



Coursework



Assessment: Paper 4 Comparative Prose

One extended comparative essay referring to two texts. Total advisory word count: 2500–3000. Shared study of Jane Eyre and free choice of another text for comparison.



AOs

- AO1 Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression
- AO2 Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts
- AO3 Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received
- AO4 Explore connections across literary texts
- AO5 Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations

Terminology

Allegory a symbolic representation, or expression by means of symbolic fictional figures and actions, of truths or generalizations about human existence.

Anagnorisis the startling discovery that produces a change from ignorance to knowledge

Antagonist the main character in a work of fiction who comes into conflict with the protagonist .

Byronic Character who is characterised by being dark, mysterious, moody and who fails to follow society's rules and expectations.

Convention a traditional or common style often used in literature, theater, or art to create a particular effect. Example: romantic conventions (characteristics of romantic literature) include the following: Imagination and emotion, A reliance on intuition, An emphasis on nature and primitivism, An idealization of life, An emphasis on sadness, melancholy, psychology, and introspection.

Connotations the associations that words have

Denouement the final resolution or clarification of the plot-the events following the climax of the action

Diction the choice of words, especially with regard to correctness, clearness, or effectiveness, in a literary work. Writers will use words to reveal character, imply certain attitudes, convey action, demonstrate themes, and indicate values.

Dramatic irony The audience possesses more information than some of the characters have

Flashback when a relevant past event is brought up in the current time of the story. Flashbacks create complications within the chronology of the plot to help enrich the experience of time.

Foil a character who clearly contrasts with another

Hamartia tragic flaw or error of judgement

Hyperbole exaggeration

Symbol something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance, especially a visible sign of something invisible; an object or act representing something in the unconscious mind that has been repressed. Example: birds are often used as symbols of freedom.

Ideas from *Jane Eyre* used to link with free choice text:

- Role of women
- The female challenge
- Post colonial perspectives
- Byronic Heroes
- The role of the inherited house on behaviour
- Expectations of characters in society
- Context is the key to behaviour
- Role of madness
- Eurocentric interpretations
- Perspectives of religion
- Unreliable Narrations
- The Bildungsroman

Other Texts used:

Rebecca, Wide Sargasso Sea, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Far from the Madding Crowd, Great Expectations, Bleak House, The Bloody Chamber; any other of A Level standard may be selected.

Wider Reading/Further Study

'The Madwoman in the Attic' - Sandra Gilbert & Susan Gubar

'A Literature of their own' - Elaine Showalter

The British Library online critical resources:

<https://www.bl.uk/works/jane-eyre>



Context

In the early 19th century, critics often dismissed the work of women writers as light entertainment. Much of it (Jane Austen's work being a notable exception) was, in fact, sentimental, romantic, and trivial, written for popular consumption. Women writers who wanted to create more literary works often found that their work would be taken more seriously if they used a male pseudonym. Charlotte Brontë published her first two novels, *Jane Eyre* and *Shirley*, under the name Currer Bell. Her sisters Emily and Anne published under the names Ellis and Acton Bell, respectively. In an 1850 preface to Emily's novel *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte explained why they decided to use pseudonyms: "without at that time suspecting that our mode of writing and thinking was not what is called 'feminine'—we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice; we had noticed how critics sometimes use for their chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward, a flattery, which is not true praise."

Critical Response

Critics enthusiastically recommended *Jane Eyre* at the time of its publication. One London critic, reviewing the book in 1847, said that the author showed "fertile invention, great power of description, and a happy faculty for conceiving and sketching character." He called it a "remarkable novel, very far indeed above the average." Some reviewers detected that the author of *Jane Eyre* was a woman, but despite Charlotte's concern that female authors are judged differently than male authors, this didn't dampen their praise. George Henry Lewes wrote in the *Westminster Review* in 1848: "Whoever may be the author, we hope to see more such books from *her* pen."

Jane Eyre has enjoyed enduring popularity due to its emotional power and strong female voice. Brontë has been celebrated for her effective use of natural descriptions to establish mood, her clear depiction of the obstacles women faced in male-dominated society, and her probing of the protagonist's psyche. Like many other rich and memorable works, the novel has inspired other writers to explore its world, chief among them Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, something of a prequel that focuses on the character of Bertha Mason.

Victorian Britain

Jane Eyre was written during the Victorian era, named for the queen who ruled the United Kingdom from 1837 to 1901. It was a time of economic growth through the Industrial Revolution, expansion of the British empire, and increasing democratization. During this period British society had sharp divisions between the classes. At the top were the aristocrats, the wealthiest class. They had ties to royalty and didn't need to work because their income came from land and wealth passed down through the generations. Their children were mostly educated at home by tutors or governesses. University education was open only to males; females were expected to marry. Noble parents often arranged marriages for their children to bring increased wealth, land, or prestige to the family. The presence of a new class of wealthy entrepreneurs, enriched by the Industrial Revolution, posed something of a challenge to the aristocrats. That class nevertheless remained at the top of the social ladder. Some wealthy industrialists hoped to gain status by marrying a child into a noble family. Some nobles, their estates grown less lucrative, seized the opportunity to improve their financial position through such a match.

Strict rules of behaviour governed interactions between the lower classes and the aristocrats. The servants who did the work of keeping the aristocrats' manor houses and large estates in order were expected to show great deference to their employers. They were to do their work quietly and without drawing attention to themselves. Most servants had little or no education; they received very low pay and had few opportunities to better themselves. Governesses, who had some education and were entrusted with caring for the children, were treated somewhat better but nevertheless had an in-between status, both part of the family and not part of the family. Farmers, blacksmiths, and other working people were also considered lower class. The middle class included merchants, bankers, doctors, teachers, and members of the clergy.

Christianity was very important to people of all classes. The Bible was widely read and often quoted, and the village church was a central part of community life. During the 19th century, particularly during the reign of Queen Victoria, Britain was solidifying its empire, ruling over colonies in India, Australia, and the West Indies. The British generally viewed non-Europeans as having ways of life and beliefs inferior to their own, and this inspired many churchgoers to travel abroad as missionaries to convert them to Christianity.

Questions

Questions are created by each student after discussion with the teacher.

The stem for the question is usually: Explore how