

Terms Associated with Close Reading

High School

Definitions contain examples from *Jane Eyre* and *Antigônê*, and an explanation of how the use of the device links to meaning.

Literary Elements

Archetype is a character, action, or situation that is a prototype, or pattern, of human life generally; a situation that occurs over and over again in literature, such as a quest, an initiation, or an attempt to overcome evil. Many myths contain archetypes. Two common types of archetypes involve **setting** and **character**. A common archetypal setting is the desert, which is associated with spiritual sterility and barrenness because it is devoid of many amenities and personal comforts. **Archetypal characters** are those who embody a certain kind of universal human experience. For example, a *femme fatale*, *siren*, or *temptress* figure is a character who purposefully lures men to disaster through her beauty. Other examples of archetypal figures include the “damsel in distress,” the “mentor,” the “old crone,” the “hag” or witch, and the “naïve young man from the country.” These characters are recognizable human “types” and their stories recreate “typical” or recurrent human experiences. *Jane Eyre*’s journey is a **heroic journey**. She begins life as a lowly orphan, mistreated by her guardian. By challenging her unfair treatment, she finds herself sent away to school and into the world. She travels through life, tested, tempted, and abandoned. In utter despair, she survives by remaining true to her convictions. Her ultimate reward is a strong (legal) marriage to Rochester, a marriage in which she is an equal partner.

Characters are people or animals who take part in the action of a literary work. Readers learn about characters from

- what they say (dialogue),
- what they do (actions),
- what they think (interior monologue),
- what others say about them, and
- through the author’s direct statement.

The **protagonist** is the central character of a drama, novel, short story, or narrative poem. The adversary of this character is then the antagonist. To be believable, a character must reflect universal human characteristics that are the same despite geographical differences and time periods. The emotions and concerns of real people of all times are expressed in concrete terms through the traits of literary characters. An author may choose to emphasize a single important trait, creating what is called a **flat character**; or the author may present a complex, fully-rounded personality (a three-dimensional or **round character**). A character that changes little over the course of a narrative is called a **static character**. Things happen *to* these characters, but little happens *in* them. A character that changes in response to the actions through which he or she passes is called a **dynamic character**.

Epiphany is a sudden unfolding in which a character proceeds from ignorance and innocence to knowledge and experience.

The **protagonist** of *Jane Eyre* is Jane herself because it is her story, and she is always central to the action. She is **dynamic** because she changes and adjusts to new circumstances throughout her journey.

Jane Eyre’s chief **antagonist** is Rochester because he tries to make her into something that she is not, as does St. John later in the story.

A **flat, static character** in *Jane Eyre* is the spiteful Aunt Reed, who never changes in her attitude towards Jane, not even on her deathbed.

Motivation—Jane’s motivation is self-preservation; she is trying to find a measure of happiness in a world of dreary prospects for an orphan girl with no money.

Epiphany—For example, *Jane Eyre* suddenly understands all the mysterious events and signs

when she hears Mr. Briggs announce that Mr. Rochester has a wife still living. Everything makes sense to her now.

Foil—a character, usually minor, designed to highlight qualities of a major character: e.g., Blanche Ingram enhances Jane’s qualities of modesty and humility.

Stock—a flat character in a standard role with standard traits: e.g., Mrs. Reed is like a wicked stepmother, and her children act as wicked stepsisters and brother.

Details are the facts revealed by the author or speaker that support the attitude or tone in a piece of poetry or prose: e.g., in *Jane Eyre*, Rochester explains the arrangements he made for housing his “mad” wife in this way.

“I had some trouble in finding an attendant for her: as it was necessary to select one on whose fidelity dependence could be placed; for her ravings would inevitably betray my secret: besides, she had lucid intervals of days—sometimes weeks—which she filled up with abuse of me. At last I hired Grace Poole, from the Grimsby Retreat. She and the surgeon, Carter..., are the only two I have ever admitted to my confidence. Mrs. Fairfax may indeed have suspected something; but she could have gained no precise knowledge as to facts” (272).

Rochester seems to have made the best arrangements he possibly could have made for Bertha, but he also wants to keep her hidden away. Since she has periods of sanity, she might reveal her identity if others interacted with her.

Diction is word choice intended to convey a certain effect: e.g., in *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë describes Bertha in harsh terms:

“In the deep shade, at the further end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing; and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face” (257-258).

Words such as *grovelled*, *snatched*, *mane* make Bertha appear as something less than human.

The **denotative** and **connotative** meanings of words must also be considered. Denotation refers to the dictionary definition of a word, whereas **connotation** refers to the feelings and attitudes associated with a word. Here is an example from *Jane Eyre*: ““And, Miss Eyre, so much was I flattered by this preference of the Gallic sylph for her British gnome, that I installed her in an hotel...” (123).

In this sentence, Brontë emphasizes the contrast between Rochester and Celine Varens, the French opera singer, by having him call Celine a sylph—“(1) any of a class of imaginary beings supposed to inhabit the air. (2) a slender, graceful woman or girl.” And he calls himself a gnome—“in folklore, a dwarf supposed to dwell in the earth and guard its treasures.” (definitions from Webster’s)

The **connotations** of these two words reinforce even more the differences between Celine and Rochester. “Sylph” suggests beauty, delicateness, happiness, lightness, etc., while “gnome” suggests ugliness, heaviness, despair, darkness, etc.—or day and night. Neither sylphs nor gnomes exist, Brontë perhaps suggesting through these words that neither does their relationship. Rochester discovers later that Celine was only using him.

Dialect is the speech of a particular region or group as it differs from those of a real or imaginary standard speech. For example, John and Mary, the servants at Ferndean, speak in a lower-class dialect, speech that distinguishes their position in society. After Jane and Rochester marry, Jane hears John say, ““She’ll happen do better for him nor ony o’ t’ grand ladies.’ And again, ‘If she ben’t one o’ the’ handsomest, she’s noan faal and varry good-natured; and i’ his een she’s fair beautiful, onybody may see that”” (395). (Translation: “She will be better for him than any of the grand ladies.” And, “If she isn’t one of the handsomest, she’s no fool and very good-natured;

and in his eyes she’s quite beautiful, anybody may see that.”)

Euphemism is the use of a word or phrase that is less expressive or direct but considered less distasteful or offensive than another: e.g., when Helen Burns is dying of tuberculosis, the doctor says, “she’ll not be here long” (69). Then Jane visits Helen and asks her, “Are you going somewhere, Helen? Are you going home?” And Helen replies, “Yes; to my long home—my last home” (70). These phrases (*not be here long* and *long/last home*) soften the blow of Helen’s dying.

An idiom is an accepted phrase or expression having a meaning different from the literal: e.g., when Abbot and Bessie take Jane to lock her in the red room, she says, “The fact is, I was a trifle beside myself; or rather *out* of myself, as the French would say” (9). Both phrases are idioms because it is physically impossible to be next to oneself or outside of oneself. She means she is thinking and behaving in a way she has not before.

Imagery consists of the words or phrases appealing to the senses—the descriptive diction—a writer uses to represent persons, objects, actions, feelings, and ideas: e.g., in *Jane Eyre*, Jane describes one of her paintings that caught Rochester’s attention with its vivid images:

“One gleam of light lifted into relief a half-submerged mast, on which sat a cormorant, dark and large, with wings flecked with foam: its beak held a gold bracelet, set with gems, that I had touched with as brilliant tints as my palette could yield, and as glittering distinctness as my pencil could impart. Sinking below the bird and mast, a drowned corpse glanced through the green water; a fair arm was the only limb clearly visible, whence the bracelet had been washed or torn” (110).

Not only do the images set an eerie mood, they also foreshadow disastrous events in Jane’s relationship with Rochester.

Mood is the emotional atmosphere in a literary work: e.g., in *Jane Eyre*, the atmosphere of Moor House

beckons to a miserable, destitute Jane:

“I could see clearly a room with a sanded floor, clean scoured; a dresser of walnut, with pewter plates ranged in rows, reflecting the redness and radiance of a glowing peat-fire. I could see a clock, a white deal table, some chairs. The candle, whose ray had been my beacon, burnt on the table; and by its light an elderly woman, somewhat rough-looking, but scrupulously clean, like all about her, was knitting a stocking” (292).

Nothing could appeal to Jane more at this point than a clean, warm home. The occupants take her in, nurse her back to health, and help her achieve a measure of independence.

Plot is the sequence of events or actions in a short story, novel, play, or narrative poem. **Freytag’s Pyramid** is a convenient diagram that describes the typical pattern of a dramatic or fictional work. The structure of the work begins with *exposition*, in which the author lays the groundwork for the reader by revealing the setting, the relationships between the characters, and the situation as it exists before conflict begins. The *inciting incident* interrupts the harmony and balance of the situation, and one or more of the characters comes into conflict with an outside force, with his or her own nature, or with another character. During the plot events that constitute the *rising action*, the things that happen in the work build toward an irreversible *climax*, or pivotal point, after which the *falling action* leads inevitably toward a revelation of meaning that occurs at the *denouement*, or unraveling, of the problem set up by the inciting incident.

Examples of each stage from *Jane Eyre*:

- **Exposition:** The first two sections of the novel, Gateshead Hall and Lowood School, provide details of Jane’s childhood and adolescence. She demonstrates courage by standing up to John Reed, Mrs. Reed, and Mr. Brocklehurst and learns to balance her temper with patience from both Helen Burns and Miss Temple.
- **Inciting Incident:** Serious conflicts for Jane begin when she takes a job as a governess at Thornfield Hall.

- *Rising action*: Jane falls in love with her employer, Mr. Rochester, as she grows increasingly fearful of whatever haunts the attic.
- *Climax*: After Jane accepts Rochester's marriage proposal and endures his outrageous courtship methods, her discomfort turns to horror and humiliation when she finally meets Bertha Mason Rochester, his wife, in the attic.
- *Falling Action*: Jane escapes Rochester and his desire to make her his pampered mistress and, after much trouble, finds herself at Moor House, where her only living relatives take her in and help her recover.
- *Denouement*: After Jane fends off St. John's advances, she returns to Mr. Rochester, now blinded and crippled, but a widower whom she happily and legally marries at Ferndean in the end.

Conflict is a term that describes the tension between opposing forces in a work of literature and is an essential element of *plot*. Some of the more common conflicts involve the following forces: a person in opposition to another person, a person opposing fate, an internal battle involving contradictory forces within a character, a person fighting against the forces of nature, or a person in opposition to some aspect of his or her society. Examples of each conflict from *Jane Eyre*:

- *a person in opposition to another person*: Jane vs. John, Jane vs. Mrs. Reed, Jane vs. Mr. Brocklehurst, Jane vs. St. John
- *a person opposing fate*: Jane vs. her position in life as an orphan, a charity school girl, a lowly governess, a village schoolmarm
- *an internal battle involving contradictory forces within a character*: Jane vs. her strong feelings for Rochester, when he is still a married man
- *a person fighting against the forces of nature*: Jane vs. the elements and dire hunger when she wanders penniless on the moors after escaping Rochester
- *a person in opposition to some aspect of his or her society*: Jane vs. the rest of society when

she, a mere governess, first accepts Rochester's marriage proposal

Flashback is a scene that interrupts the action of a work to show a previous event: e.g., at different points in *Jane Eyre*, Rochester tells the stories of his affair with Celine Varens, the French opera singer, and of his entrapment into a marriage with Bertha Mason, the West Indian madwoman.

Foreshadowing is the use of hints or clues in a narrative to suggest future action. Brontë uses foreshadowing in the passage that follows:

“As I looked up at them, the moon appeared momentarily in that part of the sky which filled their fissure; her disk was blood-red and half overcast; she seemed to throw on me one bewildered, dreary glance, and buried herself again instantly in the deep drift of cloud. The wind fell, for a second, round Thornfield; but far away over wood and water, poured a wild, melancholy wail: it was sad to listen to, and I ran off again” (243).

The eerie color of the moon and the wild cry occur shortly before Jane's illegal wedding. Both warn of the forthcoming disastrous ceremony and the revelation of Rochester's mad wife locked in Thornfield's attic.

Suspense is the quality of a short story, novel, play, or narrative poem that makes the reader or audience uncertain or tense about the outcome of events. Because *Jane Eyre* tells her own story, we experience her confusion about Grace Poole, and her dread of the eerie cries and laughter, and her fear of the figure who visits her in the night to tear her wedding veil. Our discomfort grows as does Jane's during Rochester's courtship. We know something bad will happen and learn just how bad when Mr. Mason and his lawyer stop Jane's wedding. The tension builds as we climb up to the attic with Jane and finally relents as we come face to face with Bertha Mason Rochester.

Point of view is the *perspective* from which a narrative is told. Some technical terms for different points of view include **omniscient** and **limited**; however, point of view may also refer to the bias of

the person or thing through whose eyes the reader experiences the action. Jane Eyre tells her story from the distance of ten years' time, a perspective that influences her story yet provides the understanding she has gained over the years.

Shift in point of view—The point of view shifts to Rochester's in Chapter 26 when he explains to Jane the history of his marriage to Bertha.

Rhetorical Shift or *turn* refers to a change or movement in a piece resulting from an epiphany, realization, or insight gained by the speaker, a character, or the reader. In *Jane Eyre*, when Jane falls in love with Rochester, her language reflects her new-found happiness:

“I felt at times as if he were my relation, rather than my master: yet he was imperious sometimes still; but I did not mind that; I saw it was his way. So happy, so gratified did I become with this new interest added to life, that I ceased to pine after kindred. My thin crescent-destiny seemed to enlarge; the blanks of existence were filled up; my bodily health improved; I gathered flesh and strength” (129).

Of course, this happiness she feels now only makes more painful her disappointment later when she discovers Rochester already has a wife.

Setting is the time and place in which events in a short story, novel, play, or narrative poem take place. *Jane Eyre* takes place in the early nineteenth century and has five major settings: Gateshead, Lowood, Thornfield, Moor House (Marsh End), and Ferndean Manor.

Style is the writer's characteristic manner of employing language.

Theme is the central message of a literary work. It is not the same as a subject, which can be expressed in a word or two: courage, survival, war, pride, etc. The theme is the idea the author wishes to convey about that subject. It is expressed as a sentence or general statement about life or human nature. A literary work may have more than one theme, and most themes are not directly stated but are implied. The reader must think about all the elements of the work and use

them to make inferences, or reasonable guesses, as to which themes seem to be implied. An example of a theme on the subject of pride might be that pride often precedes a fall. Themes in *Jane Eyre* might be stated as “Be true to your beliefs” and “Act from a balance of passion and reason.”

Tone is the writer's or speaker's attitude toward a subject, character, or audience, and it is conveyed primarily through the author's choice of diction, imagery, figurative language, details, and syntax. Tone may be serious, humorous, sarcastic, indignant, etc. Jane's description of the morning after Rochester proposes to her reflects her intense happiness:

“I was not surprised, when I ran down into the hall, to see that a brilliant June morning had succeeded to the tempest of the night; and to feel, through the open glass door, the breathing of a fresh and fragrant breeze. Nature must be gladsome when I was so happy. A beggar-woman and her little boy—pale, ragged objects both—were coming up the walk, and I ran down and gave them all the money I happened to have in my purse—some three or four shillings: good or bad, they must partake of my jubilee. The rooks cawed, and blither birds sang; but nothing was so merry or so musical as my own rejoicing heart” (226).

Again, this supreme happiness of hers will soon come crashing down when Jane learns of the existence of Bertha Mason Rochester.

Tone shift, multiple tones—reveal changes in attitude or create new attitudes: e.g., when Jane has run from Rochester and has to spend the night on the moor, at first her tone is apprehensive—“What was I to do? Where to go? Oh, intolerable questions, when I could do nothing and go nowhere!” (284) But then she adjusts, and her tone grows calm: “I looked at the sky; it was pure: a kindly star twinkled just above the chasm ridge. The dew fell, but with propitious softness; no breeze whispered. Nature seemed to me benign and good...” (285).

Figures of Speech

Figures of speech are words or phrases that describe one thing in terms of something else. They always involve some sort of imaginative comparison between seemingly unlike things. Not meant to be taken literally, figurative language is used to produce images in a reader’s mind and to express ideas in fresh, vivid, and imaginative ways. The most common examples of figurative language, or figures of speech, used in both prose and poetry are **simile**, **metaphor**, and **personification**.

Apostrophe is a form of personification in which the absent or dead are spoken to as if present, and the inanimate as if animate. These are all addressed directly: e.g., the night after Jane learns about Rochester, she lies in her room thinking what to do:

“She broke forth as never moon yet burst from cloud: a hand first penetrated the sable folds and waved them away; then, not a moon, but a white human form shone in the azure, inclining a glorious brow earthward. It gazed and gazed and gazed on me. It spoke to my spirit: immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart—‘My daughter, flee temptation!’ ‘Mother, I will!’” (281).

Motherless Jane finds the comfort and support she needs in the light of the moon just as she will find in the heath after she runs from Thornfield.

Metaphor is a comparison of two unlike things *not* using *like* or *as*: e.g., in Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*: “The gaping wound of my wrongs, too, was now quite healed; and the flame of resentment extinguished” (200). Here, Jane has returned to Gateshead to visit her aunt, Mrs. Reed, on her deathbed. She calls her old emotional hurt a “wound” and her resentment a “flame,” and both are now gone.

Also, “A fierce cry seemed to give the lie to her favourable report: the clothed hyena rose up, and stood tall on its hind feet” (258). In this quote, Jane says upon first seeing her that Bertha literally is a lowly hyena, a scavenging animal.

Both quotes enhance understanding of and offer insight into Jane’s emotions.

Extended (controlling) metaphor—differs from a regular metaphor in that it is sustained for several lines or sentences or throughout a work. Brontë sustains the Bertha as less-than-human (animal) metaphor throughout the story.

Metonymy is a form of metaphor. In **metonymy**, the name of one thing is applied to another thing with which it is closely associated: e.g., in *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens describes the common people in the streets: “A narrow winding street, full of offense and stench, with other narrow winding streets diverging, all peopled by rags and nightcaps, and all smelling of rags and nightcaps, and all visible things with a brooding look upon them that looked ill.” The starving commoners are associated with their “rags and nightcaps” to emphasize their extreme deprivation.

Oxymoron is a form of paradox that combines a pair of opposite terms into a single unusual expression: e.g., in *Jane Eyre*, when St. John explains to Jane why he will not marry Rosamond Oliver, the great love of his life, he calls what he feels a “delicious poison” (328). He knows that his marriage to Rosamond would consume his passion, distracting him from his goal to be a missionary. (Poison is not “delicious.”)

Paradox occurs when the elements of a statement contradict each other. Although the statement may appear illogical, impossible, or absurd, it turns out to have a coherent meaning that reveals a hidden truth: e.g., in Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, it is paradoxical that Mr. Rochester must go blind before he can “see” the errors of his ways and gain humility.

Personification is a kind of metaphor that gives inanimate objects or abstract ideas human characteristics. Brontë uses personification in the passage that follows. “Your pity, my darling, is the suffering mother of love; its anguish is the very natal pang of the divine passion. I accept, Jane; let the daughter have free advent—my arms wait to receive her” (270). Here, Rochester tries to persuade Jane to live with him as his mistress, and his comparison

of pity to a mother is meant to play upon Jane’s sympathetic nature.

Pun is a play on words that are either identical or similar in sound but have sharply diverse meanings. Puns may have serious as well as humorous uses: e.g., Jane’s last name “Eyre” might be a play on “air” (Rochester’s describing her consistently as an enchanted being) or on “heir” (Jane inherits a fortune large enough to split four ways) or “err” (Jane makes mistakes). Another pronunciation of “Eyre” is “ire.” Jane learns to express her “ire” and to control it as she grows more mature.

Simile is a comparison of two different things or ideas through the use of the words *like* or *as*. It is a definitely stated comparison in which the poet says one thing is like another. When Jane has caught up with a blinded, maimed Rochester at Ferndean, Brontë writes, “The water stood in my eyes to hear this avowal of his dependence: just as if a royal eagle, chained to a perch, should be forced to entreat a sparrow to become its purveyor” (387). Jane has always considered Rochester to be a powerful, controlling man. Now his helplessness reminds her of a chained majestic hunting bird reduced to requesting help from a little songbird.

Epic simile (Homeric)—more involved, more ornate than the typical simile. When trying to make something new and strange understandable to their audience, authors compare it to something familiar. For example, when St. John pressures Jane to marry him, she hears a voice calling her, giving her strength to resist St. John. She thinks about it later:

“The wondrous shock of feeling had come like the earthquake which shook the foundations of Paul and Silas’s prison: it had opened the doors of the soul’s cell, and loosed its bands—it had wakened it out of its sleep, whence it sprang trembling, listening, aghast; then vibrated thrice a cry on my startled ear, and in my quaking heart, and through my spirit; which neither feared nor shook, but exulted as if in joy over the success of one effort it had been privileged to make, independent of the cumbrous body” (371).

Brontë refers to a biblical story her audience would have been sure to recognize. Jane feels as if she has been released miraculously from prison by something similar to an earthquake when she hears the voice.

Synecdoche is a form of metaphor. In synecdoche, a part of something is used to signify the whole: e.g., “All hands on deck.” Also, it can represent the reverse, whereby the whole can represent a part: e.g., “Canada played the United States in the Olympic hockey finals.” Another form of synecdoche involves the container representing the thing being contained: e.g., “The pot is boiling.” In one last form of synecdoche, the material from which an object is made stands for the object itself: e.g., “The quarterback tossed the pigskin.” An example from Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* occurs in Antony’s speech: “Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears” (III.ii.75). In *Jane Eyre*, Jane marries the blind, maimed Rochester and says, “Mr. Rochester continued blind the first two years of our union: perhaps it was that circumstance that drew us so very near—that knit us so very close! For I was then his vision as I am still his right hand” (397). She means, of course, that, even though he still has his “right hand,” he relies on her for help.

Sound Devices

Sound devices are stylistic techniques that convey meaning through sound. Some examples of sound devices are **rhyme** (two words having the same sound), **assonance** (repetition of similar vowel sounds), **consonance** (repetition of consonant sounds in the middle or at the end of words), **alliteration** (words beginning with the same consonant sound), and **onomatopoeia** (words that sound like their meaning).

Alliteration is the practice of beginning several consecutive or neighboring words with the same consonant sound: e.g., Jane Eyre describes a perfect summer day: “I saw a bee busy among the sweet bilberries.” The repetition of “b” captures the erratic movement of the insect.

Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in a series of words: e.g., the words “cry” and “side”

have the same vowel sound and so are said to be in assonance: e.g., Jane Eyre returns to Thornfield after her encounter with the stranger (Rochester) whose horse slipped on ice and who needed her to help him. At this point Thornfield is cozy, but dull for her: “The hall was not dark, nor yet was it lit, only by the high-hung bronze lamp: a warm glow suffused both it and the lower steps of the oak staircase” (102). The repeated “o” gives the scene a mellowness, but all that will change when she finds that the stranger she helped is Rochester who has arrived home.

Consonance is the repetition of a consonant sound within or at the end of a series of words to produce a harmonious effect: e.g., when Jane Eyre is lost and wandering the moors, she says, “while the rain descends so, must I lay my head on the cold, drenched ground?” (290). She wishes to die at this point, and the “d” sound suggests a dull, thudding finality. Just before this scene, she looks up at the Milky Way: “Remembering what it was—what countless systems there swept space like a soft trace of light—I felt the might and strength of God” (285). The repeated “s” suggests a sighing or a “shushing” sound a mother might use to soothe an unhappy child, something Jane has never heard.

Meter is the measured, patterned arrangement of syllables according to stress and length in a poem. In the lines from the song Rochester sings to Jane (see **rhythm** below), the meter alternates from *tetrameter* (4 stressed syllables per line) to *trimeter* (3 stressed syllables per line). Authors provide variations in rhythm and meter to keep poems from becoming repetitious or too predictable.

Onomatopoeia (*imitative harmony*) is the use of words that mimic the sounds they describe: e.g., “hiss,” “buzz,” “bang.” When onomatopoeia is used on an extended scale in a poem, it is called *imitative harmony*. The sounds Bertha Mason makes when the wedding party confronts her in her attic room are onomatopoeic: “snatched,” “growled,” “bellowed.” These words recreate the animal sounds she makes.

Rhyme is the repetition of sounds in two or more words or phrases that appear close to each other in a

poem. *End rhyme* occurs at the end of lines; *internal rhyme*, within a line. A *rhyme scheme* is the pattern of end rhymes. The following lines from *Jane Eyre* illustrate how regular rhyme (a rhyme scheme of ABAB) connects the lines of the ballad with clarity and concision:

“My feet they are sore, and my limbs they are weary;
Long is the way, and the mountains are wild;
Soon will the twilight close moonless and dreary
Over the path of the poor orphan
Child” (18).

Bessie sings this song to Jane; it captures Jane’s present and foreshadows her future. Rhyme may enhance the experience of reading a poem and may promote memory through the pattern of sounds.

Rhythm is the varying speed, intensity, elevation, pitch, loudness, and expressiveness of speech, especially poetry. The rhythm of this stanza from a song Rochester sings for Jane is iambic rhythm with the first syllable unstressed and the second syllable stressed throughout:

“Her coming was my hope each day,
(iambic tetrameter)
Her parting was my pain;
(iambic trimeter)
The chance that did her steps delay
(iambic tetrameter)
Was ice in every vein” (239).
(iambic trimeter)

Iambic *rhythm* is the natural rhythm of the English language and possesses a smooth, flowing feel as does this song.

Literary Techniques

Allusion is a reference to a **mythological, literary, or historical** person, place, or thing: e.g., in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*: “I lingered in the long passage to which this led, separating the front and back rooms of the third story: narrow, low, and dim, with only one little window at the far end, and looking, with its two rows of small black doors all shut, like a corridor in some Bluebeard’s castle” (93). The echoes of “Bluebeard” become obvious as the story of

Rochester’s mad wife locked in the attic unfolds.

Antithesis is a contrast or opposition. St. John with his *icy* disposition is the antithesis of the *fiery*-natured Rochester:

“The picture you have just drawn is suggestive of a rather too overwhelming contrast. Your words have delineated very prettily a graceful Apollo: he is present to your imagination,—tall, fair, blue-eyed, and with a Grecian profile. Your eyes dwell on a Vulcan,—a real blacksmith, brown, broad-shouldered; and blind and lame into the bargain” (388-389).

Brontë’s allusions to Apollo and Vulcan capture perfectly the contrast between the two men.

Argumentation functions by convincing or persuading an audience, or by proving or refuting a point of view or an issue. Argumentation uses **induction**, moving from observations about particular things to generalizations, or **deduction**, moving from generalizations to valid inferences about particulars—or some combination of the two—as its pattern of development. Composers of arguments will also use a combination of logical (**logos**), emotional (**pathos**), and ethical (**ethos**), evidence to establish both their credibility as writers or speakers. Though *Jane Eyre* contains no formal arguments, the conflicts between (or within) the characters illustrate the appeals made in attempts to persuade the audience.

Emotional—In his attempts to make Jane agree to become his mistress, Rochester plays upon her guilt feelings: “Then you condemn me to live wretched, and to die accursed?... Then you snatch love and innocence from me? You fling me back on lust for a passion—vice for an occupation?... Is it better to drive a fellow-creature to despair than to transgress a mere human law—no man being injured by the breach?’...” (278-279).

Ethical—St. John employs the tactic of posing as God’s voice as he tries to convince Jane to marry him: “A missionary’s wife you must be—shall be. You shall be mine: I claim you—not for my pleasure, but for my sovereign’s service... Think like me, Jane—trust like me. It is the Rock of Ages I ask you to lean on: do not doubt but it will

bear the weight of your human weakness” (354).

Logical—In his attempts to persuade Jane to marry him and become a missionary, St. John appeals to Jane’s reason, to her logic, by enumerating her strengths: “In the village school I found you could perform well, punctually, uprightly, labour uncongenial to your habits and inclinations; I saw you could perform it with capacity and tact: you could win while you controlled’ ” (355). Earlier Jane uses her logic to resist Rochester’s appeals:

“I care for myself. The more solitary, the more friendless, the more unsustained I am, the more I will respect myself. 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. Laws and principles are not for the times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this, when body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigour; stringent are they; inviolate they shall be. If at my individual convenience I might break them, what would be their worth? They have a worth—so I have always believed...” (279).

Cause/Effect consists of arguing from the presence (or absence) of the cause to the existence (or nonexistence) of the effect, or result. Conversely, one may argue from an effect to its probable cause(s). As Jane wrestles with her conscience and her sympathy for Rochester, she fears that, by leaving him, she will be the cause of his return to a life of dissipation and, ultimately, his ruin: “Oh, comply! it [feeling] said. ‘Think of his misery; think of his danger—look at his state when left alone; remember his headlong nature; consider the recklessness following on despair—soothe him; save him; love him; tell him you love him and will be his’ ” (279).

Classification, one of the traditional ways of thinking about a subject, identifies the subject as a part of a larger group with shared features. Jane asks Helen Burns about the teachers at Lowood School and, though Helen will not criticize them or classify the teachers as good or bad, Jane does. She thinks Miss Scatcherd is a bad teacher because she constantly

picks at Helen for the slightest infraction. Jane thinks Miss Temple is the best teacher because she is so kind, dignified, and intelligent.

Comparison is a traditional rhetorical strategy based on the assumption that a subject may be shown more clearly by pointing out ways it is similar to something else. The two subjects may each be explained separately, and then their similarities are pointed out. For example, Rochester explains to Jane about his living with mistresses, how it is “the next worst thing to buying a slave: both are often by nature, and always by position, inferior: and to live familiarly with inferiors is degrading” (274). And Jane sees that she would be no different from Celine, Giacinta, or Clara:

“I felt the truth of these words; and I drew from them the certain inference, that if I were so far to forget myself and all the teaching that had ever been instilled into me as—under any pretext—with any justification—through any temptation—to become the successor of these poor girls, he would one day regard me with the same feeling which now in his mind desecrated their memory” (274).

Contrast is a traditional rhetorical strategy based on the assumption that a subject may be shown more clearly by pointing out ways in which it is unlike another subject. When Jane first hears of Blanche Ingram’s beauty, she tries to maintain her grip on reality (she has no business falling in love with her employer) through painting two portraits showing the contrast between her and Blanche—“Portrait of a Governess, disconnected poor, and plain” and “Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank” (141).

Characterization is the act of creating or developing a character. In **direct characterization**, the author directly states a character’s traits. Through Jane’s character, Brontë makes direct statements about Rochester’s character:

“...all my acquaintance with him was confined to an occasional rencontre in the hall, on the stairs, or in the gallery, when he would sometimes pass me haughtily and coldly, just acknowledging my presence by a distant nod or a cool glance, and

sometimes bow and smile with gentlemanlike affability. His changes of mood did not offend me, because I saw that I had nothing to do with their alternation; the ebb and flow depended on causes quite disconnected with me” (113).

Brontë also uses **indirect characterization** to reveal Rochester’s character: Rochester talks with Jane during his first evening at home, questioning her about her skills and demanding that she demonstrate her piano playing. Soon after she begins playing, he called out in a few minutes, “‘Enough!’ ‘You play a *little*, I see, like any other English schoolgirl: perhaps rather better than some, but not well’” (109). His comments reveal his brusque, imperious manner.

Hyperbole is a deliberate, extravagant, and often outrageous exaggeration. It may be used for either serious or comic effect. Brontë uses hyperbole in this passage:

“My hopes were all dead—struck with a subtle doom.... I looked on my cherished wishes, yesterday so blooming and glowing: they lay stark, chill, livid corpses that could never revive. I looked at my love: that feeling which was my master’s—which he had created; it shivered in my heart, like a suffering child in a cold cradle; sickness and anguish had seized it; it could not seek Mr. Rochester’s arms—it could not derive warmth from his breast. Oh, never more could it turn to him; for faith was blighted—confidence destroyed!” (260).

These words of Jane’s capture the seriousness of her mood shortly after her discovery of Rochester’s dishonesty, but the words are excessive because Jane never truly loses her hope, faith, or confidence.

Irony occurs in three types.

Dramatic irony occurs when a character or speaker says or does something that has a different meaning from what he thinks it means, though the audience and other characters understand the full implications of the speech or action: e.g., Oedipus curses the murderer of Laius, not realizing that he is himself the murderer and so is cursing himself. Also, the following passage from Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* contains dramatic irony:

“[Mr. Brocklehurst]’ . . . each of the young persons before us has a string of hair twisted in plaits which vanity itself might have woven; these, I repeat, must be cut off; think of the time wasted, of—”

Mr. Brocklehurst was here interrupted: three other visitors, ladies, now entered the room. They ought to have come a little sooner to have heard his lecture on dress, for they were splendidly attired in velvet, silk, and furs. The two younger of the trio (fine girls of sixteen and seventeen) had grey beaver hats, then in fashion, shaded with ostrich plumes, and from under the brim of this graceful head-dress fell a profusion of light tresses, elaborately curled; the elder lady was enveloped in a costly velvet shawl, trimmed with ermine, and she wore a false front of French curls” (56).

In this scene, Mr. Brocklehurst has just ordered haircuts for the impoverished girls at Lowood School so they aren’t indulging in vanity. In walk his wife and daughters, decked out in the latest fashions and sporting fashionable hairdos. He obviously does not see the irony here in applying different rules to his own family than to the girls at Lowood.

Situational irony occurs when a situation turns out differently from what one would normally expect—though often the twist is oddly appropriate. Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* contains this example:

“ . . . that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not lawfully be joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it . . . ”

He paused, as the custom is. When is the pause after that sentence ever broken by reply? Not, perhaps, once in a hundred years. And the clergyman, who had not lifted his eyes from his book, and had held his breath but for a moment, was proceeding: his hand was already stretched towards Mr. Rochester, as his lips unclosed to ask ‘Wilt thou have this woman for thy wedded wife?’—when a distinct and near voice said;—‘The marriage cannot go on: I declare the existence of an impediment’” (254).

It is ironic that Jane has just thought about how the ceremony is rarely stopped because of an impediment when hers is interrupted by Mr. Briggs, the London

solicitor, who announces that Rochester “has a wife now living.”

Verbal irony occurs when a speaker or narrator says one thing while meaning the opposite. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, the title of Chapter 12, “The Fellow of Delicacy,” is ironic. This chapter concerns the self-important Mr. Stryver who presumes that Lucie Manette will be thrilled to marry him, never thinking that she may have other plans. When Mr. Stryver shares his wedding plans with Mr. Lorry, Mr. Lorry tries to make Mr. Stryver see that it would not be at all “delicate” to ask Lucie to marry him based on what Mr. Stryver sees as his personal credentials: “a man of business—a man of years—a man of experience—in a Bank.” Dickens uses verbal irony also in the title of Chapter 14, “The Honest Tradesman.” This chapter concerns Jerry Cruncher, the grave-robber, a man anything but honest.

Sarcasm is the use of verbal irony in which a person appears to be praising something but is actually insulting it. The remark may also be taunting or caustic. For example, when St. John Rivers tries to persuade Jane to accompany him to India as a missionary’s wife, she finally realizes why he makes her uncomfortable and refuses to marry him, saying she will accompany him only as a sister: “‘Oh! I will give my heart to God,’ I said. ‘You do not want it’” (357).

Motif is a term that describes a *pattern or strand of imagery or symbolism* in a work of literature. For example, fire recurs throughout *Jane Eyre*—Bertha Mason sets Rochester’s bedroom on fire and, later, all of Thornfield Hall. Rochester’s suffering from his burns brings about his ultimate redemption and the return of his true love.

Satire refers to the use of devices like irony, understatement, and exaggeration to highlight a human folly or a societal problem. The purpose of satire is to bring the flaw to the attention of the reader in order that it may be addressed, remedied, or eradicated. In Chapters 17-19 of *Jane Eyre*, Brontë exaggerates the flaws of the Ingrams and other members of the upper class at Rochester’s house

party. Her criticism of their behavior enhances Jane’s character, for she is above reproach.

Symbolism is the use of any object, person, place, or action that not only has a meaning in itself but also stands for something larger than itself, such as a quality, attitude, belief, or value. There are two basic types, *universal* (a symbol that is common to all mankind) and *contextual* (a symbol used in a particular way by an individual author). For example, in *Jane Eyre*, the chestnut tree stands as a symbol of what happens to Jane and Rochester. They will be separated for a time but rejoined after Rochester suffers burns and mutilation trying to rescue Bertha from a burning Thornfield:

“...I faced the wreck of the chestnut-tree; it stood up, black and riven: the trunk, split down the centre, gasped ghastly. The cloven halves were not broken from each other, for the firm base and strong roots kept them unsundered below; though community of vitality was destroyed—the sap could flow no more; their great boughs on each side were dead, and next winter’s tempests would be sure to fell one or both to earth: as yet, however they might be said to form one tree—a ruin, but an entire ruin” (243).

Understatement is the opposite of hyperbole. It is a kind of irony that deliberately represents something as being much less than it really is: e.g., Jane Eyre tries to make sense of Grace Poole and her eccentric behavior. Puzzled by everyone’s tolerance of Grace, she will not allow herself to grow too alarmed: “When thus alone I not unfrequently heard Grace Poole’s laugh...” (96). Her understated thoughts help keep her panic to a minimum.

Literary Forms

Aristotle’s Rules for Tragedy

Catharsis is the release of emotion (pity and fear) from the audience’s perspective: e.g. After watching *Antigoné*, the audience will feel pity for the tragic deaths and fear for themselves because if even the “best” in society fall, what future awaits the common man?

Dramatic Unities

- **Time:** The play has to take place within a 24-hour period: e.g. *Antigoné* takes place in “real” time; the audience experiences the action as it unfolds.
- **Place:** The action of the play is set in one place. *Antigoné* is set in front of the royal palace in Thebes.
- **Action:** There is one hero and one plot. The action in *Antigoné* focuses on Antigone’s determination to bury her brother Polyneices and the resulting consequences.

Hamartia is the tragic flaw that leads to the tragic hero’s downfall. In *Antigoné* Creon’s tragic flaw of holding himself above the prophets and the laws of the gods dooms him.

Hubris is arrogance before the gods. In *Antigoné* Creon’s pride and arrogance cause his downfall.

Recognition occurs as the hero meets his catastrophe, at which point he recognizes his flaw and the reason he must die. In *Antigoné* Creon acknowledges his responsibility for the deaths of his family and confesses he was too proud.

Reversal occurs when the opposite of what the hero intends is what happens. In *Antigoné* Creon thinks he is doing the right thing by imprisoning Antigone, but this action leads to the suicides of his son and his wife.