

Name _____
Date _____
Period _____

Jane Eyre Comparison Activity

Directions: Read the description of Jane Eyre and the descriptions of other heroines in Victorian literature. Through completing each activity, compare and contrast how women were portrayed in Victorian literature compared to Jane Eyre

Jane Eyre in *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë

“Bessie, when she heard this narrative, sighed and said, ‘Poor Miss Jane is to be pitied, too, Abbot.’

‘Yes,’ responded Abbot; ‘if she were a nice, pretty child, one might compassionate her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that.’

‘Not a great deal, to be sure,’ agreed Bessie: ‘at any rate, a beauty like Miss Georgiana would be more moving in the same condition.’

‘Yes, I doat on Miss Georgiana!’ cried the fervent Abbot. ‘Little darling!—with her long curls and her blue eyes, and such a sweet colour as she has; just as if she were painted!—Bessie, I could fancy a Welsh rabbit for supper.’”

Jane Eyre’s Physical Qualities	Other’s Reactions to Those Qualities

Catherine Earnshaw/Linton in *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë

Context: Unfortunately, Catherine Linton has just passed away after a difficult childbirth. In the following passage her husband Edgar is looking at her after she has passed.

“Next morning—bright and cheerful out of doors—stole softened in through the blinds of the silent room, and suffused the couch and its occupant with a mellow, tender glow. Edgar Linton had his head laid on the pillow, and his eyes shut. His young and fair features were almost as deathlike as those of the form beside him, and almost as fixed: but *his* was the hush of exhausted anguish, and *hers* of perfect peace. Her brow smooth, her lids closed, her lips wearing the expression of a smile; no angel in heaven could be more beautiful than she appeared. And I partook of the infinite calm in which she lay: my mind was never in a holier frame than while I gazed on that untroubled image of Divine rest. I instinctively echoed the words she had uttered a few hours before: ‘Incomparably beyond and above us all! Whether still on earth or now in heaven, her spirit is at home with God!’”

Describe Catherine in 5 Words

Describe Jane Eyre in 5 Words

Dorothea Brooke in *Middlemarch* by George Eliot

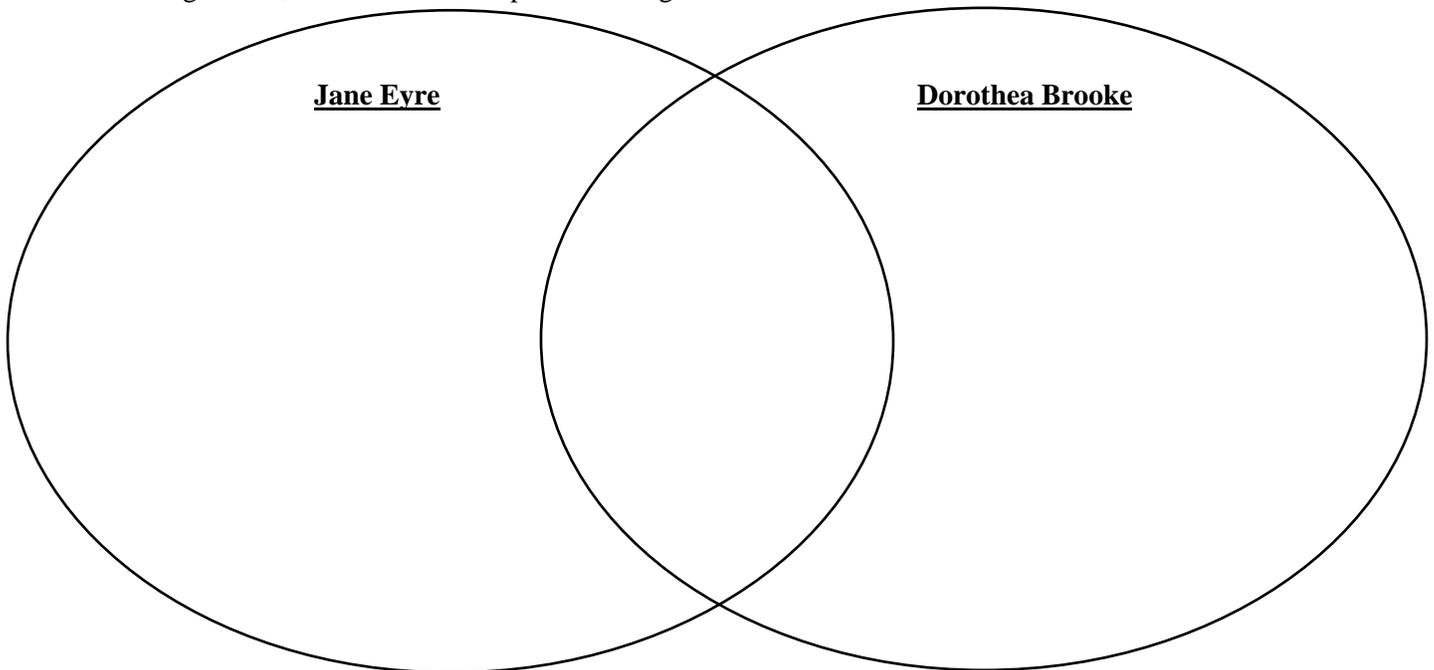
Context: These are the opening lines of the novel that introduce Dorothea to the audience.

“Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters; and her profile as well as her stature and bearing seemed to gain the more dignity from her plain garments, which by the side of provincial fashion gave her the impressiveness of a fine quotation from the Bible,—or from one of our elder poets,—in a paragraph of to-day's newspaper. She was usually spoken of as being remarkably clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common-sense. Nevertheless, Celia wore scarcely more trimmings; and it was only to close observers that her dress differed from her sister's, and had a shade of coquetry in its arrangements; for Miss Brooke's plain dressing

was due to mixed conditions, in most of which her sister shared. The pride of being ladies had something to do with it: the Brooke connections, though not exactly aristocratic, were unquestionably "good:" if you inquired backward for a generation or two, you would not find any yard-measuring or parcel-tying forefathers—anything lower than an admiral or a clergyman; and there was even an ancestor discernible as a Puritan gentleman who served under Cromwell, but afterwards conformed, and managed to come out of all political page troubles as the proprietor of a respectable family estate. Young women of such birth, living in a quiet country-house, and attending a village church hardly larger than a parlor, naturally regarded frippery as the ambition of a huckster's daughter.”

Jane Eyre

Dorothea Brooke



Gwendolen Fairfax in *The Importance of Being Ernest* by Oscar Wilde

Algernon. By the way, did you tell Gwendolen the truth about your being Ernest in town, and Jack in the country?

Jack. [In a very patronising manner.] My dear fellow, the truth isn't quite the sort of thing one tells to a nice, sweet, refined girl. What extraordinary ideas you have about the way to behave to a woman!

Algernon. The only way to behave to a woman is to make love to her, if she is pretty, and to some one else, if she is plain.

- What would Algernon think of Jane Eyre? What would he think of someone like Dorothea or Catherine?

- In this exchange, how do Algernon and Jack view the importance of women's beauty?

Concluding Questions

Jane Eyre in *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë

"I sometimes regretted that I was not handsomer; I sometimes wished to have rosy cheeks, a straight nose, and small cherry mouth; I desired to be tall, stately, and finely developed in figure; I felt it a misfortune that I was so little, so pale, and had features so irregular and so marked. And why had I these aspirations and these regrets? It would be difficult to say: I could not then distinctly say it to myself; yet I had a reason, and a logical, natural reason too."

- How did Jane Eyre feel pressure because of her appearance?

- How does Jane Eyre reject the norms of the Victorian time period?

- How does the inclusion of a plain looking female character help advance women's literature as a whole?