

Contents

Introduction	9
Chronology	13

Chapter 1: Background on Charlotte Brontë

1. The Fight for Independence as Student, Governess, and Writer	17
---	----

Herbert J. Rosengarten

Charlotte Brontë was reared in Haworth, England, attended boarding school, worked as a governess, went to study abroad, and returned to Haworth to become a novelist.

2. The Brontë Sisters at Cowan Bridge School	29
--	----

Elizabeth Gaskell

Lowood School in *Jane Eyre* was universally recognized as Cowan Bridge School, which the four Brontë girls attended, two of them dying from conditions there.

Chapter 2: *Jane Eyre* and Woman's Search for Independence

1. Female Independence as a Central Theme in <i>Jane Eyre</i>	40
---	----

Inga-Stina Ewbank

In the course of Jane's rebellious pursuit of economic and inner independence, she trades in the traditional religion of the patriarchy for an Earth Mother.

2. Vision and Power in <i>Jane Eyre</i>	48
---	----

Peter J. Bellis

Unlike the subjugated women of her day, Jane Eyre develops her own independent vision, incorporating it into her autobiography.

3. Parallels Between Colonialism
and Female Oppression

Susan L. Meyer

Brontë equates and abhors English colonialism and the lack of female independence.

54
4. The Harem Slave and Rochester and Jane

Joyce Zonana

Jane Eyre is filled with references to oriental enslavement in harems, similar to Jane's vision of what life would be like as Rochester's mistress.

63
5. From Patriarchy to Matriarchy

Nancy Pell

The heart of *Jane Eyre* is a young woman's lifelong struggle for justice and independence within a religious-based patriarchy.

72
6. Balancing Romance and Independence

Jean Wyatt

Outwardly Jane battles in a patriarchy for her self-identity and independence but inwardly never loses her passion for her patriarchal lover.

79
7. Romance Is Not Compatible with Freedom

Melodie Monahan

In *Jane Eyre*, Jane's attempt to free herself from society's oppression of women is in sharp conflict with romance with masculine despots.

87
8. Sexual Awakening and Freedom

John Maynard

Jane's fight for independence involves her sexual awakening and her attempt to keep passion from making her a slave.

95
9. Religion as a Tool of Justification

Margaret Howard Blom

Jane always makes decisions in her own best interest, using religion only as a justification for her acts but refusing to obey Christian dictates.

103

10. Class Restrictions on Jane's Independence 110
Terry Eagleton
The lower-middle-class: Jane is conflicted about a class system that regards her as a servant and refuses to accommodate her search for independence.
11. Revolution with an Undertone of Conservatism 120
Parama Roy
Jane Eyre is basically a revolutionary, fighting against social and religious tradition for her independence; yet there is an undercurrent of conservatism.

Chapter 3: Contemporary Perspectives on Female Independence

1. Finding Independence and Embracing Feminism 129
Rosanna Eang
A young woman in a culture that teaches women to be dependent and obedient, emerges from poverty to find her independent self.
2. The Case Against Marriage 136
Jessica Bennett and Jesse Ellison
All the old reasons for a woman to marry and relinquish her independence are now irrelevant.
3. A Matriarchal Society Is Not Imminent 143
Katha Pollitt
Women who strive for education and create strategies for improvement are progressing, but inequality of and demeaning cultural attitudes toward women still create burdens for them.
4. Women Must Take Ownership of Their Finances 147
Suze Orman
A woman's wise control of her money is the path to true independence and fulfillment and has a direct effect on self-esteem and the lives of those she loves.

For Further Discussion	154
For Further Reading	155
Bibliography	156
Index	161