

# JANE EYRE

Written by **Charlotte Bronte**  
 Adapted by **Polly Teale**  
 Directed by **KJ Sanchez**  
 Originally produced by **Shared Experience Theatre Company**  
**April 25 - May 21, 2017**  
**Quadracci Powerhouse**

This Teacher's Guide is designed to be used in the classroom along with The Rep's Play Guide for *Jane Eyre*.  
 These are some suggested activities for your classroom. The Play Guide is available online at  
[milwaukeerep.com/Tickets--Events/201617-Season/Jane-Eyre/Jane-Eyre-PlayGuide/](http://milwaukeerep.com/Tickets--Events/201617-Season/Jane-Eyre/Jane-Eyre-PlayGuide/)

## TEACHER'S GUIDE

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## SUGGESTED TEACHING & LEARNING TOPICS

*Classroom activity topics include:*

- 1.) Symbolism
- 2.) Social Status
- 3.) Desire & Longing

## SYMBOLISM

See *Jane Eyre* Play Guide page 10 for more information on Symbolism in Polly Teale's adaptation

### DISCUSS: Pre-Show Questions

- Define the term "symbolism". What are some examples of symbolism used in pop culture or mainstream media?
- Brainstorm the different ways symbolism can be shown in the theatre (set design, costume design, music, and actor's body language). Why might a director or playwright choose to use symbolism onstage instead of portraying the moment literally?
- If you were the director and one character in your play was "divided" or fighting an internal conflict – what would be the most effective way to communicate that onstage?

### DISCUSS: Post-Show Questions

- How would you classify the genre of this play? Thriller? Romance? Comedy? Tragedy? Use specific moments from the show to justify your answer!
- How would you describe the relationship between Jane and Bertha? At what points do you see conflict and at what points do they work in tandem? Why do you think you see conflict between them?
- Think about the Red Room where Bertha was secluded. What does this symbolize? Why do you think the adaptation calls specifically for the color red?
- The characters refer to "fire" multiple times in the story. Think about Jane and Bertha's references to or interactions with fire; are they different from one another? Why or why not? How would the story or symbolism change if another element (wind, water, earth) replaced "fire"?



Rin Allen (Bertha) and Margaret Ivey (Jane) in *Jane Eyre* at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park

### ACTIVITY: Image Walk

Invite the students to take a walk around the room. Say the following statements and transition the students through Levels 1-5: Level 1 being the most internal way to express the state (FEELING the image inside rather than showing it physically) and Level 5 being the most external way to express the state (BIG, exaggerated physical movements, theatrical and circus-like).

- |                |  |   |
|----------------|--|---|
| <b>IMAGES:</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- You have a sunflower growing out of the top of your head.</li> <li>- You have a bouncy ball in your stomach.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There is a fire growing inside of you.</li> <li>- Your knees are made of heavy metal.</li> <li>- You are walking on clouds.</li> </ul> |
|----------------|--|---|

**DISCUSS:** Which statement was your favorite and why? Was there a Level (1-5) at which you felt most comfortable? What did it feel like (at Level 1) to interpret these images internally opposed to externally? Describe the different versions of the same image you saw in your classmates. What does this tell you about perspective and interpretation?

**"He is not a ghost  
and yet every nerve  
I have is unstrung."**  
-Jane

## DISCUSS: Pre-Show Questions

- What does social status mean? What are some examples of social status in 2017?
- Describe authority. Who is an authority figure in your life? How do you treat someone who has authority?
- Jane Eyre takes place in nineteenth century England. Discuss what pressures were placed on women and men during this time period; what were the expectations of the genders?
- Historically, how did gender affect status? Do the two concepts go hand in hand or are they independent of one another? What about authority and gender roles?

## DISCUSS: Post-Show Questions

- Discuss the status of Rochester and Saint John. How did their status affect Jane's decision when they proposed to her?
- How did Jane's class status affect her personality or actions in the play? Use specific examples from the production to justify your answer!
- What clues in the production or theatrical elements indicated the status of each character?
- Jane is often described throughout the script as "plain". How would the story change if Jane were described as a beautiful young woman? Would this affect her status positively or negatively?

## ACTIVITY: An Aristocrat and a Servant

Split the class into two groups: the first are the Aristocrats and the second are the Servants. As separate groups, let the students discuss their roles at a party. How would each role behave at a party? How would they interact with one another?

Have the students take on these roles, following the rules below, and improv dialogue with each other. Each conversation contains one Aristocrat and one Servant. There are a few rules to go with each role:

- Servants may not look the Aristocrat in the eye.
  - Servants must stand with hands folded in front of their body.
  - Servants movement is small, jerky, and nervous.
- 
- Aristocrat may only respond to Servants with five words or less.
  - Aristocrat constantly stand with their arms crossed or on their hips.
  - When talking to a Servant, the Aristocrat may only stare at the top of their head.

**"I fear discovery above all else."**  
-Jane

After a minute or so, have the groups switch roles and repeat the activity!

**DISCUSS:** Which role did you like playing the best: Aristocrat or Servant? Why? How did the rules shape your dialogue with your scene partner? What did it feel like to switch roles between the two groups? How did the rules affect your behavior towards your scene partner? What would be the equivalent of these roles in today's society? Are social statuses important to a functioning society, or is structure obtainable without a social hierarchy?

## DESIRE & LONGING

## DISCUSS: Pre-Show Questions

- How would you show "desire" with your body? Come up with a quick tableau for desire. Share a few different examples! Discuss how the tableau were similar or how they were unique.
- Brainstorm different desires of characters in novels or TV shows. Does a desire always have to be positive or can you desire something negative? (Desiring pain, desiring revenge, etc.)
- What is something you long for? How do you think age, gender, social status, or career affects what you long for or desire? Can desires change over time? How so?



The cast of *Jane Eyre* share a dance at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park.

**Tableau:** A group of models or motionless figures representing a scene from a story or history; a *tableau vivant*

## DISCUSS: Post-Show Questions

- How could you tell what, or whom, Jane desired? (Body language, facial expression, tone of voice) Was desire manifested more in Bertha or Jane?
- Discuss Jane's desire for both Rochester and Saint John. What does she desire out of each of these men? What do they desire of her?
- How do a character's morals affect what they desire and vice versa?

**"Desire may imagine wonderful things but judgment shall have the last word in every argument"**  
-Gypsy Woman



Margaret Ivey (Jane) in Jane Eyre at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park.

## ACTIVITY: Honey, I Love You

Gather the students in a circle. Invite a volunteer into the center of the circle. The person in the middle will walk up to someone in the circle and say, "Honey, I love you. Will you please smile?" The person they are saying the phrase to may NOT smile or laugh as they respond with, "Honey, I love you, but I just can't smile". If they do smile or laugh, they are now in the middle.

The person in the middle can try as many tactics as they wish to get their peers laughing. Play as many rounds as you would like!

**DISCUSS:** What was the desire of the person in the middle, and of the people receiving the message? What were the different tactics that worked to get people to laugh? How did different tactics affect the emotional tone of lines?

## OTHER QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- How do other characters view Jane? How is this different or similar from the way she views herself?
- Define the word "ethics". What are some of your personal ethics? Are ethics negotiable?
- Discuss the word "punishment". Each of these characters, some literally and some abstractly, are punished. Give examples from the play that justify this statement.
- Do all humans have an animalistic part of our psyche that comes out in times of stress or excitement, like Jane experiences with Bertha? Or is that only specific to Jane Eyre? Provide examples to justify your answers.
- In what ways do societal norms affect our emotions? What stops us from feeling and expressing the raw and powerful emotions Bertha expresses? Do we stop ourselves? Are there certain ages where this changes?



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The Education Department offers backstage tours, pre- and post-show workshops and classroom residencies.

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### Common Core State Standards: English Language Arts

RL.6-10.1 LITERACY COMPREHENSION  
RL 6-12.3 ANALYZE DIALOGUE  
SL.8-12.1 COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSIONS  
SL.8-12.3 POINT OF VIEW  
SL.6-12.4 PRESENTATION OF KNOWLEDGE AND IDEAS  
L.8-12.5 FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE

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