

世界经典文学作品赏析(英汉对照)

# Charlotte Brontë's JANE EYRE

Ruth H. Blackburn

夏洛蒂·勃朗特的

简·爱



外语教学与研究出版社



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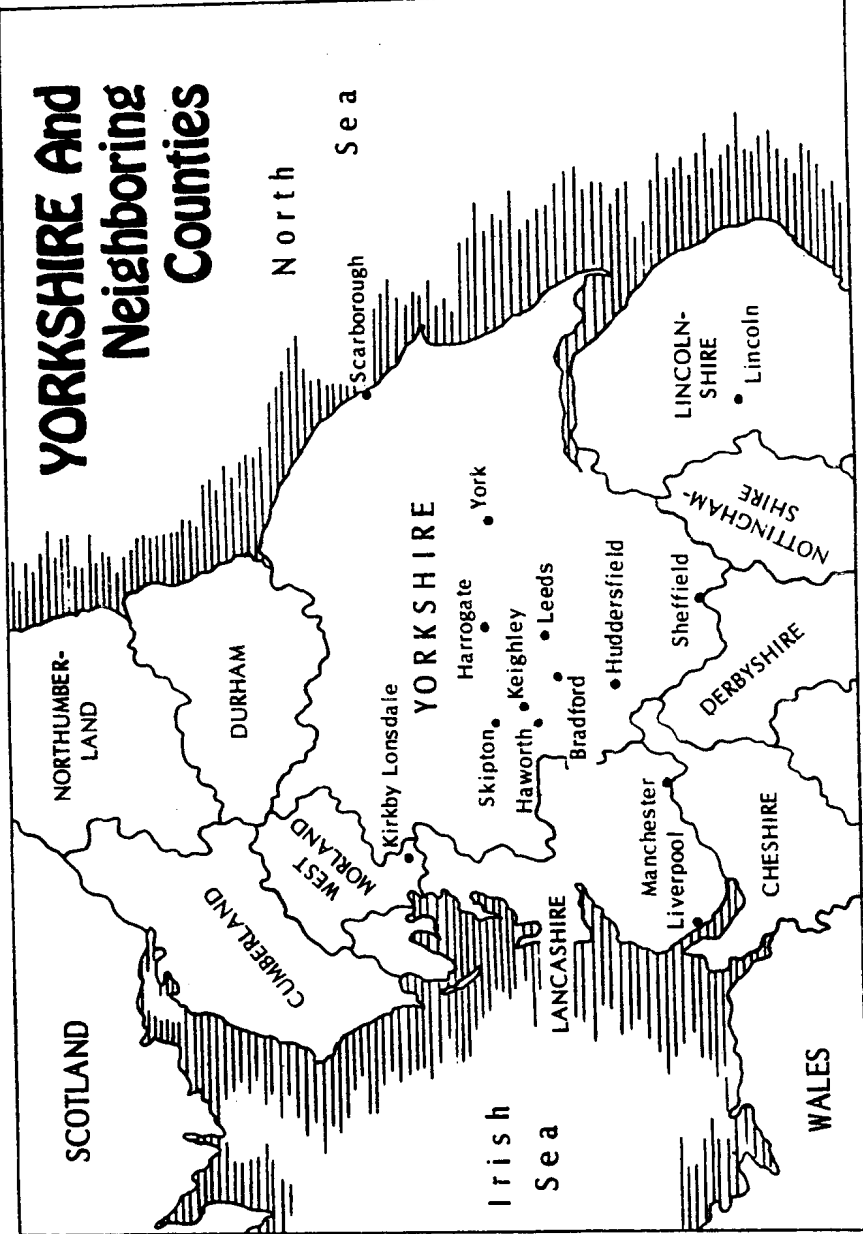
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# YORKSHIRE And Neighboring Counties



# CONTENTS

## 目 录

### 英文部分

* General Introduction .....	1
* Chronology of the Brontës .....	7
* Life of Charlotte Brontë .....	8
* Literary Background to <i>Jane Eyre</i> .....	35
* Detailed Summary and Analysis of <i>Jane Eyre</i> .....	40
* Survey of Criticism .....	99
* Important Features of <i>Jane Eyre</i> .....	114
* Character Analysis .....	118
* Essay Questions and Model Answers .....	136
* Suggestions for Further Study and Research .....	142
* Annotated Bibliography on Charlotte Brontë .....	145

### 中文部分

* 导言 .....	155
* 勃朗特家族大事年表 .....	160
* 夏洛蒂·勃朗特生平 .....	161
* 《简·爱》的文学背景 .....	184
* 《简·爱》详细故事梗概及分析 .....	188
* 书评综述 .....	234
* 《简·爱》的重要特点 .....	247
* 人物分析 .....	251

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:** The four Brontës lived and died in the first part of the nineteenth century. They were born in the years just after the Napoleonic wars—Charlotte the year after Waterloo (1815), the victory of her hero, the Duke of Wellington. Branwell, Emily, and Anne saw the first dozen years of Queen Victoria's long reign (1837-1901). Only Charlotte lived to see the mid-century mark and the Great Exhibition of 1851 (the ancestor of our World's Fair), which celebrated half a century of progress.

These were years of swift and kaleidoscopic change in England. Few periods have seen such changes in the face of a country in such a short time. Though there had long been some industrial centers, England in the early years of the nineteenth century was still predominantly rural. The majority of the people were in some way connected with the land, and the typical community was the village with its parson and squire (local landed proprietor). Land was what counted in terms of power and prestige. Landowning gentry such as Rochester in *Jane Eyre*, the Lintons in *Wuthering Heights*, and Darcy and Bingley in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, were important socially and politically.

But already by the year of Waterloo, industry was growing rapidly and more and more communities became large slums. Great cotton mills had sprung up in Lancashire (see map p. iv) and with them coal mines and blast furnaces. Steam-driven machinery was installed in Yorkshire (see map); the traditional wool industry began to feel

the effects of the Industrial Revolution, and enterprising mill-owners began to buy the new machinery. Power spinning began to drive out hand spinning. Side by side with mechanized industry came better transportation. Already the roads had been greatly improved and the construction of canals begun. Coaches and barges went everywhere. In 1825, when the Brontës were small children, the first railway was built; by the time they were young people, and had a small legacy to invest, the railways offered them a good return on their money and the great iron web was spreading all over the land, taking new thoughts and new ideas as well as new goods wherever it went.

It is interesting to notice, though, that while Charlotte and Emily Brontë were in advance of their time in their independent habits of mind, they liked to place their stories in the past. The opening chapter of *Wuthering Heights* is dated 1802, and the main action of the story begins a generation before that. Charlotte's *Shirley* deals with the Luddite riots—outbreaks of machine-smashing by unemployed factory workers—which took place during the Napoleonic wars before she was born. *Jane Eyre* apparently begins just before the turn of the century, or so we would conclude from the reference to Sir Walter Scott's *Marmion* in Chapter 32. *Marmion*, published in 1808, is there described as "a new work," and Jane is about nineteen when St. John Rivers gives it to her. Thus the action of *Jane Eyre* takes place in the coaching era, before the advent of the railways. However, in certain respects it also reflects the economic and social changes of a little later period, as will be apparent in the next section.

**SOCIAL CHANGES AND EDUCATION:** Connected with the improvements in industry and transport was the rise of a new kind of

ruling class, the mill-owners and mine-owners of the industrial age. As they gained in financial strength in their communities, they began to demand political power. The Reform Bill of 1832 (of which Charlotte, then a schoolgirl, wrote an enthusiastic account) gave this group the vote. They began to compete with the old landed gentry and went on in their turn to buy land, to build attractive houses, to travel, and to improve themselves generally. We see an old landed family and a member of the *nouveau riche* side by side in *Jane Eyre*, for while St. John Rivers is a member of an old family, it is Mr. Oliver, the taciturn needle manufacturer, who has the money. Notice that Oliver would be graciously willing to let his daughter marry into the Rivers family with its fine old traditions. Another example of a manufacturer of the new sort is Robert Moore in *Shirley*. The novel shows, among other things, the struggles of Moore to keep his mill going in the face of the opposition from workmen who have been thrown out of work by his new machines.

One of the ways in which the mill-owning families strove to improve themselves was by providing a good education for their children. In Yorkshire, as in other industrial areas, many families now had enough money to hire governesses and tutors for their children or to send them to school, if they so desired. At the same time there were many impoverished gentlewomen for whom being a governess was the one respectable career open to them. It was in this economic and social situation that girls of good background began to go out to work; and it was with this situation in mind that the Brontës made their plans for earning their living, which would one day be necessary if they were unmarried when their father died. All the girls were governesses in homes or schools, and Branwell was at one time a tutor. Eventually the girls planned to have a school of their own and so find security and independence. Two of the Brontë novels,



*Jane Eyre* and Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey*, concern the careers of governesses and give a good idea of their circumstances. Their position was indeed often an uncomfortable one, as Charlotte and Anne both felt. They were of a higher class than the servants and yet not on a level with the family, and in consequence they often suffered from loneliness and humiliation. They were also extremely poorly paid. Even later in the century, fifteen pounds a year, Jane's salary at Lowood, was a not uncommon sum, although it compared unfavorably with the pay received by miners and weavers, who usually earned between forty and sixty pounds a year. When she was a teacher in a boarding school, Charlotte herself wrote that when she had paid her expenses and bought clothes for herself and Anne, she had nothing left. Her heroine, Jane, was certainly one of the very poorest of wage earners.

**RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND:** The religious situation of the time is complex and ought to be understood, as a knowledge of it is assumed in *Jane Eyre* and other Brontë novels. The Church of England or Anglican Church (its American branch is called the Protestant Episcopal Church) was the Established Church of England; that is, it received financial support from the state and had essential ties with the Crown and Parliament. The Reverend Patrick Brontë, the father of the Brontës, was an Anglican clergyman. Other Protestant bodies, which did not enjoy this connection with the state, were called "nonconformists" or "Dissenters." They included the Methodists, the Baptists, and the Congregationalists. Roman Catholics were a small minority at the time and were widely feared and disliked, partly because in the past they had often been suspected of alliance with England's Catholic enemies, Spain and France, and partly because they were thought to owe their first allegiance to the Pope rather than to the English Crown. Charlotte's letters from

Belgium and her novel *Villette*, as well as Chapter 22 in *Jane Eyre*, attest to a prejudice against Catholicism which seems to the modern reader sheer bigotry; it should be remembered that her views were characteristic of the only society she knew.

During the eighteenth century, the Church of England was in a state of spiritual destitution. It was substantially controlled by the conservative landowning gentry, whose younger sons frequently held "livings" (positions) in the Church, lacked any real sense of vocation, and left their parish duties to their overworked subordinates. Large sections of the poorer classes, particularly in the new industrial areas, were out of touch with the Church altogether, and their widespread drunkenness and immorality seemed beyond the power of religion to redeem. Two related religious movements brought about some badly needed reformation in this state of affairs.

**THE METHODIST REVIVAL:** The brothers John and Charles Wesley, members of a society which undertook a "methodical" cultivation of the religious life, underwent deeply felt religious conversions before the middle of the eighteenth century. They devoted the rest of their lives to highly successful preaching missions to convert others to the new understanding they had attained. They believed that in Christ was forgiveness of sins and grace for a renewed life in His service. The new life would issue in joyous and spontaneous acts of piety and charity. Their preaching was immensely successful both in England and America and affected both the Church of England, of which they were ordained ministers, and the Methodist churches which their followers founded. Methodism was more emotional, appealed to large numbers of the deprived, uneducated population, and was, therefore, numerically strong. Within the Church of England, the persons affected by the religious revival were called "EVAN-

GELICALS” and formed a relatively small but influential party. They wielded enormous moral power in their time and were behind such movements as the freeing of the slaves, the education of poor children, prison and factory reforms, and the distribution of pious literature to the working classes. They did much good, but, like every religion, Methodism and Evangelicalism were subject to perversion and their adherents to hypocrisy and fanaticism.

Although they were members of the Church of England, the Brontës were exposed to Methodist influence from both sides of the family. Mr. Brontë had once been connected with a Methodist school, and their Aunt Branwell, who brought them up, taught them Methodist hymns and prayers and lent them Methodist magazines. Moreover, Haworth had in the past been the scene of Methodist revivals. What was the effect on Emily and Charlotte Brontë of this exposure to Evangelical religion? To judge by the novels, their reaction seems to have been a negative one. In *Wuthering Heights*, we have the portrait of the grumbling, puritanical fanatic, Joseph; in *Jane Eyre* the meddling, loveless, hypocritical Mr. Brocklehurst. Were those portraits drawn from life?

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE BRONTËS

- 1812 Patrick and Maria Brontë married.  
1813 Maria Brontë born.  
1815 Elizabeth Brontë born.  
1816 Charlotte Brontë born, April 21.  
1817 Patrick Branwell Brontë born.  
1818 Emily Jane Brontë born.  
1820 Anne Brontë born.  
1820 The Brontë family moves to Haworth.  
1824 Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, and Emily Brontë sent to Cowan Bridge School.  
1825 Maria and Elizabeth Brontë die.  
1831-1832 Charlotte at Roe Head.  
1835-1838 Charlotte at Roe Head as governess.  
1842 Charlotte and Emily go to Brussels; Emily returns late that year, Charlotte in January 1844.  
1846 *Poems* published.  
1847 *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Agnes Grey* published.  
1848 *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* published.  
1848 Branwell and Emily die.  
1849 Anne dies.  
1849 *Shirley* published.  
1852 *Villette* published.  
1854 Charlotte and Arthur Bell Nicholls marry.  
1855 Charlotte dies, March 31.  
1857 Mrs. Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë* published.  
1861 Mr. Brontë dies.  
1906 Mr. Nicholls dies.

## LIFE OF CHARLOTTE BRONTË

The Brontës were one of the most extraordinary literary families who ever lived. They spent the greater part of their lives in an isolated Yorkshire village on the edge of the moors, not only cut off from the Victorian world of letters, but also to a large extent from the companionship of young people of their own age and education. Yet they became known and loved all over the world. Their books have been translated into many languages and are always high in reading popularity. Their home, Haworth Parsonage (see map p. iv), is visited by Brontë lovers from many nations—by over 146,000 people in 1971. Every decade sees new attempts to dramatize their lives and works in plays or films. Finally, it has been estimated that there have been more items of critical writing on the Brontës than on any other English writer except Shakespeare. What is the source of the Brontë uniqueness and of their perennial appeal? We may seek the answer to this question in their unusual heredity and environment, in their own genius, in their effect on each other, and in the tragic nature of their lives.

Phyllis Bentley, herself a novelist and a Yorkshirewoman, has called attention to the favorable combination of Celtic heredity and Yorkshire environment in the Brontë temperament. Their parents were both Celtic,\* their mother being from Cornwall and their father from Ireland. Yet they grew up in Yorkshire and were in fact able to speak and write either an Irish brogue or a Yorkshire dialect with

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\* The Celts, for our present purpose, were the inhabitants of the British Isles pushed to the west and north of England by the Anglo-Saxons and Danish invaders.

the greatest of ease. They thought of themselves as English, yet were aware of their Cornish and Irish descent. Miss Bentley comments: "The Yorkshire character (descended partially from Scandinavian elements) forms a great contrast to the Irish; it is vigorous, practical, prosaic, stubborn, broadly humorous and sparing of speech where the Irish is melancholy, passionate, proud, restless, eloquent, and witty. This striking contrast between the Brontës' heredity and their environment played, as we shall see, a highly important part in forming the nature of their work." (See her book *The Brontë Sisters*, p. 12.)\*

Next, all the young Brontës were talented and precocious. Now, of course, gifted children are not rare. But Charlotte, Branwell, Emily, and Anne Brontë were a rare combination. What is unique in the Brontë family is the spectacle of four gifted children, two of them (Charlotte and Emily) geniuses, growing up together, more or less isolated from other children and from the society around them, inventing stories and entertaining each other with them, creating for themselves an imaginary world, and living so completely in that world that it often seemed more real to them than the everyday doings around them. More will be said about this imaginary world presently.

Finally, it can be truthfully claimed that for all the Brontës life was in some sense tragic. Originally there were six of them. The two older girls died within a few weeks of each other before they entered their teens. All the others died before they were forty. Anne and Emily, the youngest, died with books planned which they were never able to write. Branwell, the only boy, the delight and hope of

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\* Full details on books cited in the text will be found in the bibliography.

his sisters, died with his promise completely unfulfilled, a drunkard and a drug addict. Charlotte lived to win the fame and independence they had all longed for; but when it came, she was too tired, too ill, too alone, and too grief-stricken to enjoy it.

**HAWORTH PARSONAGE:** But these sad days were in the future on a spring day in 1820 when the Reverend and Mrs. Patrick Brontë, their household goods in seven carts, mounted the steep hill to Haworth village. Their church towered above the village; higher still stood the parsonage which was to be their home, as long as any of them should live. Its front windows looked out on the graveyard and the church, but behind the house lay the moors—sombre, limitless, inviting.

Perhaps the six children also rode up in the carts. The two “big girls,” Maria and Elizabeth, seven and five, would probably be expected to look after four-year-old Charlotte, and Branwell, who was not yet three. Emily and Anne were babies. Before long the older children were left much on their own, as their mother became very ill with cancer and could not bear to have them see her suffer. Someone overheard her repeating, “O God, my poor children; O God, my poor children.” She died in the fall of 1821, and probably the younger children did not remember her. It is clear that Maria, an intelligent and loyal child, tried to take her place and mother her little sisters and brother. Mrs. Brontë’s sister, Aunt Branwell, gave up her home in Cornwall to look after the children and the house. She brought up the girls to be efficient housekeepers and set them an example of courtesy and good breeding, but otherwise left them much to themselves.

The head of the household, the Reverend Patrick Brontë, seems to

have been quite a complex character, and biographers have not always done him justice. There is a tendency to dwell on his eccentricities, such as his fear of fire (he allowed no drapes in the parsonage), his habit of firing a pistol out of a door or window, and his custom of eating alone. Eccentric he certainly was, but it is equally clear that he loved his children, talked with them as equals on subjects of interest to them all (usually politics), saw that they had plenty to read, bought them toys, and encouraged them to be as independent and courageous in their thinking as he was himself. Most of all, he respected their right to lives of their own; their secret games and plays were never interfered with. His greatest error was that he was not at all strict with Branwell, whom he kept at home and tutored himself; the whole family paid dearly for this. However, his daughters loved and respected him as long as they lived. He was immoderately proud of Charlotte's success and did all he could to guard her memory.

**THE CLERGY DAUGHTERS' SCHOOL AT COWAN BRIDGE:** But for the present the children had to be educated so that they could earn their living. \* Mr. Brontë, left with six small children to bring up, must have been relieved when he heard that a fellow-clergyman, the Reverend W. Carus Wilson, had founded the Clergy Daughters' School for the daughters of poor clergy. Here Maria and Elizabeth (now eleven and nine) were entered in the spring of 1824, and here Charlotte (eight) and Emily (barely six) followed them later in the same year.

The Clergy Daughters' School, located at Cowan Bridge near Kirk-

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\* This was many years before schools financed by public money were common in England.



by Lonsdale (see map p. iv) made a deep and painful impression on Charlotte Brontë. She used her memories of her school days when she wrote the early chapters of *Jane Eyre*. The school was the original of Lowood, where the Reeds sent Jane after her illness; the "black marble clergyman," Mr. Brocklehurst, is based on Charlotte's impression of Mr. Carus Wilson, and Helen Burns, who dies in Chapter 9, is Maria Brontë as Charlotte remembered her. (Charlotte claimed over and over that her picture of Helen Burns was drawn from life and was if anything understated.) It is therefore important to understand something about the Reverend Carus Wilson and the school at Cowan Bridge.

Mr. Carus Wilson was a clergyman of the Church of England who had very early come under Evangelical influences (see *Religious Background*, p. 4). He had a profound fear of hell and a hatred of sin; at one point at least he maintained that grievous sin after baptism cannot be forgiven. He also had a vivid faith in divine grace and in heavenly rewards for the righteous. Like other evangelicals he believed in and pursued works of charity. At the age of eight he distributed religious tracts, and while at college he openly rebuked some army officers for swearing. He founded low-priced religious periodicals, many copies of which can still be seen today in the British Museum in England. They contain hundreds of little stories about naughty boys and girls who meet sudden death and go to hell (see under Brocklehurst, p. 127), or who make stupendous sacrifices and go to heaven.

The publication of these periodicals was not Mr. Carus Wilson's only charitable work. He also founded five schools, one of which was Cowan Bridge. There he planned to educate sixty or seventy poor clergymen's daughters. "In all cases," he wrote in his prospectus,