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**Simon & Schuster Classroom Activities  
for the Enriched Classic edition of  
*Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë  
1-4165-0024-3 • \$4.95 / \$6.95 Can.**

Activities created by Katie Gideon

**This curriculum guide is composed of three interrelated activities, all designed around the portrayal of women in *Jane Eyre*. Is Charlotte Brontë's novel a work of female rebellion, or does it encourage and affirm traditional female roles? By the end of this unit of study, students will answer the question in a formal academic essay.**

Each of the three activities includes:

- NCTE standards covered
- An estimate of the time needed
- A complete list of materials needed
- Step-by-step instructions
- Questions to help you evaluate the results

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Lesson Plan #1

**“Hardy, Patient, Self-Denying”**  
(A Lesson in Layered Elaboration)

To support their development of strong opinions—and writing skills—this first activity introduces students to the concept of layered elaboration.

This activity takes one fifty-minute class period and also includes homework.

**NCTE Standards Covered:**

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

**What To Do:**

1. Prior to teaching this cooperative lesson, decide how many students will be in each group. Then, make a copy of Handout #1 (on yellow paper) and Handout #2 (on blue paper) for each group. Cut up the handouts so that each sentence is on a different strip, and place those strips in envelopes. When you're finished preparing, each group should have an envelope containing the cut-up sentences of each paragraph.
2. In class, divide the students into groups. Tell them to take out the yellow strips of paper and set aside the topic sentence: “The heroine of *Jane Eyre* shows rebellious spirit, even though she’s poor and her relatives are mean to her.” Now, give them some time to put the other sentence strips in order beneath the topic sentence so that they form a coherent paragraph supporting the topic sentence. When students are finished, call on one group to share. Ask if anyone else has a different order of sentences, and have several more groups share.
3. The students should realize that all of the paragraphs make sense, but none of them are very good. Inform them that it’s impossible to identify the “correct” order for the sentences because

they are vague and unconnected. Instead of building a convincing argument for readers, the author of this paragraph compiled a list of evidence.

4. Now, tell them to take out the pieces of blue paper and set aside the topic sentence: “The spirited heroine of *Jane Eyre* does not conform to the Victorian expectation that an impoverished female should meekly endure any ill treatment from her benefactors.” As before, give groups time to put the sentences in order and then have them share their complete paragraphs with the class.

5. This time, students will notice that multiple groups are creating the same paragraph with their sentence strips. They should also notice that the author of this second paragraph has superior writing skills. Why is that? Lead them in a discussion to recognize the paragraph’s internal organizational structure. This author layered each point on top of the other to create a complex, cohesive argument. The intentional vocabulary creates context for the reader. Finally, the direct textual citations provide much stronger evidence than the vague references to plot in the first paragraph.

6. Inform the class that they will have a chance to practice writing paragraphs with a strong internal structure. Post the following sentence so that students can copy it down: “Major incidents in *Jane Eyre*’s childhood demonstrate that impoverished, dependent women cannot protect themselves from inhumane suffering.” Students will use this as their topic sentence when they write a paragraph for homework. The paragraph should contain layered elaboration, paraphrasing from the text, and citations. If students wish to modify the topic sentence, they may.

7. Keep the graded paragraphs in the classroom, so that students can incorporate them into the final essay.

### **What You Need:**

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *Jane Eyre* (ISBN: 1416500243) for each student

Copies of Handout #1, made on yellow paper

Copies of Handout #2, made on blue paper

Business-size envelopes

### **How Did It Go?**

Were the students able to see the difference between the two paragraphs about *Jane Eyre*? Did the students properly cite passages in the text? Were they able to identify evidence that illustrates the topic sentence? Did they correctly interpret their evidence using intentional vocabulary and strong statements? Could they avoid listing and create layered elaboration instead?

Lesson Plan #2

**“The Clothed Hyena”**  
(A Lesson in Categorizing Evidence)

Charlotte Brontë’s novel contains several representations of rebellion and imprisonment—the most widely studied being that of the character of Bertha Mason. No discussion of Brontë’s female characters would be complete without an analysis of the “dark madwoman” living on the third floor of Thornfield Hall. In this lesson, students will analyze passages referencing Rochester’s wife. They will practice organizing evidence and then using strong, intentional vocabulary to explain their analysis of the character.

This activity assumes familiarity through Volume II of *Jane Eyre*. It takes one or two fifty-minute class periods and also includes a night of homework.

**NCTE Standards Covered:**

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.

**What To Do:**

1. Once again, you must split the students into groups prior to teaching the lesson. Make enough copies of Handout #3 for each group to have one copy. Cut up the handout so that each piece of evidence is on a different strip of paper, and place those strips in envelopes. When you’re finished preparing, each group should have an envelope containing all of the cut-up evidence relevant to interpreting Bertha Mason’s character.
2. Start class with the discussion question regarding Bertha Mason (pg.600). Encourage students to reference the text as they discuss how Brontë wants readers to view Rochester’s wife. Then, divide the students into groups and pass out both the envelopes and Handout #4. Read the prompt question written on Handout #4. Tell students that the envelopes contain the information that they will be using on their Evidence Outline Organizer.
3. In their groups, students must divide the nine pieces of evidence into three separate categories. For instance, students might create a category for “quotes that make Bertha sound like an animal” or “quotes about Rochester cheating on his wife.” They can literally shuffle the strips of

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evidence around until everyone in the group agrees on the three categories. As they work with the evidence, invite students to notice how the evidence consists of both direct quotations and paraphrases of the text. How does this combination of quoting and summarizing strengthen the evidence? How would it make the evidence more reader-friendly in an essay?

4. Once they've agreed on their categories, students should write sentences for their three categories on Handout #4. The sentences should explain how the three pieces of grouped evidence are related to one another. (For instance, next to "Category One: Explain Relationship" someone might write, "In describing Bertha's behavior and looks, Brontë repeatedly suggests that the madwoman is somehow demonic or otherworldly.")

5. Students should then copy the evidence onto the appropriate lines of Handout #4.

6. Once the groups are finished with the activity, have a representative of each group share with the class how they chose to group the evidence. Point out that, though all of the groups started with the same passages, they noticed different relationships between the evidence and thus created different categories.

7. For homework, students should choose the category that interests them most. They will turn their outline for that category into a formal academic paragraph. In doing so, they should feel free to modify the paraphrasing of evidence in order to make their ideas flow clearly. The category sentence explaining the relationship is a guide for their topic sentence, but can also be modified to make ideas flow clearly.

8. Keep the graded paragraphs in the classroom, so that students can incorporate them into the final essay.

**What You Need:**

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *Jane Eyre* (ISBN: 1416500243) for each student

Copies of Handout #3 (one for each group)

Copies of Handout #4 (one for each student)

Business-size envelopes

**How Did It Go?**

Were students able to group the evidence? Could they write a sentence that explained the unifying topic for each of the categories they created? Does their outline indicate a sense of organization? Did their homework paragraph thoughtfully examine the portrayal of Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*? Did they correctly interpret their evidence using intentional vocabulary and strong statements to interpret their evidence?

Lesson Plan #3

**“My Own Mistress Now”**  
(A Lesson in Literary Analysis)

The following assessment activity is designed to develop students’ confidence and effectiveness as they write literary analysis. In this lesson, students will use close reading, critical thinking, and revision skills to discuss the portrayal of women in Charlotte Brontë’s novel.

This activity takes two fifty-minute class periods to complete and may also include homework.

**NCTE Standards Covered:**

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).
4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.
6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and non-print texts.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

**What To Do:**

1. Facilitate a brief class discussion regarding whether or not *Jane Eyre* is a novel of female rebellion. Use the third question on page 599 to help guide the conversation. At the end of the discussion, have each student complete one of the following two sentence stems on a scrap piece of paper.
  - *Jane Eyre* is a work of female rebellion because...
  - The novel *Jane Eyre* encourages and affirms traditional female roles because...

The sentences that they create will be the rough draft thesis statements for the students’ essays, which they can later modify to add nuance.

2. Explain that students will be writing an analytical essay as part of their final assessment for the unit. Pass out copies of Handout #5. Explain that successful writers carefully read all of the information provided for an assignment before they commence work. Encourage students to underline key words and phrases as you read the essay prompt and rubric out loud.

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3. Lead students through a brief prompt analysis. What is this prompt asking students to do? Who are some of the characters the students might discuss in their papers? What are some key events they may want to analyze?

4. Pass back the paragraphs that students wrote for the first two activities in this curriculum guide. Have students look at their rough draft thesis statement. Of the two paragraphs that they wrote earlier in the unit, which one—after editing—will best support their essay’s thesis statement? After students choose a paragraph, encourage them to make any changes necessary so that the paragraph fits seamlessly in with the rest of the argument. They should also incorporate any editor’s suggestions you made into their final draft of the paragraph.

5. As the students write their essays, encourage them to consider whether or not their rough draft thesis statements are still adequate in light of the passages they chose and the analysis they did. If not, students should revise them accordingly.

6. Students should turn in their final essay with Handout #5 and the copy of their paragraph attached.

**What You Need:**

A copy of the Enriched Classic edition of *Jane Eyre* (ISBN: 1416500243) for each student

Copies of Handout #5 (one for each student)

**How Did It Go?**

Were students able to take a strong position on the portrayal of women in *Jane Eyre*? Did they make connections between different passages? Could they use the skills taught in prior lessons to formulate and support a coherent argument? Could they synthesize what they learned into an organized essay? Did their essays fully address the prompt?

Handout #1

**“Hardy, Patient, Self-Denying”:** Listed Evidence Scramble

The heroine of *Jane Eyre* shows rebellious spirit, even though she’s poor and her relatives are mean to her.

Everyone thinks that Jane should be grateful because her wealthy relatives took her in.

Even though she is poor, Jane believes that she should be treated fairly—given some affection and protected from injustice or cruelty.

Her guardian, Mrs. Reed, doesn’t like her.

Her guardian’s children are mean to her and get away with it because they have more money.

At Gateshead Hall, Jane’s material needs are met. She has food and clothing, but no one to love her.



### **“Hardy, Patient, Self-Denying”: Layered Elaboration Scramble**

The spirited heroine of *Jane Eyre* does not conform to the Victorian expectation that an impoverished female should meekly endure any ill treatment from her benefactors.

Her unique attitude is obvious even during her childhood at Gateshead Hall, for Jane feels no appreciation towards the wealthy relatives who are raising her.

This lack of gratitude is not surprising given that her guardian, Mrs. Reed, is unkind and allows her ignorant, contemptible children to bully poor Jane.

Because Jane is poor, people expect her to meekly endure such treatment from her relatives. As Bessie, a maid, reminds Jane, “They will have a great deal of money, and you will have none: it is your place to be humble, and to try to make yourself agreeable to them” (pg.20).

Bessie is not alone in this belief; everyone at Gateshead thinks that Jane should be humble and submissive towards her wealthier relatives.

Yet Jane rebels against this expectation. She even castigates Mrs. Reed—first for allowing her son to strike Jane for no reason, and then for forcing Jane to endure a traumatizing, needless punishment in the red room (pg. 49).

### **Bertha Mason: Textual Evidence**

One night, Jane wakes up to the sound of “demoniac laughter” and thinks she sees something “crouched” by her pillow. Frightened, she prepares to run to Mrs. Fairfax and, in doing so, discovers that Mr. Rochester’s bed curtains have been mysteriously set on fire (pgs. 189-190).

When Mr. Mason attempts to visit with Bertha alone, she wounds him. Rochester analyzes the wound and guesses that she used her teeth; Mason concurs: “She sucked the blood: she said she’d drain my heart.” Rochester meets this account of Bertha’s behavior with an expression of “disgust,” “horror,” and “hatred” (pgs.269-270).

After Bertha wounds Mr. Mason, Jane enters the locked rooms to help care for him. From behind a door she hears “a snarling, snatching sound, almost like a dog quarreling.” (pg.265)

Mr. Rochester invites Jane to imagine herself a wild boy “in a remote foreign land” who commits “a capital error... one whose consequences must follow you through life and taint all your existence.” The “error” is his marriage to Bertha (pg.276).

Though Bertha is still alive, Rochester confesses his love to Jane and proposes marriage. She accepts, and they kiss passionately (pgs.320-323).

Before her wedding, Jane wakes up in the middle of the night to a “shape” standing before her. Though Jane doesn’t realize it, this is Bertha. She tells Rochester how the madwoman tried on Jane’s extravagant wedding veil before tearing it in two, flinging the parts down, and stepping on them. Jane thinks it all might be a dream until she wakes up to see “the veil, torn from top to bottom in two halves” (pgs. 355-357).

As Jane relates the wedding veil incident to Rochester, she describes Bertha’s “savage face” with its red eyes and swollen, dark lips. The face reminds Jane of a vampire. (pgs.355-356)

During Jane and Rochester’s wedding ceremony, the clergyman asks them to confess if they know of any reason why they cannot or should not be joined in matrimony. From somewhere in the congregation, a voice calls out that there’s an impediment. The speaker explains that it “consists of the existence of a previous marriage. Mr. Rochester has a wife now living” (pgs. 362-363).

After the wedding is ruined, Rochester confesses that the accusation is true—he is, in fact, married. He then invites witnesses to come to the locked rooms at Thornfield: “see what sort of a being I was cheated into espousing, and judge whether or not I had a right to break the compact, and seek sympathy with something at least human.” (pg.366)

When the ruined wedding party ascends to the attic, they see a figure in the shadows. “What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it groveled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal” (pg. 367)

**Evidence Outline Organizer**

Analyze Jane’s impressions of Bertha Mason as well as Rochester’s treatment of her. How does Brontë invite us to see Bertha? Explain how her portrayal of the “dark madwoman” affects your interpretation of whether *Jane Eyre* actually encourages female rebellion, or affirms adherence to traditional gender roles.

(Category One: Explain Relationship) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Evidence 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence 3: \_\_\_\_\_

(Category Two: Explain Relationship) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Evidence 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence 3: \_\_\_\_\_

(Category Three: Explain Relationship) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Evidence 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Evidence 3: \_\_\_\_\_

## Handout #5

### *Jane Eyre* Essay

**Prompt:** Consider the portrayal of women in *Jane Eyre*: the way they're described, the hardships they endure, and the choices they make. Is Charlotte Brontë's novel a work of female rebellion, or does it encourage and affirm traditional female roles?

**Rubric: Focus on Evidence Selection/Organization, Layered Elaboration, Revision**

- + Excellent! You have this area mastered (30 points)
- ✓ Satisfactory, but could use some improvement (25 points)
- You need some help; please see me (20 points)

#### Central Argument

- Precise, sharply focused thesis statement contains an argument that will require significant evidence and elaboration to support
- Relevant evidence selected from the text
- Evidence cited correctly
- Evidence gathered from a variety of places within text, not just one or two chapters
- Evidence incorporated into central argument using both paraphrasing and direct quotation.

#### Body Paragraphs

- Support thesis; strong commitment to topic
- Sequencing of evidence and explanation is logical and effective
- Overall effect is smooth and balanced
- Transitions used skillfully to create layered elaboration
- Layered elaboration explains connections between characters, events, themes, and/or perspectives
- Use of intentional vocabulary brings clarity to writer's analysis of the evidence.
- Mechanical errors (grammar, spelling, punctuation) are few, and do not distract from meaning

#### Revision

- Final essay contains a paragraph from a previous assignment, rewritten to fit thesis statement.
- The paragraph is rewritten to incorporate initial editing suggestions made by teacher
- Paragraph from previous assignment fits seamlessly with other paragraphs to form a cohesive argument
- Original paragraph turned in with final essay, so that teacher can ascertain extent of revision