CAPITOLO

3

Rebel Heroines: the Brontës and George Eliot

"Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be." — Robert Southey, letter to Charlotte Brontë (March 1837), in Elizabeth Gaskell, The Life of Charlotte Brontë (1857), ch. 8

OBIETTIVI

1. I can describe the Victorian "woman question" — education, work, the law and the first demands for the vote — and explain the ideal of the angel in the house.
2. I can outline the lives and novels of Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë and of George Eliot, and define the Bildungsroman.
3. I can analyse Jane Eyre's first-person voice and the frame narrative of *Wuthering Heights* in three passages, and compare them in a paragraph.
4. I can express shades of likelihood, resignation and attitude with *may well, might as well, could hardly*, putative *should*, *dare* and *need*.
5. I can take turns and interrupt politely in a discussion, and write a character analysis essay with short quotations.
6. I can compare Jane's protest with Medea's speech to the women of Corinth and with the women of Deledda and Aleramo.

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English 5 · Parte I · The Victorian Age · versione 1.0
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In December 1836 a twenty-year-old clergyman's daughter in Yorkshire sent some of her poems to the Poet Laureate, Robert Southey, and asked for his opinion. His answer reached her in March 1837, a few months before Victoria came to the throne. It was kind, and it was firm: a woman's "proper duties", he wrote, would leave her little time for literature, and she should not seek fame. Ten years later the same young woman, Charlotte Brontë, published a novel in which a penniless governess tells her employer that she has "as much soul" as he has. It was an immediate success: a second edition was needed within three months.

This chapter follows the women who wrote, and the women they wrote about, in the middle decades of Victoria's reign. History and Society looks at the "woman question" — education, work, the law and the first demands for the vote. Literature and Texts read the three Brontë sisters and George Eliot, and three passages in which Jane Eyre and Catherine Earnshaw speak for themselves. In Language you will refine your modal verbs; in Skills you will learn to take part in a discussion without talking over others, and to write a character analysis essay. Connections takes you to Sardinia with Grazia Deledda, back to Corinth, where Euripides' Medea speaks to the women of the city, and to the notes in which Ada Lovelace imagined what a machine might do.

3.1 History and Society: the Woman Question, 1837–1882

When Victoria became queen in 1837, the head of state was a woman of eighteen. Yet a married woman of her time could not own property in her own name, no woman could vote in a parliamentary election or take a university degree, and almost every profession was closed to women. In the middle of the century these facts became the subject of a long public argument that the Victorians called the **woman question** (*la questione femminile*): what women were by nature, how they should be educated, what work they could do and what rights the law should give them. Figura 3.1 sets the novels of this chapter beside the main milestones of that debate.

3.1.1 The angel in the house

Middle-class Victorians liked to think of society as divided into two worlds. The public world of work, money and politics belonged to men; the private world of the home belonged to women, who were to make it a refuge of comfort and moral purity for husbands and children. Historians call this ideology **separate spheres** (*sfere separate*). Its most famous image comes from a long poem by Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House*, published in four parts between 1854 and 1862, in which the poet celebrates courtship and married love. Patmore meant the title as praise. Later readers turned the phrase **angel in the house** (*angelo del focolare*) into a label for

the ideal wife — gentle, selfless, devoted to others — and for the pressure that ideal put on real women: in a lecture of 1931 Virginia Woolf said that killing the Angel in the House was part of a woman writer's job.

The ideal was middle-class. Working-class women had always worked: in textile mills, in the fields, in sweated trades such as dressmaking and, above all, in domestic service, the largest single employment for women in Victorian Britain. For them the question was not whether to work, but for how many hours and for what wage — the industrial city of chapter 1 was also a city of working women.

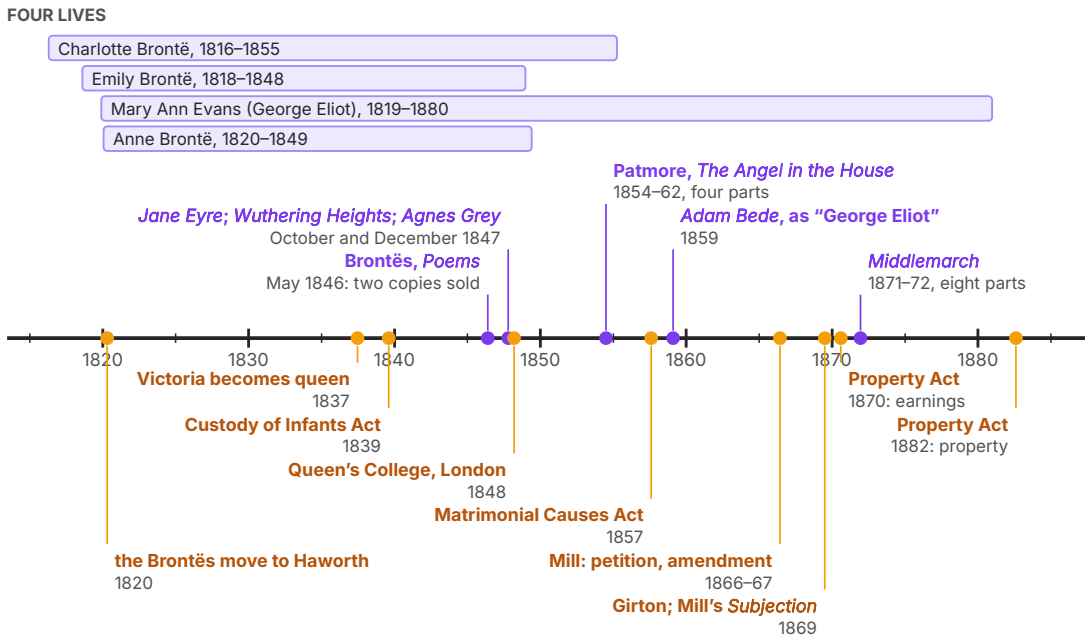


Figura 3.1 The Brontës, George Eliot and the woman question, 1815–1885: lives (top), literary works (violet, above the axis) and events (amber, below), on a proportional axis (ticks every 5 years). Works published in parts are placed at their first part.

3.1.2 Governesses and the first colleges

For a middle-class woman without money of her own, the choice was narrow. She could marry; she could live as a dependant in a relative's house; or she could earn a modest living as a teacher, as a paid companion to an older lady or, most often, as a **governess** (*istitutrice*): a woman who lived in a family's house and taught its children. The governess was a lady by birth and education but a paid employee, neither a member of the family nor a servant, and she belonged fully to neither world. Wages were low and there was no pension, so in 1843 a charity, the Governesses' Benevolent Institution, was founded to help those who were ill or old. All three

Brontë sisters worked as governesses or teachers; so do Jane Eyre and Anne Brontë's Agnes Grey.

The lectures that the Institution organised for governesses grew into Queen's College in Harley Street, London (1848), one of the first institutions to give women a recognised qualification; Bedford College followed in 1849, and girls' schools with serious academic programmes, such as the North London Collegiate School (1850) and Cheltenham Ladies' College (1853), came next. In 1869 Emily Davies, with the support of Barbara Bodichon, opened a small college for women at Hitchin, which moved in 1873 to Girton, near Cambridge. Women could study there and, in time, sit the university examinations, but Cambridge gave them full degrees only in 1948; the University of London opened its degrees to women in 1878. In 1865 Elizabeth Garrett became the first woman to qualify as a doctor in Britain, through the licence of the Society of Apothecaries, whose rules had not foreseen a woman candidate.

3.1.3 A wife in law

The law was the hardest wall. Under coverture (English 4, chapter 8), husband and wife were one person in law, and that person was the husband: a wife's property and earnings became his, and the children were in his custody. The case of Caroline Norton, a writer whose husband took her children from her, helped to pass the Custody of Infants Act (1839), which allowed a separated mother to ask a court for the custody of children under seven. The Matrimonial Causes Act (1857) created a divorce court, but with a **double standard** (*due pesi e due misure*): a husband could divorce his wife for adultery, while a wife had to prove adultery together with another offence, such as cruelty or desertion. Only the **Married Women's Property Acts** of 1870 and 1882 changed the rule itself: the first let a wife keep the money she earned; the second let her own and control property as if she were unmarried.

3.1.4 Mill and the vote

The philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), whose Utilitarianism you met in chapter 1, was elected to Parliament in 1865. On 7 June 1866 he presented a petition signed by about 1,500 women asking for the vote; it had been organised by a group that included Barbara Bodichon, Emily Davies and Elizabeth Garrett. During the debate on the Second Reform Bill, on 20 May 1867, he proposed to replace the word "man" with "person"; the amendment was defeated by 196 votes to 73. Two years later he published *The Subjection of Women* (1869), which argues that the legal subordination of women is a relic of the past and a loss for everyone. Its central claim is that nobody can know what women are "by nature" while they are kept in subjection: "What is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing". Mill wrote that the deepest ideas in the book belonged to his late wife, Harriet Taylor Mill, who had died in 1858. Women over thirty who met a property qualification would vote for the first time in 1918, and women gained the vote on the same terms as men only in 1928 (chapter 9).

3.1.5 Haworth and the pen name

The Brontës grew up far from London. In 1820 their father, Patrick Brontë, an Irish-born clergyman who had studied at Cambridge, became perpetual curate of Haworth, a village of stone houses on a steep hill in the West Riding of Yorkshire, with the churchyard in front of the parsonage and the moors behind it. His wife died in 1821. In 1824 the four eldest daughters were sent to a school for clergymen's daughters at Cowan Bridge; Maria and Elizabeth fell ill there and died at home in 1825. The four surviving children — Charlotte, Branwell, Emily and Anne — educated one another, and invented imaginary kingdoms, Angria and Gondal, whose stories they wrote in tiny handmade books. The early writings of an author are called **juvenilia** (*scritti giovanili*).

When the sisters decided to publish, they hid behind a **pen name** (*pseudonimo*). Charlotte explained in 1850 that they chose names neither clearly male nor clearly female — Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell — because they "had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice". Mary Ann Evans made a similar choice when she became "George Eliot" in 1857. A pen name protected a woman from gossip, and it obliged reviewers to judge the book rather than the sex of its author — at least until the secret came out.

> **ERRORE FREQUENTE**
>
> ✗ «Nell'età vittoriana le donne non lavoravano.» → ✓ Lavoravano moltissime donne delle classi popolari (fabbriche tessili, campi, servizio domestico); l'ideale dell'*angel in the house* riguardava la classe media.
>
> ✗ «Con le leggi del 1870 e del 1882 le donne inglesi ottennero il voto.» → ✓ Le *Married Women's Property Acts* riguardano la proprietà delle donne sposate; il voto arrivò nel 1918, con limiti, e alla pari con gli uomini nel 1928.
>
> ✗ «Patmore scrisse *The Angel in the House* per criticare la condizione delle donne.» → ✓ Il poema celebra la moglie ideale; è stato l'uso successivo dell'espressione — da Virginia Woolf in poi — a renderla critica.

3.2 Literature: the Brontës and George Eliot

The novel was the great literary form of Victorian Britain (chapter 1), and women were among its most important writers and a large part of its readers. Between 1847 and 1872 four of them — three sisters from a Yorkshire parsonage and the daughter of a Warwickshire estate manager — wrote novels that put a woman's mind at the centre of the story and asked what a woman could become.

3.2.1 Three sisters, three novels

In 1842 Charlotte and Emily studied in Brussels, at the school of Constantin and Zoë Héger, to improve their French and prepare to open a school of their own; the plan later failed for lack of pupils. In 1846 the three sisters paid to publish *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell*, which sold, Charlotte later wrote, two copies. Then each finished a novel. Charlotte's first, *The Professor*, was refused by publisher after publisher (it appeared only after her death), but her second, *Jane Eyre*, was accepted by Smith, Elder and Co. and published in October 1847. Emily's *Wuthering Heights* and Anne's *Agnes Grey* appeared together two months later, from a less careful publisher, Thomas Cautley Newby. Anne's second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), tells the story of a woman who leaves a dissolute, alcoholic husband to save her son — a choice that the law of coverture made almost impossible. Readers argued about whether the three Bells were one person; in July 1848 Charlotte and Anne travelled to London to show Charlotte's publisher that they were two.

Then, within nine months, death broke the family: Branwell died in September 1848, Emily in December and Anne in May 1849. Charlotte wrote two more novels, *Shirley* (1849) and *Villette* (1853), married her father's curate, Arthur Bell Nicholls, in 1854, and died in March 1855, during her pregnancy. Two years later Elizabeth Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857) made Haworth a place of pilgrimage and the sisters a legend — lonely geniuses of the moors — which later biographers have corrected in many details.

3.2.2 *Jane Eyre* (1847)

Jane Eyre appeared as "an autobiography", "edited by Currer Bell". Its narrator, Jane, writes ten years after the end of the story, and she often turns to the reader directly. The novel follows her from the age of ten to her marriage through five houses (Figura 3.2): Gateshead Hall, where the orphan lives with her unkind aunt, Mrs Reed, and is locked in the "red-room"; Lowood, a harsh charity school where her friend Helen Burns dies; Thornfield Hall, where she becomes governess to Adèle, the French ward of Mr Rochester, and falls in love with him; Moor House, where she finds cousins, work as a village schoolmistress and an inheritance; and Ferndean, where she returns to a blind and maimed Rochester.

A novel that follows the growth of its protagonist from childhood or youth to maturity — through education, conflict with the world and a final finding of one's place in it — is called a **Bildungsroman** (*romanzo di formazione*), from the German *Bildung*, 'formation, education'; Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795–96) is its classic model. *Jane Eyre* is a Bildungsroman with a difference: its hero is a poor, plain girl, and what she must learn is to keep both her passion and her independence. At Thornfield she has to choose between them. On the wedding day it is revealed that Rochester already has a wife, Bertha Mason, a Creole heiress from Jamaica who has gone mad and is kept locked on the third storey, and Jane leaves him rather than stay as his mistress. She returns only when she is free, independent and sure of herself, and

when he has been humbled. The last chapter opens with a famous short sentence: “Reader, I married him.” Jane is the subject of the verb.

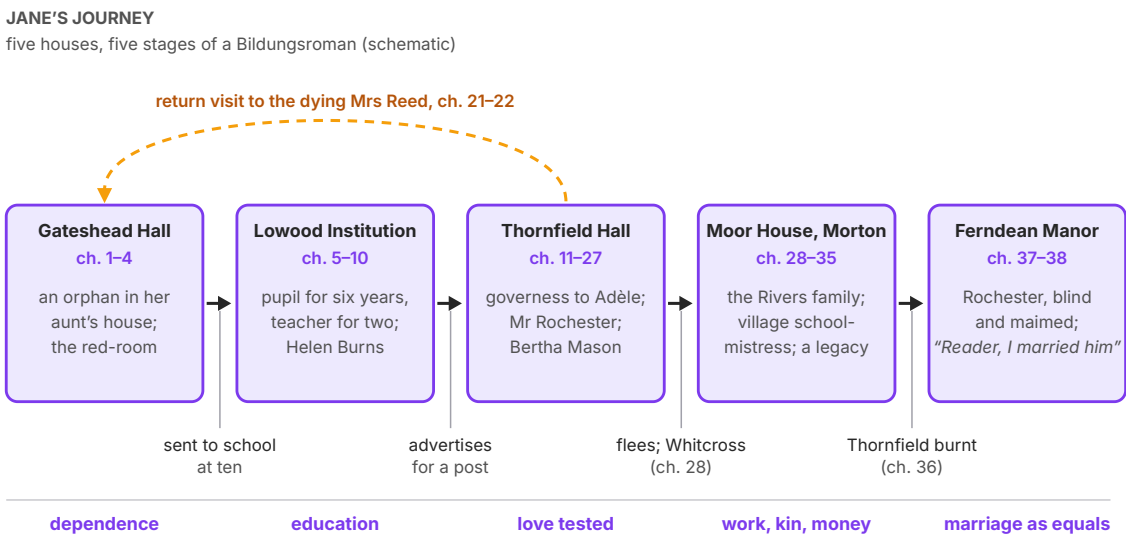


Figura 3.2 Jane’s journey in *Jane Eyre*: the five houses of the novel, with the chapters set in each (continuous numbering), the events that move her on and the stage of her development (schematic).

The novel mixes realism (English 4, chapter 6) with the Gothic (English 4, chapter 10): the red-room, a mysterious laugh, a fire in the night, a torn wedding veil. Readers in 1847 were thrilled; some reviewers were shocked by a heroine who spoke so freely of her anger and her love. Bertha has become one of the most discussed figures in English fiction, and in chapter 12 you will meet the novel in which Jean Rhys gave her a voice.

DA RICORDARE

Bildungsroman (*romanzo di formazione*): the story of a young protagonist’s growth to maturity, through education, conflict and a final choice. Model: Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* (1795–96). In English: *Jane Eyre* (1847); later *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations* (chapter 1) and Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (chapter 8).

3.2.3 *Wuthering Heights* (1847)

Emily Brontë’s only novel is built as a frame narrative (English 3, chapter 6). In 1801 Mr Lockwood, a gentleman from the south who has rented Thrushcross Grange, visits his landlord, Heathcliff, at the farmhouse of Wuthering Heights — “‘Wuthering’ being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather”, as he explains in the first chapter. Puzzled by what he sees there, he asks the housekee-

per, Nelly Dean, to tell him its history, and most of the novel is Nelly's account, written down by Lockwood. Two narrators, neither of them fully reliable, stand between the reader and the passion at the centre of the book.

The story covers two generations of two families (Figura 3.3). Mr Earnshaw brings home from Liverpool a dark, ragged foundling, whom he names Heathcliff and loves more than his own son, Hindley. Heathcliff and Earnshaw's daughter Catherine grow up wild and inseparable on the moors; but Catherine marries the gentle, wealthy Edgar Linton of Thrushcross Grange. Heathcliff disappears, returns rich and spends the rest of his life taking revenge on both families: he marries Edgar's sister Isabella without love, degrades Hindley's son Hareton and gains possession of both houses. Catherine dies after giving birth to a daughter, Cathy. Only in the second generation, with the love of Cathy and Hareton, does the violence end.

Heathcliff is a Byronic hero (English 4, chapter 13) — proud, dark, outside society, defined by one great passion — but the novel never lets us forget that he is also cruel to the weak, children and animals included. Victorian reviewers found the book savage. Modern readers admire its structure, its landscape, which reflects and shapes the characters' feelings, and its refusal to tell us what to think.

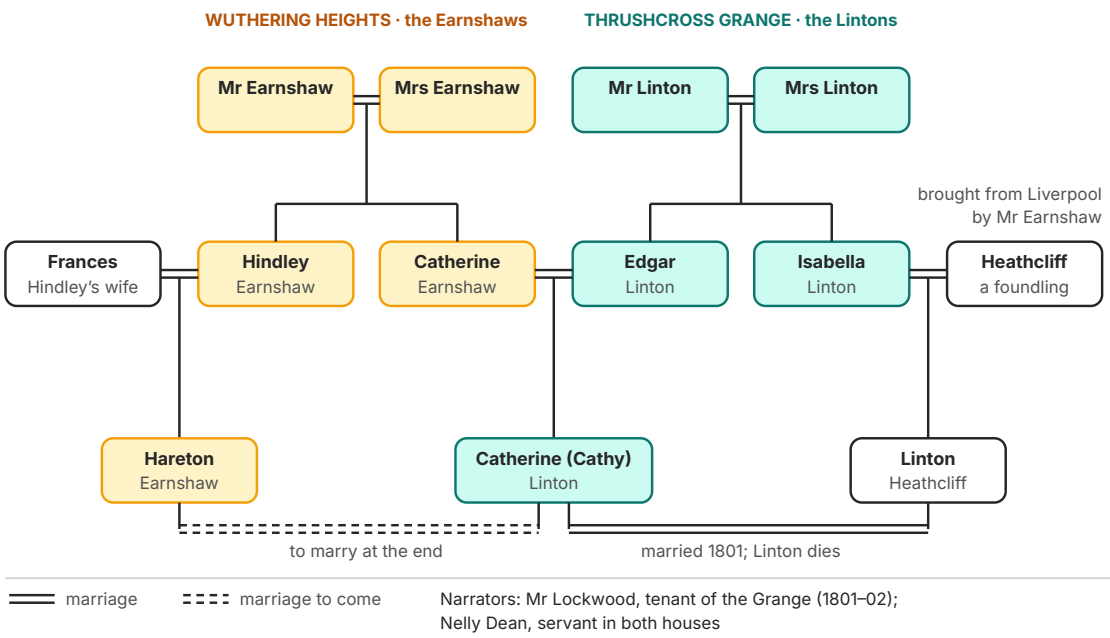


Figura 3.3 The Earnshaws and the Lintons in *Wuthering Heights*: every relation shown is stated in the novel. Amber: the family of Wuthering Heights; teal: the family of Thrushcross Grange; white: Frances, Heathcliff and Heathcliff's son, Linton.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «In *Jane Eyre* Charlotte Brontë racconta la propria vita.» → ✓ È un'autobiografia **fittizia**: la narratrice è **Jane**. L'autrice usa esperienze proprie (Cowan Bridge, il lavoro di istitutrice), ma Jane non è Charlotte.

✗ «Heathcliff è l'eroe romantico perfetto.» → ✓ È un *Byronic hero*, ma anche un uomo crudele e vendicativo: il romanzo non chiede di ammirarlo senza riserve.

✗ «La storia di *Wuthering Heights* è raccontata da Lockwood.» → ✓ Lockwood fa da cornice; quasi tutta la storia è il racconto di **Nelly Dean**, che lui trascrive.

3.2.4 George Eliot (1819–1880)

Mary Ann Evans was born in Warwickshire, the daughter of the manager of a large estate. Largely self-educated, she translated David Friedrich Strauss's critical *Life of Jesus* from German (1846), lost her evangelical faith and moved to London, where she worked in effect as the editor of the *Westminster Review*, a leading radical journal. In 1854 she began to live with the writer George Henry Lewes, who could not divorce his wife, and respectable society shut its doors to her. In 1856 she published an essay mocking "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists", and the next year she began to publish fiction as George Eliot: *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Romola* (1862–63, set in fifteenth-century Florence) and *Middlemarch* (1871–72).

Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life was published in eight parts and is set in a Midlands town between 1829 and 1832, the years of the Reform Act (English 4, chapter 14). Its idealistic heroine, Dorothea Brooke, longs to do something great; she marries the elderly scholar Edward Casaubon, hoping to help him with his life's work, a "Key to all Mythologies" that will explain every ancient myth, and discovers on their honeymoon in Rome that the work is dead and the marriage empty. Eliot's narrator is omniscient (English 4, chapter 8) in a new sense: a moral intelligence that moves from mind to mind, explains each character from inside and asks the reader to understand rather than to judge. The novel gives Dorothea no heroic destiny, but ends with a famous defence of ordinary lives: "the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs."

A few lines earlier Eliot writes: "Her full nature, like that river of which Cyrus broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth." The image comes from Herodotus (I.189–190), who tells how the Persian king punished the river Gyndes by dividing it into three hundred and sixty channels. A great force spread into many small channels is still a force.

IN SINTESI

Four novels at a glance

- *Jane Eyre* (Charlotte, 1847) — first-person, retrospective narrator; a governess's Bildungsroman; realism and Gothic; ends in a marriage of equals.
- *Wuthering Heights* (Emily, 1847) — frame narrative (Lockwood → Nelly); two houses, two generations; passion, revenge and the moors.
- *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (Anne, 1848) — a wife leaves her husband to save her son; the law of coverture in fiction.
- *Middlemarch* (George Eliot, 1871–72) — omniscient, reflective narrator; a provincial town in 1829–32; the value of "unhistoric acts".

APPROFONDIMENTO

Bertha and her critics. For a century Bertha Mason was read mainly as a Gothic obstacle between Jane and Rochester. In 1979 Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar called their study of nineteenth-century women writers *The Madwoman in the Attic*: they read Bertha as Jane's dark double, the rage that a well-behaved governess must hide. Postcolonial critics, beginning with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in an essay of 1985, pointed out instead that Bertha is a colonial subject — a Creole heiress from Jamaica, married for her money, brought to England and silenced — and that the novel's happy ending needs her death. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966) tells her story from her own point of view (chapter 12). These readings do not cancel one another; together they are now part of how the novel is read.

3.3 Texts: "As Much Soul" — Jane and Catherine

Three prose extracts, all in the voice of a young woman: Jane reflecting alone, Jane speaking to Rochester, Catherine speaking to Nelly. They are printed from the first editions of 1847; later editions changed some of the punctuation.

3.3.1 T1 · Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ch. 12: "women feel just as men feel"

Context. Jane has settled at Thornfield. Adèle is a docile pupil and the housekeeper, Mrs Fairfax, is kind, but Jane is restless: she climbs to the roof to look at the horizon and walks up and down the corridor of the third storey, telling herself stories. "Who blames me?" she asks; "I shall be called discontented." Then the narrator stops the story to explain, and defend, that restlessness.

Tabella 3.1 T1 — *Jane Eyre*, ch. 12 (Vol. I, ch. 12 of the first edition, 1847; Wikisource transcription of the scan, checked against Project Gutenberg eBook #1260, whose later text adds a comma after *efforts*).

> Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine, and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions besides political rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties, and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex.

Glosses. *condemned to*: forced to accept · *a stiller doom*: a quieter fate · *lot*: situation in life · *ferment*: boil up, like wine · *which people earth*: that fill the earth (*people* is a verb here) · *faculties*: powers of the mind · *restraint*: control, limitation · *stagnation*: lack of movement, like still water · *confine themselves to*: do nothing except · *custom*: tradition · *pronounced*: declared.

Analysis

From one to millions. The passage moves outward: from Jane (*a stiller doom than mine*) to *millions*, to *the masses of life*, to *women*. Words from politics — *condemned, revolt, rebellions, political rebellions, masses* — describe a private feeling. In 1847, between Chartism (chapter 1) and the revolutions of 1848, they were not innocent words.

The argument. The central sentence repeats one balanced comparison three times: women feel *just as men feel*, need a field *as much as their brothers do*, suffer *precisely as men would suffer*. Against this rhythm of equality Brontë sets a list of four domestic activities — puddings, stockings, the piano, embroidered bags — whose small, homely nouns make the limits of a lady's life sound absurd.

Voice. The present tense (*Women are supposed…*) turns Jane's experience into a general truth, and the narrator speaks to the reader as an equal in an argument. The next sentence of the novel, though, returns abruptly to the story: Jane hears Grace Poole's strange laugh, the first sign of the woman locked upstairs. Virginia Woolf, who quoted this passage in *A Room of One's Own* (1929), felt that Charlotte's indignation broke the flow of the novel here; other readers see the juxtaposition as deliberate — the rebel and the prisoner on the same floor.

- a Who are the *millions* in *silent revolt*? Is Jane speaking only about women?
- b Find the three comparisons between women and men. Which words make each comparison exact?
- c Why does Brontë choose these four activities? What do they have in common?
- d Who are the *more privileged fellow-creatures*, in your view: men, richer women, or both?
- e Is this passage a complaint, an argument or a manifesto? Justify your answer with two details.

3.3.2 T2 · Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ch. 23: "equal,—as we are!"

Context. Midsummer Eve, in the orchard at Thornfield. Rochester has let Jane believe that he will soon marry the beautiful, aristocratic Blanche Ingram, and tells her he has found her a new post in Ireland. Jane, who loves him, thinks she must leave; when he insists that she must stay, her self-control breaks.

Tabella 3.2 T2 — *Jane Eyre*, ch. 23 (Vol. II, ch. 8 of the first edition, 1847; Wikisource transcription of the scan). Later editions, such as the Project Gutenberg text, read *heartless? You think wrong!*, *some beauty and much wealth* and *mortal flesh;—it is*.

> "I tell you I must go!" I retorted, roused to something like passion. "Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton?—a machine without feelings? and can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips, and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless?—You think wrong!—I have as much soul as you,—and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty, and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh:—it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal,—as we are!"

Glosses. *retorted*: answered sharply · *roused*: stirred · *an automaton*: a machine that moves by itself, like a clockwork doll · *morsel*: small piece · *dashed from*: knocked violently from · *obscure*: unknown, of low position · *plain*: not beautiful · *gifted me with*: given me · *I should have made*: I would have made (*should* after *I*, older British use) · *conventionalities*: social rules · *mortal flesh*: the body, which dies.

Analysis

Questions as weapons. Jane attacks with rhetorical questions (English 4, chapter 11), each beginning *Do you think…?*, and answers them herself: *You think wrong!* The dashes of the 1847 text mark her breathless speed.

What she is and what she has. The four adjectives *poor, obscure, plain, and little* list what society sees: money, rank, beauty, size. The two that follow, *soulless and heartless*, name what it wrongly concludes. Jane separates the two lists: she lacks the first, and she has the second *as much* as he.

The conditional. *If God had gifted me…, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me* is an unreal past (a third conditional) that slides into the present (*as it is now for me to leave you*): what did not happen explains what she feels now.

Equality beyond the world. The final sentence takes the argument out of society altogether: spirit speaks to spirit, as if both were dead and stood before God. Equality is religious before it is social. Rochester repeats her last words, *As we are!*, and turns them into a proposal — but the reader will soon learn why the wedding cannot take place.

- a What do the images of the *automaton*, the *morsel of bread* and the *living water* say about Jane's needs?
- b Why does Jane mention *custom, conventionalities* and *mortal flesh*? What is she setting aside?
- c Compare this speech with T1. Which is more personal, and which more general?
- d Some reviewers in 1847 found Jane improper. What in this passage might have shocked them?

3.3.3 T3 · Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ch. 9: "Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff"

Context. Nelly is telling the story to Lockwood. Catherine has just accepted Edgar Linton's proposal, and that evening in the kitchen she confides in Nelly. Heathcliff, sitting unseen, has heard her say that it would degrade her to marry him, and has slipped out before the words that follow. Catherine has just told Nelly that marrying Edgar will let her help Heathcliff with her husband's money; now she tries to explain what Heathcliff is to her.

Tabella 3.3 T3 — *Wuthering Heights*, ch. 9 (Vol. I, ch. 9 of the first edition, 1847; Wikisource transcription of the scan). Later editions, followed by Project Gutenberg (eBook #768), replace many of the dashes with colons, full stops and exclamation marks.

> I cannot express it; but surely you and every body have a notion that there is, or should be an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of my creation if I were entirely contained here? My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and, if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees—my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath—a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff—he's always, always in my mind—not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself —but, as my own being—so, don't talk of our separation again—it is impracticable; and—"

Glosses. *every body*: everybody (two words in 1847) · *What were the use of*: what would be the use of (subjunctive) · *my creation*: my having been created · *annihilated*: destroyed completely · *a mighty stranger*: something enormous and foreign · *foliage*: leaves · *impracticable*: impossible to carry out.

Analysis

Three voices. Catherine speaks; Nelly remembers and repeats her words; Lockwood writes them down. The reader hears Catherine's passion through two people who do not share it: in the next lines Nelly calls it *nonsense* and *folly*.

Two similes. Catherine compares her two loves to two parts of a landscape: love for Linton is *like the foliage in the woods*, which changes with the seasons; love for Heathcliff *resembles the eternal rocks beneath*, which give *little visible delight* but hold everything up. One is pleasure, the other necessity.

Love as identity. *I am Heathcliff*, with the stress on *am*, is less a declaration of love than of identity: he is *my own being*, and without him the universe would become *a mighty stranger*. This is the language of the soul, close to religion — and it is also the problem: Catherine believes she can marry one man and remain the other.

Syntax. The long chain of clauses joined by dashes imitates the rush of thought; the speech breaks off (*and*—) when she hides her face.

- a What does Catherine mean by *an existence of yours beyond you*?
- b Explain the two similes in your own words. Which love, according to Catherine, will last?
- c Catherine marries Edgar partly to help Heathcliff with her husband's money. Does this passage make her choice more or less convincing?
- d Compare Jane's *I have as much soul as you* with Catherine's *I am Heathcliff*. Which woman claims a separate self, and which gives it up?

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

From two quotations to a comparative paragraph. Task: *How do Jane (T2) and Catherine (T3) define their relationship with the man they love?* Build a PEE paragraph (English 3, chapter 6) in four steps.

1. **Point:** state the comparison in one sentence — both claim equality, in opposite ways.
2. **Evidence:** choose one short quotation from each text and fit it into your own sentence.
3. **Explanation:** comment on a precise word (*as much*; the verb *am*) and on a device (rhetorical questions; similes).
4. **Link:** connect the paragraph to the whole novel or to the essay question.

Model paragraph: *Both heroines claim equality with a man, but in opposite ways. Jane insists that she has "as much soul" as Rochester: her equality depends on remaining a separate person, and the comparison keeps two terms apart. Catherine, by contrast, declares "I am Heathcliff", and the verb* be *removes the distance between them altogether. Where Jane's rhetorical questions defend a self that Rochester could reduce to "nothing", Catherine's similes of foliage and rock describe a self that exists only through another. It is no accident that Jane's story ends in a marriage of equals, and Catherine's in a marriage to the wrong man and an early death.*

3.4 Language: Modal Nuances

You already use modal verbs for ability, permission, obligation and deduction, in the present and in the past (English 3, chapters 2–3). Fluent writers and speakers also use them for finer distinctions: how likely something is, whether there is any better choice, whether an action is reasonable, and how surprised or indignant we feel. Tabella 3.4 sums up the forms; Victorian dialogue is full of them, and so is the English of essays and seminars.

Tabella 3.4 Modal nuances: form, meaning and examples

Form	Meaning	Examples
may / might / could well + infinitive	it is quite likely	*Jane may well refuse a loveless marriage.* · *Readers in 1847 might well have been shocked.*
might / may as well + infinitive	there is no better option; nothing is lost	*It's raining on the moors: we might as well stay in and read.* · *We might as well have stayed at home.*
can / could hardly + infinitive	it is (was) almost impossible or unreasonable	*A governess could hardly refuse.* · *You can hardly blame Jane for leaving.*
It is natural / odd… that + **should** + infinitive	an idea we react to, not a fact we report	*It is natural that she should rebel.* · *It's odd that you should say that.*
dare / need as modals (questions, negatives)	formal, mainly British	*She dared not speak.* · *How dare you!* · *Need I say more?* · *You needn't wait.*

3.4.1 Likelihood: *may well, might well, could well*

May, might and *could* + infinitive say that something is possible (Figura 3.4). Adding *well* makes it probable: *Jane may well refuse* means that a refusal is quite likely, not just possible. With the perfect infinitive the same nuance applies to the past: *Charlotte might well have had Cowan Bridge in mind when she described Lowood.* In conversation, *You may well ask!* means 'That is a very good question (and the answer is not simple)'. Remember that *can* does not express a particular possibility in the future: say *It may rain later* or *It could rain later*.

3.4.2 No better option: *might as well*

Might as well (or *may as well*: there is no difference in meaning) says that we do something because there is no reason not to, or nothing better to do: *The last coach has gone; we might as well walk.* It often sounds resigned or ironic. With the perfect infinitive it judges a past action useless: *We might as well have stayed at home* (= going out achieved nothing). Followed by *as*, it says that two actions are equally useless: *You might as well talk to the rocks as try to change Heathcliff's mind.*

3.4.3 Almost impossible: *can hardly, could hardly*

Hardly is a negative adverb (English 4, chapter 12), so it is never used with *not*. With *can* or *could* it says that something is almost impossible — physically (*She could hardly breathe*) or socially and morally: *A governess could hardly refuse an invitation from her employer* (= it was not really possible for her). *You can hardly blame her* means 'it would be unreasonable to blame her'.



Figura 3.4 How likely? Modal verbs of likelihood from certain to impossible, with an example each. The two nuances introduced in this chapter are in violet boxes; *could hardly* describes something that is (or was) almost impossible to do.

3.4.4 Putative *should*

After adjectives and nouns of feeling and judgement — *natural, odd, strange, surprising, shocking, a pity, a shame* — and after *be surprised* or *be sorry*, British English often uses *should* + infinitive in the *that* clause: *It is natural that Jane should rebel. It was a scandal that a clergyman's daughter should write such a book. I'm surprised that you should think so.* This is called **putative should** (*should* ipotetico): it presents the content of the clause as an idea we react to, not as a fact we report. The ordinary verb is also correct (*It is natural that Jane rebels*) and sounds more factual. For the past, use *should have* + past participle: *It is strange that nobody should have guessed the Bells' secret.* Do not confuse it with the mandative subjunctive (English 4, chapter 7), which follows words of necessity and demand: *It is essential that she be told.*

3.4.5 *Dare* and *need*

Dare and *need* are **semi-modal verbs** (*verbi semimodali*): they can behave like ordinary verbs (with *do*, *-s* and *to*) or, in questions and negatives, like modals (no *do*, no *-s*, bare infinitive). The modal forms are mostly British and rather formal or literary: *She dared not speak. Need I say more? You needn't wait.* The ordinary forms are common everywhere: *She didn't dare (to) speak. Do I need to say more? You don't need to wait.* Two fixed expressions use only the modal form: *How dare you!* (indignation) and *I dare say* (= I suppose, probably). Modal *need* is not used in affirmati-

ve sentences: say *You need to go*. For *needn't have done* and *didn't need to do*, see English 3, chapter 2.

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Le sfumature dei modali. *may / might / could* ***well*** = «è molto probabile che»: *She may well refuse* = È molto probabile che rifiuti. *might / may as well* = «tanto vale»: *We might as well go* = Tanto vale andare. *could hardly* = «non poteva certo»: *She could hardly refuse* = Non poteva certo rifiutare. *Può darsi che* si rende con *may / might*: *Può darsi che abbia ragione* = *She may be right*.

Il *should* ipotetico (*putative should*). Dopo *It is natural / strange / a pity that…* l'inglese britannico usa *should* + infinito dove l'italiano usa il congiuntivo: *It's strange that she should say that* = È strano che dica così. Anche l'indicativo è corretto (*that she says that*), ma presenta il fatto come semplice dato.

***Dare* e *need*.** Hanno due costruzioni: come modali (*She dared not speak, Need I say more?*) e come verbi ordinari (*She didn't dare to speak, Do I need to say more?*). *How dare you!* = «Come ti permetti!». Non si mescolano: niente *to* dopo la forma modale.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *It can rain tomorrow.* → ✓ *It may / could rain tomorrow.* (*can* non indica una possibilità futura specifica)

✗ *We might as well to go home.* → ✓ *We might as well go home.* (infinito senza *to*)

✗ *She couldn't hardly refuse.* → ✓ *She could hardly refuse.* (*hardly* è già negativo)

✗ *How do you dare!* → ✓ *How dare you!*

✗ *Need I to say more?* → ✓ *Need I say more?* o *Do I need to say more?*

✗ *It's natural that she should rebels.* → ✓ *It's natural that she should rebel.*

3.5 Skills: Taking Turns and Analysing a Character

3.5.1 Vocabulary: independence, passion and convention

The words below come from this chapter's history and novels. Learn each with its word family and a typical example.

Tabella 3.5 Independence, passion and convention: key words

Word	Meaning	Example
independent (adj.; n. *independence*)	not controlled or supported by others	*Jane wants to be independent, even if she is poor.*
passionate (adj.; n. *passion*)	feeling or showing very strong emotion	*Catherine's passionate speech alarms Nelly.*
conventional (adj.; n. *convention*)	following accepted social rules	*A conventional heroine would have married St John.*
governess (n.)	a woman who teaches children in their family's home	*Jane advertises for a post as a governess.*
inheritance (n.; v. *inherit*)	money or property received after someone's death	*Her inheritance makes Jane independent.*
equality (n.; adj. *equal*)	the state of having the same rights and value	*Jane claims spiritual equality with Rochester.*
rebel (n. and v.; adj. *rebellious*)	a person who fights authority; to fight it (noun stressed on the first syllable, verb on the second)	*As a child, Jane rebels against her cousin.*
restrain (v.; n. *restraint*)	to control, to hold back	*Girls were taught to restrain their feelings.*
wilful (adj.; AmE *willful*)	determined to do what one wants, even when it is wrong	*Nelly thinks Catherine wilful and spoilt.*
outspoken (adj.)	saying openly what one thinks	*Some reviewers found Jane too outspoken.*

Word formation: binomials and their order

In English 4 (chapter 6) you met binomials, fixed pairs like *safe and sound* or *trial and error*, whose order never changes. The order is not random. Several tendencies, which often work together, decide which word comes first:

- **short before long:** *bread and butter, peace and quiet, salt and pepper*;
- **time or logical order:** *trial and error, cause and effect, born and bred, sooner or later*;
- **positive before negative:** *pros and cons, ups and downs, rise and fall*;
- **near before far:** *here and there, now and then, this and that*;
- **sound:** alliteration and rhyme make a pair memorable — *pride and prejudice, sense and sensibility, wear and tear, high and dry*.

Some binomials preserve an old social order: *man and wife, husband and wife, Mr and Mrs, brothers and sisters* put the man first, while the polite formula *ladies and gentlemen* reverses it. Novelists liked binomials as titles because they promise a story built on a contrast: Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* and *Pride and Prejudice* (English 4, chapter 14), Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (chapter 1) and *Wives and Daughters* (1864–66).

3.5.2 Reading: *Jane Eyre* at 19

Before you read. After *Hard Times*, the Link Reading Club's second novel this year is *Jane Eyre*, and Giulia has offered to write the review for the club's forum. Can a novel written in 1847 speak to a nineteen-year-old today? Discuss briefly, then read her draft and do the Reading task in Towards the Exam, at the end of the chapter.

Tabella 3.6 Reading text — Giulia's review draft for the Link Reading Club forum

Jane Eyre at 19 · draft by Giulia, Sunday 15 December — comments welcome!
I was nervous about this one. Almost five hundred pages in my edition, a heroine who calls herself plain, and a love story with a man twice her age: I was ready to be bored, or annoyed, or both. Prof.ssa Rossi only smiled and said, "You may well be surprised." She was right, and I am a little irritated that she was.
The first surprise is the voice. Jane tells her own story, and from the first chapter she talks to me as if I were sitting next to her. At ten she is locked in a frightening red bedroom for hitting back at her cousin, and instead of apologising she argues. At eighteen, a governess in a plain dress, she tells her employer that she has as much soul as he has. I kept thinking: how dare she? And then: how could she not? A woman in her position could hardly speak like that in 1847, which is exactly why she has to.
The second surprise is how modern her problems sound. Jane wants three things that many of us want at nineteen: work that uses her mind, money of her own, and a love that does not cost her her self-respect. The novel is honest that these three are hard to have at the same time. When she discovers the truth about Mr Rochester's first marriage, she leaves Thornfield with no money and no plan rather than stay as something less than an equal. Marta, who is reading it with me, says she would have stayed. I am not sure I would have had Jane's courage either, but I understood her.
Not everything has aged well. Bertha Mason, the woman locked in the attic, is described almost as an animal, and the book never lets her speak. Elena, who has read Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, says that this is the most important thing to notice about the novel, and she may well be right. I also found St John Rivers, the cold clergyman who wants to marry Jane and take her to India as a missionary's wife, frightening rather than holy. It is odd that the novel should end with his words and not with Jane's — something to discuss in our next call.
And Mr Rochester? I could not decide. He lies, he plays games with Jane's feelings, and he tries to marry her when he already has a wife. On the other hand, he is the only person in the book who talks to her as an intelligent adult. The ending makes them equal in a strange way: she is rich and independent, he is blind and needs her. Some readers see that ending as a punishment for him; I think it is the price of equality in a world that did not offer it in any other form.
So, is *Jane Eyre* worth all those pages? Yes — but read it slowly, two or three chapters a day, and keep a list of the places, because each house is a new stage of Jane's life. Skim the long descriptions if you need to, but never skip the dialogues: that is where Jane is most alive.

Sam has promised to tell us what his seminar group in Manchester thinks. I suspect they will be harder on Rochester than I am. We might as well start arguing now: comments below, please, before Sunday!

After reading. Find in the text two examples of *may well*, one of *could hardly*, one of putative *should*, one of *might as well* and one of *how dare*. What does each one add to Giulia's meaning?

3.5.3 Speaking: a discussion — taking turns and interrupting politely

In a seminar, in a group task or in the colloquio, the quality of a discussion depends on **turn-taking** (*alternanza dei turni*): knowing when to speak, how to come in without being rude, how to keep the floor and how to bring others in. You practised agreeing and disagreeing in English 4 (chapter 1); here the focus is the traffic of the conversation itself. English speakers usually signal an interruption with an apology or a request (*Sorry to jump in, but…*), and soften it by linking it to what the other person said (*…just on your point about money*). Tabella 3.7 collects the most useful expressions.

Tabella 3.7 Useful language — taking turns in a discussion

Function	Expressions
Taking the floor	*Can I come in here? · I'd like to say something about that. · If I could just add something…*
Interrupting politely	*Sorry to jump in, but… · Sorry, can I just add… · Before you go on, …*
Keeping the floor	*Hang on, let me just finish this point. · Bear with me a second. · I'm nearly done.*
Bringing others in	*What do you think, Elena? · We haven't heard from Marta yet. · Let her finish. · Go on, you were saying…*
Coming back to a point	*As I was saying… · Where was I? Oh yes… · To go back to Giulia's point…*
Moving the discussion on	*Shall we move on to…? · I think we've covered that. · Let's come back to the question.*

- **Task 1 (groups of four, eight minutes).** Discuss: *Have the obstacles Jane faced disappeared?* Think about education, work, money, appearance and the expectation that women put others first. One student chairs, two take opposite views, one observes and notes every expression from the table that is used. At the end the observer reports: who interrupted, how, and was anyone left out?
- **Task 2 (pairs, two minutes each) — colloquio link.** Start from Jane's words "equal,—as we are!" and link them to one other subject: Mill's *The Subjection of Women* in philosophy, Medea's speech in Greek, or the campaign for the vote in history. Your partner may interrupt once, politely, with a question.

3.5.4 Writing: a character analysis essay

A **character analysis essay** (*analisi del personaggio*) explains how and why a character changes, or fails to change, in the course of a work, and what that development means. It is not a summary of the plot: every paragraph makes a claim about the character, and short quotations prove it. Read Sam's essay, written for his first-year seminar in Manchester (word limit: 300).

Tabella 3.8 Model text — Sam's character analysis essay (title excluded: 250 words)

From "discord" to "equal": the development of Jane Eyre
Jane Eyre is one of the first heroines in English fiction whose growth is the subject of a whole novel. Across five houses she changes from a powerless, angry child into a woman who chooses for herself; but she never stops being a rebel. What changes is the way she rebels.
At Gateshead, Jane's rebellion is pure feeling. She remembers that "I was a discord in Gateshead Hall: I was like nobody there", and the musical metaphor shows a child who knows only that she does not belong. Her rage is honest but self-destructive: it leads straight to the red-room.
Lowood and Thornfield give her rebellion words. Helen Burns teaches her patience, and work as a governess gives her a position from which to speak. When Rochester seems ready to send her away to Ireland, she answers with an argument about souls rather than a tantrum: she has "as much soul" as he has.
The real test comes after the failed wedding. Rochester begs her to stay with him, and she refuses with the novel's most important sentence about herself: "*I* care for myself." Rebellion has become self-respect, and self-respect requires her to leave the man she loves.
The ending confirms this development. "Reader, I married him." makes Jane the subject of the sentence and the author of her own life: she returns when she is independent and free to choose. Jane remains passionate to the last page; she has simply learned that passion without independence would destroy her.

Structure. The introduction states a thesis (Jane changes the *way* she rebels); three body paragraphs follow three stages, each opening with a topic sentence (English 3, chapter 2) and containing one short quotation, explained; the conclusion returns to the thesis and widens it. The quotations are short, fitted into Sam's own sentences and always followed by a comment. The tense is the literary present (chapter 1).

Checklist. ✓ a thesis about change, not a summary · ✓ one stage per paragraph, in order · ✓ three short quotations, exact, in quotation marks, each explained · ✓ the literary present · ✓ linkers of time and contrast (*at first, by the end, but, however*) · ✓ a conclusion that says why the change matters · ✓ 250–300 words.

Task. Write a character analysis essay of 250–300 words on Catherine Earnshaw or Heathcliff, Mr Rochester, Dorothea Brooke, or a character from an Italian novel you have studied this year (the same task is set in the Writing and Speaking exercises).

LEARNING TO LEARN

Reading a long novel in English. *Jane Eyre* has 38 chapters, *Middlemarch* 86. Nobody reads them like a textbook, word by word. Try this:

- **Read selectively.** Read dialogues and key scenes carefully; skim long descriptions; do not stop at every unknown word — mark it and go on if you can follow the sense.
- **Build a character map** as you read (like Figura 3.3): names, relations and one line on what each character wants.
- **Summarise each chapter in three lines:** what happens, who changes, one short quotation worth keeping.
- **Track the places**, which in a Bildungsroman are often the stages of the story (Figura 3.2).

Transfer. The same method works for a long Italian novel such as *I Malavoglia*, and for the long texts you read in Latin and Greek: a character map of Petronius's *Satyricon* or of a tragedy is the fastest way to revise it. **Colloquio link:** Jane's five houses → the Bildungsroman in Italian literature; or the women of Greek tragedy, from Medea to Antigone, in Greek.

3.6 Connections: Women and Fate, from Corinth to Sardinia

3.6.1 Grazia Deledda, *Canne al vento* (1913)

Grazia Deledda (1871–1936), born in Nuoro, is, to date, the only Italian woman to have won the Nobel Prize in Literature (the prize for 1926, awarded in 1927). Like the Brontës, she grew up far from the literary capitals, educated herself largely by reading and wrote about a remote, harsh landscape that most of her readers had never seen. *Canne al vento* tells of the Pintor sisters, impoverished noblewomen in a village of eastern Sardinia, and of their old servant Efix. Their tyrannical father had kept his four daughters shut in the house; one of them, Lia, ran away, leaving the other three behind, and the arrival of her son, Giacinto, sets the novel in motion. Near the end Efix explains to donna Ester why their lives have gone as they have:

> *— Sì, — egli disse allora, — siamo proprio come le canne al vento, donna Ester mia. Ecco perchè! Siamo canne, e la sorte è il vento.*

"Yes," he said then, "we really are like reeds in the wind, donna Ester. That's why! We are reeds, and fate is the wind." (*Canne al vento*, ch. XVI; text of the first edition, Milan, 1913, from Wikisource.)

The comparison with the Brontës is instructive. Jane Eyre believes that a woman can shape her life by will and work; Deledda's characters accept, with a mixture of guilt and faith, that their lives are bent by forces they cannot control — fate, sin, the land. Yet Lia's flight from her

father's house, the act from which everything follows, is a rebellion very like Jane's flight from Thornfield.

3.6.2 Sibilla Aleramo, *Una donna* (1906)

Sibilla Aleramo (the pen name of Rina Faccio, 1876–1960) published *Una donna* in 1906; the book is still protected by copyright, so it is summarised here. Its narrator, who is never named, tells her own story: a happy childhood with an admired father, a move to a small town, a marriage while still very young to a man who had assaulted her, years of depression and an attempted suicide, the birth of a son and, slowly, the discovery of reading, writing and the women's movement. In the end she leaves her husband, knowing that she will lose her child. Often called the first Italian feminist novel, it asks the question that Anne Brontë had asked in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* almost sixty years earlier: what may a woman sacrifice to save herself?

3.6.3 Classico: Medea speaks to the women of Corinth

Twenty-three centuries before Jane, another woman made a public speech about what it means to be a woman. In Euripides' *Medea* (431 BC), which you met in Greek last year, Medea has been abandoned by Jason, who is going to marry the daughter of Creon, king of Corinth. She comes out of the house and speaks to the chorus of Corinthian women (Tabella 3.9).

Tabella 3.9 Euripides, *Medea* 230–231 and 248–251. Greek text of the Perseus Digital Library, checked against Greek Wikisource; translation by the editors.

Greek	English (translation by the editors)
πάντων δ' ὅσ' ἔστ' ἔμψυχα καὶ γνώμην ἔχει γυναῖκές ἐσμεν ἀθλιώτατον φυτόν· (*pantōn d' hos' est' empsycha kai gnōmēn echei / gynaikes esmen athliōtaton phyton*)	"Of all the creatures that have life and judgement, we women are the most wretched growth."
λέγουσι δ' ἡμᾶς ὡς ἀκίνδυνον βίον ζῶμεν κατ' οἴκους, οἱ δὲ μάρνανται δορί, κακῶς φρονοῦντες· ὡς τρὶς ἂν παρ' ἀσπίδα στῆναι θέλοιμ' ἄν μᾶλλον ἢ τεκεῖν ἅπαξ. (*legousi d' hēmas hōs akindynon bion / zōmen kat' oikous, hoi de marnantai dori, / kakōs phronountes; hōs tris an par' aspida / stēnai theloim' an mallon ē tekein hapax*)	"They say that we live a life without danger at home, while they fight with the spear. They are wrong: I would rather stand three times beside a shield than give birth once."

Between these lines Medea lists the injustices of marriage as a Greek woman lived it: a husband must be "bought" with a dowry and becomes the master of her body; divorce brings disgrace; a bride enters a house with new customs and must guess how to please a stranger; a man who is unhappy at home can go out, while a wife has only one person to look to. Like Jane, Medea turns her own case into a general argument (*we women*), measures women against men and rejects the idea that women's lives are easy because they are protected. The differences matter as

much. Medea's speech is also a strategy: at its end she asks the chorus to keep silent about her plans, and she will take revenge by killing Jason's bride and her own children. Jane's claim of equality leads her away from revenge, towards independence. Read together, the two speeches raise a question worth taking to the colloquio: is a protest weakened, or made stronger, when the person who makes it is not a model of virtue? This is a comparison, not a source: nothing suggests that Charlotte had Euripides in mind.

COLLEGAMENTI

Maths and computing: Ada Lovelace and the first program. You met Ada Lovelace (1815–1852), Byron's daughter, in English 1 (chapter 6). Here she belongs to the woman question: as a woman she could not study at a university and was taught privately, and her great work appeared under her initials only. In 1843 she published an English translation of an article by the Italian engineer Luigi Federico Menabrea on Charles Babbage's Analytical Engine, based on lectures Babbage had given in Turin in 1840, and added "Notes" much longer than the article. She explained that the Engine would keep the numbers in one part, the **store** (the memory), and work on them in another, the **mill** (the processor), and that its instructions would be given on punched cards, like those that controlled the pattern of a Jacquard loom: "the Analytical Engine weaves algebraical patterns just as the Jacquard-loom weaves flowers and leaves."

Two ideas in the Notes are still the heart of programming. First, a sequence of operations can be repeated — she called it a *cycle*, and even a "cycle of cycles" — which a programmer today calls a **loop** (*ciclo*). Second, the instructions (on "operation cards") are kept separate from the numbers they act on (on "variable cards"), so that the same program can work on different data. Note G sets out, step by step, how the Engine could calculate the Bernoulli numbers, and is often called the first published computer program. The Engine itself was never built.

SINTESI

- The **woman question** was the Victorian debate on women's nature, education, work and rights; the ideal of **separate spheres** and the **angel in the house** (from Patmore's poem, 1854–62) concerned the middle class, while working-class women worked in mills, fields and domestic service.
- The **governess**, a lady and an employee at once, was the symbol of the unmarried middle-class woman's narrow choices; lectures for governesses led to **Queen's College** (1848), and **Girton** opened in 1869.
- Under coverture a wife's property and earnings were her husband's; the **Married Women's Property Acts** (1870, 1882) changed that. **Mill** presented a women's petition (1866), proposed "person" for "man" (1867) and wrote *The Subjection of Women* (1869); the vote came in 1918 and 1928.
- Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë grew up at **Haworth**, wrote **juvenilia** about Angria and Gondal and published as **Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell**; Mary Ann Evans wrote as **George Eliot**.
- *Jane Eyre* (1847) is a fictional autobiography narrated by Jane and a **Bildungsroman** (*romanzo di formazione*) in five houses, mixing realism and the Gothic; it ends "Reader, I married him."
- Bertha Mason has been read as Jane's dark double (Gilbert and Gubar) and as a silenced colonial subject; Jean Rhys tells her story in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (chapter 12).
- *Wuthering Heights* (1847) is a frame narrative (Lockwood → Nelly Dean) about two families and two generations; Heathcliff is a Byronic hero but also cruel and vengeful.
- George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871–72), set in 1829–32, uses an omniscient narrator as a moral intelligence and ends by praising "unhistoric acts" — with an image from Herodotus.
- Modal nuances: **may / might / could well** (quite likely), **might as well** (no better option), **can / could hardly** (almost impossible, unreasonable), **putative should** (*It is natural that she should rebel*), and **dare / need** as semi-modals (*How dare you! Need I say more?*).
- Binomials follow tendencies of order (short before long, time order, positive before negative, near before far, sound); some keep an old social order (*man and wife*).
- In a discussion, **turn-taking** means coming in, interrupting politely, keeping the floor and bringing others in; a **character analysis essay** traces a character's development with short, explained quotations.
- Connections: Deledda's *Canne al vento* (1913: "Siamo canne, e la sorte è il vento"), Aleramo's *Una donna* (1906), Medea's speech to the women of Corinth (*Medea* 230–251) and Ada Lovelace's Notes (1843).

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● What was *The Angel in the House*?
   A. A novel by Charlotte Brontë about a governess.
   B. A long poem by Coventry Patmore celebrating the ideal wife.
   C. The law of 1870 on married women's earnings.
   D. Virginia Woolf's essay on women and fiction.

2. ● Why did the Brontës publish as Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell?
   A. Their father forbade them to publish under their own names.
   B. They wanted readers to believe that they were three brothers.
   C. They thought that women authors were judged with prejudice.
   D. Their publisher, Smith, Elder and Co., required it of all women.

3. ● Which statement about women's education in the period is correct?
   A. Girton opened in 1869, and Cambridge gave women full degrees soon afterwards.
   B. Elizabeth Garrett qualified as a doctor after studying at Oxford.
   C. No British university admitted women to its degrees before 1900.
   D. Queen's College, London, grew out of lectures for governesses.

4. ● Match each author with a work and a date: Charlotte Brontë · Emily Brontë · Anne Brontë · George Eliot · J. S. Mill · Coventry Patmore — *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* · *The Subjection of Women* · *Middlemarch* · *Jane Eyre* · *Wuthering Heights* · *The Angel in the House* — 1847 · 1847 · 1848 · 1854–62 · 1869 · 1871–72.

5. ●● True or false? Correct the false statements. a Under coverture, a wife's earnings belonged to her husband. b The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 treated husbands and wives equally. c Mill's amendment of 1867 would have replaced "man" with "person". d Emily Brontë wrote *Agnes Grey*. e *Middlemarch* is set in the years of the Reform Act, 1829–32. f Lockwood tells most of the story of *Wuthering Heights*.

6. ●● Explain each term in one or two sentences, with an example from the chapter: a the woman question · b the angel in the house · c Bildungsroman · d juvenilia · e pen name.

7. ●●● Short answer (50–80 words): why was the governess a symbol of the woman question? Use *Jane Eyre* as an example.

Text Analysis

8. ● T1. a According to Jane, what do women need? b To which activities, she says, are women told to confine themselves? c What does she think of people who laugh at women who want to learn more? d Find a word that means "lack of movement".

9. ●● T1. Find a a list, b three comparisons with men and c three words from the language of politics, and say what each device does.

10. ●● T2. Paraphrase in modern English: a *Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless?* b *I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh.*

11. ●● T3. When Catherine compares her love for Heathcliff to "the eternal rocks beneath", she means that it is...
    A. exciting and always changing.
    B. hard and painful, so she wants to escape it.
    C. a cold friendship rather than love.
    D. not always pleasant, but permanent and necessary.

12. ●● T3. Explain the effect of the dashes in the 1847 text and of the italic *am*. How would the speech change if the dashes were replaced by full stops?

13. ●●● Compare T2 and T3 in a PEE paragraph (100–130 words): how do Jane and Catherine define their relationship with the man they love?

14. ●●● Colloquio link (60–80 words). Link T1 to one other subject: philosophy, history, Greek or Italian.

Language

15. ● Complete with *may well, might as well, could hardly, needn't, dare*. a The last coach has gone; we _____ walk home. b Jane _____ refuse an invitation from her employer: she was only the governess. c You _____ bring the novel — I have a copy. d Look at those clouds: it _____ rain later. e How _____ you read my diary!

16. ●● Rewrite each pair as one sentence with putative *should*. a It is natural. Jane rebels against Mrs Reed. b It was strange. Nobody guessed who the Bells were. c I'm surprised. You think Heathcliff is a hero. d It is a pity. Bertha never speaks. e It shocked some reviewers. A governess spoke of love so openly.

17. ●● Rewrite with the modal forms of *dare* and *need* (formal British English). a Jane didn't dare to look at Rochester. b Do we need to read the whole novel? c You don't need to answer now. d Nelly didn't dare to tell Edgar.

18. ●● Correct the mistakes (✗). a It can snow tomorrow on the moors. b We might as well to start chapter 13. c She couldn't hardly speak. d How do you dare speak to me like that? e Need I to explain? f It's odd that she should says that.

19. ●● Order the sentences from the most to the least likely, and explain each modal. a Rochester can't be married. b Rochester may be married. c Rochester must be married. d Rochester may well be married. e Rochester might not be married.

20. ●● Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, using the word in capitals (2–5 words). a It is quite likely that the club will choose *Middlemarch* next. (WELL) The club _____ *Middlemarch* next. b There is no point in waiting for Sam; let's begin. (AS) We _____ without Sam. c It would be unreasonable to criticise her for leaving. (HARDLY) You _____ for leaving. d It isn't necessary for you to bring the novel. (NEED) You _____ the novel. e She was too afraid to open the door. (DARE) She _____ the door.

21. ● Choose the correct option: *You* _____ *blame Rochester for everything: Jane chose to come back.*

    A. can hardly
    B. can't hardly
    C. hardly can't
    D. could not hardly

22. ●●● Nelly comments on Catherine's decision to marry Edgar. Write five sentences in her voice using *may well, might as well, could hardly*, putative *should* and modal *need*.

23. ●● Translate into English. a Tanto vale cominciare subito: il romanzo è lungo. b È naturale che le sorelle abbiano usato uno pseudonimo. c Come ti permetti di parlarmi così? d Può darsi che Emily non volesse pubblicare.

Vocabulary

24. ● Complete with *independent, passionate, conventional, inheritance, restrain, outspoken, wilful, equality*. A _____ Victorian girl was expected to _____ her feelings. Jane cannot: she is _____ and _____, and to her aunt she is simply a _____ child. Only an unexpected _____ makes her _____, and only then can she marry Rochester on terms of _____.

25. ●● Complete the binomials and say which tendency fixes the order. a peace and … b trial and … c pros and … d here and … e wear and … f sooner or … g husband and … h ladies and …

26. ●● Complete the word families: independent → n. … · passion → adj. … · convention → adj. … · inherit → n. … · restrain → n. … · equal → n. … · rebel → adj. …

Writing and Speaking

27. ●●● Write a character analysis essay (250–300 words) on Catherine Earnshaw or Heathcliff, Mr Rochester, Dorothea Brooke, or a character from an Italian novel you have studied this year. Use three short quotations and follow the checklist in the Skills section of this chapter.

28. ●● Speaking. In groups of four, hold Task 1 of the Speaking section (*Have the obstacles Jane faced disappeared?*), using at least four expressions from the table of useful language. Then write the first ninety seconds of the discussion as a short script.

Towards the Exam

29. ●● Reading (INVALSI-inspired). Read Giulia's review in the Skills section again. For a–c choose A, B, C or D; answer d–e in no more than ten words. a Before reading the novel, Giulia expected to be: A enthusiastic · B indifferent · C bored or annoyed · D curious about Rochester. b According to Giulia, Jane leaves Thornfield because: A she has found a better post · B she will not stay as less than an equal · C Marta would have left · D St John asks her to marry him. c Giulia sees the ending as: A a punishment for Rochester · B the price of equality · C a mistake by the author · D proof that Jane is not independent. d What does Elena think is most important to notice? e Which two pieces of advice does Giulia give new readers?

30. ●● Open cloze. Write one word in each gap. Ada Lovelace was (1) _____ daughter of Lord Byron, but she never knew him. Her mother had her taught mathematics, partly to keep her (2) _____ from poetry. In 1843 she translated an article on Babbage's Analytical Engine and added notes that were much longer (3) _____ the article itself. In (4) _____ of them she set out the steps for calculating the Bernoulli numbers. Women could not study at a university at the time, (5) _____ she was taught privately. Her notes appeared (6) _____ her initials only, and for years few readers knew who (7) _____ written them. Today she is (8) _____ called the first computer programmer.

31. ●●● Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, using the word in capitals (2–5 words). a It is possible that Emily wrote poems about Gondal as a child. (MAY) Emily _____ poems about Gondal as a child. b Jane didn't have the courage to look at him. (DARED) Jane _____ at him. c It is surprising that the reviewers were so harsh. (SHOULD) It is surprising that the reviewers _____ so harsh. d Jane learnt the truth only after the wedding was stopped. (UNTIL) It _____ the wedding was stopped that Jane learnt the truth. e If Mill had not proposed the amendment, nobody would have voted on women's suffrage in 1867. (HAD) _____ the amendment, nobody would have voted on women's suffrage in 1867.

32. ●●● Colloquio prompt. The material: Southey's sentence in the epigraph of this chapter, and an image described in words — a Victorian drawing-room in the evening: the family round the piano, and in a corner, apart, a young woman in a dark dress, holding a child's book. a Describe the image and say who the young woman might be. b Link the material to one text of this chapter. c Link it to one other subject. d Give your opinion: has the question changed? Speak for three minutes.

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. E, *The Victorian Age*: the section of texts on the "woman question", and the extracts from the Brontës and George Eliot.
- [SAN] A. Sanders, *The Short Oxford History of English Literature*: the chapters on the early and mid-Victorian novel.
- [ABR] M. H. Abrams, G. G. Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*: the entries on the novel (including the Bildungsroman) and on feminist criticism.
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: the entries on *dare*, *need*, *may as well / might as well* and *should* after adjectives of feeling.
- The texts on Project Gutenberg: *Jane Eyre* (eBook #1260), *Wuthering Heights* (#768), *Middlemarch* (#145), Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (#27083) and Gaskell's *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (#1827); the first editions of 1847 are transcribed on Wikisource.

Glossario del capitolo

Angel in the house
angelo del focolare — the Victorian ideal of the gentle, selfless, domestic wife, named after Coventry Patmore's poem (1854–62); later a critical label.

Bildungsroman
romanzo di formazione — a novel that follows a young protagonist's growth to maturity through education, conflict and a final choice: *Jane Eyre*.

Character analysis essay
analisi del personaggio — an essay that explains how and why a character develops in a work, proving each claim with short quotations.

Double standard
due pesi e due misure — a rule applied more strictly to one group than to another, like the divorce law of 1857 for wives and husbands.

Governess
istitutrice — a woman who lived with a family and taught its children; a lady by education but a paid employee.

Juvenilia
scritti giovanili — the works an author wrote as a child or very young person, like the Brontës' stories of Angria and Gondal.

Loop
ciclo — in programming, a sequence of instructions repeated several times; Ada Lovelace called it a "cycle".

Married Women's Property Acts
leggi sulla proprietà delle donne sposate — the laws of 1870 and 1882 that let a wife keep her earnings and then own property in her own right.

Outspoken
schietto, franco — saying openly what one thinks, even when it may offend.

Pen name
pseudonimo — a false name used by an author: Currer Bell, George Eliot.

Putative should
should ipotetico — *should* + infinitive after words of feeling or judgement (*It is natural that she should rebel*), presenting an idea rather than a fact.

Semi-modal verb
verbo semimodale — a verb such as *dare* or *need* that can behave like a modal (*Need I say more?*) or like an ordinary verb (*Do I need to say more?*).

Separate spheres
sfere separate — the Victorian middle-class idea that the public world belongs to men and the home to women.

Turn-taking
alternanza dei turni — the way speakers in a conversation take, keep and give up the right to speak.

Wilful
ostinato, capriccioso — determined to do what one wants, even when it is wrong (AmE *willful*).

Woman question
questione femminile — the nineteenth-century debate about women's nature, education, work and rights.

Soluzioni

1. B (published in four parts, 1854–62; the critical use of the phrase came later).

2. C (Charlotte's explanation of 1850: they chose names neither clearly male nor clearly female).

3. D (Cambridge gave full degrees only in 1948; Garrett qualified through the Society of Apothecaries, 1865; London opened its degrees to women in 1878).

4. Charlotte Brontë — *Jane Eyre*, 1847 · Emily Brontë — *Wuthering Heights*, 1847 · Anne Brontë — *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, 1848 · Coventry Patmore — *The Angel in the House*, 1854–62 · J. S. Mill — *The Subjection of Women*, 1869 · George Eliot — *Middlemarch*, 1871–72.

5. a T · b F — a double standard: a husband could divorce for adultery alone, a wife had to prove adultery plus another offence · c T (defeated by 196 votes to 73) · d F — Anne wrote *Agnes Grey*; Emily wrote *Wuthering Heights* · e T · f F — Lockwood is the frame narrator; most of the story is told by Nelly Dean.

6. Model answers. a The Victorian debate about women's nature, education, work and legal rights, e.g. Mill's *Subjection of Women* (1869). b The ideal of the selfless, domestic wife, from Patmore's poem (1854–62); later a critical label (Woolf). c A novel of a young protagonist's growth to maturity, e.g. *Jane Eyre*, from Gateshead to Ferndean. d An author's early writings, e.g. the Brontës' tiny books about Angria and Gondal. e A false name used by an author, e.g. "Currer Bell" (Charlotte) or "George Eliot" (Mary Ann Evans).

7. Guidance. The governess was a lady by birth and education who had to work for a living: neither family nor servant, badly paid, without a pension (hence the Governesses' Benevolent Institution, 1843). She showed how few respectable choices an unmarried middle-class woman had. Jane, at Thornfield, is educated, poor and dependent; her restlessness (T1) and her claim to equality with her employer (T2) turn that position into an argument about women's needs and rights.

8. a Exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts, as much as men. b Making puddings, knitting stockings, playing the piano and embroidering bags. c That it is thoughtless to condemn or laugh at them. d *stagnation*.

9. a *making puddings and knitting stockings, … playing on the piano and embroidering bags*: small domestic tasks that make the limits of a lady's life sound trivial. b *just as men feel*, *as much as their brothers do*, *precisely as men would suffer*: the balanced repetition builds an argument of equality. c *condemned, revolt, rebellions, masses* (also *political rebellions*): they give a private feeling the weight of a public, collective protest.

10. Model answers. a Do you think that, just because I am poor, unimportant, not beautiful and small, I have no soul and no feelings? b I am speaking to you now without the rules of society and good manners, and even without the body that separates us — soul to soul.

11. D (*a source of little visible delight, but necessary*; the changing love is the one for Linton).

12. Guidance. The dashes join the clauses into one breathless rush, as if Catherine were thinking aloud and could not stop; the italic *am* stresses identity ("I am Heathcliff", not "I love him"). With full stops the speech would become a sequence of calmer, separate statements — more logical, less passionate (as in later editions).

13. Guidance: see the Esempio svolto at the end of the Texts section. Point: both claim equality, in opposite ways. Evidence: "as much soul as you" / "I am Heathcliff". Explanation: comparison that keeps two selves apart vs the verb *be* that merges them; rhetorical questions vs similes of foliage and rock.

Link: Jane's marriage of equals vs Catherine's marriage to Edgar and early death.

14. Model answer (philosophy). Jane's claim that "women feel just as men feel" anticipates by twenty-two years Mill's argument in *The Subjection of Women* (1869): what is called women's nature is "an eminently artificial thing", produced by restraint. Both use the language of equality and of wasted faculties. Jane speaks from experience and feeling, Mill from Utilitarian reasoning: the greatest happiness is impossible while half of humanity is confined. (Other links: the 1866 petition in history; Medea 230–251 in Greek; Aleramo in Italian.)

15. a might as well · b could hardly · c needn't · d may well · e dare.

16. a It is natural that Jane should rebel against Mrs Reed. b It was strange that nobody should have guessed (that nobody should guess) who the Bells were. c I'm surprised that you should think Heathcliff is a hero. d It is a pity that Bertha should never speak. e It shocked some reviewers that a governess should speak (should have spoken) of love so openly.

17. a Jane dared not (dare not) look at Rochester. b Need we read the whole novel? c You needn't answer now. d Nelly dared not tell Edgar.

18. a It may / could snow tomorrow on the moors. b We might as well start chapter 13. c She could hardly speak. d How dare you speak to me like that? e Need I explain? (or Do I need to explain?) f It's odd that she should say that.

19. c (certain deduction) → d (quite likely) → b (possible) → e (perhaps not) → a (impossible: a negative deduction).

20. a may well choose (might well / could well choose) · b might as well begin (may as well start) · c can hardly criticise her (could hardly criticise / blame her) · d needn't bring (don't need to bring) · e dared not open (didn't dare (to) open).

21. A (*hardly* is already negative; it goes before the main verb, after the modal).

22. Model answers. *She may well regret it one day. If she won't listen, I might as well save my breath. A girl of her temper could hardly be happy at the Grange. It is strange that she should think money will help Heathcliff. Need I tell Mr Edgar what she said?* Accept any correct sentences.

23. a We might as well start now: the novel is long. b It is natural that the sisters should have used a pen name. c How dare you speak to me like that? d Emily may (might) not have wanted to publish.

24. conventional · restrain · passionate · outspoken (or outspoken · passionate) · wilful · inheritance · independent · equality.

25. a quiet (short before long) · b error (time / logical order) · c cons (positive before negative) · d there (near before far) · e tear (rhyme) · f later (time order) · g wife (old social order: the man first) · h gentlemen (politeness reverses the old order).

26. independence · passionate · conventional · inheritance · restraint · equality · rebellious.

27. Guidance. Thesis about change (e.g. *Catherine does not develop: she tries to be two people at once, and the attempt destroys her*); three stages in order (childhood on the moors; the choice of Edgar, T3; illness and death); three short exact quotations, each explained; literary present; a conclusion on what the development means. Assess: content and thesis, use of evidence, organisation, accuracy and range of language.

28. Model answer. *A: I'd say most of them have, at least in law: women can study, work and own property. B: Sorry to jump in, but in law isn't the same as in practice — think of the gender pay gap. A: Hang on, let me just finish this point: Jane couldn't even choose a job. C: Can I come in here? Appearance still matters, maybe more than in 1847, because of social media. D: We haven't heard from Elena yet. E: Well, to go back to Giulia's point, I think the biggest obstacle is still the idea that women should put others first.* Assess: interaction, turn-taking expressions used naturally, range of arguments, accuracy.

29. a C · b B · c B (some readers see it as a punishment: A is their view, not hers) · d That Bertha is never allowed to speak. · e Read slowly and list the

places; skim descriptions, never skip dialogues (any two).

30. 1 the (also *a*: Byron had other children) · 2 away · 3 than · 4 one · 5 so · 6 under (with) · 7 had · 8 often (also *sometimes, widely, commonly, usually*).

31. a may have written · b dared not look (didn't dare (to) look) · c should have been · d was not until (wasn't until) — a cleft sentence (English 4, chapter 6) · e Had Mill not proposed — an inverted conditional (English 4, chapter 8).

32. Model answer. The young woman could well be a governess: she is with the family but apart from it, as Jane is in the drawing-room at Thornfield. Sou-

they's "Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life" (1837) shows the world she lived in: proper duties first, ambition never. Ten years later Charlotte Brontë answered with *Jane Eyre*, whose heroine says that women "need exercise for their faculties" (T1). In history, the link is the woman question: Queen's College (1848), the Property Acts (1870, 1882), Mill's petition (1866) and the vote (1918, 1928). In Greek, Medea's "we women are the most wretched growth" shows how old the protest is. Today the law has changed, but the expectation that women put others first has not completely disappeared.