

GCSE (9–1)
Delivery Guide

ENGLISH LITERATURE

J352
For first teaching in 2015

Jane Eyre
Charlotte Brontë
Version 1



GCSE (9–1)

ENGLISH LITERATURE

Delivery guides are designed to represent a body of knowledge about teaching a particular topic and contain:

- Content: A clear outline of the content covered by the delivery guide;
- Thinking Conceptually: Expert guidance on the key concepts involved, common difficulties students may have, approaches to teaching that can help students understand these concepts and how this topic links conceptually to other areas of the subject;
- Thinking Contextually: A range of suggested teaching activities using a variety of themes so that different activities can be selected which best suit particular classes, learning styles or teaching approaches.

If you have any feedback on this Delivery Guide or suggestions for other resources you would like OCR to develop, please email resources.feedback@ocr.org.uk



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The study of a nineteenth century novel is compulsory in all the new GCSE (9–1) English Literature specifications. Teachers should be aware of some key changes in the assessment that will affect how the text is taught:

- the examinations are ‘closed text’ and there are no tiered papers
- in extract-based questions, candidates must show understanding of the whole text by writing about other parts of the novel. The extract should be used to show close analysis, but the rest of the response should demonstrate wider understanding of the novel’s themes and characters
- candidates need to show understanding of the social, cultural and historical setting of the text – this includes the literary genre – and this knowledge should be integrated into the examination response.

Overview of Component 1 – Exploring modern and literary heritage texts

Assessment overview – 50% of total GCSE

- 80 marks
- two-hour written paper
- one studied modern prose or drama text
- one studied 19th century prose text.

Assessment objective overview

Component Exploring Modern and Literary Heritage Texts (J352/01)	Intended weightings (% of GCSE)				Total
	AO1	AO2	AO3	AO4	
Section A: Modern prose or drama Part a	5	2.5	5		12.5
Section A: Modern prose or drama Part b	6.25	6.25			12.5
Section B: 19th century prose	8.75	8.75	5	2.5	25
Total	20	17.5	10	2.5	50

Required skills

Learners should be able to:

Reflect critically and evaluatively on their reading. Learners are expected to respond to some of the following:

- themes, ideas and issues
- atmosphere and emotion
- plot development
- characters and relationships
- language
- relevant social, historical or cultural contexts, or literary contexts such as genre
- pay attention to the details of a text: understanding the significance of a word, phrase or sentence in context
- demonstrate the ability to read at a literal level and also explore deeper implications
- explain motivation, sequence of events and the relationship between actions or events
- identify and interpret key themes
- make an informed personal response, justifying a point of view by referring closely to evidence in the text
- reflect critically and evaluatively on a text, using an understanding of context to inform reading
- recognise and evaluate the possibility of different valid responses to a text
- explain and illustrate how choice of language shapes meaning
- analyse how the writer uses language, form and structure to create effects and impact
- use relevant subject terminology accurately to support their views
- produce clear and coherent pieces of extended writing
- select and emphasise key points and ideas for a particular purpose
- develop and maintain a consistent viewpoint
- use textual references and quotations effectively to support views
- use accurate Standard English and spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Exam questions

This component is worth 80 marks: 40 marks for Section A and 40 marks for Section B.

- **Section A:** Modern prose or drama (25% of total GCSE (9–1))
Learners study **one** modern prose or drama set text. Learners respond to one extended response-style question on their studied text, which is divided into two parts: a) a comparison of an extract from the studied text with a modern, same-genre unseen extract and b) a related question on the same studied text.
- **Section B:** 19th century prose (25% of total GCSE (9–1))
Learners study **one** 19th century set text. Learners respond to one extended response-style question on their studied text, from a choice of two: an extract-based question, making links to the whole text OR a discursive question.

The novel can be approached in various ways in terms of form:

- **Bildungsroman** – a novel which follows the moral and spiritual growth of the protagonist in the form of a journey whereby the character finds their role and place in the world once they have discovered their 'true self' and identity. In the case of *Jane Eyre* this is also true of Rochester and in this respect it is a double bildungsroman.
- **Romance** – at the heart of *Jane Eyre* is a romance with a brooding, unfulfilled Byronic hero and a passionate heroine who yearns for love and security. Their love emerges triumphant after a series of moral trials which they have had to overcome in order to be rewarded with each other and a life of happiness together.
- **Gothic** – the novel contains a number of Gothic elements which readers at the time would have enjoyed because the Gothic novel was at its height. The most obvious of these are Thornfield as a setting and the mystery of Bertha, the madwoman in the attic.
- **Social critique** – there are strands of social criticism throughout the novel: education, class divisions, the treatment of women, colonialist attitudes and social and economic injustice (including inherited wealth).



- **Semi-autobiographical novel** - *Jane Eyre* was first published as *Jane Eyre: An Autobiography*. At the beginning of Chapter 10 she claims, 'this is not to be a regular autobiography.' Although it is not an autobiography because Jane is a fictional character, it can be described as semi-autobiographical because certain events, places, situations and characters in the novel are taken from Brontë's own experience. It is said that Jane bears a strong similarity to Charlotte Brontë herself.

Students should avoid trying to map any similarities to Brontë's life in detail - the text is studied as a novel but they may find it interesting to ask the question, 'How far are all novels semi-autobiographical?'

- It is a linear novel and as such we observe Jane's journey chronologically.

Suggested activities

Ask students to rank these forms in terms of which they think is the most apposite to the novel.

Originally the novel was published in 3 volumes (typical of the novel at that time):

- Chapters 1 – 15 – from Jane's childhood at Gateshead to the night of the fire in Mr Rochester's room
- Chapters 16 – 26 – from the morning after the fire to the revelations at the wedding
- Chapters 27 – 38 – from Rochester's request that Jane runs away with him to the ending ten years after Jane has returned to Rochester.

Suggested activities

Ask students to consider whether they would divide the text into three volumes differently and to justify their choices. Encourage them to explain why they think Brontë chose to place the breaks where she did.

A Sense of Place

Jane's moral and spiritual journey can be broken into stages which correspond with the places of the novel:

- **Gateshead Hall** – the seat of her original unhappiness, rejection, sense of injustice and some of her deepest fears and darkest moments. It is her desire to escape the home of her Aunt and cousins that launches her into the wider world.
- **Lowood School** – the school to which Jane is sent and where she experiences further unhappiness, deprivation and injustice. However, she also discovers friendship and witnesses positive change and she begins to find ways to manage her emotions and to learn acceptance through Christian values such as forgiveness.
- **Thornfield Hall** – it is here that Jane's moral journey reaches its crisis. She falls in love, finds that her love is requited and then faces the horror of discovering Rochester's marriage.
- **Marsh End/Moor House** – the home of the Rivers family offers Jane sanctuary and a chance to reflect and rebuild her life. She discovers that she has family and wealth and can be her own person; she also chooses to refuse to marry someone she doesn't truly love.
- **Ferndean Manor** – the place where Jane finally settles and marries Rochester, finding real happiness and a sense of purpose in caring for a family of her own.



Suggested activities

Ask students to consider what the constituent parts of the names of these places suggest and how they could be commented on in terms of Jane's experiences and development. Encourage them to use their imaginations to develop interpretation in this exercise:

eg Gateshead Hall – a hall is a very grand place and could reflect how this will never be a home for Jane. A gate is an opening and it is from here that Jane's life opens out. Her life with the Reeds comes to a head when she retaliates against John Reed.

Remember that students must be able to integrate what they know about the social and historical context of the novel with the events, characters and situations described in it. Avoid extensive historical context 'projects' and 'research' which can result in 'bolt-on' material (especially in introductions and / or conclusions to an essay). It is often tempting to start with this material but the result can then be that this is what students remember best or most. Instead, aim to weave this contextual material into the teaching of the novel as students read so that its relevance is always to the text itself. One way to do this is to suggest a key quotation from part of the novel and analyse in some depth how this quotation reflects the time at which was written:

Suggestion: Chapter 3: 'poverty for me was synonymous with degradation'

When asked if she would prefer to live with any poor relations she might have, Jane says 'poverty for me was synonymous with degradation'. She is used to the kind of luxuries people like the Reeds would have been able to afford and she knows that many poor people at the time would have lived a very hard and degrading life, one which she does not want.

Jane Eyre was first published in 1847. It is difficult to date when the novel is set but various textual clues certainly anchor the action in the first part of the 19th century, between 1808 and 1840. Because the novel is so clearly semi-autobiographical and Charlotte Brontë was born in 1816, it would be fair to assume that the opening of the story when Jane is ten years old is set around the 1820s.

At the time **women** were still very much second class citizens with few rights, opportunities or ways of supporting themselves. They were expected to marry as well as could be arranged and to obey their husbands thereafter or to remain as spinsters and be useful to their families in some way. For middle class women one of the only other options was to teach or become a governess, a route which offered them a small degree of independence and security outside of marriage. The novel is set at a time of rigid moral codes whereby any woman who became a 'mistress' (as Rochester proposes when his existing marriage is revealed) would be shunned by society and considered ruined.

Although *Jane Eyre* is set at a time of increasing prosperity for Britain as a world power, it was also a time of enormous **poverty and social injustice** for many and this is reflected in parts of the novel, for example Lowood School. The agricultural revolution and the growth of industry had resulted in an emergent wealthy middle class but had also sharpened the divide between the aristocracy and the the working classes.

This was the age of 'Great' Britain and the UK had extensive powers overseas through its **colonialist** interests which included areas like the West Indies referred to in the novel.

Slavery had been commonplace across the British Empire and would have been a fashionable topic because the 1780s to the 1820s saw the abolition of slavery by the British.

Insanity – The early nineteenth century also gave rise to changing attitudes to forms of **madness**. It began to be believed that madness could be partial rather than absolute and that those who were considered mad could be helped. Rochester's approach to his wife is 'old-school' and in contrast to Jane's more modern, sympathetic approach to Bertha. Brontë herself had first-hand experience of forms of insanity because her brother descended into mental breakdown following his addiction to drink and her close friend's brother was admitted to an asylum. Victorian culture, however, tended to link women and insanity, often as a form of oppression and a way of keeping women in their place. Passionate, challenging or highly expressive behaviour could easily be interpreted as neurosis or even madness. Jane herself is seen by the apothecary after her episode in the red room.

For today's students, *Jane Eyre* will be considered an 'old-fashioned' classic, a novel deeply embedded in our cultural heritage, but they should be reminded that for its time it was considered ground-breaking:

- It is one of the first feminist novels – more able students could be encouraged to explore the concept of **proto-feminism**.
- Brontë is considered to be the 'first historian of the private consciousness' and has been referred to as the literary ancestor of writers like Joyce and Proust.
- It contains strong elements of social criticism and religious questioning.
- It raises questions about the kind of **imperialism** and **colonialism** which were prevalent at the time it was written.



Definitions

Proto-feminism – applies to feminist ideas existing before the term feminism was introduced and understood

Social Criticism – criticism aimed at poor conditions in society

Imperialism – extending a country's power and influence by establishing colonies.

Colonialism – the unequal relationship between a colony and the colonial power which has acquired it.

Patterns in the Novel

It may be helpful for students to explore patterns within *Jane Eyre* and use these to generate ideas about the text:

Ten years:

- The novel begins when Jane is ten years old.
- It is nearly a decade later that Jane leaves Lowood to seek a 'new kind of servitude.'
- When Rochester tries to marry Jane, Bertha Mason had been held at Thornfield for ten years.
- Jane looks back on the events of Thornfield Hall from the perspective of ten years later.

Suggested activities

Suggest that students consider the question:
Is the idea of a decade significant and why?

St. John Rivers is the moral opposite of John Reed – is there a connection between their names?

Bertha and Blanche – according to Rochester they are of similar appearance.

Jane and Bertha:

- Both are perceived as having volatile, fiery and passionate natures. Jane is viewed by the Reeds as 'all fire and violence,' 'an infantine Guy Fawkes' but we sympathise with her whereas we see Bertha very much as the Reeds and their servants saw Jane – as a dangerous animal-like creature.
- Both Jane and Bertha are physically imprisoned by others (Jane in the red room and at Lowood school, Bertha in the attic at Thornfield Hall).
- Bertha appears as a distorted image in Jane's mirror.
- When Bertha is finally showed to us she is in an animal like position 'on all fours' and when Jane flees from Thornfield she is reduced to 'crawling' across the countryside.

Jane and Rochester:

- When Jane decides to leave Rochester, she uses Biblical language 'pluck out your right eye; yourself cut off your right hand' to define how she feels about leaving the man she loves.
- Later in the novel, Rochester loses his sight and the use of his arm.

Language

Narrative stance – *Jane Eyre* is self-conscious as a novel and as a narrative – Jane refers to herself as a writer and to the reader at various points, most famously at the end when she opens with the last chapter with the words 'Reader, I married him.' She draws attention to both narrator and reader (in Chapter 35 she openly states 'the reader shall judge') creating a relationship between the two which generates a bond with and a sympathy for Jane.

Journeys – Jane's journeys are metaphorical as well as literal – throughout the novel Jane's movement to new places reflects her spiritual and moral growth.

Names – names of places, and sometimes people, are significant.

Past and present tense – the narrative is delivered in both the past and present tense to create different effects. Good examples of the use of the present tense are:

- at the beginning of Chapters 10 and 11 Jane uses the present tense to remind us that she is looking back on events from a later point in her life.
- at the beginning of Chapter 21 the present tense conveys her philosophical musings, emphasising perhaps that these are values which haven't changed for her over the years and creating a sense of the woman who is telling this story.
- in Chapter 17 – Jane describes the group of guests and her feelings as she sees Rochester enter in the present tense, giving this passage an air of immediacy and reinforcing a sense of her being trapped in that moment of discomfort and excitement.
- in Chapter 22 when Jane returns from Gateshead to Thornfield and sees Rochester again, the present tense clearly heightens the intensity of this very emotional and nerve-wracking moment for Jane.

Suggested activities

Give students a short passage from the novel written in the past tense and ask them to rewrite it in the present tense. Encourage them to explore how this changes the 'feel' of the passage. You could use the moment in the attic when Bertha attacks Rochester.

- In Chapter 28 where Jane describes the moors as if she is there, the present tense makes it seem as if she remembers it vividly.

Gothic – there are frequent Gothic episodes within the novel, most notably:

- The red room
- Jane's first meeting with Rochester
- The fire in Rochester's room
- The attack on Richard Mason
- The visit to see Bertha in the attic
- Jane's journey to Marsh House.

Suggested activities

Ask students to list examples of Gothic language they already know (you could prompt them with ideas of typically Gothic settings or characters) and then compare these words or phrases with the Gothic language used within any one of these episodes. Were some of their examples the same or similar? Which words / phrases surprised them in the text?

Pathetic Fallacy – it is important for students to be clear about the meaning of pathetic fallacy. It is sometimes confused with personification but they differ in function and effect:

- I passed the smiling hedgerows (personification)
- Feeling happy, I passed the smiling hedgerows (pathetic fallacy).

Pathetic means of the emotions and fallacy means falseness. Originally the term was coined to show that when our feelings run high, our impressions of the world may change. For example, if we are feeling sad, the rain may seem more depressing or even spiteful. In literature, when nature or the landscape is described in emotional language and it reflects a character's feelings or situation, then the term pathetic fallacy can be used.

Symbolism – there is a wealth of symbolic representations in the novel and students will need to explore these in their context.

Religious language – the religious language is noticeable in the novel and Jane's search is very much about finding a kind of Christianity which works for her. She bears witness to Brocklehurst's mission to 'mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh', Helen's belief that 'God waits only the separation of spirit from flesh to crown us with a full reward' and St. John's repressive denial of sexual desire and self-sacrifice which mean he remains 'undefiled' to the very end of his life. In contrast to St. John, Rochester has indulged in excesses which result in grave consequences for him and those around him. Jane is the embodiment of the middle ground.

Suggested activities

Read the following with students and then ask them to comment on the use of pathetic fallacy in this passage:

And I sank down where I stood, and hid my face against the ground. I lay still a while: the night-wind swept over the hill and over me, and died moaning in the distance; the rain fell fast, wetting me afresh to the skin. Could I but have stiffened to the still frost-- the friendly numbness of death--it might have pelted on; I should not have felt it; but my yet living flesh shuddered at its chilling influence.

Chapter 28

Highlight the writer's choice of the words 'moaning', 'still frost' and 'chilling influence' and ask how these words are used to reflect Jane's situation and feelings.

Character

There are numerous character summaries available on the internet and in the many study guides to the novel.

Jane can be referred to as the 'heroine', 'main character', 'protagonist', 'title character', or 'titular character'. Equipping students with this range of terms will avoid repetition in their writing.

It is worth considering other characters in the light of their effect on Jane and her spiritual growth or breaking character analysis into different areas:

- Place (Gateshead and Lowood / Thornfield / Marsh End)
- Religious / moral influence (Brocklehurst, Helen, St. John)
- Aspects of love (Rochester, the Rivers family, Adele, Helen, Miss Temple)
- Fear, injustice and anger (the Reeds, Brocklehurst, Bertha, St. John).

Suggested activities

The following questions could be used to generate discussion or writing around character:

- At Thornfield does Jane find a 'new kind of servitude' or a new kind of freedom?
- How far is Rochester old-fashioned in terms of his view of women?
- Why would Jane be the ideal wife for St. John Rivers?
- Could Mrs Reed's view of, and behaviour towards, Jane be justified?
- In what ways is Blanche Ingram 'inferior'?
- How far could Jane be described as a proto-feminist?
- Is Rochester good enough for Jane?



Moments

In the extract-based exam question, students will be presented with a 'moment' from the text. The following are just some of the particularly significant moments in the novel:

- The red room (Chapter 2)
- Punishment at Lowood (Chapter 7)
- The death of Helen Burns (Chapter 9)
- The first and second meetings with Rochester (Chapters 12 and 13)
- The fire in Rochester's room (Chapter 15)
- Jane observing Rochester and Blanche Ingram together (Chapter 17)
- The attack on Mr Mason (Chapter 20)
- Jane's visit to her dying aunt (Chapter 21)
- Rochester's proposal of marriage (Chapter 23)
- The wedding and its aftermath (Chapter 26)
- Jane's wanderings across the moors (Chapter 28)
- Jane's discovery that she is financially independent and has family (Chapter 33)
- St. John's proposal (Chapter 34)
- Rochester's call for Jane (Chapter 35)
- Jane's reunion with Rochester (Chapter 37).

Suggested activities

Students will benefit from analysing passages from different parts of the novel in some detail to help them develop these 'moment'-based skills.

1. You could use a grid such as the example in [Learner resource 1](#) to ensure that students cover all relevant Assessment Objectives in their answer.
2. Get learners to evaluate a passage from the novel and then answer a series of questions, taking them from the passage as a springboard, to wider exploration of the novel. This provides a good grounding in the skills they will need to answer the extract-based exam question.

You can find an example of this approach in [Learner resource 2](#).



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