

## A novel for the weekend: Jane Eyre

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**Start date** 13<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**End date** 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**Venue** Virtual Classroom

**Tutor** Dr Jenny Bavidge

**Course code** 2021NDR222

**Director of Academic Centres** Dr Corinne Boz

**For further information on this course, please contact**

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**To book** See: [www.ice.cam.ac.uk](http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk) or telephone 01223 746262

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### Tutor biography

Jenny Bavidge is University Senior Lecturer and Academic Director for English at ICE and is a member of the English Faculty. She is a Fellow of Murray Edwards College, University of Cambridge. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Oxford and her PhD from the University of London in 2001. Before joining the Institute in 2011, she was Senior Lecturer at the University of Greenwich. She has been President of the Literary London Society and is on the committee of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment and of the British Association for Contemporary Literature Studies. Her publications have included work on London in literature, children's literature, ecocriticism, and rats.

### **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

#### **Session 1: 10.00 – 11.15am**

##### **Restraint and revolution: placing the novel in biographical and historical contexts**

In this session, we'll consider the events around of the publication of *Jane Eyre*, in relation to the extraordinary story of the Brontë family and the wider contexts of time, place and literary influence which informed Charlotte Brontë's writing. The introductory talk will also touch on the novel's reception by critics and later by literary critics and modern literary theorists.

**Preparation:** Please read Charlotte Brontë's 'Preface' to the second edition of *Jane Eyre*, published in December 1847. If it isn't included in your copy of the novel, you can find it here: <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/bronte/cbronte/janeeyre/preface.html>.

On what grounds does the author defend her work, and how does she mount her counterattack on its critics?

#### **Session 2: 11.45am – 1.00pm**

##### **Piloting the plot: the form and shape of the novel**

What kind of novel is *Jane Eyre*? Is it simply a melodramatic story? Is it realist? What are its influences? We will look at the structure of the whole novel in this session and consider its formal elements.

**Preparation:** Please read the first chapter of *Jane Eyre* very closely. How does Brontë establish the narrative voice of the novel? Who is speaking to us? How does the first chapter foreshadow what is to come?

### **Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

#### **Session 3: 10.00 – 11.15am**

##### **Patterns, themes and images**

In this session we will explore the networks of imagery and patterns in naming and setting which structure the story of *Jane Eyre*'s progress through the world.

**Preparation:** as you read or reread, please keep a note of recurring or striking images, for example, you might notice images of imprisonment, the visible and the hidden, fire (!).

#### **Session 4: 11.45am – 1.00pm**

##### **The ending and afterlife of *Jane Eyre***

Our final session will focus on the final chapters of the novel, looking at how the story is resolved. We will also spend some time thinking about the different ways *Jane Eyre* has proved to be a very durable text, one which still speaks to new generations of readers, and draw on examples of the novel's afterlife in creative responses to the novel, including visual art, film and television adaptations.

**Preparation:** please read the final two chapters of the novel. Is it a satisfying ending? Why do you think the novel ends with St John Rivers rather than Jane?

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## Course syllabus

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### Aims:

- to introduce students to *Jane Eyre* and to encourage depth of reading and critical attention to the novel
- to investigate questions about literary style, form and content
- to encourage an enjoyable atmosphere in which to discuss and debate
- to place students' own reading and knowledge of the novel in a broad context of literary, historical and critical contexts

### Content:

Over two days, we will immerse ourselves in this remarkable novel and hone our readings and reactions to it with reference to the critical responses it has provoked since its publication in 1847. Lovers of literature often remember their first reading of *Jane Eyre*: it is a novel which broke the rules when it was written and has continued to influence writers, film-makers and artists. Beginning with an introductory 'scene-setting' lecture which will touch on Charlotte Brontë's life and times, we will then examine the nature of *Jane Eyre* (is it a realist novel, a *bildungsroman* or a gothic novel?) and the nature of Jane Eyre herself (is she a feminist heroine, a masochist, or primarily a projection of Brontë's thwarted passions?). We will consider the novel as a negotiation between restraint and rebellion: much of the Brontë's work expressed a rebellious spirit, which strove to challenge convention, particularly religious orthodoxy and entrenched ideas about femininity and a woman's proper place in the world. However, there is also a strong element of restraint in the writing too, both thematically and in its form and structure. The novel's structure organizes powerful feelings and melodramatic events into coherent moral and philosophical discussion and combines supernatural elements with the political and social concerns of nineteenth century realism.

### Presentation of the course:

The course will be taught remotely, via Zoom. Each session will begin with a short lecture/presentation from the tutor, followed by structured discussion and small-group work. Please come ready to discuss, debate and argue! Students will be encouraged to close-read sections of the novel, paying attention to details of style and form and we will look at some examples from contemporary reviews during the morning sessions. The course will be taught with the expectation that all attendees will have read the novel in full.

### As a result of the course, within the constraints of the time available, students should be able to:

- to understand *Jane Eyre* in its literary and historical context
- to be able to employ appropriate critical vocabulary to describe the style and form of *Jane Eyre*
- to be able to, independently, critically analyse its language, imagery and form.
- feel confident in their discussions the themes and ideas explored in the novel

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## Reading and resources list

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**Please read the novel in full before the course and please bring a copy with you to the class. Any edition will do but scholarly editions such as Oxford World's Classics or the Norton edition are particularly recommended (the Penguin Classics edition is good too). The tutor will be using the Oxford World's Classics edition.**

Listed below are texts that might be of interest should you wish to supplement your learning on the course.

Author	Title	Publisher and date
Barker, Juliet.	<i>The Brontës</i>	Winfield and Nicholson, 1994
Gaskell, Elizabeth.	<i>The Life of Charlotte Brontë</i>	1857 – any edition, eg. Penguin
Gilbert, Sandra, M. and Susan Gubar.	<i>The Madwoman in the Attic</i>	Yale University Press, 2 <sup>nd</sup> . Ed 2000
Glen, Heather.	<i>The Cambridge Companion to the Brontës</i>	Cambridge University Press, 1992
Harman, Claire.	<i>Charlotte Brontë: A Life</i>	Penguin, 2015
Michie, Elsie B. ed.	<i>Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre: A Casebook</i>	Oxford University Press, 2006
Shuttleworth, Sally.	<i>Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology</i>	Cambridge University Press, 1996

### Website addresses

There are several useful articles on the Victorian Web:

<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/bronte/cbronte/index.html>

The Bronte Society and Haworth Parsonage have a great website here with lots of fascinating information and images:

<https://www.bronte.org.uk/>

**Suggested resources continued overleaf...**

## TV/Film

There are several filmic or televisual adaptations of *Jane Eyre*. It's always useful to consider how adaptations transform, truncate and interpret a literary text so you may find it interesting to watch a few different versions.

*Jane Eyre* (Robert Stevenson, 1943)

*Jane Eyre* (Franco Zeffirelli, 1996)

*Jane Eyre* (Robert Young, 1997)

*Jane Eyre* (Cary Fukunaga, 2011)

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## Additional information

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### What you will need

The course is open to anyone; however, it is taught via a virtual classroom. You will be able to see, hear and interact with your classmates and the tutor. In order to participate you will need to have a laptop, computer, tablet or other device equipped with a camera (webcam), speakers and a microphone. Full instructions and support on the use of the software will be given on request.

### Venue

This course takes place online using the teleconferencing software ZOOM.

If you have any queries about the software or accessing the course, please contact us by e-mailing [creativewriting@ice.cam.ac.uk](mailto:creativewriting@ice.cam.ac.uk).

**Note** Students of the Institute of Continuing Education are entitled to 20% discount on books published by Cambridge University Press (CUP) which are purchased at the Press bookshop, 1 Trinity Street, Cambridge (Mon-Sat 9am – 5:30pm, Sun 11am – 5pm). A letter or email confirming acceptance on to a current Institute course should be taken as evidence of enrolment.

*Information correct as of:* 10 December 2020