Class Struggle in Jane Eyre.

- "Jane Eyre" (1847) is a hauntingly beautiful and eloquently written novel. The novel was replete with progressive ideas. Eyre was one of the first literary heroines to command recognition of feminine fortitude, wit, and desire. Like her creator, she was a heroine ahead of her time, and her story is 'peppered with nuggets of wisdom' that are just as relevant today as they were when it was first written and published.
- Education and the right to vote were exclusive to the upper class in the Victorian times. The right to vote and the ability to hold political office required ownership of property. The upper class was almost entirely exclusive and required being born into it.
- Jane Eyre is not an ordinary depiction of the19th century Britain as its main character is female and it deals with serious social issues in 19th century British society. In her novel, Charlotte Brontë explores the possibility that class relationships have no absolute boundaries that cannot be crossed. Her protagonist Jane is placed in between economic classes and drifts among the lower, middle, and upper classes of Victorian England.
- The condition of women in Victorian England was one of inequality and oppression. Women were not given equal rights and were expected to get married and surrender most of their identity to their husbands. This was especially true for women in the lower classes, who were looked down on by society and expected to serve those who were wealthier.
- The obstacles that Jane faces are social, structural, and institutional.
- Throughout the novel, the protagonist Jane occupies an ambiguous class position. She travels the entire spectrum of class status from homeless vagabond to upper class married woman. Both Jane's mother and father were socially ambiguous, and this ambiguity is part of their legacy to Jane. Jane's father was a poor clergyman who married Jane's mother, a middle-class woman. Her father's education helped him to elevate himself slightly from the masses of poor people and her mother's marrying down lowered her from the class she had been born into. Therefore, when Jane was born, she also occupied this socially ambiguous spot. Jane's class status becomes even more indefinable when her parents died and left her as an orphan to be brought up by her wealthy Aunt Reed.
- "I learned, for the first time, from Miss Abbot's communications to Bessie, that my father had been a poor clergyman; that my mother had married him against the wishes of her friends, who considered the match beneath her; that my grandfather Reed was so irritated at her disobedience, he cut her off without a shilling; that after my mother and father had been married a year, the latter caught the typhus fever…that my mother took the infection from him, and both died within a month of each other."
- Bronte's depiction of Jane is revolutionary. Jane clearly feels as strongly and deeply as men do. Jane exemplifies the self-confident, resolute and brave woman. Women at that time were supposed to be silent and not to claim their own identities. She believes in her right to live a rewarding, independent life… As a passionate woman she strives

to fit in but is constantly rejected by everyone she meets because she is superior to the servants and below the gentry. Her story creates a wonderful commentary on social class.

Take a look at the 2 quotes below.

- "Do you think I am an automaton?–a machine without feelings? and can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips, and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong!–I have as much soul as you,–and full as much heart!.... I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh;–it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal,–as we are!"

- "Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts, as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, to absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex."

- Poverty is one of the main motivations for Jane to leave her original situation and improve her situation through personal development and education. It is Jane's strength of mind, character, and morality that allows her to succeed in life and love.

- She has proven three things to her readers-1.that her love for Mr. Rochester was real and not for his wealth and social status; 2. That Mr. Rochester truly loves and appreciates her; 3. she proves to herself that she has made the right choice and does not contradict her moral principles.

- At the end of the novel, Jane miraculously inherits a fortune from her uncle. Having entered the upper class without the support of Rochester, she proves her worth as an individual. Terry Eagleton writes, (Jane) "comes to have power over Rochester" because when she agrees to marry him, "she comes to him on her own terms, financially self-sufficient" Thus, she goes back to Rochester and marries him, content with the knowledge that she had achieved her goal. Eagleton believes that Brontë intentionally lowered Rochester beneath Jane economically and socially in order to promote the hardworking, proletariat character over the idle bourgeoisie.

- "Jane remains essentially the same character throughout the novel even though her class status changes dramatically. By doing so, Charlotte Brontë shows that economic classes were not as concrete as certain people wanted them to be and that individuals should not be defined solely by their economic class."

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