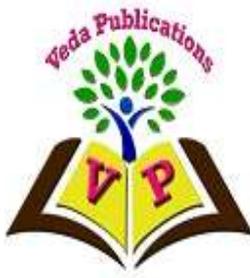


**WEALTH AND POSITION IN CHARLOTTE BRONTE'S JANE EYRE**Ms.Pandimeena¹, E. Janani^{2*}¹(Assistant Professor, Dept. of English, Nadar Saraswathi College of Arts and Science, Theni.)^{2*}(M.A English Student, Nadar Saraswathi College of Arts and Science, Theni.)**ABSTRACT**

Jane Eyre is one of the best novels of Charlotte Bronte. The novel contains basics of community analysis, with a sturdy sense of Christian ethics at its nucleus, and is measured by many to be in advance of its time because of Jane's distinctive character and how the novel approaches the topics of class, sexuality, religion and feminism. Jane Eyre is divided into 38 chapters. It was initially published in three volumes, as was common in the 19th century, comprising chapters 1 to 15, 16 to 27, and 28 to 38. Her book has serious things to say about a number of important subjects: the relations between men and women, women's equality, the treatment of children and of women, religious faith and religious hypocrisy (and the difference between the two), the realization of selfhood, and the nature of true love. Jane Eyre triumphs over its flaws and remains a classic of nineteenth-century English literature .and one of the most popular of all English novels. The novel begins with the title character, Jane Eyre, aged 10, living with her gentle uncle's family, the Reeds, as a consequence of her uncle's dying wish. It is more than a few years after her parents died of Typhus. Mr. Reed, Jane's uncle, was the only person of the Reed family who was ever kind to Jane the others behave very spiteful with her as they dislike her. The present paper deals with the role of money in human life as portrayed in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*.

Keywords: *Feminism, Wealth, Class, Society.*



With wealth come possessions, a promise of freedom from social constraints and the ability to pursue one's dreams. However, the influence it has on a person's character can be a reminder of what the misuse of wealth can ultimately lead to. In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* the corrupting nature of monetary wealth is displayed through the lives of multiple characters. It is easy to see that a preoccupation with money blinds people to the prosperity that stands before them and can lead them down roads that end with nothing more than loneliness, misery or even death.

The protagonist Jane Eyre occupies an ambiguous class position. She travels the entire spectrum of class status from homeless vagabond to upper class married woman. Her status does not progressively incline or decline, but rather oscillates between the two ends of the social scale. Even before birth, her class status was somewhat ambiguous. As Susan Fraiman writes, both Jane's mother and father were "socially ambiguous, and this ambiguity is part of their legacy to Jane" (616). When Jane was born she occupied socially ambiguous spot. Jane's class status becomes even more indefinable when her parents die and leave her as an orphan to be brought up by her wealthy Aunt Reed.

One day, as retribution for fighting with her cousin John Reed, Jane's aunt imprisons Jane in the red-room, the room in which Jane's Uncle Reed died. While sheltered in, Jane, believing that she sees her uncle's spirit, screams and faints. She wakes and finds herself in the care of Bessie and the sympathetically apothecary Mr. Lloyd, who suggests to Mrs. Reed that Jane be sent to school. To Jane's glee, Mrs. Reed concurs. In the school she feels very lonesome and no proper facility available there. Once at the Lowood School, Jane finds that her life is far from peaceful. The school's headmaster is Mr. Brocklehurst, a brutal, disloyal, and hateful man. Brocklehurst preaches a doctrine of poverty and privation to the students while using school's funds to provide a rich and lavish lifestyle for his own family.

She is mixed with other poor girls and forced to live in a rough environment. At the time she leaves the school, Jane has encountered only the troubling existence of a working class girl. However, her

education helped her raise up into the lower middle class as she takes a job as governess at the Thornfield estate. There, she earns money by educating another orphan and meets her future spouse, Edward Rochester. Difficulties emerging from a commitment to Rochester drive Jane to escape Thornfield. She lives as a destitute runaway. She is so cool and hungry that she attempts to trade her hanky and gloves for a roll or cake at a certain point. "Almost desperate," Jane tells us, "I asked for half a cake" (323) and then she asks, "Would she take my gloves?" (323). She is denied the food by the bakery worker and further humiliated. Again, Jane's status changes when she is taken in by St. John River's and given a job as a schoolmistress in a small town. Finally, in a dramatic turn of events, Jane inherits a large sum of money from her deceased uncle and rockets into the upper middle class. With the money, she goes back to her lover Rochester with a superior class to marry him. As Fraiman describes it, Jane represents, "the happy, rich, and conventionally respectable lady and the overworked, always potentially irate nurse" (630). Throughout her entire life, Jane Eyre drifted in and out of different economic classes and remained locked in a state of social ambiguity.

Jane tends not to judge other people based on their class status. Instead, she judges people based on their behavior. During her childhood at Gateshead, Jane is more emotionally attached to the servant Bessie. She puts together her reverence with respect to Bessie's own attributes as opposed to her financial status. Fraiman tells us that during Christmas time, "instead of yearning toward the genteel company, [Jane] would rather spend a quiet evening with Bessie" (617) because of the motherly characteristics that Bessie displays towards Jane. Jane longs for the affection of a motherly woman rather than the glamorous company of her rich family. At Lowood, Jane again attaches herself to a poor, humbly, motherly woman and scorns the wealthy, this time in the form of Mr. Brocklehurst. Jane describes Miss Temple with much adoration. She esteems the time that she goes through with her instructor, in spite of the fact that she is certainly not a rich lady.



Although Jane is able to look past economics to form deep friendships with members of the other classes, she still is acutely aware of class status. Jane tells Mr. Lloyd that she would rather stay with the wealthy, abusive and neglectful Reed family than go to live with her poorer relatives. She says, "I should not like to belong to poor people" (36) and "I should not like to go a-begging" (36). It should also be noted that Jane eventually does 'go a-begging' and shortly thereafter lives with her poor relations and enjoys living with them a great deal. Although Jane does not judge people by their economic status, she does notice it and use it as a feature to describe them.

At last, Jane acquires twenty thousand pounds from her uncle and, as Terry Eagleton expresses, "comes to have control over Rochester" (30) since when she consents to wed him, "she comes to him on her own terms, financially self-sufficient" (30). He asserts that the equivocal idea of class status and connections that has conveyed all through the novel accepts a last turn as Jane is all of a sudden raised socially above her former master. After reading Brontë's entire novel, we are not astonished to see another mixing of the regularly unmistakable class lines. The main path for the solidarity of marriage to be conceivable between the working class Jane and the gentleman Rochester is through the extraordinary circumstances that take place, elevating Jane above Rochester.

Jane remains basically a same character all through the novel despite the fact that her class status changes drastically. Thusly, Charlotte Brontë demonstrates that financial classes were not as concrete as specific individuals needed them to be and that people ought not to be characterized exclusively by their monetary class.

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