
"Jane Eyre" by Charlotte Bronte and the Women of the Victoria Era

Jane Eyre criticizes assumptions about both gender and social class. It contains a strong feminist stance; it speaks to deep, timeless human urges and fears, using the principles of literature to chart the mind. Thus, Jane Eyre is an epitome of femininity - a young independent individual steadfast in her morals and has strong Christian virtues, dominant, assertive and principled. That itself is no small feat. Feminism has been a prominent and controversial topic in writings for some time.

Charlotte Bronte uses Jane Eyre, to explore the depth at which women may act in society and find her own boundaries in Victorian England, which most other novels before the time never did. Jane Eyre does not reinforce the past, but gives an idea to the future. There is an ample amount of evidence to suggest that the tone of Jane Eyre is in fact a very feminist one and may well be thought as relevant to the women of today who feel they have been discriminated against because of their gender.

At the beginning of the 19th century, little opportunity existed for women, and thus many of them felt uncomfortable when attempting to enter many parts of society. The absence of advanced educational opportunities for women and their alienation from almost all fields of work gave them little option in life: either become a housewife or a governess. Although today a tutor may be considered a fairly high class and intellectual job, in the Victorian era a governess was little more than a servant who was paid to share her scarce amount of knowledge in limited fields to a child.

With little respect, security, or class one may certainly feel that an intelligent, passionate and opinionated young woman such as Jane Eyre should deserve and be capable of so much more. The insecurity of this position, being tossed around with complete disregard for her feelings or preferences, is only one of many grueling characteristics of this occupation. However for Jane to even emerge into society, becoming a governess seemed the only reasonable path for her.

The women of the Victorian Era can be regarded as the first group to do battle for the equality of the sexes. They lead all women to follow after them, and though their progression may not have been as vivid as the women of the 70's, they did have an effect. Feminism was not outright spoken of in this time, rather passed through literature. Any era before never gave and thought to the women and how they felt about anything.