from the beginning. When she was just a kid, she lost her parents, and her life changed a lot because she found herself alone. After all, her mother's family did not like her. Not only that, she met many people along the way who mistreated her and tried to overshadow her in some way. Charlotte's Brontë presents a complicated character for some people because of her outspoken personality. However, the author also presents a young woman who had a miserable life, and even though she suffered a lot, she remains true to herself. No matter what, Jane endured all her experiences and continues creating the life that she deserves. In the novel, the protagonist has to overcome and solve all the problems or challenges that appear in her way. Jane's character is resilient, independent, and

strong, and she knows what she wants, and if this woman has to fight for her beliefs and rights, she does it. Also, the book shows the different versions of Jane's character; in the end, she is entirely different from the beginning.

Besides showing us the role of women in that era, this novel Jane Eyre is a characteristic character because she challenges society and its beliefs. The book also shows the society at that time, how the social classes were so divided, and how everyone should know their class and role. Moreover, the novel is also about child abuse and how orphans have to suffer in silence all the abuse and discrimination because, as orphans, they are considered low social class; at the time, Jane was in the charity school for orphan girls they treat her better than her family ever did however the treatment was not excellent they had to live full of oppression otherwise they would be punished. In the case of Jane, when she lives with her family, she is considered a servant because they are from a better social class, and it is unbelievable that they are from the middle class, not even the high class, and mistreat her for this reason; another factor of the book is religion, in particular, Christianity; in the book, Jane meets people that represent different versions of the region until she finds her version of Christianity. Further, the character of Jane Eyre is also about self-discovery because, from the beginning of the novel, she begins her journey of self-discovery. Moreover, the book has supernatural elements, such as the red room and others.

Women from all parts of the world have been changing their mindsets since the 19th century. All the events made women realize that they also matter. They can fight against all kinds of injustices and violations of their rights. Because of these brave women, the situation for the new generations of women has constantly been changing; women are not alone. Some men are fighting alongside women, something that before was impossible. Authors like Charlotte

Brontë help people realize what needed to change in the old society. However, feminism is still in progress; women are still fighting to eliminate the old beliefs that society still has about women.

Moreover, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is a significant novel because it not only reveals how society operated in the Victorian era but also exposes the mistreatment and limitations people faced. The novel offers valuable lessons for young people who wish to question societal expectations, empowers women to claim their independence, and encourages anyone longing for personal growth to pursue a path of self-discovery, much like Jane Eyre herself.

This project presents the problems that occurred during the Victorian era. Moreover, one of the main goals is to highlight how women and the poor have historically struggled in society and how. This novel is essential not only for the critique that the author provides of her own time but also because it offers valuable insight into the social conditions and cultural mindset of that era.

In addition, a sociocultural approach to Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* allows readers to explore and understand how people's behavior is shaped by society, cultural context, and the environment that surrounds them. According to Cherry (2024), "the sociocultural approach seeks to understand how these societal factors interact with individual ones to influence how people learn, develop, and grow." As Cherry highlights, these societal factors play a fundamental role in shaping the way an individual acts and behaves. In the context of *Jane Eyre*, this approach becomes essential to examine how Victorian values such as gender roles, class distinctions, religion, and moral codes directly affect the characters and influence their choices. By adopting this approach, the study emphasizes not only the personal journey of Jane, but also the broader

cultural structures that influenced individual lives during the Victorian era, highlighting how Brontë's narrative reflects and critiques the sociocultural forces of her time. Furthermore, the project also presents a detailed comparison of various scholarly resources related to Jane Eyre, along with selected quotes from the book to support and strengthen the analysis.

#### **1.4 Antecedents**

The novel Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë is set in the 19th century, during Queen Victoria's reign. In the Victorian era, many aspects of society were vastly different from today: social classes were more rigidly divided, the role of women was more restricted, inequality was evident, and the working class lived in poor conditions. Social dynamics and religion also played a dominant role in shaping people's lives. In this research, the antecedents analyzed are literary, sociocultural, and theoretical. Each one provides key support for the development of this study.

The social classes during the Victorian era, as previously mentioned, were deeply divided, with inequality being strongly marked. The lower or working class not only lived in distressing conditions but were also deprived of fundamental rights such as access to education, healthcare, and social inclusion. Furthermore, the social dynamics, traditions, and norms of the Victorian era played a significant role in how individuals were perceived and treated. Social class dictated not only one's lifestyle but also one's relationships, especially in terms of marriage. It was common and expected for individuals to marry within their own class, and it was considered inappropriate for a man of high status to marry a woman from a lower social background. Conforming to Sastra (2023) from Indonesia

This novel tells of Jane's relationship with Mr. Rochester, whom she eventually marries.

However, her love for Rochester has set Jane against social class traditions. Because it

was Jane whose position was equal to that of a maid, while Rochester was the lord of Thornfield. That is, they both come from two different worlds, which at that time violated the norms of society when they got married. (p. 92)

As explained, when Jane and Mr. Rochester develop feelings shortly after starting a relationship, it is considered unusual since they are from different social classes, and their relationship is against tradition or stereotypes; in those times, seeing a man considered important with someone from a lower class was very frowned upon. Besides, this also demonstrates that, during the Victorian era, wealthy individuals enjoyed significantly better living conditions and had access to more privileges than those from the lower classes. This is portrayed in Jane Eyre through the experiences of its characters.

Jane Eyre is a character who represents determination and moral strength. She does not hesitate to do what she believes is right, even when it seems inappropriate or controversial by societal standards. Throughout the novel, Jane's character evolves as a result of the many harsh situations she endures. One of the most significant moments of transformation occurs during her stay at Lowood, an institution marked by cruelty and oppression. As Gao (2013) from China explains:

During Jane Eyre's staying in the orphanage of Lowood, which is a benevolent institution in name, but a hell in fact, her understanding of esteem becomes deeper. She is aware of a fact that, even in the face of powerful and authoritative people like the chief inspector of this charity school, Brocklehurst, as long as her esteem and dignity hurt ruthlessly, she will never submit but rebel against it decidedly. (p. 929)

From the very beginning of the novel, the protagonist faces situations of oppression. Because Jane is neither wealthy nor part of the upper class, she is expected to follow the strict rules and traditions of Victorian society. However, Jane Eyre is ultimately a novel about self-discovery and personal integrity. Jane's character represents the strength to stand up for one's beliefs, even when society is against them. She challenges and questions everything that, according to social expectations, is considered improper behavior for a woman.

Jane Eyre is clearly a Victorian era criticism According to Doncel (p.97. 2005), from the UCR, she said Jane Eyre's character is reflected in the author; it can be said that it is like a copy of how she thought. besides, When the novel was published in 1847, it caused much scandal because of how the character criticized society. Further, in the paper, she explains that the author was aware that Jane Eyre's novel was going to be a scandal since she critiqued Victorian society and the circumstances. To illustrate this point, a passage from the novel in which Jane asserts:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. (Brontë 110-111)

In this passage, the protagonist voices what Charlotte Brontë herself could not openly express at the time. Through Jane, Brontë questions the prescribed role of women and argues that women are capable of much more than merely fulfilling domestic duties, as society expected during the Victorian era. Because of this critique, Jane Eyre was a provocative novel for its time,

and Jane's character faced heavy criticism, as the book revealed the harsh realities and restrictions imposed on women by Victorian society.

Moreover, in the novel, the theme of religion is controversial. Jane is a character who questions not only the role of religion in society but also how its meaning varies for different individuals. While some characters in *Jane Eyre* are more devout than others, many interpret religion in highly personal ways. Some even use it to justify oppression, claiming their actions are aligned with divine will. According to Taylor (2015) from the Umea University from Sweden

Firstly, looking through the lens of the theory of imprisonment and escape at religion has highlighted that religion is not only a matter of belief, but that it can also be used to enslave or liberate. Secondly, whether religion is used to enslave or liberate has to do with what the characters base their morality on. (p. 24)

As mentioned above, how the characters perceive religion depends largely on their personal morality something Jane consistently questions throughout the novel. Furthermore, their understanding of religion is also shaped by their life experiences and the circumstances they face. The novel suggests that one's perception of religion can even vary depending on gender. Throughout the story, the protagonist gradually discovers a personal relationship with religion that aligns with her moral values and brings her a sense of peace.

Additionally, in this research the approach used to sustain the investigation is the sociocultural approach. Dylan Montero from UIA (2025), in his thesis *Literary Analysis of the book "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" by Edgar Allan Poe through a Sociocultural Approach*, states that "the characters of the work develop a fundamental role due to their contribution in the

construction of the work. They are the ones who give the narrative its tone of mystery, and even through their actions or characteristics, it is possible to understand how its author, Edgar Allan Poe, challenges the usual way of thinking, achieving a unique method of reflection in his respective characters.” This perspective highlights how the author creates characters that are shaped by and respond to societal conditions. Similarly, in *Jane Eyre*, certain characters are employed not only as part of the narrative structure but also as vehicles to critique the values and constraints of Victorian society.

## **1.5 Scope**

This investigation focuses on England during the Victorian era (1837–1901) and aims to demonstrate the social problems presented in both the novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë and the historical context in which it was written. This scope seeks to gather and analyze information that supports the importance of conducting a literary analysis of *Jane Eyre* from a sociocultural perspective.

The main objective is to draw comparisons between the circumstances depicted in the novel such as social status, gender roles, social hierarchies, religion, oppression, inequality, and the lack of opportunities and similar issues in modern society.

- 1.5.1** To explore the author’s perspective on key subjects, particularly the role of women, through the lens of the main character, whose point of view reflects Brontë’s critique of her time.

- 1.5.2** To demonstrate how gender roles shaped society, especially affecting women's lives. Since this was a real issue during the Victorian era, it is essential to analyze how these dynamics are portrayed in the novel.
- 1.5.3** To examine social hierarchies and how societal traditions and expectations impacted individuals, as seen through Jane's personal experiences. These depictions offer a realistic reflection of the time, making this analysis vital to the research.
- 1.5.4** To illustrate the role of religion in the novel and how some characters justify their actions through religious beliefs even when their actions harm others. Since religion continues to influence society today, it is relevant to compare these fictional portrayals with current social behaviors.

## **Chapter II**

### **Theoretical Framework**

This chapter presents the theoretical foundations used to analyze the novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë from a sociological perspective. It outlines the key concepts and literary theories that support this study, including gender stratification, social class hierarchy, and the role of religion as a tool of social control within Victorian society.

Furthermore, it defines essential literary elements such as themes, symbols, and motifs, explaining their function and relevance in literary analysis. These tools serve to deepen the understanding of how Brontë communicates social critique through her narrative and characters.

The chapter also includes a brief overview of Charlotte Brontë's life, highlighting the biographical aspects that influenced the creation of *Jane Eyre*. Understanding the author's personal context provides insight into the novel's critical stance on gender roles, class divisions, and religious authority in 19th-century England.

#### **2.1 Literary Theories**

Literary theories are defined as knowledge that readers can apply to understand a literary work. Literary theories guide the readers for a better understanding or interpretation of a literary work; in simple words, literary theory is a tool that allows the reader to explain how literary texts are formed.

Moreover, literary theories can also be defined as critical theories; they are essential because they are principles that can be applied in many interpretive situations when conducting literary analysis.

Further, since literary theory is the study of the method for a literary analysis, many other theories are also critical because they help readers find the meaning of their reading.

For instance, literary criticism is the discipline in charge of evaluating the content of a literary work supported by evidence. Literary criticism might have a positive or negative prejudice about an author's literary work. Different types of literary theories analyze different areas of literary analysis.

### **2.1.1 Gender Stratification and the Construction of Gender Roles**

Following this, gender stratification refers to the inequalities in opportunities between men and women. It describes a social system in which men generally hold higher status and access to power, while women are consistently placed at a disadvantage in various spheres of life. According to Danaj (2016),

Gender stratification is a relatively new concept borne of the feminist perspective in social sciences, especially in sociology, around the 1970s. Gender stratification can be illustrated by the figures of unequal participation of women in the labor market, incomes, politics, and so on. (n.p)

In the Victorian context, these inequalities were even more pronounced, as women were expected to conform to strict gender roles that limited their autonomy and access to public life.

Furthermore, women in Victorian society faced numerous stereotypes and strict expectations imposed by the culture of the time. These roles not only confined them socially but also shaped their behavior, encouraging them to follow the rules without questioning them, as doing otherwise was seen as improper or unladylike.

For many women, marriage was seen as the ultimate goal and a measure of respectability. Married women were considered more honorable and respected than unmarried ones, who were often viewed with suspicion or pity. Once married, women were expected to be devoted mothers, manage the household, and fulfill their domestic duties with submission and obedience. Within marriage, women belonged to the private or domestic sphere, while men occupied the public domain of politics, work, and decision-making.

In contrast to these social expectations, Jane Eyre challenges the traditional roles imposed on women. From a young age, Jane defends her dignity and stands up against injustice, even when it comes from male figures or authority figures. Despite being an orphan and socially disadvantaged, she refuses to be silenced or submissive.

Throughout her life, Jane faces numerous forms of social and gender-based oppression. This begins with the harsh living conditions she endures while staying at Gateshead with her aunt, Mrs. Reed. Her aunt treats her with coldness and neglect, while allowing her cousins particularly John to bully and mistreat her without consequence. Instead of defending Jane, Mrs. Reed constantly punishes her and ultimately sends her away to Lowood Institution, further removing her from any sense of family or protection.

Despite her young age, Jane shows remarkable strength and resistance. In one defining moment, she confronts her aunt with unwavering honesty: "I am not deceitful: if I were, I should say I loved you; but I declare I do not love you: I dislike you the worst of anybody in the world."

(Brontë, Ch. 4). This bold statement demonstrates Jane's refusal to conform to the expected submissive and obedient behavior of a Victorian girl, even when facing a powerful authority figure.

Moreover, Jane's relationship with Mr. Rochester is complex and layered with both emotional depth and social tension. Their connection begins when Jane is hired as the governess for Adèle, Mr. Rochester's ward. Despite the significant age gap and the differences in their social status, the two gradually fall in love. However, Jane is aware of the power imbalance between them and refuses to let it define her worth or diminish her self-respect. Despite their social differences, once they fall in love, Jane demands to be treated as an equal. She firmly asserts this when she declares: "Do you think I am an automaton? a machine without feelings? Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong!" (Brontë, Ch. 23). With this statement, Jane rejects the notion that her lower social position makes her inferior. She insists on being seen as a woman with agency, emotions, and dignity demanding equality in a relationship that society would typically consider unbalanced.

Besides, Charlotte Brontë critiques various aspects of Victorian society through her female characters. Jane Eyre represents a strong and independent woman who is not willing to sacrifice her morals or values under any circumstances. She challenges the traditional expectations placed on women by asserting her autonomy and emotional integrity.

In contrast, Bertha Mason is portrayed as the "madwoman in the attic," Rochester's secret wife. She is hidden due to her mental instability and spends most of her life confined and oppressed both by patriarchal control and the rigid structures of Victorian society, which silenced women who did not conform.

Blanche Ingram, on the other hand, embodies the stereotypical ideal of the Victorian woman: she is beautiful, charming, wealthy, and behaves according to social expectations. However, her character lacks depth and individuality, showing how superficial conformity was often rewarded.

Lastly, Helen Burns represents the pious, submissive model of femininity. She is compassionate, faithful, and deeply religious. Through her character, Jane learns important lessons about endurance and forgiveness. Helen provides Jane with emotional support during a difficult stage of her life, although Jane ultimately chooses a path of resistance rather than passive acceptance.

### **2.1.2 Social Hierarchies and Class Inequality**

In Victorian England, society was extremely divided by class. There were three main social groups: the upper class, the middle class, and the working class. The upper class consisted of the royal family, titled aristocrats, and the wealthy elite. These individuals typically inherited wealth, titles, and social privileges from their families. They had access to high-quality education, political power, luxurious lifestyles, and strong social influence.

The middle class, although lacking the privileges of the upper class, still enjoyed relatively comfortable living conditions. Many had access to education and some degree of political influence. This group included professionals such as doctors, lawyers, business owners, and managers.

Lastly, the working class, also referred to as the commoners, faced the harshest conditions. They worked demanding and often dangerous jobs in fields such as agriculture, mining, and factory labor. Members of the working class had very limited access to healthcare, education, and decent living conditions, and they had little to no political or social power.

In addition, it was common for upper-class families and, to a lesser extent, some members of the middle class to employ servants. While the upper class often had large numbers of domestic workers, middle-class households usually had fewer, depending on their income. Servants were an essential part of wealthy households, responsible for tasks ranging from cooking and cleaning to attending personal needs.

In many cases, servants had little to no time off and were expected to be obedient, discreet, and fully dedicated to their duties. They were required to address their employers with formal titles such as “sir” or “master” and were only allowed to speak when spoken to. The masters held full authority and control, dictating the servants’ working hours, living conditions, and even aspects of their behavior and speech. This dynamic reinforced the class hierarchy and the clear divide between those who held power and those who served.

At Thornfield, Jane works as a governess a role that placed her in a socially ambiguous position. Governesses were responsible for the education and moral instruction of children in wealthy families. Although they were educated and held a respectable role, they were not considered part of the upper class. At the same time, they did not belong to the servant class either, which often made them socially isolated.

During her time at Thornfield, Jane frequently feels like an outsider. She is close enough to the upper-class world to observe it especially through her interactions with Mr. Rochester but not fully accepted within it. Her position highlights the complexities of class identity in Victorian society, where social mobility was limited and deeply intertwined with gender.

Furthermore, Jane’s social status becomes a central conflict in her relationship with Mr. Rochester. The class difference between them creates an imbalance of power that Jane is not willing to accept. Although she loves him, she refuses to enter a relationship where she would be

socially and economically inferior. She wants a love based on equality, not dependence. At one point in the novel Jane makes her position clear:

I will not be your English Céline Varens. I shall continue to act as Adele's governess. By that I shall earn my board and lodging, and thirty pounds a year besides. I'll furnish my own wardrobe out of that money, and you shall give me nothing but..  
(Brontë, Cap. 24)

This shows Jane's determination to preserve her independence and integrity despite her feelings. The idea of a wealthy and respectable man being in love with his employee also challenged the social norms of the time, making their relationship controversial both for Jane and for society.

### **2.1.3 Literary Elements that Reflect Sociological Themes**

Themes in literary works represent the central ideas that the author wants to explore and communicate to the reader. To express these themes, authors use literary elements such as characters, setting, and dialogue to enrich the main message. According to Masterclass (2021), a theme can be a moral or a message like "do not judge a book by its cover." In more complex stories, themes often serve as open-ended explorations of essential aspects of society or human nature.

In any novel, readers can identify multiple themes at once. These are generally categorized into two types: main themes and minor themes. The main theme refers to the central or dominant idea that drives the narrative such as love, justice, forgiveness, or religion. On the other hand, minor themes are less prominent and appear briefly to support or contrast the main themes, such as fate, violence, or hope.

In *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, both main and minor themes are presented throughout the novel. Below are some of the most significant main themes explored through Jane's character and the sociocultural context of the Victorian era.

## **2.2 Literary Approaches**

### **2.2.1 Sociocultural Approach to *Jane Eyre***

To begin with, this research uses the sociocultural approach as a framework for analysis. This perspective supports the study of key concepts such as gender, class, and religion, offering a clearer understanding of Victorian society the historical context in which *Jane Eyre* takes place. The sociocultural approach not only allows us to understand the setting and social conditions of the period, but also helps us examine and interpret the "Victorian Society" portrayed in the novel. Through this lens, we can explore the reasons behind specific people behaviors, relationships, and conflicts that reflect the values and structures of 19th-century England.

Moreover, 19th-century England was marked by significant social injustice, particularly affecting the lower classes. Society during the Victorian era was highly hierarchical, and there was a stark contrast between belonging to the upper class and the lower class. Social mobility was extremely limited, and people's opportunities and rights were largely determined by their position in the class structure. This rigid division shaped the way individuals were treated and perceived, reinforcing inequality and social exclusion.

During the Victorian era, those who lacked a voice in society were mainly the poor, women, and children. Children from impoverished families were often subjected to unsafe and unsanitary working conditions. Many of them worked in factories or mines from a very young age. Women, on the other hand, were expected to be calm, behave like proper ladies, and

dedicate their lives to serving their husbands and families by maintaining a pleasant and orderly household. According to Britannica (2025), gender ideology during this period reinforced the belief that men were physically stronger and thus suited for public life, including politics and work, while women were considered emotionally and physically weaker, destined to remain in the private sphere as caregivers and homemakers. This ideology justified the social and political exclusion of women and contributed to the rigid gender roles that dominated Victorian society.

Religion played a significant role in Victorian society. Christianity, in particular, was the dominant belief system and had a strong influence on everyday life, values, and social norms. Although there was a diversity of religious beliefs including Catholicism, Spiritualism, Judaism, and others Christianity, especially in its Anglican form, held the most power and presence. This religious diversity led to several challenges, including disagreements and tensions among different religious groups. Moreover, a portion of the population began to question traditional religious beliefs or distanced themselves from organized religion altogether, especially toward the end of the Victorian period.

Furthermore, *Jane Eyre*, written by Charlotte Brontë and published in 1847, is a novel that demonstrates the complexities of Victorian society and offers insight into its values, morality, and way of life. The story begins with Jane as a ten-year-old orphan who has already suffered the loss of her parents. From a young age, she must endure difficult experiences, starting with life under the care of her aunt's family who do not love her, constantly scold and isolate her, and even cause her trauma by locking her in the infamous Red Room.

Later, Jane is sent to the Lowood Institution, an orphan school with oppressive conditions. The school's supervisor, Mr. Brocklehurst, is harsh and enjoys punishing the girls. At Lowood, Jane meets her best friend, Helen Burns, who teaches her important life lessons but

tragically dies from consumption. These experiences shape Jane's resilience. Eventually, Jane becomes a teacher at the same institution.

She later finds work as a governess at Thornfield Hall, where she meets Edward Rochester, her employer. At Thornfield, the story intensifies as Jane begins to hear strange noises and encounters mysterious events. She and Mr. Rochester gradually fall in love. However, Jane later discovers that he cannot marry her because he is already married to Bertha Mason, a mentally ill woman he keeps hidden on the third floor. The strange noises Jane had heard came from Bertha.

Shocked by Rochester's secret, Jane decides to leave. She then meets St. John Rivers and his sisters, who take her in. St. John offers Jane a job and later proposes to her. However, Jane refuses, as she does not love him and will not marry someone out of duty. He insists she join him as a missionary in India, and although she considers it, she ultimately decides to return to Thornfield.

Upon her return, Jane discovers that the estate has been burned down by Bertha, who died in the fire. Mr. Rochester, who tried to save her, was left blind. Jane, now an independent woman with an inherited fortune from her uncle, reunites with Rochester, and they begin a life together based on love and equality.

Throughout the novel, Brontë explores the rigid class system, the limited roles and expectations placed on women, and the powerful influence of religion. Jane constantly resists the stereotypes imposed by Victorian society, making *Jane Eyre* not just a literary work, but also a sociocultural.

## **2.3 Importance of Literary Analysis**

A literary analysis is important not only because a reader can discover the symbols, motif, and themes that might be hidden in the story. By paying closer attention to these elements, readers can gain a deeper perspective and better understand what the author was trying to express. Moreover, literary analysis helps readers understand the historical and social context of the novel through its characters and the situations they experience.

## **2.4 Themes, Symbols, and Motifs**

### **2.4.1 Themes**

Themes in literary work describe the central idea the author wants to present in the novel, poem, or other literary work. When using themes, the author needs to apply literary elements, like characters, setting, and dialogue, to give more sense to the main idea. In a novel, the reader can find several themes at once.

#### **2.4.1.2 Religion as a Tool of Social Control**

Religion played a significant role in Victorian society, shaping not only individual beliefs but also broader social norms. Its influence varied depending on the individual, but in many cases, religion was used as a tool for social control. It reinforced the hierarchical structures of the time by emphasizing obedience to authority, moral discipline, and self-denial. For some, religious doctrine served to justify social oppression, particularly for women and the lower classes. It dictated proper behavior and shaped how individuals especially women were judged by society, reinforcing the idea that moral virtue was directly tied to submissiveness and conformity.

In the novel, several characters represent different interpretations of religion and reflect how it functioned within Victorian society. Mr. Brocklehurst, the director of Lowood Institution, embodies a harsh and hypocritical form of religious authority. Although he presents himself as a deeply religious man, his actions are rooted in cruelty, punishment, and social control. His mistreatment of the girls at Lowood imposing poverty and humiliation under the guise of Christian humility marks Jane's early life with injustice and trauma. Jane endures this treatment for nine years, which shapes her views on authority and morality. As he states, "You are aware that my plan in bringing up these girls is not to accustom them to luxury and indulgence, but to render them hardy, patient, self-denying" (Brontë, Ch. 7). This quote reveals how he justifies deprivation as a moral and religious duty. Mr. Brocklehurst represents a form of religion that is used not for compassion or spiritual growth, but as a tool of oppression, particularly toward poor and vulnerable individuals.

On the other hand, Helen Burns represents a completely different interpretation of religion. She is Jane's close friend at Lowood Institution, and although both experience the same harsh conditions and punishments, Helen responds to suffering with patience, faith, and forgiveness. Her version of Christianity is rooted in compassion, spiritual resilience, and a belief in divine justice. Unlike Mr. Brocklehurst's oppressive approach, Helen's faith offers comfort rather than control. She encourages Jane to endure hardship without resentment and to believe in a higher moral order. Helen expresses this when she tells Jane: "It is not violence that best overcomes hate nor vengeance that most certainly heals injury." (Brontë, Ch. 8). This quote reflects Helen's deep commitment to forgiveness and inner peace. For her, religion is not a tool of dominance, but a source of strength and hope in the face of injustice.

In the case of St. John Rivers, he is a clergyman in Morton and Jane's cousin. He helps her after she leaves Thornfield, offering her shelter and later a teaching job. St. John is portrayed as cold, deeply religious, ambitious, and emotionally repressed. His interpretation of religion is rooted in sacrifice, discipline, and the denial of personal desires. He is entirely devoted to his religious duties and missionary goals, believing that his life must serve what he perceives as God's will regardless of the emotional cost.

St. John's form of Christianity becomes another tool of control when he tries to pressure Jane into marrying him, not out of love, but as part of his religious mission. He tells her: "God and nature intended you for a missionary's wife. It is not personal, but religious conviction that I urge." (Brontë, Ch. 34). This quote illustrates how his faith prioritizes duty over emotion, and how he attempts to impose that worldview on Jane. His character embodies a rigid and authoritarian version of religion, one that sacrifices human connection in pursuit of spiritual ambition.

All of these experiences lead Jane to form her own understanding of religion one based on personal conviction rather than submission. She learns valuable lessons from Helen Burns, particularly about forgiveness and spiritual resilience. In contrast, her interactions with St. John Rivers make her reject a version of religion that demands self-sacrifice without love or emotional fulfillment. Jane refuses to blindly follow any doctrine that contradicts her morals or values. As she states, "I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad as I am now" (Brontë, Ch. 27). Unlike the oppressive and punishing beliefs promoted by figures like Mr. Brocklehurst or the emotionally detached path proposed by St. John, Jane chooses a spiritual path that aligns with her beliefs,

integrity, and emotional needs. Her faith becomes a quiet form of resistance and self-empowerment.

#### **2.4.1.2 Independence and Autonomy**

From the beginning of the novel, Jane constantly seeks independence escaping abuse, societal limitations, and the traditional role expected of Victorian women. She desires emotional and financial freedom. This is powerfully expressed when she states: “I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will.” (Brontë, Ch. 23)

This quote encapsulates her rejection of control and oppression, particularly those imposed by patriarchal and classist systems. Jane’s journey challenges the submissive role imposed on women, reflecting the desire for autonomy that many Victorian women were denied.

#### **2.4.1.3 Love vs. Autonomy**

One of Jane’s most profound internal conflicts lies in choosing between love and her independence. Although she deeply loves Mr. Rochester, she refuses to stay with him when doing so would compromise her values and autonomy. She declares: “I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself.” (Brontë, Ch. 27)

This moment highlights Jane’s strength and moral clarity. She refuses to define herself through romantic attachment alone, challenging Victorian ideals that expected women to sacrifice personal identity for love or marriage.

#### **2.4.1.4 Moral Integrity**

Jane consistently remains true to her values, even when doing so brings suffering. Her strong moral compass guides her actions, setting her apart from the hypocritical figures in the novel who represent the corrupted morality of the time such as Mr. Brocklehurst. Unlike the Victorian ideal of passive obedience, Jane chooses dignity and moral strength. As she asserts: “Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this...” (Brontë, Ch. 27)

This reveals her belief that true integrity is tested in moments of hardship, reinforcing her resistance to societal norms that demanded compliance without reflection.

#### **2.4.1.5 Religion and Spirituality**

Religion is explored in various forms through different characters. Mr. Brocklehurst represents rigid, authoritarian Christianity; Helen Burns, a peaceful and forgiving faith; and St. John, a form of duty-driven religiosity. Jane, however, gradually develops her own spiritual identity one that aligns with her sense of justice and self-respect. She chooses a personal spirituality that brings her inner peace without demanding self-sacrifice. “I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man. I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad as I am now.” (Brontë, Ch. 27) Her spirituality becomes a source of strength, not repression marking a contrast to the oppressive forms of religion presented earlier in the novel.

Additionally, the novel presents various themes that reflect the social and gender tensions of the nineteenth century. These include the pursuit of independence and autonomy, represented by Jane’s constant search for freedom, agency, and self-respect; the concern for social justice and class, expressed through a critique of rigid social hierarchies and the injustices rooted in class and gender; the tension between love and autonomy, which illustrates the inner conflict between

emotional fulfillment and personal integrity; the value of moral integrity, seen in Jane's unwavering commitment to her principles even in the face of adversity; and finally, the theme of religion and spirituality, highlighted through contrasting forms of religious belief and Jane's search for spiritual balance.

## **2.4.2 Symbols**

Symbols are a literary device in which the author uses an object, image, or element to represent a meaning beyond its literal definition. Symbols are powerful because they communicate complex ideas in a subtle and emotional way. It is essential to distinguish symbols from metaphors: while a metaphor compares two unrelated things to highlight a similarity, a symbol assigns a deeper meaning to a concrete object, allowing it to represent abstract concepts.

In *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, symbolism plays a key role in reinforcing both character development and social critique. Several significant symbols appear throughout the novel, contributing to the emotional depth and thematic resonance of the story.

### **2.4.2.1 Fire and Ice**

These two elements are used to represent opposing emotional and social forces. Fire symbolizes passion, desire, anger, transformation, and emotional intensity. It appears most vividly when Bertha Mason sets fire to Thornfield Hall, an act that represents the destructive power of suppressed emotions and hidden truths. On the other hand, ice represents repression, emotional coldness, control, and societal constraint. This is embodied in the character of St. John Rivers, whose lack of passion and rigid devotion to duty contrasts starkly with Jane's emotional integrity.

Together, fire and ice mirror Jane's internal struggle between passion and reason, autonomy and conformity. Their presence throughout the novel underscores the tension between freedom and societal expectations.

#### **2.4.2.2 The Red Room**

One of the most iconic symbols in the novel, the Red Room is where young Jane is imprisoned as punishment. This space becomes a representation of trauma, social exclusion, and disciplinary power. The room is dark, cold, and associated with death reinforcing Jane's feelings of abandonment and injustice.

Symbolically, the Red Room reflects the oppressive nature of Victorian society, especially towards women and the poor. It serves as a metaphor for the way society punishes and isolates those who do not conform to expected roles. Jane's experience in the room marks the beginning of her resistance against unjust authority and her struggle for autonomy.

#### **2.4.2.3 The Chestnut Tree**

The chestnut tree is a powerful symbol of Jane and Mr. Rochester's relationship. It is under this tree that Rochester proposes to Jane, marking the moment of emotional union and commitment. Shortly after, however, the tree is struck by lightning and split in two, foreshadowing their impending separation and the obstacles they will face.

The dramatic splitting of the tree reflects the rupture caused by social expectations, hidden truths, and the moral dilemmas that Jane must confront. Despite the split, the roots remain symbolizing that their love, though challenged, is resilient. This image suggests that true love can endure adversity if it is based on mutual respect and equality.

In *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, both main and minor themes are intricately presented throughout the novel. Some of the most significant main themes are explored through Jane's personal development and her resistance to the restrictive sociocultural norms of the Victorian era. Likewise, symbols such as fire, ice, the Red Room, and the chestnut tree allow Brontë to express deeper messages related to emotion, repression, social class, gender roles, and institutional control. Together, these thematic and symbolic elements enrich the narrative, engaging the reader both emotionally and intellectually, while encouraging critical reflection on the limitations and injustices imposed by Victorian society.

### **2.4.3 Motifs**

Motifs can be repeated ideas, sounds, and objects with symbolic meaning in the literary work. The word "Motif" comes from French and means "Pattern," so an idea constantly repeated in the story can be a motif.

#### **2.4.3.1 Social Justice and Class**

*Jane Eyre* is a direct critique of the social injustices of the Victorian era. The novel presents a society governed by rigid hierarchies, where one's treatment depends entirely on class and status. Jane, born poor and orphaned, is treated as inferior despite her intelligence and strength of character. This inequality is illustrated in a scene from her childhood: "You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent, mama says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen's children like us." (Brontë, Ch. 1)

This quote reflects how people of lower social status were dehumanized and excluded. Brontë uses Jane's experiences to expose how social class confined individuals and dictated their worth.

## **2.5 Author's Biography**

### **2.5.1 Biography Definition**

A biography is a summary of a natural person's life. It can be about someone who is still alive or someone who has passed away. A Biography must include essential facts such as place and date of birth, family, education, occupation, experiences, achievements, and essential details about the person's life. Biographies are critical because readers can learn about a person's past and connect even more with the writer, poet, singer, actor, and hero

### **2.5.2 Charlotte Brontë Biography**

Charlotte Brontë was an English novelist. She was born on 21st April 1816 in Thornton, Yorkshire, England. Her father was Revd Patrick Brontë, and her mother was Maria née Branwell. Charlotte was the third of six children: Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Emily, Anne, and her brother Branwell. In 1821, her mother, Maria, died from cancer; three years later, in 1824, Charlotte and her three sisters, Maria, Elizabeth, and Emily, attended Clergy Daughters' School. That school had terrible conditions, and unfortunately, Charlotte's older sisters contracted tuberculosis, from which they later died. After her sisters' death, Charlotte and Emily did not return to the Clergy Daughters' School.

Afterward one year after her sister's death, Charlotte and her family returned home. Charlotte, Emily, and her brother Branwell were educated at home for five years or more; they learned to paint, write, and invent tales. In 1831, Charlotte studied at Miss Wooler's school at Roe Head. She studied there for one year, and then, in 1832, she went back home to teach her siblings, but three years later, she returned to Roe Head as a teacher to improve her family's wealth and position.

In 1842, Charlotte, her sister Emily, and their father went to the Héger Pensionnat in Brussels, Belgium. They aimed to improve their qualifications to open a school together in England. In Brussels, they learned French and a little bit of German. The administrators of the Pensionnat Heger were Madame Heger and her husband Constantin Heger; he was 32 years old, and her wife was four years older than him.

Further, during their time there, Charlotte and Emily, to cover their expenses, Charlotte taught English classes and Emily piano classes. Both sisters took French and literature classes, and their professor was Constantin Heger. For Charlotte, the classes she had with Mister Heger were her favorites; he encouraged Charlotte to write; she liked the classes so much that she decided to stay one year more to continue her classes with Constantin Heger, and her sister, Emily, went back to England the second year. Despite this, they could not open the school together. Charlotte was so fascinated with her tutor that she fell in love with him.

During her second year at Héger Pensionnat, Charlotte did not see Mister Heger frequently because her wife was jealous of her spending too much time with her husband. Shortly after, she returned to England because she was feeling depressed and alone. When she was back in England in 1844, she started writing many letters to Constantin Heger, letters

that he at some point stopped replying to. All these experiences in Belgium helped Charlotte develop her novels later in the years since her love for Mister Heger inspired some of her famous novels.

Further, In 1848, Charlotte's little brother, Branwell Brontë, died from tuberculosis aggravated by alcoholism at the age of 31. In December of the same year, Emily Bronte died from tuberculosis at the age of 30. One year later, in 1849, Anne Bronte died at 29 for the same reason as her siblings.

Charlotte Brontë wrote many literary works such as novels and poems. Brontë's common themes were gender roles, challenged society, and self-discovery, among other themes. She had Victorian characteristics when writing poems that some writers at that time also had; she had a long narrative poem and a dramatic monologue. After her success with Jane Eyre, she stopped writing poems and focused on novels.

Furthermore, Charlotte's first novel was "The Professor." She wrote it during her time in Belgium, but it was not until 1857 that the novel was finally published after many tries with publishing houses. This novel was written even before Jane Eyre. The second novel that Brontë wrote was Jane Eyre in 1847. Jane Eyre is a romantic and Gothic novel narrated in first person; the novel events are told in the past from the protagonist's point of view. The novel Jane Eyre is one of the author's most famous novels. Moreover, Shirley was the second published novel of Charlotte Brontë in 1849. Shirley is a romantic novel, and unlike Jane Eyre, this novel is narrated by an omniscient third-person narrator. This novel has two main characters, Shirley Keeldar and Caroline Helstone.

Finally, in 1853, Charlotte published her last novel, Villette. This is a Gothic Romantic novel, and it is narrated in first person. Villette is about Lucy Snowe, the

protagonist who has to move to another country. This novel is inspired by the time that Charlotte moved to Brussels. Additionally, Charlotte Brontë rejected three marriage proposals until 1854, when she married Arthur Bell Nicholls on 29th June. They were married for nine months, and Charlotte was pregnant, but unfortunately, she died because of hyperemesis gravidarum, a pregnancy complication in which the body rejects the pregnancy. Charlotte Brontë died on 31st March, 1855.

### **2.5.3 Charlotte Brontë and Jane Eyre**

When Charlotte Brontë published her first novel, *Jane Eyre*, in 1847, she and her sisters, Emily and Anne Brontë, agreed to keep their names anonymous. Instead, they used male pseudonyms: Charlotte was Currer Bell, Emily was Ellis Bell, and Anne was Acton Bell. The sister even published a collection of poems called "Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell" in 1846, with 21 poems by Emily, 21 by Anne, and 19 by Charlotte. Following the book "The Brontës and the Idea of the Human," Brontë's writing exposes human experiences through imagination. (2019)

In the Victorian era, women were underprivileged in almost all areas. They have any inequalities in marriage and society. There were vital distinctions between men's and women's rights during this era; They had to stay home and follow their husbands' orders. Typical jobs for women during the Victorian period were in factories, domestic service for wealthier households, or in family businesses. So, a female writer was considered odd because of the belief at that time that women were considered intellectually inferior to men. As specified by DeLong (2018), "Despite the limitations, Victorian women managed to infiltrate the literary marketplace. They often published anonymously to protect their reputations and garner favorable reception for their works, which were subject to the sexism of reviewers and readers."

Further, because of that, the Brontë sisters agreed to keep their names under a pseudonym. Besides, the sisters wanted to see how they sold the books and how the people reacted to their writing, and they did not want their novels to be judged because they were women. Following Cambridge University Press (2015) Women who chose the literary life often faced social censure, received substandard pay, and were subject to a critical double standard. Because of the separate spheres of ideology, it was difficult for women to gain access to masculine social and professional networks.

Additionally, no one knew that Charlotte was writing a novel, nor did her sisters and father. There are no records that she was writing, and there are not even drafts of her time writing. Brontë decided to tell nobody; she told her father about the novel once the novel was published. The only certain thing is that during the period that Charlotte Brontë was writing her bestseller "Jane Eyre," her father was about to go blind; after his operation, she nursed him, and during that time, in 1846, she started writing the novel.

Moreover, the novel Jane Eyre has many paralleled moments with Charlotte Brontë's life events. The author saw herself as the protagonist of the novel. Many references in Jane Eyre happened in Charlotte's life. For instance, when Charlotte and her sister attended Clergy Daughters' School, a school in which, sadly, her two elder sisters died, she would later use her experience there as inspiration for Lowood, the rough boarding school attended by Jane Eyre. Another example is when Jane's family punishes her by locking her in the red room; the protagonist associates the red room with loneliness and she always felt scared in there. The author refers to when she had depression in 1838 she felt trapped and distressed.

Furthermore, Charlotte writes about her personal experiences and creates characters

about the people she met in the past. For example, Helen Burns, who was Jane's friend, the person that inspired this character was her mother, Maria Brontë, who died when Charlotte was only five years old. Another important character, not only for Jane but also for Charlotte, was Mr. Rochester. The person who encouraged her to create this character was Constantin Heger, her French literature tutor, with whom she was madly in love and who wrote many letters, but he was married and older than her.

In addition, in her novel, Jane Eyre accomplished many things that Charlotte probably could not. Jane had the opportunity to rescue relationships with lost family members. Jane also married Mr. Rochester, and they ended up in love and with one child. Scenarios that were never part of Charlotte's actual life. In the book "La Historia Secreta de Jane Eyre" by John Pfordresher (2018) Brontë's novel uses what she recalls in a very personal way. Her memory transforms what we know to actually have happened into scenes of intense feeling and high drama alternating with equally touching moments of relief, tranquility, and affection. Everything is felt and rendered in terms of the emotions not only of the moment recalled but also of the moment when in remembering they are transcribed into narrative.

Charlotte Brontë did not want her real name to be in the novel because she did not want to be judged for being a woman, but also because in the novel Jane Eyre, she wrote about her personal experiences and saw herself reflected in the character. So people would talk about her being a woman but also about her resemblance with the protagonist of her novel. According with Corgal (2023) she had been careful to choose a name that signaled neither male nor female. She wanted the work to speak for itself, and like her protagonist Jane Eyre, was willing to stand up for herself at a time when women were expected to be weak and submissive. Jane Eyre is a novel that breaks rules and stereotypes in literature and society at the time. It also changes the

way women are characterized in literature. Jane Eyre is a protagonist who is not afraid to stand by herself and challenge society and its beliefs that affect so many women in the era. She is also a character who inspires people with her bravery and determination. Charlotte Brontë, after her sisters' death, revealed her identity and her sisters.

#### **2.5.4 Author's Context and Relationship to Social Issues**

Charlotte Brontë was an English novelist. She was born on April 21st, 1816, in Thornton, Yorkshire, England. Her father was Reverend Patrick Brontë, and her mother was Maria Branwell. Charlotte was the third of six children: Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Emily, Anne, and her brother Branwell. In 1821, her mother died from cancer; three years later, in 1824, Charlotte and her three sisters Maria, Elizabeth, and Emily attended the Clergy Daughters' School. The school had terrible conditions, and unfortunately, Charlotte's older sisters contracted tuberculosis, from which they later died. After their deaths, Charlotte and Emily did not return to the school.

One year later, Charlotte and her family returned home. Charlotte, Emily, and Branwell were educated at home for more than five years. They learned to paint, write, and invent stories. In 1831, Charlotte studied at Miss Wooler's school at Roe Head. She studied there for one year and then returned home in 1832 to teach her younger siblings. Three years later, she returned to Roe Head as a teacher to help improve her family's financial situation and social position.

In 1842, Charlotte, her sister Emily, and their father traveled to the Héger Pensionnat in Brussels, Belgium. Their goal was to improve their qualifications and eventually open a school together in England. In Brussels, they studied French and some German. The school administrators were Madame Heger and her husband, Constantin Heger. He was 32 years old, and his wife was four years older.

To cover their expenses, Charlotte taught English classes, and Emily taught piano. Both sisters also took French and literature classes with Constantin Heger, whom Charlotte especially admired. She enjoyed his classes so much that she decided to stay one more year, while Emily returned to England. Despite their plans, they never opened the school. During her second year in Brussels, Charlotte fell in love with Mr. Heger, but she saw him less frequently because Madame Heger was jealous of the attention he gave her. Eventually, Charlotte returned to England, feeling depressed and isolated. Back home, she wrote several letters to Mr. Heger, which he eventually stopped answering. These emotional experiences in Brussels would later influence many of her novels.

In 1848, Charlotte's younger brother Branwell died from tuberculosis, worsened by alcoholism, at the age of 31. That same year, Emily died of tuberculosis at age 30, followed by Anne in 1849 at age 29, from the same illness. Charlotte Brontë wrote many literary works, including novels and poems. Her recurring themes included gender roles, criticism of social conventions, and self-discovery. As a poet, she reflected some Victorian literary traits such as long narrative poems and dramatic monologues, which were common among writers of the period. However, after the success of *Jane Eyre*, she focused on novel writing.

Her first novel, *The Professor*, was written during her time in Belgium, although it was not published until 1857, after several rejections. This novel was written before *Jane Eyre*, which was her second novel, published in 1847. *Jane Eyre* is a romantic and Gothic novel, narrated in the first person, and it remains one of her most famous works.

In 1849, she published her second released novel, *Shirley*, a romantic story narrated by an omniscient third-person narrator. Unlike *Jane Eyre*, *Shirley* features two main characters: Shirley Keeldar and Caroline Helstone. Her final novel, *Villette*, was published in 1853. It is a Gothic

romantic novel narrated in the first person, centered on Lucy Snowe, a protagonist who moves to another country reflecting Charlotte's own experience in Brussels.

Additionally, Charlotte Brontë rejected three marriage proposals before marrying Arthur Bell Nicholls on June 29, 1854. She became pregnant, but tragically died nine months later, on March 31, 1855, from hyperemesis gravidarum, a pregnancy complication in which the body rejects the pregnancy.

When Charlotte Brontë published her first novel, *Jane Eyre*, in 1847, she and her sisters, Emily and Anne Brontë, agreed to keep their names anonymous. Instead, they used male pseudonyms: Charlotte was Currer Bell, Emily was Ellis Bell, and Anne was Acton Bell. The sisters even published a collection of poems titled *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell* in 1846, which included 21 poems by Emily, 21 by Anne, and 19 by Charlotte. According to the book *The Brontës and the Idea of the Human* (2019), Brontë's writing reveals human experience through the power of imagination.

In the Victorian era, women were underprivileged in nearly all areas of life. They faced severe inequalities in both marriage and society. Clear distinctions existed between the rights of men and women; women were expected to stay at home and obey their husbands. Common occupations for women during this time included factory work, domestic service for wealthier households, or helping in family businesses. Female writers were considered oddities, as women were thought to be intellectually inferior to men. As Peterson (2015) explains: "Throughout the century, it was challenging for women to find success in a male-dominated literary marketplace. Women who chose the literary life often faced social censure, received substandard pay, and fell subject to a critical double standards."

This is why the Brontë sisters agreed to publish under pseudonyms. They wanted to observe how the public would react to their writing without gender bias, and they feared their novels would be judged unfairly if readers knew the authors were women. According to Peterson (2015)

Women who chose the literary life often faced social censure, received substandard pay, and were subject to a critical double standard. Because of the separate spheres ideology, it was difficult for women to gain access to masculine social and professional networks.

Additionally, no one knew that Charlotte was writing a novel not even her sisters or father. There are no surviving drafts or records from that period. She kept her writing entirely secret and only revealed *Jane Eyre* to her father once it had been published. During the time she wrote the novel in 1846, her father was going blind, and she was caring for him after his operation an emotional period that undoubtedly shaped her writing process.

Moreover, *Jane Eyre* contains many parallels to Brontë's own life. She saw herself in the character of Jane. For example, when Charlotte and her sisters attended the Clergy Daughters' School where her two older sisters tragically died she later used this experience as inspiration for the harsh conditions at Lowood School in the novel. Another example is the "red room" scene, where Jane is locked away and overwhelmed by fear and loneliness. Brontë later described her own experience with depression in 1838 in similar emotional terms feeling trapped and distressed.

Charlotte also based characters in the novel on people from her real life. Helen Burns, Jane's dear friend, was inspired by Charlotte's mother, Maria Brontë, who died when Charlotte was only five years old. Mr. Rochester, a pivotal figure for Jane, was inspired by Constantin Heger, Charlotte's French literature tutor in Brussels, whom she deeply admired and to whom she wrote many heartfelt letters. Heger, however, was older and married mirroring the complexity of Rochester's character.

In many ways, *Jane Eyre* allowed Brontë to give her protagonist the life she herself could not live. Jane reconnects with lost family, marries the man she loves, and starts a new life with him and their child. These were scenarios that Charlotte never experienced. As John Pfordresher writes in *The Secret History of Jane Eyre* (2018):

Nor do many know that she wrote it during a devastating and anxious period in her life. Thwarted in her passionate, secret, and forbidden love for a married man, she found herself living in a home suddenly imperiled by the fact that her father, a minister, the sole support of the family, was on the brink of blindness. (n.p)

Charlotte Brontë not only concealed her identity to avoid gender prejudice, but also because *Jane Eyre* was deeply personal. She feared that people would talk not just about the fact that a woman had written the novel, but also about how much of herself she had poured into it. According to Colgal (2023)

She had been careful to choose a name that signaled neither male nor female. She wanted the work to speak for itself, and like her protagonist Jane Eyre, was willing to stand up for herself at a time when women were expected to be weak and submissive. *Jane Eyre* is a novel that breaks both literary and societal conventions. It changed the way

women were portrayed in fiction and introduced a heroine who stands alone, challenges injustice, and remains loyal to her principles. Charlotte Brontë created a character who continues to inspire readers with her strength and resilience. After the deaths of her sisters, Charlotte finally revealed not only her identity but also that of her sisters cementing their legacy in literary history.

It is no secret that Charlotte Brontë used her novels to criticize society, stereotypes, gender roles, religion, and many other issues present in her time. Her first published novel, *Jane Eyre*, strongly challenged the values and contradictions of the Victorian era. The novel addresses several key problems, such as class structure, women's roles, religious beliefs, the institution of marriage, and prevailing moral standards. Brontë created a protagonist who attempts to find her own path in a patriarchal society a woman who acts according to her own beliefs, not according to what society dictated. *Jane Eyre* stands in clear contrast to the traditional Victorian ideal of womanhood. In simple terms, Charlotte Brontë created a character who challenges societal expectations in every possible way.

Moreover, when *Jane Eyre* was published, it had a profound impact on Victorian readers. The feminist movement was just beginning, and it was uncommon for a novel to expose social problems so directly. Brontë's writing had the power to inspire women and disturb male readers, as it highlighted gender inequality and criticized the unjust treatment of women. *Jane Eyre*'s voice gave many women a new perspective on their roles, and Brontë's work opened the door for future female writers and thinkers. The novel continues to empower women across generations. According to Wilhelm (2005)

Charlotte Brontë created a literary work that shook traditional conventions in Victorian England by showcasing the feminist view so clearly. It is a work that refutes

denial and ignorance of women's sexual identity and passion. Jane Eyre shows that women are capable of being passionate and of experiencing fulfillment in a marriage where the partners are equals.(p. 3)

Charlotte Brontë was an extraordinary writer. Her life was marked by pain and adversity, but she never allowed her circumstances to defeat her. Instead, she transformed her struggles into powerful literature that served as a mirror for society. Through her stories and characters, she inspired countless women to stand up for their rights. Brontë made Jane Eyre not only a heroine in fiction but also a symbol of resistance in a time when women had few opportunities to raise their voices. Her work received criticism in its time for being bold but it continues to be celebrated today for precisely that reason.

## **2.6 Plot**

### **2.6.1 Plot definition**

The plot of the story is an order or sequence of events that help the author shape or build the story. The plot is the element that guides the reader throughout the story. Moreover, the plot also needs characters that play an essential part when it reaches its most incredible intensity. The function of the plot and its elements shape the story as a whole.

### **2.6.2 Jane Eyre's Plot**

Jane Eyre begins with the little version of Jane; she is only ten years old and has already lost her parents, becoming an orphan. Since her early childhood, the protagonist has had to overcome many difficult situations for a 10-year-old kid. The sequence of events in

Jane Eyre starts when she goes to live with her family, a family that does not love her; they scold her, make her feel alone, mistreat her, and even generate trauma by locking her in the red room.

Afterward, her aunt sent her to the orphan institute, the Lowood Institution; again, she experienced complex events. In the novel, the Lowood Institution is oppressive and has poor conditions. The supervisor of Lowood School was Mr. Brocklehurst. He was mean and enjoyed punishing the girls. In that institute, the protagonist meets her best friend, Helen Burns; she teaches her many lessons and sadly dies from consumption. Jane suffers a lot in this situation, but that makes the protagonist even more resilient. Jane later became a teacher at that institute.

After that, Jane finds work as a governess at Thornfield Hall; she meets Edward Rochester, Jane's boss. At Thornfield Hall, the protagonist encounters many conflicts that will help the story reach its climax. Jane, there, hears strange sounds that, at the time, have no explanation. After some time, she and Mr. Rochester develop feelings for each other; Jane falls in love with him, and he begins to reciprocate her feelings.

Further, Jane finds out that Rochester is going to marry Blanche Ingram, who likes Mr. Rochester because he is rich. Afterward, Jane discovers that Mr. Rochester can not marry Blanche because he is already married to Bertha Mason, who was hidden on the third floor because of her violent behavior. The strange sounds that she heard came from the third floor. Jane decides to leave Rochester because of everything he was keeping from her.

After leaving Rochester, she meets St. John. Jane decides to live with him and his, St. John gives Jane a job; later in the novel, he proposes to Jane; however, Jane is not in love with him and refuses to marry someone who does not love her.

Moreover, St. John tries to convince her and proposes that she accompany him as a missionary in India; Jane agrees to go with him but not as his wife. Ultimately, she decides not to marry him and returns to Thornfield to discover everything burned because of Rochester's wife. Jane finds Mr. Rochester blind because he tried to save Bertha, and he lost his sight in the attempt. Rochester does not know that Jane inherited a fortune because his uncle died and left her all his money, so she is rich now.

### **2.6.3 Main Characters**

In literature, main characters are those directly affected by the events and plot of the story. In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, the central protagonist is Jane Eyre herself. As the narrator of her own story, the novel follows her personal journey in depth. Jane is portrayed as an intelligent, independent, and resilient young woman who consistently challenges the societal stereotypes and prejudices of the Victorian era.

Another main character is Edward Fairfax Rochester, the master of Thornfield Hall. He belongs to the upper class and becomes Jane's employer. Rochester is depicted as wealthy, passionate, and unconventional. His mysterious past and dark secret (his marriage to Bertha Mason) contribute to the novel's gothic tone and suspense. Eventually, he becomes Jane's love interest and emotional counterpart.

A third main character is St. John Rivers, a clergyman in Morton and Jane's cousin. He is cold, deeply religious, and driven by ambition. Though he offers Jane security and a purposeful life through missionary work, he lacks emotional warmth and manipulates Jane through moral pressure. She ultimately refuses his marriage proposal, asserting her autonomy.

#### 2.6.4 Secondary characters

Secondary characters are not the main focus of the story, but they play vital roles in shaping the plot, developing the protagonist, or embodying social and moral contrasts. Among them is Adèle Varens, a young French girl under Jane's care at Thornfield. She is the daughter of Rochester's former mistress, who abandoned her. Adèle serves as a connection between Jane and Rochester and softens Rochester's otherwise stern character. Another important figure is Mrs. Alice Fairfax, the housekeeper at Thornfield. She is kind but cautious, and disapproves of Jane and Rochester's relationship due to the significant class difference and age gap between them.

Blanche Ingram is another secondary character who represents the social expectations of Rochester. She is wealthy, beautiful, and proud, and she seeks to marry Rochester for his wealth. Her presence highlights the contrast between superficial aristocratic values and Jane's depth of character. Bertha Antoinetta Mason, Rochester's secret wife, is a deeply symbolic figure in the novel. She is mentally ill and kept hidden in the attic, representing the themes of madness, colonialism, and the repression of women. Her final act of setting Thornfield on fire serves as both literal destruction and symbolic release.

Helen Burns, Jane's closest friend at Lowood School, is portrayed as calm, intellectual, and spiritually mature. She teaches Jane the values of endurance and forgiveness. Her death from tuberculosis in Jane's arms marks a turning point in Jane's emotional development and sense of loss. Mr. Brocklehurst, the cruel and hypocritical head of Lowood, represents religious authoritarianism and class-based oppression. He uses religion as a tool of control and justifies the mistreatment of the girls in the name of moral discipline.

Mrs. Sarah Reed, Jane's aunt and legal guardian, mistreats her and ultimately sends her to Lowood. She represents betrayal within the family and the denial of affection and justice to those

who do not conform. Her son, John Reed, is also abusive and plays a key role in Jane's early trauma, particularly when he causes her punishment in the Red Room. His eventual downfall and self-destruction reflect the consequences of unchecked entitlement and cruelty. Finally, John Eyre, Jane's uncle, although not present in the story, plays an important role by leaving Jane a substantial inheritance. This fortune ultimately gives her the financial independence she has long desired and marks her transition into a self-sufficient and autonomous woman.

All the characters in *Jane Eyre* contribute to the development of the narrative and the unfolding of key events. Moreover, each character embodies specific aspects of Victorian society that Charlotte Brontë aimed to expose and critique. Through figures such as Mr. Brocklehurst, Sarah Reed, or Blanche Ingram, Brontë illustrates the cruelty, hypocrisy, classism, and rigid gender roles of the era. By giving voice to a protagonist like Jane who questions these structures the novel not only tells a personal story of growth and resistance, but also becomes a broader critique of the oppressive norms of 19th-century England.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodological Framework**

The main objective of this chapter is to explain the methodological foundation that supports the present investigation. It aims to clarify how the research objectives were addressed, how the analysis was conducted, and how the information presented throughout the study was gathered and interpreted. Additionally, this chapter outlines the methodological tools and procedures employed to analyze *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë from a qualitative literary perspective, ensuring coherence between the theoretical approach and the research findings.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

A research approach refers to the procedures selected by the researcher to analyze, acquire, and interpret evidence in order to support the investigation. The three main research approaches are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. This study adopts a qualitative approach, which is particularly suitable for analyzing literary texts and sociocultural contexts.

##### **3.1.1 Qualitative Approach**

The qualitative approach involves exploration and discovery. It allows the researcher to collect and analyze non-numerical data in order to understand concepts, perceptions, and human experiences in depth. This type of research emphasizes understanding social phenomena within their natural settings and focuses on the underlying reasons behind people's actions, beliefs, or reactions. According to the National Library of Medicine (2022), qualitative research is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems. Instead of

collecting numerical data points, qualitative research helps generate hypotheses and investigate the hows and whys behind perceptions and behavior.

Within this approach, researchers rely on methods such as case studies, ethnographic research, grounded theory, phenomenological studies, and content analysis, depending on the nature of the investigation. For this particular study, the qualitative method proves essential due to its interpretative and analytical scope. The investigation aims to compare the societal expectations of Victorian England especially regarding gender roles with the continuing social challenges they faced in contemporary times.

The qualitative approach enables the researcher to examine a wide range of non-numerical sources, including literary criticism, academic articles, historical analyses, theories, and feminist perspectives. It also allows the integration of various definitions of key concepts through the use of academic and virtual dictionaries, enriching the understanding of fundamental terms used in the literary analysis.

Furthermore, the perspectives of female writers from the same historical period as Charlotte Brontë were particularly valuable. Their literary works and critical reflections offer direct insight into the gender norms and societal pressures of the 19th century. These different voices, combined with literary reviews and modern academic interpretations, provided essential data that sustain and validate the sociological and literary analysis of *Jane Eyre*.

### **3.2 Research Design**

With the application of a research design, various key points are considered in the formulation of this investigation. According to Creswell, “Research designs are plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of

data collection and analysis.” (n.d.). Furthermore, the approach used in this investigation is a non-experimental and descriptive design, since this research is based on a literary analysis of the novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, with no experimentation involved.

### **3.2.1 Research Method**

This research follows a textual and contextual analysis method, which is situated within the qualitative research framework. Textual analysis involves a close reading of the primary source *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, focusing on language, narrative structure, literary devices, symbols, and character development. Through this process, the study identifies recurring themes and messages found in the novel.

In addition to the textual examination, this method incorporates a contextual approach, which situates the literary work within its historical and sociocultural background. By understanding the norms, values, and expectations of Victorian England especially in regard to class, gender, and morality the research draws connections between the fictional elements of the novel and the real societal structures Brontë critiques.

This method allows for a comprehensive analysis that not only interprets the meaning of the literary content but also reflects on how the novel challenges or reinforces the dominant ideologies of its time. The insights obtained from academic articles, feminist literary theory, and historical texts further support the interpretation of the characters, themes, and symbols in the novel.

### **3.3 Information Sources**

This investigation used different sources of information that were fundamental to sustain the ideas and arguments developed throughout the research. The primary source is the novel

“Jane Eyre.” Further, secondary sources were consulted to support the theoretical framework and to contextualize the novel within Victorian society.

### **3.3.1 Data collection techniques**

Data collection techniques refer to the methods used to gather essential and accurate information for the analysis. These techniques can be categorized into primary and secondary sources. In the context of this research, data collection was fundamental to obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the literary and social elements present in Jane Eyre.

#### **3.3.1.1 Primary Sources**

The primary source for this research is Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë, published in 1847. The novel serves as the main source of analysis. Through a detailed examination of its characters, themes, symbols, and narrative structure, relevant textual evidence was identified to support the research objectives.

#### **3.3.1.2 Secondary Sources**

This analysis is supported by literary criticism, academic articles, historical texts about Victorian England, gender studies, and biographical information on Charlotte Brontë and her contemporaries. These sources provide context, interpretation, and contrasting perspectives that enrich the textual analysis. Further, the research is supported with varied and credible information that sustains the sociocultural and literary interpretation of the novel.

### **3.4 Analysis Categories**

This investigation focuses on three categories; Narrative structure, cultural and social context. All of them are fundamental and contribute to a better understanding and the completion of this project. These categories are explained below.

#### **3.4.1 Narrative Structure**

The narrative structure of *Jane Eyre* plays a fundamental role in supporting the scope of this research. The novel is written in a first-person retrospective voice, which allows the protagonist, Jane Eyre, to narrate her life story. This narrative style offers direct access to Jane's thoughts, struggles, moral values, and emotional development. Through this intimate lens, the reader can explore the author's perspective on key subjects such as gender inequality, class dynamics, and moral integrity.

Additionally, the novel follows an autobiographical and chronological format, tracing Jane's evolution from childhood to adulthood. Each stage of her life presents different challenges and conflicts that she must overcome whether emotional, social, or ethical. This structure not only highlights Jane's personal growth but also reflects the societal pressures imposed on women during the Victorian era.

Charlotte Brontë also incorporates symbolism and imagery throughout the narrative to reinforce the novel's central themes. Elements such as fire and ice, the Red Room, and the chestnut tree serve as powerful literary devices that represent punishment, repression, passion, and transformation. These symbols help to deepen the novel's emotional impact and contribute to its critique of Victorian social norms.

Moreover, the narrative structure of *Jane Eyre* makes it possible to examine in depth the scope of this research, which aims to explore Charlotte Brontë's perspective on key social and

moral subjects especially the role of women in Victorian society. This is accomplished through the narrative lens of the main character, Jane Eyre, whose point of view dominates the novel. Since the story is written in the first person, the reader gains direct access to Jane's experiences, conflicts, emotions, and thoughts. This intimate narrative technique allows Brontë to deliver a powerful critique of the values and restrictions imposed on women during her time.

Jane Eyre is a complex character who stands in direct opposition to the expectations of Victorian womanhood. She challenges social norms, gender roles, class hierarchy, and the rigid moral codes of the era. Through this character, Brontë critiques the limitations placed on women and the social injustice they endured. Jane possesses qualities that were considered scandalous or inappropriate for a woman in the 19th century such as independence, assertiveness, moral clarity, and a strong sense of self-worth. By creating such a character, Brontë offers a literary form of resistance and encourages a rethinking of the role and value of women in her society.

Another key aspect in Jane Eyre is the presence of strict gender roles and their impact on women's lives and social dynamics. In Victorian society, these roles shaped women to become the so-called "perfect Victorian woman": submissive, obedient, and unquestioning. Women were expected to follow the norms set by men, becoming entirely dependent on their husbands or father figures, since the male head of the household was always in a position of authority.

Throughout the novel, Jane consistently rejects this imposed role. From a young age, she resists her relatives' mistreatment and later refuses to become Mr. Rochester's mistress refusing to submit to a relationship in which she would not be seen as an equal. She also rejects St. John Rivers's marriage proposal, knowing that accepting it would mean sacrificing her values, principles, and everything she has fought for, simply to satisfy social expectations.

Charlotte Brontë uses Jane's defiance to show how the system punished women who resisted these roles and how society limited their opportunities. Jane's journey becomes a powerful critique of the restrictions placed on women in the 19th century. The novel demonstrates that these roles were not just social expectations but mechanisms of control that shaped women's entire lives.

Jane Eyre offers a detailed portrayal of the rigid social hierarchies that defined Victorian England. Throughout the novel, Charlotte Brontë reveals how societal status determined the way individuals were treated, valued, or excluded. This is evident in how Jane is constantly reminded of her lower social position whether as an orphan at Gateshead, a student at Lowood, or a governess at Thornfield.

Jane's personal experiences throughout the novel reflect this clearly. Social hierarchies affected not only material opportunities but also how individuals were perceived and treated by society. For example, Mrs. Reed and her children mistreat Jane because she is considered inferior and dependent. Similarly, Blanche Ingram, a member of the upper class, dismisses Jane solely based on her class and profession. Even Mr. Rochester, despite his affection for Jane, initially assumes he can control the relationship due to their class difference.

Through Jane's story, Brontë exposes how social hierarchies reinforced inequality and limited the lives of those in lower positions particularly women, who faced both class-based and gender-based oppression.

Lastly, another important aspect in Jane Eyre is religion not only as a spiritual element, but also as a force that shapes character behavior and justifies social norms. Charlotte Brontë presents different interpretations of religion through her characters, showing how it can be used both to inspire compassion and to enforce control or justify harm.

Throughout the novel, Jane interacts with male characters who demonstrate contrasting versions of religion based on their personal morals and intentions. For instance, Mr. Brocklehurst uses religion to justify the harsh treatment of the girls at Lowood, promoting suffering as a path to salvation while living in luxury himself. This illustrates how religion was often used as a tool to maintain power and control, particularly over women and the poor.

Similarly, St. John Rivers represents a cold and rigid form of religious duty. He proposes to Jane not out of love, but because he sees her as a suitable companion for his missionary work. His version of religion demands self-sacrifice and emotional detachment, prioritizing duty over personal connection.

These portrayals contrast with Jane's personal approach to spirituality, which is grounded in inner peace, moral balance, and emotional truth. Through this contrast, Brontë highlights the dangers of religious extremism and promotes a more humane and introspective form of faith.

### **3.4.2 Cultural Context**

In this section, the cultural context of the novel is explained, but first it is important to understand the definition of culture. As Britannica explains, "Culture is a complex whole encompassing knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, laws, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by individuals as members of society." As explained above, culture changes depending on the group, since it is transmitted through social interactions; this means that it can evolve over time.

### **3.4.3 Social Context**

The social context refers to the conditions that influence the way people think, behave, and feel. According to Pace (2008), "social context refers to the specific setting in which social

interaction takes place. Social context includes specific, often unique meanings and interpretations assigned by people within the given group.” This category is essential for the project, as it helps the reader understand the social environment in which the novel is set.

### **3.5 Data Collection instruments**

For this research project, several instruments were essential to gather the necessary information. For instance, previous studies were fundamental in providing key concepts, ideas, and definitions. Another important instrument was the use of charts, which illustrate the symbols, themes, and motifs that appear in the novel.

#### **3.5.1 Population and Sample**

In this case, the complete novel *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. The novel provides a rich source of data that reflects the historical, social, and cultural context of Victorian England, making it highly suitable for textual and contextual analysis.

The sample selected for this study consists of key elements within the novel that illustrate the objectives of the investigation. These include; Central themes such as independence, love versus autonomy, social justice, and the role of religion. Further, Symbolic elements like fire and ice, the Red Room, and the chestnut tree, which provide insight into emotional and societal struggles. Moreover, motif such as social justice and class. Additionally, symbols focusing on these specific aspects of the novel, the research is able to explore how Brontë critiques Victorian norms and how the novel continues to resonate with contemporary social issues.

### 3.5.2 Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis in this research is structured according to the specific objectives of the study. Since this is a qualitative investigation, the analysis is carried out through textual and contextual interpretation of selected passages from *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë. Each objective guides the analysis of particular elements within the novel

First, to address the construction of gender roles, the study examines how *Jane Eyre*'s experiences such as her resistance to authority, her defense of autonomy, and her moral decisions reveal the pressures and expectations imposed on women in Victorian society. These experiences are analyzed as a reflection of Brontë's critique of the limited roles women were allowed to play during the 19th century.

Second, to analyze social hierarchies, the research focuses on the dynamics between characters of different social classes. Interactions between *Jane* and figures like her employers, or characters such as *Blanche Ingram* and *Mr. Rochester*, are examined to highlight how class divisions influenced identity, relationships, and power. The novel presents a constant tension between social status and personal value.

Third, to explore religion as a social institution, the analysis centers on how different characters embody contrasting interpretations of religious morality. Figures such as *Mr. Brocklehurst* and *St. John Rivers* serve as examples of religious extremism or manipulation, while *Jane*'s more personal and balanced spirituality contrasts with them. This helps to demonstrate how religion in the Victorian era was often used to justify social control, especially over women and the lower classes.

All of this is supported by secondary sources, including academic articles and historical background information, which help support the interpretation of the findings and reinforce the sociological approach of the analysis.

### 3.6 Colletion data process and data analysis

As mentioned before, this project includes five charts in which the reader can analyze the social cultural approach, literary theories, and the themes, symbols and motifs, that appear in the novel. Each chart has three columns: one containing the excerpt from the book, explanation and interpretation, utility in the research. Furthermore, there are two additional charts of the main and secondary characters, each containing two columns: one with the character’s name and the other describing the role they play in the novel.

#### 3.6.1 Charts for the Sociocultural approach

In the following chart, the relevance of the sociocultural approach in relation to the novel Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë is explained. The chart contains excerpts from the book, explanations and interpretations, as well as their utility for this research.

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Excerpt from the novel</b>	<b>Explanation and interpretation</b>	<b>Utility in the research</b>
Sociocultural Approach			

Chart number one for themes. Researcher’s own creation.

### 3.6.2 Charts for Literary theories

In this part the main two literary theories are shown in the following chart. The chart contains excerpts from the book, explanations and interpretations, as well as their utility for this research.

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Excerpt from the novel</b>	<b>Explanation and interpretation</b>	<b>Utility in the research</b>
Gender Stratification and the Construction of Gender Roles			
Social Hierarchies and Class Inequality			

Chart number two for themes. Researcher's own creation.

### 3.6.3 Charts for the themes, symbols, and motifs

In this section, three charts are presented. Each chart contains three columns: the first column list the name of the theme, symbol, or motif; the second column explains its significance; and the third column provides an extract from the book to illustrate it.

<b>Theme's name</b>	<b>Significance</b>	<b>Extract from the book</b>

Chart number three for themes. Researcher's own creation.

<b>Symbol's name</b>	<b>Significance</b>	<b>Extract from the book</b>

Chart number four symbols. Researcher's own creation.

<b>Motif's name</b>	<b>Significance</b>	<b>Extract from the book</b>

Chart number five for motifs. Researcher's own creation.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Data Analysis**

The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis of the information collected throughout this research, with the aim of achieving a deeper understanding of the Victorian era, the context of the novel, the characters, and the narrative as a whole. The application of the sociocultural approach is fundamental in order to frame and interpret the findings, allowing a comprehensive exploration of the ways in which *Jane Eyre* reflects and engages with the society of its time. Furthermore, in this chapter, the charts for the literary theories, themes, symbols, and motifs are presented, demonstrating their importance in the realization of this research.

#### **4.1 Approaches of the investigation**

The approach used for this literary analysis is the sociocultural approach. This perspective is vital for the present work, as it makes it possible to examine the social dynamics portrayed in the novel while also connecting them to the realities of the Victorian era. Since the novel functions as a reflection of the issues and transformations occurring at that time, the sociocultural approach provides the necessary framework to understand the interplay between literature and society.

The sociocultural approach emphasizes human development within the social context. Besides, it helps both the researcher and the reader to have a deeper understanding of human behaviors and actions. Furthermore, this approach also focuses on the cultural context. This approach is fundamental in this literary analysis because it is helpful to understand the era of the novel the Victorian era which is different from the present. This means that many things have

changed. Also, with this approach, the actions and behavior of the characters are better understood.

**4.1.2 Table 1. Sociocultural approach**

The following chart illustrates how the sociocultural approach is fundamental to this research. This approach helps in understanding the social structures of Victorian society.

<b>Approach</b>	<b>Excerpt from the novel</b>	<b>Explanation and interpretation</b>	<b>Utility in the research</b>
Sociocultural Approach	<p>“I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will.” (Chapter 23, p. 252)</p>	<p>This excerpt from the novel demonstrates Jane’s revelation against, social expectation and the restrictive gender roles of the Victorian era</p>	<p>Supports the analysis of female autonomy and the critique of patriarchal structures in Victorian society.</p>

**4.2 Table 2. Literary theories**

The following charts illustrate how literary theories contribute to the understanding of Jane Eyre. These theories focus on two key aspects analyzed in this research: gender stratification and the construction of gender roles, and social hierarchies and class inequality.

<b>Literary theories</b>			
<b>Theory</b>	<b>Excerpt from the novel</b>	<b>Explanation and interpretation</b>	<b>Utility in the research</b>
Gender Stratification and the Construction of Gender Roles	“Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do.” (Chapter 12, p. 120)	This quote challenges the Victorian stereotype of women. Through this statement, the author exposes the gender stratification that confines Victorian women and limits their freedom.	This quote supports the analysis of gender inequality and illustrates the patriarchal society in which they lived.
Social Hierarchies and Class Inequality	“Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong!” (Chapter 23, p. 252)	Jane’s response to Mr. Rochester reflects her resistance to the stereotypes and discrimination present in Victorian society.	This quote is useful for exploring the class dynamics that define that period. It also illustrates how Charlotte Brontë critiques these aspects through the novel’s characters and settings.

### 4.3 Themes, Symbols, and motifs

In this part of the investigation the main themes, symbols, and motifs presented in Jane Eyre’s novel are examined. Each chart contains the excerpt from the novel, explanation and interpretation and utility in the research.

#### 4.3.1 Table 3. Themes

The following chart presents the main themes studied in Jane Eyre. Each theme highlights Brontë’s critique of the constraints imposed by gender, class, and religion. These themes contribute to a better understanding of the novel and its social, moral, and psychological dimensions.

<b>Themes</b>			
<b>Theme’s name</b>	<b>Excerpt from the novel</b>	<b>Explanation and interpretation</b>	<b>Utility in the research</b>
Religion as a Tool of Social Control	“You have no right to take our books; you are a dependent, and you have no fortune; you ought to obey and not play such pranks.” (Chapter 1, p. 5)	This excerpt demonstrates how Victorian society used religious and moral expectations to enforce obedience and assert the authority of social figures.	With this quote Charlotte Brontë critiques and exposes all the situations imposed by social and religious norms.
	“I must keep to myself what is my own, and act	This excerpt highlights Jane’s determination	Useful for analyzing how Brontë emphasizes

<p>Independence and Autonomy</p>	<p>according to my own conscience.” (Chapter 20, p. 210)</p>	<p>and independence in making her own decisions. It reflects her assertion of personal autonomy and moral agency.</p>	<p>the importance of individual choice and independence.</p>
<p>Love vs. Autonomy</p>	<p>“I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself.” (Chapter 27, p. 275)</p>	<p>Highlights Jane’s prioritization of personal integrity and autonomy over romantic attachment, illustrating the tension between love and self-respect.</p>	<p>Useful for examining how Brontë explores the tension between individual autonomy and romantic relationships within the Victorian context.</p>
<p>Moral Integrity</p>	<p>“I will hold to the principles received by me when I was sane, and not mad—as I am now.” (Chapter 23, p. 253)</p>	<p>Emphasizes the importance of moral consistency and personal ethics despite societal pressures and constraints.</p>	<p>Contributes to understanding Jane’s moral character and illustrates Brontë’s critique of the rigid social structures of Victorian society.</p>
	<p>“I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor</p>	<p>Illustrates Jane’s spiritual connection beyond institutionalized religion.</p>	<p>Useful for analyzing how Brontë portrays individual spirituality versus institutional</p>

Religion and Spirituality	even of mortal flesh; it is my spirit that addresses your spirit.”  (Chapter 23, p. 254)		religion, connecting to broader themes of inner freedom and personal growth. This is reflected in the protagonist’s journey.
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**4.3.2 Table 4. Symbols**

The next chart illustrates the most relevant symbols that are useful for this research. Through symbolic elements such as fire, ice, and the red-room, the author conveys and reflects different emotions. These symbols not only enrich the narrative but also serve as representations of Jane’s internal conflicts and personal growth.

<b>Symbols</b>			
<b>Symbol's name</b>	<b>Excerpt from the novel</b>	<b>Explanation and interpretation</b>	<b>Utility in the research</b>
Fire and Ice	<p>“My soul had grown strong in the hard discipline of life; but it was all fire within me, and it longed to escape.” (Chapter 27, p. 280)</p>	<p>Fire symbolizes Jane's intense emotions, passion, and inner strength, while ice represents restraint and social limitations. This duality reflects her struggle between desire and moral control.</p>	<p>Useful for analyzing the emotional and psychological tension in Jane's character and how Brontë represents internal conflict through this Symbol.</p>
The Red Room	<p>“I was too cowardly to resist; and I felt the cold, damp, and solemn air pressing on me.” (Chapter 2, p. 15)</p>	<p>The red-room symbolizes oppression, fear, and the aspects of social and familial authority.</p>	<p>Helps explore how Brontë uses physical spaces to illustrate societal and emotional repression.</p>
The Chestnut Tree	<p>“The great chestnut tree was split in twain; and a few half-rotten leaves hung upon its branches.” (Chapter 23, p. 255)</p>	<p>The tree symbolizes the relationship between Jane and Rochester.</p>	<p>Useful for analyzing the development of Jane and Rochester's relationship.</p>

### 4.3.3 Table 5. Motifs

The last chart presents the motifs that recur throughout the narrative of Jane Eyre. These motifs deepen the reader's understanding of Jane's development and Brontë's conception of self-discovery and personal transformation.

<b>Motifs</b>			
<b>Motif's name</b>	<b>Excerpt from the novel</b>	<b>Explanation and interpretation</b>	<b>Utility in the research</b>
Social Justice and Class	<p>"Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong!"</p> <p>(Chapter 23, p. 252)</p>	<p>This motif recurs throughout the novel, highlighting social injustice and class prejudice.</p>	<p>Useful for examining Victorian society and Brontë's critique through character interactions.</p>
Fire and Ice	<p>"I burnt like a fire in my conscience, yet I knew I must remain cold outwardly, hiding my emotions from the world." (Chapter 15, p. 160)</p>	<p>Symbolizing the ongoing tension between passion and restraint in Jane's life, as well as the societal restrictions she faces.</p>	<p>This quote helps to explore Jane's development. The motif reinforces her internal conflict and capacity for self-control.</p>

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Conclusions And Recommendations**

#### **5.1 Purpose of the conclusion**

This chapter presents the main conclusions derived from Jane Eyre's literary analysis. Furthermore, it provides recommendations based on the findings. This chapter is an essential part of this investigation, as it synthesizes the results obtained from each objective and the research question.

#### **5.2 Conclusions**

##### **5.2.1 To examine the construction of gender roles in the Victorian era through the experiences and challenges faced by the protagonist in Jane Eyre**

The analysis of Jane Eyre reveals that to examine the construction of gender roles in the Victorian era was very oppressive, mostly for women, as there were a lot of stereotypes and expectations placed on them. For those women who challenged the social norms, it was even more severe. From the character's point of view, she was an orphan and was mistreated by her relatives, even as an adult. Charlotte Brontë, in this novel, portrays the societal expectations imposed on women and all the poor limitations that society offered in return. Jane's character defies the conventional expectations of Victorian womanhood; her resilience, independence, and pursuit of self-determination demonstrate a challenge to these prescribed roles. By analyzing Jane's journey, this study found that Victorian women were supposed to be passive, obedient, and

follow the social norms. The author not only shows all the social construction of gender in her era but also offers timeless insights into the ongoing struggle.

### **5.2.2 To analyze the social hierarchies, particularly the dynamics between servants and masters, and the upper and lower classes, to understand how these structures shape the protagonist's role in society**

The analysis of Jane Eyre shows that social hierarchies in the Victorian era were rigid for individuals from the lower class and for women. First, when Jane is an orphan, she faced a lot of injustice just because of her role in society; orphans were considered lower class, which is shown through her treatment by her family and at the institute. Later in the novel, Jane becomes a governess. This position places her between social classes. Charlotte Brontë portrays differences between masters and servants, highlighting the privileges of the upper class and the restrictions imposed on the lower class. The novel also shows how social status influences friendships and the way people interact with one another. Jane's character challenges all these rigid societal structures; she is willing to find the life she deserves, no matter what society has to say about it.

### **5.2.3 To explore the role of religion as a social institution in Jane Eyre, and how it regulates moral conduct, gender expectations, and class behavior within Victorian society**

The analysis of Jane Eyre demonstrates that religion functioned as a central social institution in the Victorian era. The novel shows how religion shapes the moral conduct of the characters. Throughout the novel, Jane encounters various representations of religion, with characters ranging from strict, oppressive figures to more compassionate and understanding individuals. All these interactions portray how religion was used as a tool of control for some

people. Charlotte Brontë portrays religion not only as a source of guidance but also as a tool that reflects societal norms and enforces social hierarchies. In the novel, the protagonist navigates and finds her own interpretation of religion, one that aligns with her morals, values, and beliefs. By creating her own understanding of faith; Jane challenges again the rigid religion imposed by of her society

### **5.3 Research question**

The research questions for this investigation was: How can a sociocultural approach to the characters in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre enrich our understanding of the narrative and the influence of Victorian values on their actions and identities?

A sociocultural approach to the characters in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre enriches our understanding of the narrative by highlighting how Victorian values shaped individual actions, identities, and social interactions. This approach allows the reader to appreciate the historical and cultural context, as well as the societal norms that shaped the lives of Victorian people. Additionally, adopting a sociocultural approach emphasizes the influence of social structures on character development, providing a deeper understanding of the novel's narrative.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

Future students and researchers can use this investigation as a tool of information when analyzing similar literary works. Future students can apply a sociocultural approach when researching a similar literary work, as it provides a deeper understanding of the era, the characters' behaviors, and the social interactions in the book or novel. Furthermore, it is important to pay close attention to the themes presented in the novel, since they are fundamental to understanding the characters' experiences and the society in which they live. Moreover,

students should analyze the characters, motifs, symbols, and themes carefully, as these literary elements offer valuable insight not only into the narrative itself but also into the context of the period which the book is set. Finally, integrating textual evidence with sociocultural theory, as demonstrated in this study, can enrich interpretation and understanding.

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