**The locations of the novel - SETTING**

The action of *Jane Eyre* takes place in the north of England at locations in Derbyshire, Lancashire and Yorkshire. This was the area of England most familiar to Charlotte Brontë, from the places where she had lived, been educated and worked prior to the time she came to write *Jane Eyre*.

**Location and structure**

The structure of the novel can be defined by the various locations in which Jane finds herself: Each place has a particular and different topographical location, the place names indicating stages of the pilgrimage:

* + Gateshead – the beginning
  + Lowood – low wood – a low point for Jane and one where vision and progress is hampered.
  + Thornfield – a place of difficulty and trial
  + Moor House – the wide open place suggestive of freedom/spaciousness
  + Ferndean – suggestive of green-ness and fertility, therefore fulfilment & creativity

The action takes place in and around a particular house or other building. Each move marks a stage in Jane's fortunes, development and sense of her own identity. The places are therefore related to the novel's thematic content.

**Gateshead (Chapters 1- 4: Volume 1, Chapters 1-4)**

Gateshead, the house belonging to her mother's older brother, is supposedly Jane's home after she is orphaned, but after the death of her uncle the atmosphere changes:

* Both her aunt and her cousins are able to express their resentment at Jane's presence
* She is constantly reminded of her dependent status and the inconvenience to which she puts the family
* She is excluded from family belonging
* The Reeds' model of the family is in any case undesirable, combining indulgence of the children's whims and vanities with obedience to the mother's will and shot through with bullying, jealousy and spite
* Jane's troubles are intensified because she is a convenient victim of the family's problems
* She fails to conform to expectations of feminine and childlike behaviour by thinking for herself and being outspoken and defiant
* She suffers from physical bullying when John attacks her and psychological cruelty when she is locked in the Red Room
* As a result she develops a strong sense of fairness and a powerful reaction to injustice
* She finds consolation in reading and the exercise of her imagination.

Investigating Gateshead (Chapters 1- 4: Volume 1, Chapters 1-4)

**Revision Task**

1. **Re-read the passage in Chapter 1 from ‘A small breakfast-room' to ‘Henry Earl of Moreland'. Makes notes on:**
   * **What we learn about Jane's taste in reading**
   * **What this tells you about her feelings about life at Gateshead**
2. **Re-read Chapter 2. Makes notes on:**
   * **The appearance of the Red Room**
   * **The associations the Red Room arouses in Jane's mind**

**Lowood School (Chapters 5-10; Volume 1, Chapters 5-10)**

At first, Jane's experience at Lowood is a continuation of her treatment by the Reeds, with the added physical discomforts of cold and hunger and the application of a harsh and narrowly doctrinaire form of Christianity:

* Once again, Jane finds herself reminded of her dependent status
* She is branded a liar in front of the whole school
* Brocklehurst does all he can to suppress the natural in the girls – whether it be their curly hair or their personalities.

On the other hand, there are some compensations in life at Lowood:

* However briefly, Jane enjoys the companionship of Helen Burns
* Conditions at the school improve after the outbreak of typhus and the reduced influence of Brocklehurst
* Jane becomes friends with Miss Temple, whose teaching, personality and intellectual quality help in the formation of Jane's own character and intellect.

Once Miss Temple has left, however, Jane becomes restless and feels that Lowood is a prison. She now feels ready to encounter a wider world.

**Revision Task**

1. **Closely read chapters 5, 6 and 7. Make notes on the atmosphere and physical privations of Lowood School.**
2. **How do Brocklehurst's religious beliefs affect life at the school?**
3. **How does the narrative suggest that his influence on the school may be harmful?**
4. **What is the cause of Jane's restlessness in Chapter 10? What does it tell us about her character?**

**Thornfield Hall (Chapters 11-27; Volume 1, Chapters 11-Volume 3, Chapter 1)**

Jane's arrival at Thornfield Hall marks the beginning of a kind of independence:

* She makes her own decision to leave the safety and security of Lowood, where she has been happy for ten years
* She obtains a post on the basis of her abilities and experience
* She displays courage and determination in travelling to take up a post in a distant and unknown location.

From the time of her arrival, Jane feels that Thornfield is full of mystery:

* She finds that she is working for an absent and enigmatic employer
* Adèle's history is uncertain, as is the story of how Rochester came to be her guardian
* She hears strange laughter from the upper floors.

Rochester's arrival comes at a time when Jane is again feeling restless:

* She first encounters him and his dog in almost supernatural circumstances
* From the beginning of their relationship, Rochester is interested in Jane for her own sake
* He encourages her to express her feelings and is fascinated by what her drawings say about the quality of her imagination.

Jane comes into contact with a different level of society:

* In particular, Blanche Ingram offers a different image of womanhood
* Jane is again reminded of her dependent status as a governess
* The arrival of Blanche and the rest of the house party enables her to confront her own feelings.

Above all, of course:

* It is at Thornfield that she and Rochester fall in love and plan to marry
* From this arises the solution to the mystery of Thornfield and Jane's departure.

**Revision Task**

1. **When she first arrives at Thornfield, Jane is as restless as she was when she left Lowood. What are the causes of her restlessness?**
2. **Make a list of the supernatural aspects of Thornfield Hall. How do they affect the ways in which you read the story?**
3. **Search the text for details of the appearance of Thornfield House. What picture of the house, both outside and inside, does this enable you to create?**
4. **Jane is often very happy at Thornfield, but sometimes she is less happy. Why should that be the case?**

**Moor House (chapters 28-35; Volume 3, Chapters 2-10)**

Moor House offers Jane:

* Security and safety
* An opportunity for rest and recovery after her experiences at Thornfield Hall
* Like-minded companions
* Useful work in a local school and a small home of her own.

It is while she is at Moor House that

* She becomes a rich woman
* She learns that she also has a family.

However, her time at Moor House also presents Jane with a dilemma:

* How should she respond to St John's suggestion that she accompany him to India as his wife?

**Revision Task**

1. **List the arguments that St John uses to persuade Jane to agree to his suggestions**
2. **What are the arguments that Jane uses against St John?**
3. **What causes Jane to make her final decision?**

**Thornfield and Ferndean (Chapters 36-38; Volume 3, Chapters 10-12)**

The final events of the novel take place in the ruins of Thornfield Hall and at Ferndean, where Rochester and Jane now live.

**Revision Task**

1. **Do you think it is necessary to the plot of the novel that Thornfield should be destroyed? Give your reasons.**
2. **Note the details of the appearance of Ferndean. In what ways is it an appropriate home for Jane and Rochester?**