Jane Eyre: (a) Jane at Gateshead Hall

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⊘ *refers to links on www.crossref-it.info*

❖ **Lesson focus:** To examine how the opening three chapters establish the character of Jane and also introduce some key themes for the novel.

❖ **Opening exercise:** Photocopy the first page of the novel so that each student has a copy.
  ➢ Read it aloud to the students who then annotate and highlight their sheet under these three headings:
    • Characters (who we meet, and what we find out about them)
    • Language (any unfamiliar words, or interesting use of words)
    • Key words (no more than five).
  ➢ Discuss students' findings and what they suggest about this novel.

❖ **Discussion ideas:** Follow this up by reading the rest of Chapter 1.
  ➢ Ask students to list the themes that they think they detect. Again, discuss findings.
  ➢ The list might include:
    • Authority
    • Power
    • Unfairness/injustice
    • Lying and deceit
    • Wealth/class/social position
    • Fear
    • Favouritism
    • Violence
    • Bullying
    • Discipline.
  ➢ The list could be kept to refer to as the book progresses and themes are developed.
    (⊘ *Jane Eyre* > Themes and significant ideas)

❖ **Textual examination:** Collect on the board synonyms for 'red' (crimson, scarlet, pink . . .).

➢ Add to these the connotations each suggests (perhaps as a spider diagram).
➢ Read the paragraph beginning 'The red room was a spare chamber . . .' (Ch.2).
➢ Students make notes as follows:
  ▪ List words meaning or relating to red
  ▪ What makes this room sound frightening?
  ▪ What literary devices does Brontë use (alliteration, imagery, particular punctuation, etc.)?
➢ After discussing their answers, students rewrite the passage as 'The Yellow Room', a happy, welcoming, positive room. Some of these could be read out.

❖ **Recreative task:** Fill in **Worksheet (a)i**, the social worker's observation sheet, as at the end of Chapter 3.
  ➢ The characters who give their opinions could be:
    • Mrs Reed
    • Bessie
    • Abbot
    • Mr Lloyd.

❖ **Critical task:** What initial impression do you gain of Jane from the opening three chapters?
  ➢ What methods has Brontë used to convey this impression?
    (⊘ *Jane Eyre* > Characterisation > The creation of character)

❖ **Extension idea:** Compare Jane Eyre with any other orphans in literature (particularly nineteenth century novels) that you know about.
  ➢ Is this too obvious and easy a way for a writer to gain our sympathy for a character? (⊘ *Jane Eyre* > The context of *Jane Eyre* > Charlotte Brontë and childhood)