

Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Dramatic Publishing

JANE EYRE

A Dramatization
by
ROBERT JOHANSON

Based on the Novel
by
CHARLOTTE BRONTË



Dramatic Publishing
Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalog and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to:

DRAMATIC PUBLISHING
P. O. Box 129, Woodstock, Illinois 60098

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved.

©MCMXCVIII by
ROBERT JOHANSON

Based on the Novel by
CHARLOTTE BRONTË

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(JANE EYRE)

Cover design by Susan Carle

ISBN 0-87129-821-X

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the Play *must* give credit to the Author(s) of the Play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production. The name of the Author(s) *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent the size of the title type. *On all programs this notice should appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

With grateful appreciation to the first “Jane” and
“Rochester”—Elizabeth Roby and Tom Hewitt—

and to the Paper Mill Playhouse
for the exquisite first production.

FROM THE AUTHOR AND FIRST DIRECTOR

Adapting and directing Charlotte Brontë's incredible novel, *Jane Eyre*, for its initial production at the Paper Mill Playhouse, was a memorable and exciting experience. The character of Jane is so fresh and compelling and, I believe, so often misrepresented in various film and television versions. She is not by nature mousy or passive, but fiercely intelligent and quite aggressive for a woman of that time. She simply is plain—very plain. Charlotte Brontë herself was plain, and as a plain woman, she was forced to accept many oppressive situations, but she patiently and thoughtfully worked to bring about change. In this way, Charlotte and Jane are one and the same. Do not make the mistake of creating a Jane that is a wallflower. Use the life of Charlotte Brontë as a guide and carefully examine her novel to understand the true character of Jane. The play is Jane's story. A memory play told from the time Jane returns to the ruined Thornfield as an adult and remembers the experiences that have brought her to this place. Therefore, the production can be as abstract as you desire. It does not require huge sets for each location, but merely the suggestion. Costuming, however, should be as accurate as possible. Production notes and suggestions follow at the end of the text. The most important thing about any production is that you keep it fluid—constantly moving—changes of scene should take just as long as it takes for Jane to speak the transition speech written for her. If the show moves, you will be able to tell the entire story this adaptation attempts. All other versions that I know, tend to leave out huge portions of the novel and I believe this is a mistake. Each episode in the story builds Jane's character and eventually makes believable the epiphany of the ending. I so admire Charlotte Brontë—her writing and her difficult and inspiring life. I've tried very hard to do justice to her most famous heroine and I hope, if you produce this play, you will attempt to do the same.

JANE EYRE

A Play in Two Acts
For 7 Men and 16 Women, with doubling
(or as many as 11 Men, 33 Women and extras)

DRAMATIS PERSONNAE

JANE EYRE (as an adult)
YOUNG JANE EYRE, age 10

AT GATESHEAD:

MRS. SARA GIBSON REED, Jane's aunt

Her children:

JOHN REED, age 14

GEORGIANA REED, as a child, age 12

GEORGIANA REED, as an adult

ELIZA REED, as a child, age 13

ELIZA REED, as an adult

Her maids:

BESSIE

MISS ABBOT

MR. REED'S GHOST

AT LOWOOD SCHOOL:

MR. BROCKLEHURST, the headmaster

MISS MILLER

MISS SCATCHERD

MADAME PIERROT, the French teacher

HELEN BURNS, age 14

MISS MARIA TEMPLE

MRS. BROCKLEHURST, the headmaster's wife

AUGUSTA BROCKLEHURST, their daughter

SCHOOLGIRLS, ages 8-17

AT THORNFIELD:

MRS. FAIRFAX, housekeeper

JOHN, waiting man

LEAH, maid

ADELE VARENS, Rochester's ward, age 9

GRACE POOLE, a servant, age 40

MR. EDWARD ROCHESTER, age 35

BLANCHE INGRAM

LADY INGRAM, her mother

MARY INGRAM, her sister

LOUISA ESHTON, sister to Amy

AMY ESHTON, sister to Louisa

SIR GEORGE LYNN

LADY LYNN, his wife

HENRY LYNN, their son

FREDERICK LYNN, another son

RICHARD MASON, from the West Indies

A GYPSY

BERTHA MASON ROCHESTER

MR. WOODS, the clergyman

MR. BRIGGS, the solicitor

AT MARSH END:

WOMAN ON THE ROAD

WOMAN AT THE DOOR

HANNAH

ST. JOHN RIVERS, age 28

MARY RIVERS, his sister

DIANA RIVERS, his sister

AT MORTON:

ROSAMUND OLIVER

SCHOOLGIRLS

THE PLACE: Northeast England.

THE TIME: 1832-1842.

SUGGESTED DOUBLING BREAKDOWN
as performed in the original Paper Mill Playhouse
production. There are endless possibilities and it
can be done with less than indicated here.

WOMEN

Jane Eyre (as an adult)

Mrs. Fairfax, Miss Abbot, Miss Pierrot

Sara Reed, Mrs. Brocklehurst, Lady Lynn, Woman at Door
(cover Hannah, Lady Ingram)

Lady Ingram, Miss Scatcherd, Hannah
(cover Fairfax, Mrs. Reed)

Blanche Ingram, Miss Temple, Bertha Rochester
(cover Woman at Door, Woman on Road)

Miss Miller, Frederick Lynn, (cover Temple)

Rosamund Oliver, Louisa Eshton, Lowood Schoolgirl
(cover Miller, Georgiana, Eliza)

Bessie Lee, Lowood Schoolgirl, Woman on Road

Diana Rivers, Amy Eshton, Lowood Schoolgirl
(cover Jane Eyre)

Mary Rivers, Mary Ingram, Adult Georgiana Reed, Lowood
Schoolgirl (cover Blanche, Rosamund, Bertha)

Leah, Adult Eliza Reed, Lowood and Morton Schoolgirl
(cover Bessie Lee, Diana & Mary Rivers)

YOUNG GIRLS

Young Jane Eyre, Morton Schoolgirl

Adele Varens, Augusta Brocklehurst, Morton Schoolgirl

Helen Burns, Morton Schoolgirl

Young Georgiana Reed, Lowood and Morton Schoolgirl

Young Eliza Reed, Lowood and Morton Schoolgirl

Lowood and Morton Schoolgirls

(out of this group comes covers for Young Jane, Helen, Adele,
Georgiana, Eliza, Leah)

MEN

Edward Rochester

St. John Rivers, Grace Poole

Richard Mason, Lowood Doctor, Mr. Reed's Ghost
(cover Rochester, Brocklehurst)

Servant John, Lowood Cook, (cover Briggs, Woods)

Mr. Brocklehurst, Sir George Lynn, Mr. Woods

Henry Lynn, Mr. Briggs (cover St. John, Grace)

BOY

John Reed, Thornfield Servant

* John Reed could be played by a girl who then doubles in the school scenes.

* Grace Poole was played by a man in this production. This could be a separate character altogether or doubled differently with a woman and St. John Rivers could play a different male role in Act One such as Mr. Brocklehurst.

* Miss Miller played Frederick Lynn—this could be played by John Reed and Miss Miller absorbed by one of the other ladies.

* If cast size is too large some roles could be eliminated such as Frederick Lynn and Amy Eshton—it is important that the party have an even number of guests so that Jane is the “odd man out”—but it could be reduced by even two more if absolutely necessary.

JANE EYRE was first produced by the Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, N.J., in February, 1997, with the following cast:

<i>Elizabeth Roby</i>	Adult Jane Eyre
<i>Blythe Auffarth</i>	Young Jane Eyre, Schoolgirl (Morton)
<i>Nancy McDoniel</i>	Mrs. Sarah Reed, Mrs. Brocklehurst, Lady Lynn, Woman at Door
<i>Justin M. Restivo</i>	John Reed
<i>Grace Ann Pisani</i>	Young Georgiana Reed, Schoolgirl (Lowood/Morton)
<i>Laura Benanti</i>	Adult Georgiana Reed, Mary Ingram, Mary Rivers, Schoolgirl (Lowood)
<i>Lauren A. Wanko</i>	Young Eliza Reed, Schoolgirl (Lowood/Morton)
<i>Julie Georgia Thomas</i>	Adult Eliza Reed, Leah, Schoolgirl (Lowood)
<i>Ruth Moore</i>	Bessie, Woman on Road
<i>Mikel Sarah Lambert</i>	Miss Abbot, Madame Pierrot, Mrs. Fairfax
<i>Ronald H. Siebert</i> . .	Mr. Reed, Richard Mason, Fight Captain
<i>William Ryall</i>	Mr. Brocklehurst, Sir George Lynn, Mr. Woods
<i>Nancy Auffarth</i>	Miss Miller, Frederick Lynn
<i>Maureen Sadusk</i> . . .	Miss Scatcherd, Lady Ingram, Hannah
<i>Natalie Van Kleef</i>	Helen Burns, Schoolgirl (Morton)
<i>Glory Crampton</i>	Miss Maria Temple, Blanche Ingram, Bertha
<i>Amanda White</i>	Augusta Brocklehurst, Adele Varens, Schoolgirl (Morton)
<i>Rahale Berman</i>	Schoolgirl (Lowood/Morton)
<i>Courtney Blaine Dunn</i>	Schoolgirl (Lowood/Morton)

<i>Anne Hathaway</i>	Schoolgirl (Lowood/Morton)
<i>Julie-Anne Liechty</i>	Louisa Eshton, Rosamund Oliver, Schoolgirl (Lowood)
<i>Jacqueline Macri</i>	Schoolgirl (Lowood/Morton)
<i>Jennifer Lynne Marguilis</i>	Schoolgirl (Lowood/Morton)
<i>Karen Phillips</i>	Amy Eshton, Diana Rivers, Schoolgirl (Lowood)
<i>Jessica Waxman</i>	Schoolgirl (Lowood/Morton)
<i>John A. Andrews</i>	John
<i>J. Petitchamps</i>	Grace Poole
<i>Tom Hewitt</i>	Mr. Edward Rochester
<i>Edward Staudenmayer</i>	Henry Lynn, Mr. Briggs
<i>John Littlefield</i>	St. John Rivers

PRODUCTION STAFF

Executive Producer	<i>Angelo Del Rossi</i>
Artistic Director	<i>Robert Johanson</i>
Director	<i>Robert Johanson</i>
Scenic Design	<i>Michael Anania</i>
Costume Design	<i>Gregg Barnes</i>
Lighting Design	<i>Tim Hunter</i>
Music	<i>Albert Evans</i>
Sound Design	<i>David Paterson</i>
Hair Design	<i>Howard Leonard</i>
Fight Direction	<i>Rick Sordelet</i>
Stage Manager	<i>Lora K. Powell</i>
Assistant Director	<i>Patrick Parker</i>

ACT ONE

SCENE 1: THE RUINS OF THORNFIELD HALL

AT RISE: *MUSIC: A folk-like, melancholy tune. Fog. Mist. A WOMAN dressed in black walks through the ruins—stone ramparts, chimneys, door frames, rubble. A long veil covers the WOMAN's face and upper body. She moves from the ruins, toward the AUDIENCE—slowly lifting her veil. She is a very plain woman—JANE EYRE.*

JANE (*profoundly moved by the devastation around her*). It is hard to put into words my feelings at this moment. Everything that has brought me to the place where I now stand, every action in life, every person known to me, every desire, every tear, every silence—stands with me here—begging my understanding. The veil is lifting and I am seeing and feeling what I never thought possible. Never. The lonely child that was once me, never foresaw this future.

(*YOUNG JANE emerges from behind her, carrying a book—"Bewick's History of British Birds." Simultaneously, MRS. REED enters with her children, GEORGIANA, ELIZA, and JOHN, clustered about her.*)

SCENE 2: GATESHEAD HALL

MRS. REED. Jane, I regret that I really must exclude you from the privileges intended for contented happy children like my darlings. You are an orphan—for nine years a guest in our home—and should dispose yourself in a more attractive and sprightly manner. Though my late husband was your mother's brother, you can no longer trade on that relationship to be unruly and disagreeable.

JANE and YOUNG JANE. But what have I done?

MRS. REED. I don't like questioners, Jane. There is something truly forbidding about a child who takes up her elders in that manner. Until you can speak pleasantly, remain silent. Children, you will keep Jane at a distance. I will not have your naturally sweet dispositions tainted by her sullenness.

GEORGIANA, ELIZA, JOHN. Yes, mama.

(MRS. REED leaves them. YOUNG JANE sits and opens her book. JOHN, after making sure his mother has gone, looks to his sisters meaningfully. He is large and stout for his age with unwholesome skin, the golden-curled GEORGIANA is quite pretty, if a little plump, ELIZA is severely handsome.)

JANE. John Reed bullied and punished me; not two or three times a week, but every moment he was out of his mother's sight.

(MUSIC: Piano or harpsichord. MRS. REED playing in the music room. Her children are now once again alone with YOUNG JANE.)

JANE. He should have been away to school, but my aunt claimed he must remain at home due to his delicate health. I feared him with every nerve in my young body.

JOHN. What now, Madam Mope?

YOUNG JANE. What do you want?

JOHN. Say "What do you want, Master Reed?"

YOUNG JANE. What do you want, Master Reed?

JOHN. I want you to come here!

JANE (as YOUNG JANE slowly walks toward JOHN). I knew he would soon strike, and while dreading the blow, I mused on his disgusting and ugly appearance. I'm sure he read the notion on my face.

JOHN (striking YOUNG JANE hard across the face). That is for your impudence in answering mama awhile since and for that look you just had in your eyes! (He snatches YOUNG JANE's book.) How dare you steal MY book—you dependent! Everything in this house belongs to me, or will do in a few years time. I'll teach you. (He strikes her hard with the book. She falls to the ground.)

YOUNG JANE. Wicked and cruel boy! You are like a murderer—a slave driver—you are like the Roman emperors!

JOHN. What!—Eliza! Georgiana! Did you hear what this rat said to me? (He pulls her up by the hair and hits her hard again. The SISTERS run off screaming for their mother. JOHN throws himself on the ground and pulls the nearly fainted YOUNG JANE onto him and struggles with her as though she is attacking him.) Help! Get her off me! MAMA! MAMA!

(MRS. REED runs shrieking into the room, followed by the maids, BESSIE and ABBOT, and her GIRLS.)

MRS. REED. Pull her off! She's attacking my delicate John! *(BESSIE and ABBOT lift YOUNG JANE off. MRS. REED kneels by her sobbing son.)*

BESSIE.

ABBOT.

Dear! Dear! To fly at Master John that way!

Did ever anyone see such a picture of passion!

MRS. REED. Lock her up in the red room!

MAIDS. The red room?

MRS. REED. She will stay there until I come to let her out. *(The MAIDS drag YOUNG JANE away. As MRS. REED supports her sobbing son to walk:)*

JOHN. Mama, why does she always attack me? *(Screams.)*
Don't let her hurt me again!

YOUNG JANE. No! No! Please! I didn't do it!

JOHN. She's a liar! Liar! *(He is gone. YOUNG JANE is placed on a bench in:)*

SCENE 3: THE RED ROOM

JANE. Unjust! Cried my reason! Unjust!

ABBOT. Hold her arms, Bessie, she's like a mad cat!

BESSIE. For shame, Miss Eyre, to strike at your young master!

YOUNG JANE. Master! Am I his servant?

ABBOT. You are less than a servant for you do nothing for your keep. If Mrs. Reed were to turn you out you would go to the poorhouse.

YOUNG JANE. She is my aunt—they are my cousins!

ABBOT. Don't think yourself equal with the Misses and Master Reed. They will have a great deal of money and you will have none. It is your place to be humble. Now will you sit still or shall we tie you up? (*Preparing to remove her garters for bonds.*)

YOUNG JANE. No, no, please. I'll be still.

BESSIE. What we tell you is for your own good, Miss Jane. Try to behave. Come, Miss Abbot, I'm scared to stay in this haunted place.

YOUNG JANE. Haunted?

BESSIE. Mr. Reed's bedroom, miss.

ABBOT. He died in that bed, nine years ago. (*They both cross themselves, then exit. Locking the door.*)

JANE (*standing directly behind her younger self*). Even from a distance of so many years, I still feel the heat of that ceaseless inward question—WHY? Why did I suffer thus?

(*BESSIE and ABBOT appear in a hallway.*)

BESSIE. Poor Miss Jane is to be pitied, Abbot.

ABBOT. If she were a nice pretty child like Miss Georgiana, one might pity her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a plain little toad as that. (*BESSIE and ABBOT exit.*)

JANE. I was hated because I was plain. But, I could not see it then, all I could see was that I was in the room

where my dead uncle had laid in state—my dead uncle that if he had lived would have treated me kindly.

(MUSIC: Eerie and mysterious.)

JANE. Bessie had told me that if dead men in their graves were troubled that their last wishes had not been fulfilled, they would revisit the earth to exact a punishment. I stared at the bed willing my dead uncle to save me—to save me from this hell!

(Suddenly from up out of the bedcovers, MR. REED rises reaching toward YOUNG JANE. [This can also be accomplished by merely hearing his voice.]

MR. REED'S GHOST. Jane! Jane! JANE!
YOUNG JANE *(screams and bolts for the door)*. Help!
Help! Bessie! Let me out! Take me out! Save me!

(The sound of the door unlocking. BESSIE and ABBOT enter. The GHOST has disappeared.)

BESSIE.

ABBOT.

Miss Eyre, are you ill? Are
you hurt?

What a dreadful noise!

YOUNG JANE. I heard the rushing of wings—I saw it!
There was a ghost!

BESSIE. Haunted!

ABBOT. Another naughty trick!

(MRS. REED appears—her CHILDREN crowded behind her.)

MRS. REED. What is all this? She was to be left here until I let her out.

BESSIE. She screamed so loud, ma'am.

MRS. REED. Let go her hand! Leave this room! I abhor artifice; even in children.

YOUNG JANE. I saw my uncle Reed.

MRS. REED. What?

YOUNG JANE. My uncle Reed, he knows how you've treated me—all of you; he knows how you shut me up, and how you wish me dead.

MRS. REED *(after a stunned silence)*. You shall remain here the entire night!

YOUNG JANE. No, Aunt! Please don't! Please! Don't lock me in! *(She runs to the door as it is slammed again, leaving the sobbing and frightened YOUNG JANE alone. Imagining all sorts of horrors, she faints dead away. The lights fade.)*

JANE. I ought to forgive my aunt. She believed me to be a troubled and wanton child. To her I was. But to her I owe much mental suffering.

SCENE 4: THE HALLWAY AT GATESHEAD

(BESSIE unlocks the door and lets YOUNG JANE out.)

BESSIE. Come, Miss Jane, Missus said I was to bring you out. Don't cry, Miss Jane.

YOUNG JANE. I cry because I am miserable.

BESSIE. Missus was rather too hard. Here, I brought you your little doll. *(YOUNG JANE grabs her doll and hugs it to her.)*

JANE. With what absurd sincerity I doted on this shabby little scarecrow of a doll. I could not sleep unless it was folded in my nightgown. Human beings must love something.

YOUNG JANE. Bessie, they all hate me. Master John struck me. He struck me, Bessie, several times. What can I do?

BESSIE. Have you no other relatives, miss?

YOUNG JANE. My aunt once mentioned there might be some poor relations somewhere.

BESSIE. You might be happier with poor relations.

YOUNG JANE. I don't know that I should like to be poor.

BESSIE. Or wouldn't you like to go to school?

YOUNG JANE. I should like to very much.

SCENE 5: GATESHEAD PARLOUR

(MRS. REED sits on a couch by the fire with JOHN lying indolently beside her eating candy. A tall, sable-clad, severe gentleman, MR. BROCKLEHURST, stands across the room. GEORGIANA eats chocolates and ELIZA writes in her account book.)

JANE. My aunt, it seems, had come to the same conclusion. I was summoned to her presence.

MRS. REED. Mr. Brocklehurst, this is the girl respecting whom I applied to you. Jane Eyre.

BROCKLEHURST. Well, Jane Eyre, are you a good child?

MRS. REED. Perhaps the less said on that subject the better.

BROCKLEHURST. No sight so sad as a naughty little girl. Come here. Do you know where the wicked go after death?