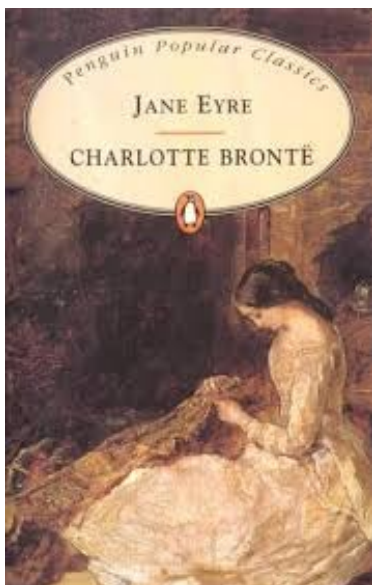
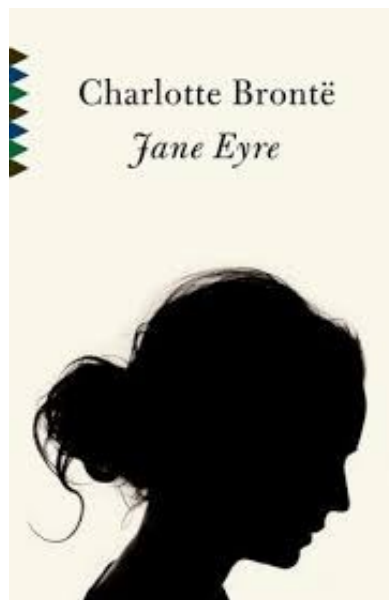


Reading Guide

Jane Eyre

by **Charlotte Brontë**



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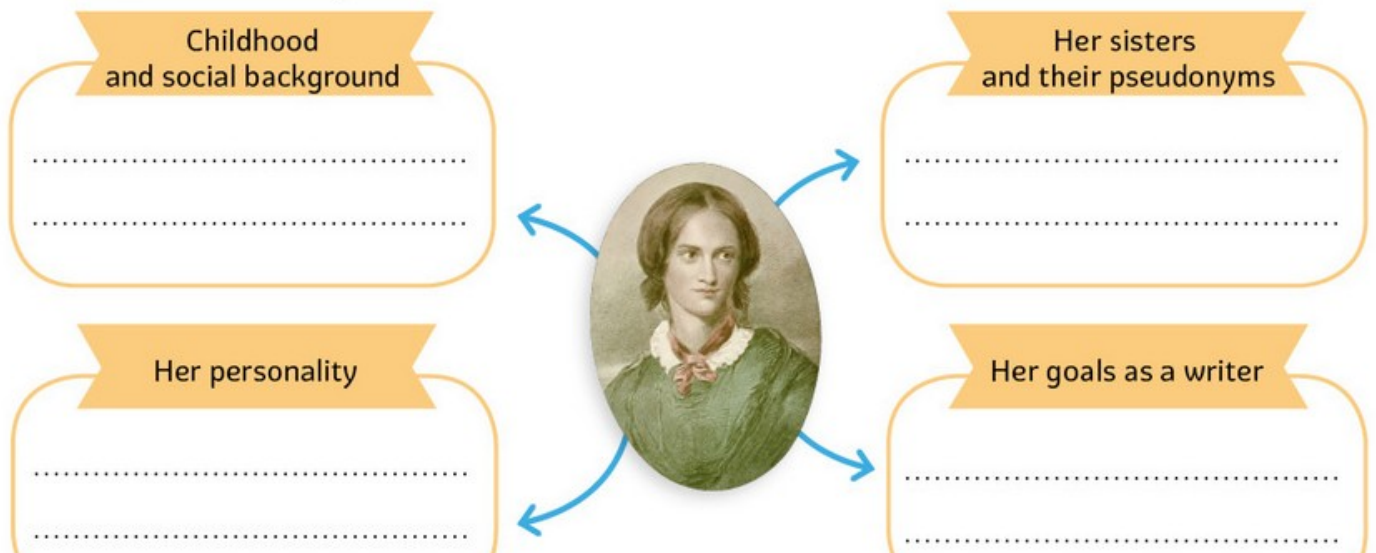
CHARLOTTE BRONTË: A SUBVERSIVE AUTHOR?

Charlotte Brontë (1816-1865) grew up in Yorkshire during the Victorian era. The third child of six children, including her fellow sisters and writers, Emily and Anne Brontë, Charlotte experienced the harsh conditions in the Clergy Daughters' School in Lancashire. As an adult, she worked as a governess and a teacher. She wrote and published four novels inspired by her life experiences. *Jane Eyre* was her first and most famous novel, written in 1847. It was followed by *Shirley*, *Villette* and *The Professor*. She became friends with two other famous writers of the period, William Thackeray and Elizabeth Gaskell.

1 Read the text above, watch the video and find out more about Charlotte Brontë.



2 Fill in the mind map.



3 Read an extract from the preface of *Jane Eyre* written by Charlotte Brontë and fill in the following chart. You can read the whole preface on the British Library site.



I mean the timorous or carping few who doubt the tendency of such books as "Jane Eyre:" in whose eyes whatever is unusual is wrong; whose ears detect in each protest against bigotry—that parent of crime—an insult to piety, that regent of God on earth. I would suggest to such doubters certain obvious distinctions; I would remind them of certain simple truths.

Conventionality is not morality.
Self-righteousness is not religion (...)

CURRER BELL. December 21st, 1847

MY REACTIONS AS A READER

WHEN READING SUCH A PREFACE:

.....

MY HYPOTHESIS AS TO THE THEMES COVERED IN THE BOOK:

.....

ABOUT CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S PSEUDONYM:

.....

Meet Charlotte Brontë

Charlotte Brontë, born in 1816, grew up in the small mill town of Haworth on the edge of the rugged moors of West Yorkshire, in northeastern England. Charlotte's second novel, *Jane Eyre*, the compelling story of a self-reliant young governess, was published in 1847 and was an immediate success.



How did Charlotte Brontë come to write *Jane Eyre*? Charlotte was having a debate with her sisters about the important qualities of a female protagonist. Acknowledging the tendency of authors to make their heroines beautiful, Charlotte asserted she would create **“a heroine as plain and small as myself, who shall be as interesting as any of yours.”** The novel charts her progress toward maturity as she contends with a social world that is hostile and indifferent to her goals and desires.

Brontë's novel is unconventional in ways other than her choice of heroine. Brontë tells Jane's story in the form of an autobiographical narrative. In so doing, she takes readers into Jane's inner life, a world of intense feeling and vigorous thought. At the time that the novel was published, such exploration of character and motive was new in English literature.

Governesses: a strange status

The occupation of governess had a special appeal for middle-class women during the Victorian era. At this time, a woman who was not financially supported by a husband or other male relative had few ways to earn a living. While many women in the 1800s did work in mills and factories, the unmarried daughters of merchants, doctors, lawyers, and clergymen sought more “suitable” employment that could offer a moderately respectable lifestyle. A governess lived with the upper-middle-class or upper-class family who hired her to teach their children. In addition to securing comfortable lodgings, she earned a modest salary.

Being a governess, however, had considerable drawbacks. Although a governess maintained a ladylike appearance and was often better educated than her employers, she was not treated as an equal. At the same time, her social status was above that of the servants, who often ridiculed the governess's claims to gentility. Working long hours and being expected to remain invisible during social gatherings, governesses had little social contact with adults, male or female. Thus the life of a governess was extremely lonely.

CHARACTERS

Complete the names and descriptions as you read.

Who's who?

1 Look at the drawings below. Complete the name of each of the characters and/or who they are in the novel.



Name: Jane Eyre

Who:



Name:

Who: Jane's husband
(at the end)



Name: Mrs

Who: Jane's aunt and
legal guardian



Name:

Who: Jane's school
friend



Name: Mr Brocklehurst

Who:



Name: Mrs Fairfax

Who:



Name: Blanche Ingram

Who:



Names:
and Rivers

Who: Jane's rescuers
and cousins

2 Which major and minor characters are missing from the section above? Fill in the table below:

Characters at Gateshead Hall	Characters at Lowood School	Characters at Thornfield	Others?

SETTINGS

Complete as you read.



Gateshead _____

Events: _____



_____ School

Events: _____

_____ Hall

Events: _____



_____ End

Events: _____

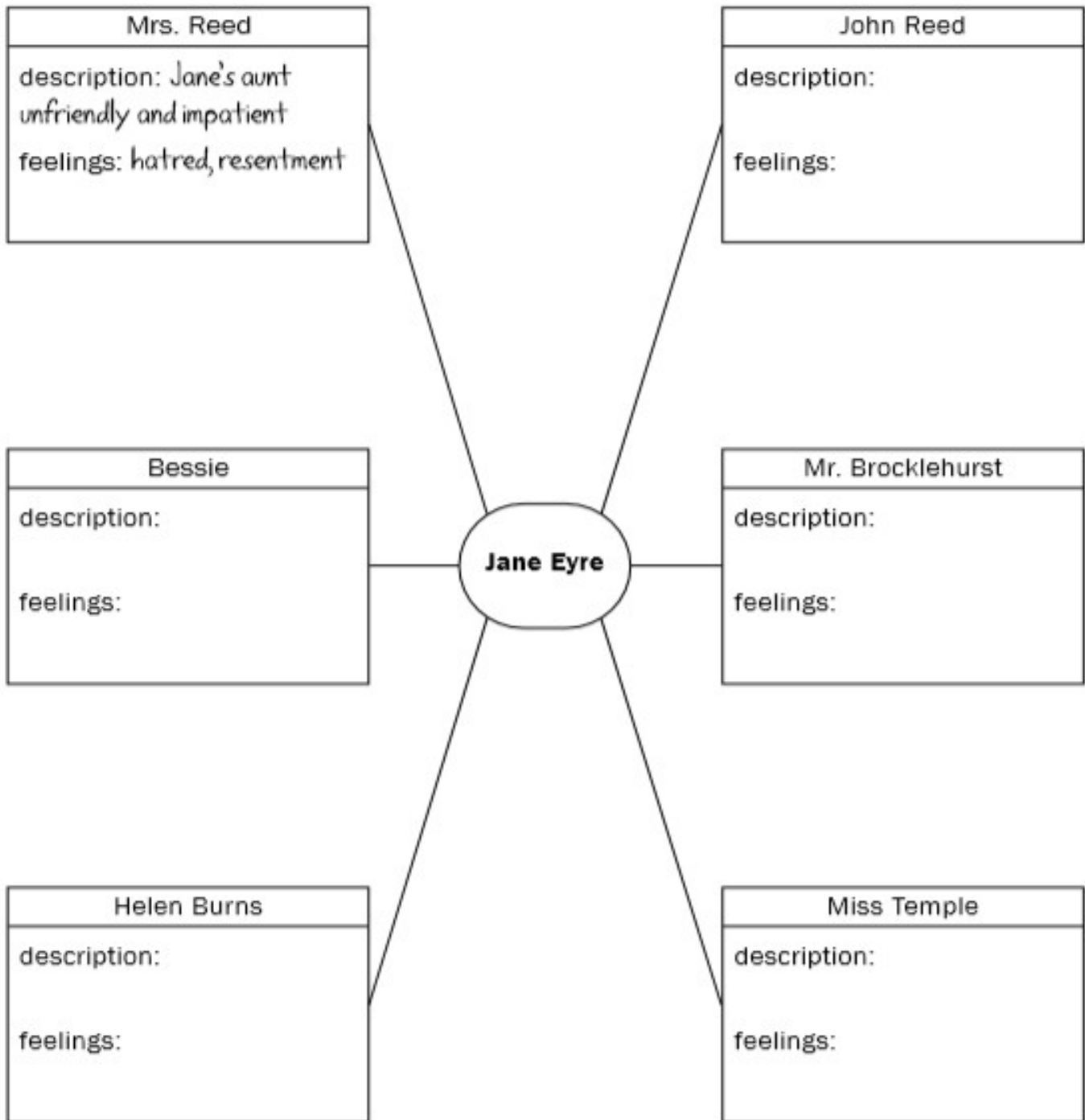


_____ Manor

Events: _____

Chapters 1–10: Jane's Childhood

In Chapters 1–10, readers learn a great deal about Jane through her interactions with other characters. As you read, identify each character and describe him or her in a phrase. Then note the feelings Jane has toward each person.



Vocabulary:

antipathy: *n.* strong dislike
 ardently: *adv.* with passion or energy
 ascertain: *v.* to find out for sure
 audacious: *adj.* recklessly bold

chastisement: *n.* punishment
 desist: *v.* to cease; to stop
 ravenous: *adj.* excessively hungry
 solace: *n.* relief from grief or anxiety



Analyzing Literature: Recall and Interpret

1. How does Mrs. Reed treat Jane? What happens in the red-room? What does Jane say to her aunt after this traumatic incident?

2. Describe the conditions at Lowood school. What is unfair about Mr. Brocklehurst's treatment of Jane? What observation does Helen make about Jane?

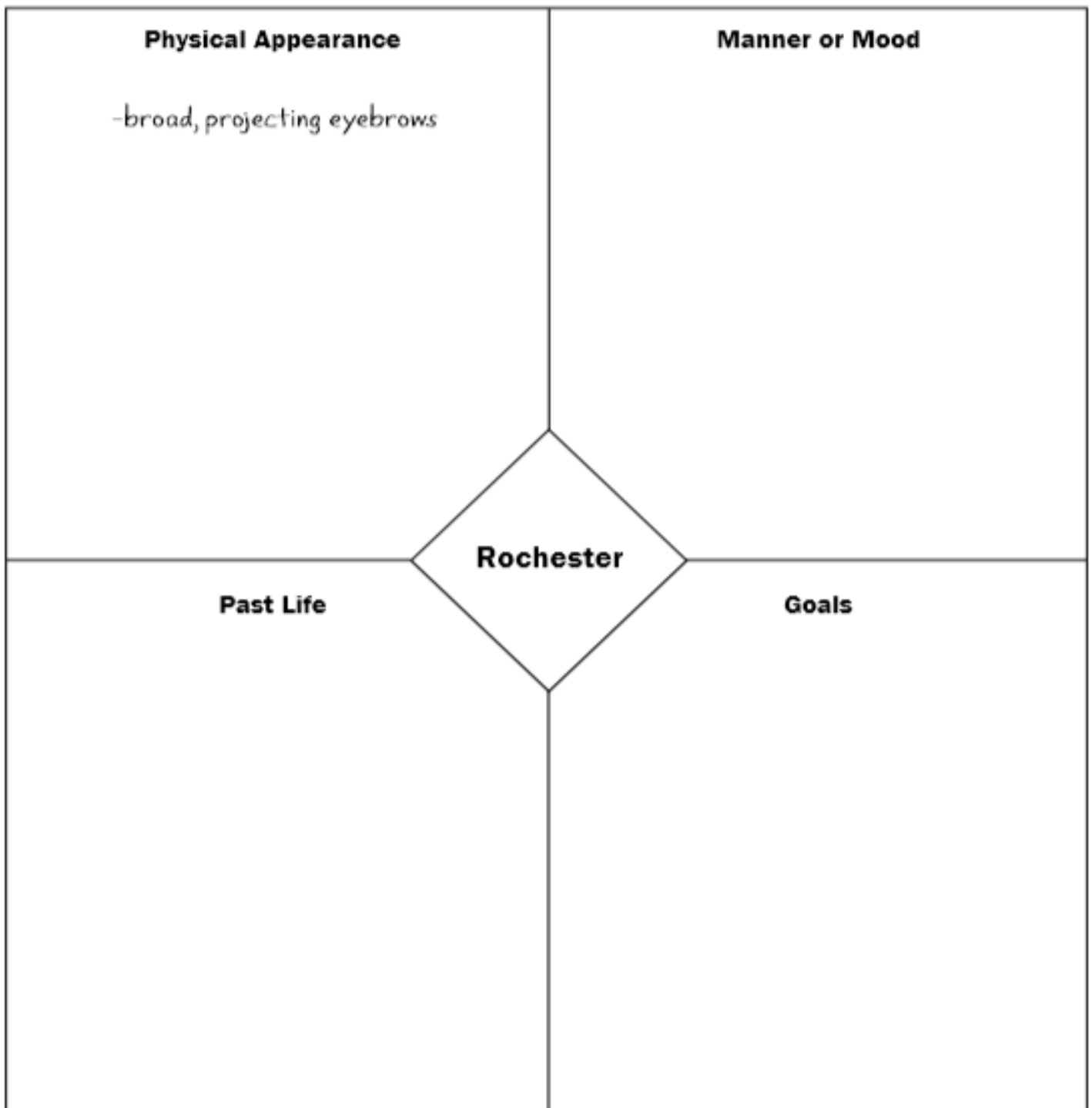
3. Why do conditions at Lowood improve? What does Jane gain from her eight years there? What is her ambition?

4. How are Jane and Helen Burns different in their attitude towards injustice?

5. Which characters see Jane as she sees herself and which see her differently? How does this affect her?

Chapters 11–20: Jane as Governess at Thornfield Hall

In these chapters, Jane gets to know her new employer, Edward Rochester of Thornfield Hall. As you read Chapters 13–15, make notes in the chart below about Rochester's appearance, manner or mood, past life, and goals.



Vocabulary:

abruptly: *adv.* suddenly; without courtesy

hector: *v.* to harass; to bully

imperious: *adj.* commanding; dominant

neophyte: *n.* beginner; inexperienced person

nonchalantly: *adv.* coolly; without concern

piquant: *adj.* stimulating; spicy

prattle: *v.* to babble, to talk on and on

quell: *v.* to put to rest; to suppress

remorse: *adj.* deep regret; sense of guilt

tenacious: *adj.* persistent

Analyzing Literature: Recall and Interpret

1. What strange sound does Jane hear on her tour of Thornfield Hall? Who does she think is responsible?

2. How do Jane and Rochester behave toward each other when they converse?

3. How does Jane find herself in the position of saving Rochester's life? What sort of suspicion is aroused by the event that threatens Rochester's life?

4. Who is Mason? How does Rochester react when he learns of his arrival? What strange incident involving Mason brings Jane to Rochester's aid again? What do all these events tell you about the relationship between Rochester and Mason?

5. Do you think Rochester is in love with Blanche Ingram? Are they a good match? Do you think he has any feelings for Jane?



Chapters 21–26: Jane’s Dilemma

In these chapters, Jane and Rochester’s relationship takes a new turn. As you read Chapters 21–25, use the chart below to analyze why the two main characters think, feel, or act as they do. Provide specific responses based on the novel.

Jane and Rochester

1. Jane believes she will need to look for a new job	because →	Adèle will be sent to school after Rochester marries Blanche Ingram.
2. Jane begins to hope that Rochester and Blanche will not be married	because →	
3. Jane sobs when Rochester speaks of her going away to Ireland	because →	
4. Rochester asks Jane to marry him	because →	
5. Although guarded at first, Jane agrees to marry Rochester	because →	
6. Rochester says, “God pardon me!” and “Man, meddle not with me” after Jane agrees to marry him	because →	
7. Jane does not want Rochester to buy her dresses and jewels	because →	
8. Rochester acted as though he were courting Blanche	because →	
9. Jane decides to act “flinty” toward Rochester	because →	
10. Jane is troubled on the night before the wedding	because →	

Vocabulary:

atone: *v.* to make amend

balm: *n.* soothing substance

dubious: *adj.* doubtful; questionable

feign: *v.* to pretend

impediment: *n.* obstacle

inquisitive: *adj.* extremely curious

presentiments: *n.* premonitions

rake: *n.* a person of loose morals

vehemence: *n.* intense emotion or force

verge: *n.* edge

Analyzing Literature: Recall and Interpret

1. When Jane revisits Gateshead, what letter does Mrs. Reed show her? What are Jane's feelings now toward Mrs. Reed? Why?

2. What disastrous event happens on Jane's wedding day? Who is Bertha?

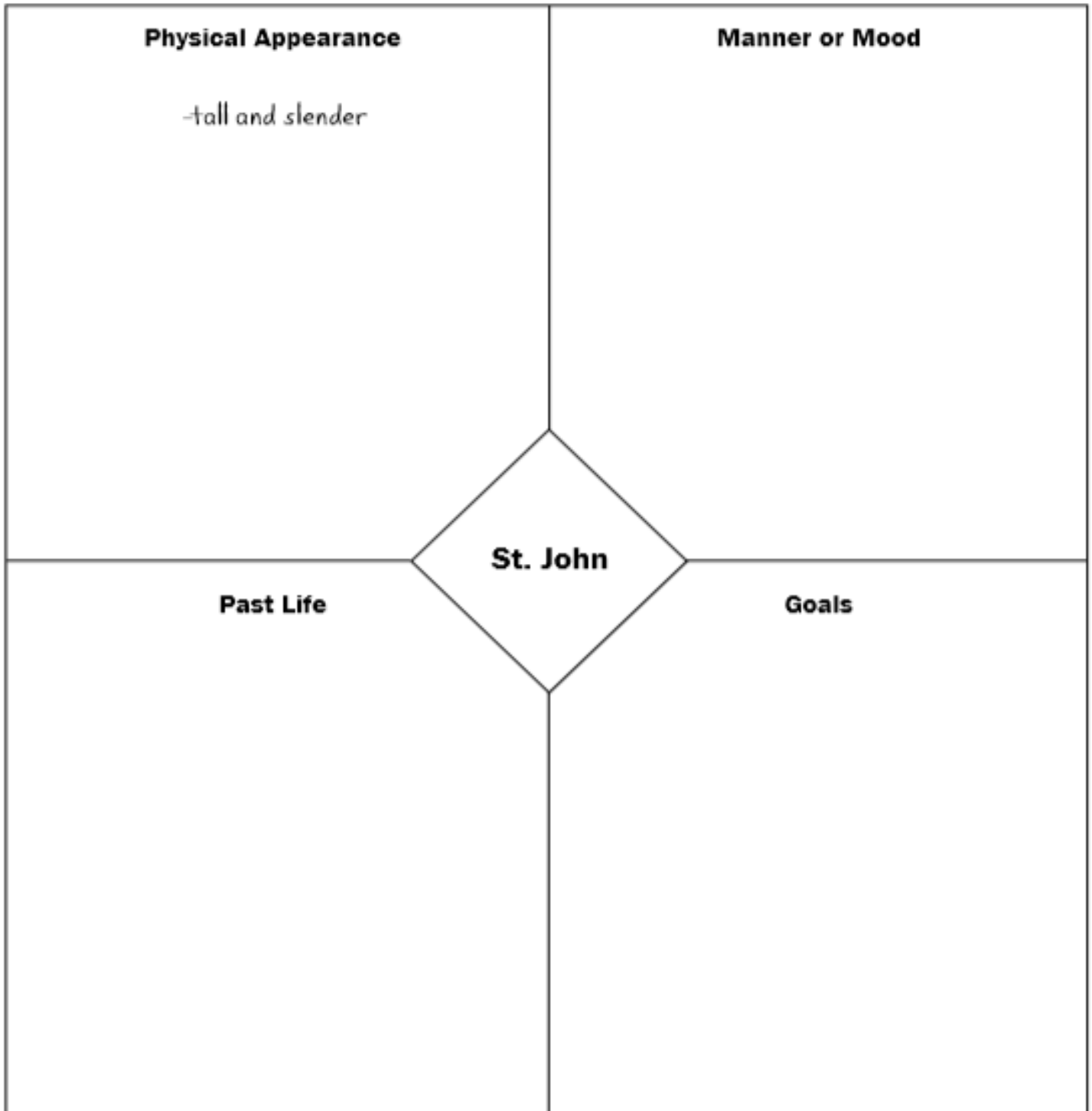
3. In Victorian England, a man could not divorce his wife if she was insane. Given this fact, was Rochester justified in asking Jane to marry him? Why or why not?

4. Can you think of earlier events in the book that foreshadowed (hinted) at this surprising twist?



Chapters 27–35: Jane’s New Life

Chapter 28 introduces St. John Rivers, another character who will become significant in Jane’s life. As you read, make notes in the chart below about St. John’s appearance, manner or mood, past life, and goals. Consider what St. John does and says about himself as well as what other characters observe about him.



Vocabulary:

approbation: *n.* approval
austere: *adj.* harsh; severe
averse: *adj.* opposed
despots: *n.* rulers with absolute power

famished: *adj.* starved
fetters: *n.* chains; restraints
inexorable: *adj.* relentless; inflexible
stoicism: *n.* indifference to pain

Analyzing Literature: Recall and Interpret

1. In chapter 27, what does Rochester propose to Jane a solution to their dilemma? How does she react to this proposal?

2. What happens to Jane on the way to Marsh End? How does Jane respond to the Rivers family?

3. How does St. John help Jane? What news does he bring to Jane? What does Jane's reaction to the news reveal about her?

4. Why does St. John ask Jane to come to India with him as his wife? How does she answer him? What do you think Jane means when she says, "If I join St. John, I abandon half myself?"

5. In what way does St. John provide a foil, or contrast, to Rochester? What traits in St. John attract Jane and what traits repel her?



Chapters 36–38: Conclusion

In Chapter 37, the plot brings Jane and Rochester back together. In the first chart below, record Jane's comments and thoughts about herself and about Rochester. In the second, record important statements Rochester makes to Jane.

Jane's Comments/Thoughts
1. "I am an independent woman now."
2.
3.
4.
5.

Rochester's Statements to Jane
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Vocabulary:

countenance: *n.* face; expression

desolate: *adj.* alone and apart

lachrymose: *adj.* tearful

relapse: *v.* to fall back to an earlier state

vainly: *adv.* without success

Analyzing Literature: Recall and Interpret

1. What shock does Jane receive when she returns to Thornfield? What does she learn about its inhabitants?

2. How does Rochester say he felt in Jane's absence? What spiritual change has occurred in Rochester?

3. Do Jane and Rochester still feel the same way about each other? In what way have the roles in their relationship been reversed?

