

Jane Eyre: (d) Jane and the Rivers family

☞ refers to links on www.crossref-it.info

- ❖ **Lesson focus:** To explore this section of the story and its significance in the structure of the whole novel.
 - ❖ **Opening exercise:** Try to create acrostics for the names of DIANA, MARY, ST JOHN.
 - Each word (or short phrase) should make an observation about their character, appearance or role in Jane's story.
 - ❖ **Discussion ideas:** Research the place of religion in Victorian society.
 - (☞ *Jane Eyre* > The world of Victorian writers > Making sense of the intangible world > Religion in Victorian England)
 - (☞ The context of *Jane Eyre* > Religious / philosophical context > The influence of Christianity)
 - (The context of *Jane Eyre* > Religious / philosophical context > Religion in *Jane Eyre*)
 - In the light of this, discuss how you think St John Rivers was regarded by Brontë's original readership, compared to how he might be thought of today.
 - ❖ **Textual examination:** Explore the role of St John Rivers in the novel by contrasting him with other characters.
 - Firstly, draw up three columns and compare and contrast his religion with that of:
 - Helen Burns
 - Mr Brocklehurst.
 (☞ *Jane Eyre* > The context of *Jane Eyre* > Educational context > Jane's education in *Jane Eyre*)
 (☞ *Jane Eyre* > The context of *Jane Eyre* > Religious context > The influence of Christianity & religion in *Jane Eyre*)
 - Secondly, compare him with Mr Rochester in as many ways as possible.
- (☞ *Jane Eyre* > Characterisation > Jane's suitors > St John Rivers)
- ❖ **Recreative task:** Try either of the following:
 - Write the letter St John might send from India on hearing about Jane's marriage to Rochester.
 - Write a dialogue between Jane and St John about:
 - How best to control a girl at the school who is not learning
 - How best to teach the children about nature.
 (☞ *Jane Eyre* > Imagery > Metaphor and Symbolism > Nature)
 - ❖ **Critical task:** What role does Jane's time with the Rivers family play in the structure and themes of the novel overall?
 - How would you respond to a reader who claimed that this part of the novel could easily be left out?
 - (☞ *Jane Eyre* > Themes > Families, parents and children)
 - ❖ **Extension Task:** Allocate each member of the class a minor character from the novel.
 - E.g. Miss Oliver, Hannah, one of the Reed children, Abbot, Helen Burns, Miss Temple, Lady Ingram, Grace Poole, any others.
 - Each student presents a case for the importance of their character in the novel (in the character's voice, if preferred) and voting decides the 'winner'.
 - This could include questioning (hot-seating?) and could be set up like a balloon debate.
 (☞ *Jane Eyre* > Characterisation > Role and significance)
 (☞ *Jane Eyre* > Characterisation > Women in *Jane Eyre*)