CAPITOLO

2

Women Who Wrote: the Brontës and George Eliot

"I am no bird; and no net ensnares me; I am a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you." — Charlotte Brontë, Jane Eyre, ch. 23 (1847)

OBIETTIVI

1. I can describe the position of women in Victorian Britain — separate spheres, the governess, property law, education — and date the main reforms from 1839 to 1882.
2. I can outline the novels of Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë and of George Eliot, and explain what a Bildungsroman is.
3. I can analyse narrative voice in *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Middlemarch*: a first-person heroine, a frame narrative, an omniscient narrator.
4. I can concede a point at C1 level (*much as*, *Poor as she was*, *for all*, *albeit*, *granted that*) in the right register.
5. I can express reservations in a discussion, write a letter to the editor and read INVALSI-style texts with the questions first.

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In May 1846 three sisters who lived in a parsonage on the Yorkshire moors published, at their own expense, a small book of poems. It was signed by three men — Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell — and, according to one of the sisters, it sold two copies in a year. By the end of 1847 the same three "men" had published three novels, and one of them, *Jane Eyre*, was the most talked-about book in Britain. A few years later a translator and journalist called Mary Ann Evans also chose a man's name, George Eliot, for her first fiction.

This chapter asks why women who wrote hid behind men's names, what their novels said about the lives of women, and how three of those novels — *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Middlemarch* — changed the English novel. In the Language section you will learn to concede a point elegantly, at C1 level; in Skills you will sit in on Sam's first university seminar and write a letter to the editor; in Connections you will meet a Sardinian Nobel Prize winner and a mathematician who imagined, in 1843, what a computer could and could not do.

2.1 History and Society: Women in Victorian Britain, 1837–1882

Victoria came to the throne in 1837 (chapter 1) and reigned for almost sixty-four years. For most of the century the most famous person in Britain was a woman; yet a married woman could not own property in her own name, no woman could vote in a general election, and no university gave degrees to women. Figura 2.1 sets the reforms of these decades beside the lives and books of the four novelists of this chapter.

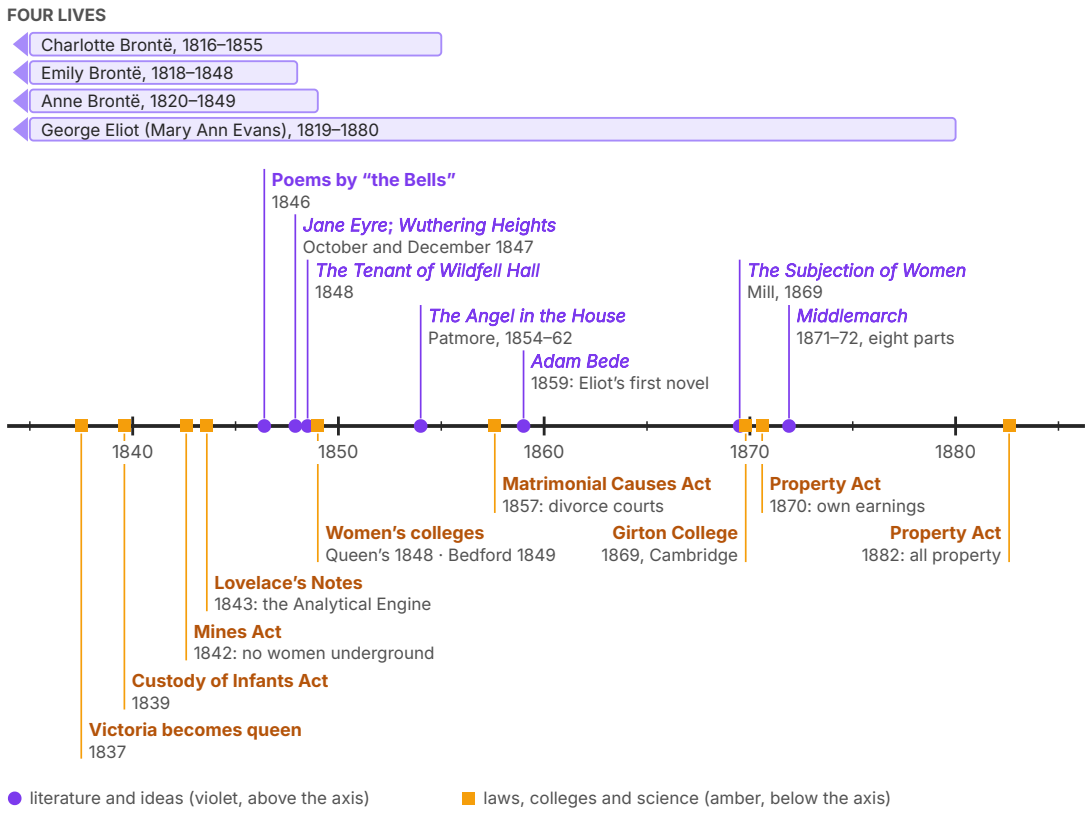

Figura 2.1 Women, writing and the law, 1835–1885, on a proportional axis (ticks every 5 years). Lives at the top; literature and ideas above the axis (violet), laws, colleges and science below it (amber).

2.1.1 Separate spheres and the angel in the house

Middle-class Victorians described society through the idea of **separate spheres** (*sfere separate*): the public world of work, politics and money belonged to men; the private world of the home, the children and moral feeling belonged to women. The home was imagined as a refuge from the competition of industrial life (chapter 1), and the wife as its guardian. The ideal took its most famous name from a long poem by Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House* (published in four parts, 1854–62), an idealised account of his courtship of his wife. The **angel in the house** (*l'angelo del focolare*) was the gentle, selfless wife and mother who lived for others and had no ambitions of her own. The queen herself, who married Prince Albert in 1840 and had nine children, was often presented as the model of this domestic ideal. Some seventy years after the poem, Virginia Woolf (chapter 10) would tell an audience of professional women that a woman writer must first "kill" the Angel in the House.

The doctrine described an ideal, not the lives of most women. Working-class women worked: in the textile mills, in the fields, as servants in other people's houses and — until the Mines

Act of 1842 forbade it — underground in the coal mines. The separate spheres were the ideal of a class that could afford them, and of the men who wrote its laws.

2.1.2 The governess

For a middle-class woman without money, the "sphere" was very small. A lady could not go into trade, and the professions — the law, medicine, the Church, the universities — were closed to her. If her father died poor and she did not marry, almost the only respectable work open to her was to become a **governess** (*istitutrice*): a woman employed to educate the children of a family in their own home. A governess was badly paid, and her position was uncomfortable: she was a lady, but she worked for a wage; she lived with the family, but was not part of it, and the servants did not consider her one of them. Mary Wollstonecraft had done the same work half a century earlier (English 4, chapter 9); Charlotte and Anne Brontë both did it, and their novels show this world from the inside. In 1848 Queen's College opened in London, growing out of lectures organised for governesses, to give women a proper education and a certificate.

2.1.3 Property, marriage and the law

Under the old rule of coverture (English 4, chapter 8), a married woman had almost no legal existence of her own: her property and her earnings passed to her husband, and the children were legally his. Reform came slowly, Act by Act. The Custody of Infants Act (1839), passed after a campaign by the writer Caroline Norton, allowed a separated mother to ask the courts for custody of her children under seven. The Matrimonial Causes Act (1857) moved divorce from the church courts to a new civil court, but on unequal terms: a husband could divorce his wife for adultery, while a wife had to prove adultery and another offence, such as cruelty. The turning point came with the **Married Women's Property Acts** (*leggi sulla proprietà delle donne sposate*) of 1870 and 1882. The first let a married woman keep the money she earned; the second let her own and control property of every kind in her own right, as an unmarried woman already could.

2.1.4 Education and the Woman Question

The whole debate about women's rights, education and work was known at the time as the **Woman Question** (*la questione femminile*). Its first concrete victories were in education. Bedford College, the first college of higher education for women in Britain, opened in London in 1849; Girton, the first women's college at Cambridge, was founded in 1869 by Emily Davies and Barbara Bodichon. Its students could study and, in time, sit the university's examinations — but Cambridge did not give women degrees on equal terms until 1948.

The great argument for equality came from a philosopher. John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), the most influential liberal thinker of the age, published *The Subjection of Women* in 1869, developing ideas he had shared with his late wife, Harriet Taylor Mill. On its first page he argues that "the legal subordination of one sex to the other" is "wrong in itself, and now one of the chief

hindrances to human improvement", and should be replaced by "a principle of perfect equality". As a Member of Parliament, Mill had already proposed in 1867, during the debate on the Second Reform Act (chapter 1), that the word "man" in the bill be replaced by "person", which would have given some women the vote on the same terms as men. The House of Commons rejected the amendment. The long campaign that followed, and the votes won in 1918 and 1928, you met in English 2 (Unit 8).

> **ERRORE FREQUENTE**
>
> ✗ «Nell'Ottocento le donne inglesi non lavoravano.» → ✓ L'ideale delle *separate spheres* era quello della **classe media**. Le donne delle classi popolari lavoravano nelle fabbriche tessili, nei campi, come domestiche e, fino al 1842, anche nelle miniere.
>
> ✗ «Con il *Married Women's Property Act* del 1870 le donne ottennero il voto.» → ✓ Le leggi del 1870 e del 1882 riguardano la **proprietà**: la donna sposata può tenere i propri guadagni (1870) e possedere beni a nome proprio (1882). Il voto arriverà solo nel 1918 (in parte) e nel 1928.

2.2 Literature: the Brontës and George Eliot

Women had written novels since the eighteenth century — Fanny Burney, Ann Radcliffe and Jane Austen among them (English 4, chapters 8, 10 and 14). What was new in the 1840s was the intensity with which women novelists wrote about a woman's inner life: her anger, her ambition, her desire. Reviewers praised the power of these books and were disturbed by it; many could not believe that a woman had written them.

2.2.1 The Brontës

Patrick Brontë, an Irish-born clergyman, became the curate of Haworth, a village on the edge of the Yorkshire moors, in 1820. His wife died the following year, leaving six children. The two eldest girls died in 1825, after falling ill at a harsh boarding school for clergymen's daughters at Cowan Bridge — the model for Lowood, the school in *Jane Eyre*. The four who survived — Charlotte (1816–1855), Branwell (1817–1848), Emily (1818–1848) and Anne (1820–1849) — grew up reading everything in their father's house and inventing imaginary kingdoms, Angria and Gondal, whose stories they wrote in tiny handmade books. As adults the sisters tried the few careers open to them: Charlotte and Anne worked as teachers and governesses, and in 1842 Charlotte and Emily went to Brussels to study languages, hoping to open a school of their own.

Their poems of 1846 appeared under a **pen name** (*pseudonimo*) each, chosen to keep their initials but hide their sex. Charlotte explained later that "we had a vague impression that authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice". The book failed, but the novels did not. Charlotte's *Jane Eyre* appeared in October 1847, "edited by Currer Bell", and was an immediate success; Emily's *Wuthering Heights* and Anne's *Agnes Grey*, the story of a governess, followed to-

gether in December, as a three-volume set (chapter 1). Anne's second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), about a woman who leaves a violent, drunken husband and supports herself and her son by painting, shocked many readers. Then, within nine months, Branwell, Emily and Anne were dead — Emily and Anne of tuberculosis. Charlotte wrote two more novels, *Shirley* (1849) and *Villette* (1853), married her father's curate in 1854 and died, pregnant, in March 1855. Two years later the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell (chapter 1) published *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, which created the legend of the three sisters on the lonely moor.

2.2.2 *Jane Eyre* (1847) and the Bildungsroman

Jane Eyre: An Autobiography is told in the first person by its heroine, looking back after ten years of marriage. It follows her from an unloved childhood with her cruel aunt, Mrs Reed, through the cold and hunger of Lowood school, to Thornfield Hall, where she becomes governess to Adèle, the ward of Mr Rochester. Jane and Rochester fall in love; but on their wedding day she learns that he is already married, to Bertha Mason, a Creole woman from Jamaica who is insane and kept locked on the third storey of the house. Jane refuses to stay as his mistress and runs away. Almost dying on the moors, she finds a home with her cousins, work as a village schoolteacher and an unexpected inheritance — and refuses a second proposal, from St John Rivers, who wants her as a missionary's wife without love. She returns to Rochester, now blinded and maimed by a fire in which Bertha has died. "Reader, I married him", the last chapter begins.

The novel follows its heroine from childhood to maturity through a series of trials in which she learns who she is and what she will and will not accept. This is the pattern of the **Bildungsroman** (*romanzo di formazione*): a novel about the moral and psychological growth of a young person, usually through conflict with the world, towards adulthood and a place in society. The term is German (*Bildung*, "formation, education"; *Roman*, "novel"), and the model usually cited is Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795–96). *Jane Eyre* gave the form a new subject: a poor, plain young woman who insists on her own judgement against every authority — her aunt, her school, the man she loves and the clergyman who wants to marry her.

APPROFONDIMENTO

The woman on the third storey. Bertha Mason speaks no words in the novel, and later readers have given her a voice. In 1966 the Dominican-born writer Jean Rhys published *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a novel set mainly in Jamaica that tells the story of Rochester's first marriage from her side. In 1979 two American critics, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, took the "madwoman in the attic" as the title of a famous study of nineteenth-century women writers, reading Bertha as an image of the anger that a Victorian woman — Jane included — was not allowed to show. Both readings ask the same question: who is allowed to tell her own story? (Rhys's novel is still protected by copyright: we discuss it, but do not quote it.)

2.2.3 *Wuthering Heights* (1847)

Wuthering Heights is set on the Yorkshire moors between 1771 and 1802, in two houses four miles apart: the exposed farmhouse of Wuthering Heights, home of the Earnshaws, and Thrushcross Grange, the comfortable house of the Lintons in the valley below. Mr Earnshaw brings home from Liverpool a dark-skinned foundling, whom he calls Heathcliff and raises with his own children, Hindley and Catherine. Catherine and Heathcliff grow up inseparable; but after the old man's death Hindley reduces Heathcliff to a farm labourer, and Catherine marries the gentle Edgar Linton. Heathcliff disappears, returns rich three years later and takes a long revenge on both families — he marries Edgar's sister Isabella and gains possession first of the Heights and then of the Grange — until, in the next generation, Catherine's daughter Cathy and Hindley's son Hareton find a love that his hatred cannot destroy (Figura 2.2).

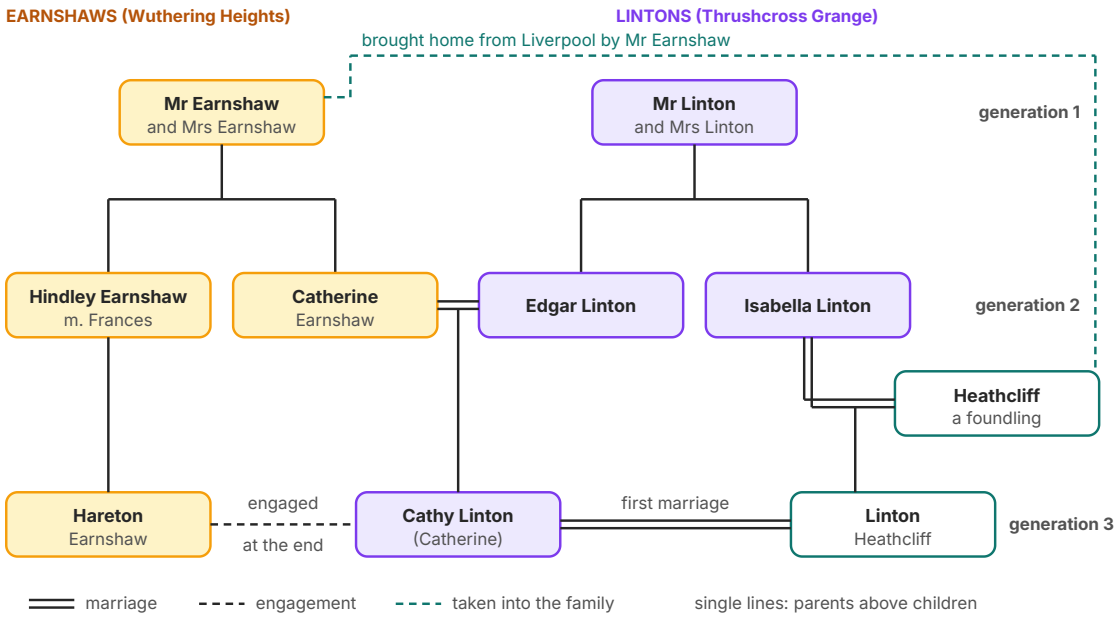

Figura 2.2 The Earnshaws and the Lintons in *Wuthering Heights*, as the novel states them. Heathcliff is not born into either family, but marries into the Lintons and becomes owner of both houses.

The story is not told by an omniscient narrator but through a frame narrative (English 3, chapter 6) with two narrators (Figura 2.3). Lockwood, a fashionable gentleman who rents the Grange in 1801, records in his diary what Nelly Dean, the housekeeper who has served both families, tells him by the fire; inside her story other voices speak — Isabella in a letter, Zillah the servant, Catherine and Heathcliff themselves. Neither narrator is neutral. Lockwood misreads almost everything he sees on his first visits, and Nelly takes sides, keeps secrets and sometimes changes the course of the story she tells. With no voice above the characters to guide them, readers

in 1847 were shocked by the novel's violence and did not know how to judge it. Emily also borrows the machinery of the Gothic novel (English 4, chapter 10) — a ghost at the window, locked doors, cruelty, graves — but the novel's deepest energy comes from nature. The moors are not a background but a measure of the characters: the Heights stand for storm and wildness, the Grange for calm and cultivation, and every character belongs to one or the other.

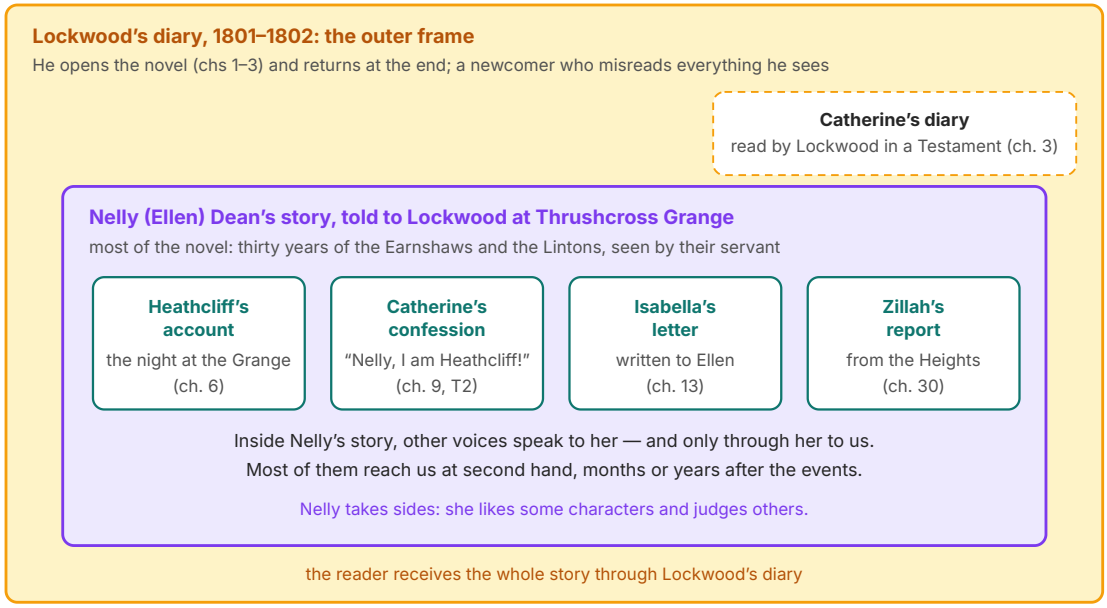

Figura 2.3 The narrative frame of *Wuthering Heights*: Lockwood's diary contains Nelly Dean's story, which contains other voices. Chapter numbers as in modern editions (1–34).

IN SINTESI

Three sisters, three pen names, three first novels (1847)

- **Charlotte** = Currer Bell → *Jane Eyre* (October 1847); then *Shirley* (1849), *Villette* (1853).
- **Emily** = Ellis Bell → *Wuthering Heights* (December 1847), her only novel.
- **Anne** = Acton Bell → *Agnes Grey* (December 1847); *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848).

2.2.4 George Eliot and *Middlemarch* (1871–72)

Mary Ann Evans (1819–1880) was born in Warwickshire, the daughter of an estate manager. Largely self-taught, she translated German theology — David Strauss's *Life of Jesus* (1846) — lost her Christian faith, and in London became the assistant editor of a radical journal, the *Westminster Review* (1851). From 1854 she lived openly with the critic George Henry Lewes, who was married and could not obtain a divorce, and respectable society closed its doors to her. When she

turned to fiction she chose a man's name, partly to keep her private life out of the reviews and partly because, as she had argued in an essay of 1856, "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists", readers expected little from women writers. *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) and *Silas Marner* (1861) made George Eliot famous; *Romola* (1862–63) is set in fifteenth-century Florence, in the years of Savonarola.

Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life appeared in eight parts between December 1871 and December 1872. It is set in a fictional Midlands town between 1829 and 1832 — the years of the Reform Bill (English 4, chapter 14) and of the first railways — and follows several lives at once: Dorothea Brooke, a young woman with a passion to do good, who marries Mr Casaubon, a scholar much older than herself, in the hope of sharing a great intellectual work and finds that the work is empty; Tertius Lydgate, an ambitious young doctor with modern scientific ideas, trapped by debt and an unhappy marriage; the banker Bulstrode, with a hidden past. What connects them is the narrator. Eliot uses the omniscient narrator (English 4, chapter 8) not to judge her characters but to understand them, moving from one mind to another and asking the reader to do the same. In chapter 15 the narrator admits to having "so much to do in unraveling certain human lots, and seeing how they were woven and interwoven, that all the light I can command must be concentrated on this particular web". The *web* — every life tied to many others — is the novel's model of society.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ «*Cime tempestose* è di Charlotte Brontë.» → ✓ *Wuthering Heights* è di **Emily**; Charlotte scrisse *Jane Eyre*, Anne *Agnes Grey* e *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. Attenzione anche agli pseudonimi: Currer (Charlotte), Ellis (Emily), Acton (Anne) Bell.

✗ «George Eliot era un romanziere vittoriano.» → ✓ Era una romanziera: **George Eliot** è lo pseudonimo di Mary Ann Evans. In inglese si scrive *Eliot*, con una sola *l* e una sola *t* — come il poeta T. S. Eliot, che però è un'altra persona (chapter 10).

IN SINTESI

Three novels, three ways of telling

- *Jane Eyre*: a **first-person** narrator, the adult Jane, who addresses the reader directly ("Reader, I married him").
- *Wuthering Heights*: a **frame narrative** — Lockwood's diary contains Nelly Dean's story, which contains other voices; no narrator is neutral.
- *Middlemarch*: an **omniscient narrator** who moves between many lives and comments on them with sympathy — "this particular web".

2.3 Texts: Three Women's Voices

Three extracts, three voices: Jane Eyre speaking for herself and for all women; Catherine Earnshaw trying to explain a love that does not fit into words; and George Eliot's narrator closing a long novel with a quiet claim about history. Read each one aloud before you analyse it.

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

Context. Jane, eighteen, has been governess at Thornfield for some months. Her pupil is pleasant and the housekeeper kind, but she is restless; when she is alone she climbs to the roof to look at the horizon, or walks up and down the corridor of the third storey. Here the narrator — Jane, years later — explains why.

Tabella 2.1 T1 — *Jane Eyre*, ch. 12 (Project Gutenberg eBook #1260, text of the 1897 Service & Paton edition)

> It is in vain to say human beings ought to be satisfied with tranquillity: they must have action; and they will make it if they cannot find it. 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. *in vain*: useless · *tranquillity*: calm, quiet · *condemned to a stiller doom*: forced to live an even quieter, more limited life · *lot*: destiny, situation in life · *ferment*: grow and bubble beneath the surface · *which people earth*: who live on the earth (*people* is a verb here) · *faculties*: abilities of the mind · *stagnation*: lack of movement or change · *fellow-creatures*: other human beings · *custom*: tradition · *pronounced*: declared.

Analysis

From one woman to all women. The paragraph is built like an argument. It begins with a general claim about human beings (*they must have action*), gives evidence (*millions are in silent revolt*), narrows to women (*women feel just as men feel*) and ends with a judgement on those who disagree (*narrow-minded*, *thoughtless*). The first-person narrator, who has just described her own restlessness, now speaks for half of humanity.

The language of revolt. *Condemned*, *doom*, *revolt*, *rebellions*, *the masses*: Brontë takes the vocabulary of politics — the vocabulary of the Chartists (chapter 1) and of the revolutions that would break out across Europe a few months after the novel appeared — and applies it to private, domestic life. The rebellions she means are not in the streets but inside people.

Balance and contrast. Three comparisons insist on equality: women feel *just as men feel*, need a field for their efforts *as much as their brothers do*, suffer *precisely as men would suffer*. Against them stands a list of the activities "custom" allows: *making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags*. The repeated *-ing* forms and the small, domestic objects make the separate sphere sound trivial and monotonous: the irony is in the list itself.

What follows. The very next sentence of the novel is: "When thus alone, I not unfrequently heard Grace Poole's laugh". Jane does not yet know that the laugh comes from Bertha, the imprisoned wife. The restless woman in the corridor and the woman locked behind one of its doors are placed side by side — a juxtaposition that later readers, from Virginia Woolf to Gilbert and Gubar, have read in very different ways.

1. Find five words that belong to the language of politics and revolt. Why does Jane use them for private life?
2. Underline the three comparisons between women and men. What claim do they make together?
3. What do the activities in the list have in common? What tone does the list create?
4. Who are *their more privileged fellow-creatures*? Explain in your own words.
5. Jane is not a slave or a prisoner, but a paid governess with a comfortable room. Is her complaint exaggerated? Give reasons.

2.3.2 T2 · Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, ch. 9: "Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff!"

Context. Catherine Earnshaw, fifteen, has just accepted Edgar Linton's proposal. That night, in the kitchen of the Heights, she confides in Nelly. Heathcliff, lying unseen on a bench on the other side of the settle (a high-backed wooden seat), has heard her say that it would degrade her to marry him — and has left before she says what follows.

Tabella 2.2 T2 — *Wuthering Heights*, ch. 9 (Project Gutenberg eBook #768; italics as printed). […] marks a cut.

> […] I cannot express it; but surely you and everybody 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.

Glosses. *notion*: idea, feeling · *What were the use*: what would be the use (an old subjunctive) · *my creation*: my being created, my existence · *contained here*: limited to my own body · *annihilated*:

completely destroyed · *foliage*: the leaves of trees · *resembles*: is like · *beneath*: underneath · *any more than*: in the same way as … not.

Analysis

An argument beyond words. Catherine begins by admitting that she *cannot express it*, and then tries anyway, with the language of philosophy: *an existence of yours beyond you, my creation, the universe*. Her love for Heathcliff is not a feeling she has but part of what she is: if he died, *the universe would turn to a mighty stranger*.

Two loves, two landscapes. The famous pair of similes uses the landscape of the moors. Her love for Linton is *like the foliage in the woods*: visible, pleasant and changing with the seasons. Her love for Heathcliff *resembles the eternal rocks beneath*: hidden, hard, *a source of little visible delight, but necessary*. Note the honesty of the second simile — this love gives little pleasure — and its geology: rocks last, leaves fall.

From simile to identity. After two comparisons with *like* and *resembles*, Catherine drops comparison altogether: *Nelly, I am Heathcliff!* The italics on *am* stress the verb of being. This is the logic of the whole novel: Catherine and Heathcliff are not two lovers but one nature divided, and her marriage to Edgar is a betrayal of herself.

The listener. Nelly answers with impatience — in the lines that follow she calls the speech *nonsense* and *folly*. The narrator through whom we hear Catherine does not understand her, and Heathcliff, who would have understood, is no longer listening. The reader alone hears everything.

1. What does Catherine mean by *an existence of yours beyond you*?
2. Compare the two similes. List what the foliage and the rocks have in common with each love.
3. Why is *am* printed in italics? How should the sentence be read aloud?
4. Heathcliff has left the room. What is the effect of this on the reader?
5. Is Catherine's love for Heathcliff presented as positive, destructive or both? Use evidence from the text.

2.3.3 T3 · George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, Finale: "unhistoric acts"

Context. The last paragraph of the novel. Dorothea, a widow, has given up her first husband's fortune to marry Will Ladislaw, his poor young cousin, and lives a private life as a wife and mother. In the Prelude the narrator had compared her to Saint Theresa of Ávila, who reformed a religious order; Dorothea, born in the wrong century and the wrong sex for such a life, reforms nothing.

Tabella 2.3 T3 — *Middlemarch*, Finale, last paragraph (Project Gutenberg eBook #145; spelling as printed)

> Her finely touched spirit had still its fine issues, though they were not widely visible. Her full nature, like that river of which Cyrus broke the strength, spent itself in channels which had no great name on the earth. But the effect of her being on those around her was incalculably diffusive: for 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.

Glosses. *finely touched spirit … fine issues*: a sensitive, noble soul with good results (an echo of Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, I.1) · *that river of which Cyrus broke the strength*: according to the Greek historian Herodotus, the Persian king Cyrus punished the river Gyndes by dividing it into hundreds of small channels · *incalculably diffusive*: spreading widely, in ways nobody can measure · *unhistoric*: not recorded by history · *ill*: bad · *owing to*: thanks to.

Analysis

From one life to a law of history. The paragraph moves outward: from Dorothea's spirit, to a general law (*the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts*), to the reader (*you and me*). The omniscient narrator, who has watched many minds through a very long novel, ends by including us in the web.

The river. A great river divided into small channels loses its force but waters a whole plain. Dorothea's energy did not change history; it spread into the lives around her. The image is both a loss and a gain, and the sentence holds both: *though they were not widely visible*.

A cadence of quiet things. The last clause is balanced on two pairs — *lived faithfully a hidden life / rest in unvisited tombs* — and falls to a close on the plainest words. Readers of Gray's Elegy (English 4, chapter 10) will recognise the theme of the forgotten dead; the difference is that Eliot claims for them a share in the world's progress.

Consolation or protest? Some readers hear a consolation: ordinary goodness matters. Others hear a protest: a woman of Dorothea's gifts was allowed no larger field. The paragraph does not choose, and the question is worth asking in an essay.

1. Find the words that describe Dorothea's life as limited, and those that describe it as valuable.
2. Explain the river image in your own words. Why is it appropriate for Dorothea?
3. What does *unhistoric acts* mean? Give an example from your own experience.
4. Why does the narrator say *you and me*? What is the effect?
5. Is the ending a consolation or a protest? Give one argument for each reading.

2.4 Language: Concession towards C1

Writing about literature means holding two ideas at once: Nelly Dean is a biased narrator, *yet* without her we would know nothing. You already have the tools for B2: *although, even though,*

despite (English 2 and 3), *while, whereas, nevertheless, nonetheless* and *admittedly … nevertheless* (English 3, chapters 7 and 14), and the spoken *even so* and *that said* (English 4, chapter 3). This section adds the structures that let a writer concede a point compactly and formally — the language of the **concessive clause** (*proposizione concessiva*) at C1: a clause or phrase that admits a fact which seems to contradict the main statement, without changing it.

Tabella 2.4 Concession beyond *although*: C1 structures

Structure	Form and use	Example
much as + clause	with verbs of liking and wanting; = although … very much	*Much as* Catherine loves Heathcliff, she agrees to marry Edgar.
adjective / adverb + *as* (or *though*) + subject + verb	the adjective or adverb moves to the front; formal and emphatic	*Poor as* she was, Jane refused to stay as Rochester's mistress. · *Hard as* they tried, the sisters could not sell their poems.
noun (no article) + *though* / *as* + subject + verb	literary; the noun loses its article	*Child though* she was, Jane answered her aunt back.
try as + subject + *might* / *may*	= however hard … tried	*Try as he might*, Heathcliff could not forget Catherine.
for all + noun phrase	= despite; neutral to formal	*For all her success*, George Eliot kept her pen name.
albeit + adjective / adverb / phrase	formal; = although (it is / was); not before a full clause	The 1870 Act was a step forward, *albeit a small one*.
granted (that) + clause	concedes a point before the main argument	*Granted that* Nelly takes sides, she is still our only witness.
may / might … but	concedes with a modal, then contradicts	Lockwood *may* be a poor judge of people, *but* he records everything.
notwithstanding + noun, or noun + *notwithstanding*	very formal (legal, academic)	Its early reviews *notwithstanding*, *Wuthering Heights* is now read all over the world.
be that as it may	formal linking phrase = whether or not that is true	Mill's amendment failed. *Be that as it may*, it put the question before Parliament.

Two rules hold for all of them. First, the concessive part is followed by the main clause **without** *but*: the contrast is already in the structure. Second, the adjective-fronting pattern does not invert subject and verb: *Poor as she was*, not ✗ *Poor as was she*. Register matters as much as grammar: Figura 2.4 arranges the structures you know and the new ones from informal to formal. In an essay or a letter to a newspaper, two or three of the formal ones, used accurately, are enough to change the tone of a whole page; ten of them in a row sound like a parody.

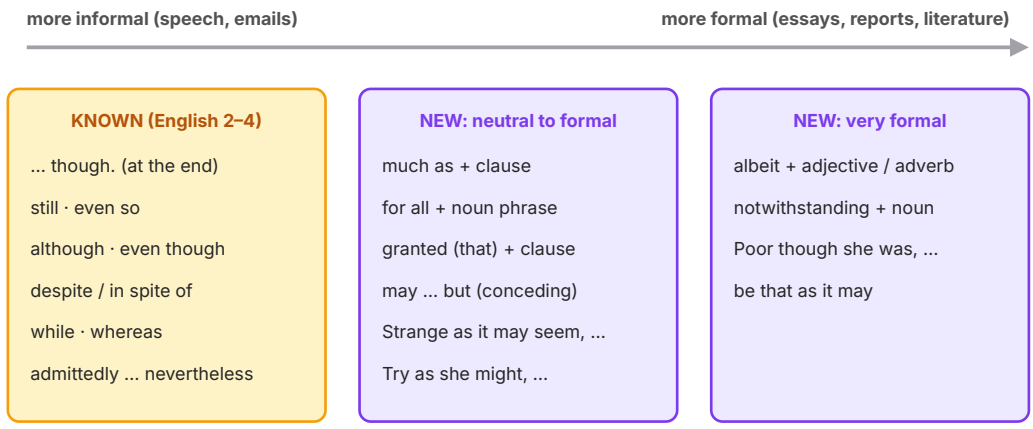

Figura 2.4 Concession from informal to formal: what you know from English 2–4 (amber) and the C1 structures of this chapter (violet).

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Le concessive di livello C1. Ammettono un fatto che sembra contraddire la frase principale, senza cambiarla. *Much as* + frase ≈ *per quanto* + congiuntivo (*Much as she loved him* = per quanto lo amasse); aggettivo + *as / though* + soggetto + verbo ≈ *per quanto* + aggettivo, oppure *pur* + gerundio (*Poor as she was* = per quanto povera fosse / pur essendo povera); *for all* + nome ≈ *nonostante, malgrado* (*for all her talent* = nonostante il suo talento); *granted that* ≈ *ammesso che, d'accordo che*; *albeit* ≈ *sebbene, seppure* davanti a un aggettivo (*un passo avanti, seppur piccolo = a step forward, albeit a small one*).

Confronto con l'italiano. L'italiano usa il congiuntivo (*sebbene fosse, per quanto amasse*); l'inglese usa l'indicativo e sposta in testa l'aggettivo. In nessuna delle due lingue si aggiunge *ma / but* dopo la concessiva.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *Much as she loved him,* ***but*** *she married Edgar.* → ✓ *Much as she loved him, she married Edgar.* (niente *but*: come in italiano non si dice «per quanto lo amasse, ma...»).

✗ *Albeit she was poor, she refused.* → ✓ *Although she was poor, she refused.* / ✓ *She refused, poor albeit proud.* — nell'inglese di oggi *albeit* precede un aggettivo, un avverbio o un sintagma, non una frase con verbo.

✗ *For all she was talented, …* → ✓ *For all her talent, …* (*for all* + nome). ✗ *As poor as she was, …* → ✓ *Poor as she was, …* nell'inglese britannico formale (la forma con due *as* si sente nell'inglese americano). ✗ *Poor as was she* → ✓ *Poor as she was* (nessuna inversione).

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

From a flat opinion to a C1 paragraph. Question: *Is Nelly Dean a reliable narrator?*

- **Start from the plain claim.** *Nelly is not a reliable narrator.* True, but flat: it ignores the obvious objection.
- **Name the objection and concede it.** She was present at most of the events, and she is our only source. → *Granted that Nelly witnessed most of what she tells, …*
- **Return to your claim, without *but*.** *… she is far from neutral: she dislikes Catherine's pride and admits keeping secrets.*
- **Add evidence and a final, qualified judgement.** Use one formal structure, not five.

Model paragraph: *Granted that Nelly Dean witnessed most of the events she tells, she is far from a neutral narrator. She dislikes Catherine's pride, calls her confession "nonsense", and admits to keeping secrets that change the course of the story. Much as we depend on her, then, we should read her account as one interpretation among others — an honest one, albeit partial.* (61 words: three concessive structures, each doing a different job.)

2.5 Skills: Qualified Opinions and the Letter to the Editor

2.5.1 Vocabulary: rights and independence

The words in Tabella 2.5 appear in the history of the Woman Question and in today's debates about equal opportunities. Learn them with their collocations.

Tabella 2.5 Rights and independence: key words

Word	Meaning	Collocations and example
equality (n.)	the state of having the same rights and chances	*legal / gender equality* · Mill argued for perfect equality.
independence (n.)	being free to live and decide without others' control	*financial independence* · Jane values her independence.
dependence (n.)	needing someone else for money or support	*dependence on / upon* · A wife's dependence on her husband was legal.
inheritance (n.)	money or property received when someone dies	*receive / come into an inheritance* · Jane comes into an inheritance.
property (n.)	things that a person owns, especially land and houses	*own / control property* · The 1882 Act let wives own property.
prejudice (n.)	an unfair opinion formed without knowledge	*prejudice against* · prejudice against women writers
suffrage (n.)	the right to vote in elections	*women's suffrage* · the campaign for women's suffrage
ambition (n.)	a strong wish to achieve something	*fulfil an ambition* · Dorothea's ambition to do good
opportunity (n.)	a chance to do something	*equal opportunities* · *deny someone an opportunity*
discrimination (n.)	unfair treatment because of sex, origin, age…	*discrimination against* · *sex discrimination*

Word focus: gendered words and inclusive alternatives

English nouns have no grammatical gender, but some words carry a sex inside them: *-man*, *-ess*, *-mistress*. Since the 1970s many institutions have preferred **gender-neutral language** (*linguaggio neutro rispetto al genere*): words that refer to people without specifying their sex when sex is not relevant (Tabella 2.6). The Victorians used *-ess* forms freely — Charlotte Brontë's *authoresses* above — and they often carried a hint of condescension; today *poetess* and *authoress* sound dated, while *actress* survives beside *actor*, which many women in the theatre now use for themselves.

Tabella 2.6 Gendered words and gender-neutral alternatives

Gendered or older form	Gender-neutral form	Note
chairman	*chair, chairperson*	*Madam Chair* is used in formal meetings
fireman, policeman	*firefighter, police officer*	now standard in British public services
spokesman	*spokesperson*	also *representative*
mankind, man-made	*humanity, humankind, people; artificial, synthetic*	*mankind* is still common in older texts
headmaster, headmistress	*head teacher, head*	standard in British schools
poetess, authoress	*poet, author*	the *-ess* forms now sound dated or belittling
actress	*actor* (for all) or *actress*	both are used; ask what a person prefers

A related point is **singular *they*** (*"they" singolare*): *they / them / their* used for one person whose sex is unknown or irrelevant (*Someone has left their umbrella*), and today also for a person who does not identify as a man or a woman. It is not a modern invention. Jane Austen gives it to Mrs Norris in *Mansfield Park* (1814, ch. 23): the doctor should have taken her dining-table "as anybody in their senses would have done". Italian is moving in the opposite direction: where English removes gendered forms, Italian debates whether to add feminine ones (*la ministra, la sindaca, l'avvocata*).

2.5.2 Listening: A Seminar on *Jane Eyre*

Before you listen. What is a university seminar? How is it different from a lesson at school? **Listen (books closed)** while four classmates read the script. Sam, in his first term at university, is in a seminar with his tutor, Dr Morgan, and two other first-year students, Nadia and Tom. They have read T1 and the chapter around it. Then answer: on which point do Sam and Nadia disagree, and who mentions Virginia Woolf?

Tabella 2.7 Listening script — A Seminar on *Jane Eyre*

Dr Morgan	Right, let's start with the passage from chapter twelve — Jane up on the roof at Thornfield. Nadia, you said last week that it's the most modern page in the novel. Do you still think so?
Nadia	I do. "Women feel just as men feel" — you could put that on a poster today. She's saying women need real work and a purpose, not just puddings and piano lessons.
Sam	I'd go along with that up to a point. But I'm not sure I'd call it modern. Jane isn't asking for the vote, or for a profession. She's asking for experience — to see the world.
Nadia	Isn't that the same thing, though?
Sam	Not quite. Remember she's a governess. She's already got a job. What she's missing is… I don't know… a life.
Tom	That's true as far as it goes, but she does use political words. "Rebellions", "revolt", "the masses". In 1847 those weren't innocent words.
Dr Morgan	Good. Can you say more?
Tom	Well, the Chartists had been holding mass meetings for years. A middle-class reader would have heard that vocabulary and felt uncomfortable.
Nadia	Exactly. So it *is* political.
Sam	I take the point, but it's political in a private way. She's talking about what happens inside people. "Millions are in silent revolt" — silent. Nobody's marching.
Dr Morgan	And what happens straight after the speech?
Nadia	She hears Grace Poole laughing.
Dr Morgan	And who is really laughing?
Tom	Bertha. Rochester's wife, locked away on the third floor.
Sam	That's what gets me. Jane is walking up and down that corridor, longing to get out, and behind one of its doors there's a woman who literally can't.
Nadia	So the novel has its own doubts about Jane's freedom.
Dr Morgan	There's a well-known reading along those lines: Bertha as the side of Jane that she has to keep locked up. Virginia Woolf saw it differently. She quoted this very passage and complained that the jump to the laugh was awkward — that Brontë's anger had got into the novel and damaged it.
Tom	I wouldn't go so far as to say that. It's deliberate.
Sam	To some extent I agree with Woolf, actually. The jump *is* awkward. But awkward isn't the same as accidental.
Dr Morgan	Nicely put. For next week, then: one page, either defending or attacking Woolf's view. And please — quotations, not summaries.

After listening. a) Find three phrases that Sam and Tom use to agree only partly. b) Which historical movement does Tom mention, and why? c) Do you agree with Sam that "awkward isn't the same as accidental"? The INVALSI-style tasks on this script are in the exercises.

2.5.3 Speaking: expressing reservations

In a seminar, a debate or the colloquio, the strongest answers are rarely a plain "yes" or "no". A **qualified opinion** (*opinione con riserva*) agrees or disagrees only in part, and says exactly where the limit lies: *I agree about the vocabulary, but not about the politics.* It sounds more thoughtful, and it is harder to attack. Tabella 2.8 collects the phrases; notice how many of them Sam uses.

Tabella 2.8 Useful language — expressing reservations and qualified opinions

Function	Phrases
agreeing in part	*I'd go along with that up to a point.* · *That's true as far as it goes.* · *There's something in that, but…* · *To some extent, yes.*
softening a disagreement	*I'm not sure I'd put it quite like that.* · *I take the point, but…* · *I see where you're coming from, but…*
refusing to go too far	*I wouldn't go so far as to say that.* · *That may be overstating it slightly.* · *It's not quite as simple as that.*
qualifying your own view	*In a sense…* · *With one reservation: …* · *I'm in two minds about…* · *Much as I agree with…, I…*

- **Task 1 (groups of three, 1 minute each).** Respond to each statement with a qualified opinion and one reason from this chapter: *"Jane Eyre is a feminist novel."* · *"Nelly Dean is the villain of Wuthering Heights."* · *"George Eliot was right to use a man's name."*
- **Task 2 (pairs, 3 minutes).** Discuss: *"Girls and boys today have exactly the same opportunities to study science."* Each speaker must use at least two phrases from the table and one concessive structure from the Language section.

2.5.4 Writing: a letter to the editor

A **letter to the editor** (*lettera al direttore*) is a short formal text sent to a newspaper or magazine for publication, usually in reply to an article or about a public question. At B2+ it has a clear shape: **the occasion** (which article, which issue), **the point** (your view in one sentence), **evidence** (experience, facts, an example), **a proposal** (what should be done) and **a sign-off**. Editors cut long letters, so every sentence must work. Read Aoife's letter to a newspaper in Galway.

Tabella 2.9 Model text — a letter to the editor (249 words)

Dear Editor,
I am writing in response to your article "Why Don't Girls Choose Physics?" in last Friday's issue, which suggested that the answer lies mainly in girls' own preferences. As a first-year marine science student, and a former member of a school physics club in which I was often the only girl, I would like to offer a different view.
Much as I agree that nobody should be pushed into a subject, preferences do not appear from nowhere. Granted, some students simply prefer languages to equations. Many of my friends, however, gave up physics at fifteen not because they disliked it, but because nobody had ever shown them that people like them could do it. Admittedly, my experience is only one example; even so, I have heard it described many times, in Galway and by friends abroad.
History is a useful reminder of how recent the change is. Women were studying at Girton College from 1869, yet Cambridge did not award them degrees on equal terms until 1948. For all the progress since then, habits of mind change more slowly than laws.
I would therefore propose three practical steps: science clubs that actively invite girls, regular visits from young women working in research, and training that helps teachers notice who stops raising their hand. All three are inexpensive, albeit not effortless.
Girls do not need to be persuaded to love science. They need to be told, early and often, that science is theirs.
Yours faithfully, Aoife Byrne Galway

Analysis. *The occasion* comes first, with the title of the article and the issue. *The point* is stated by contrast (*a different view*) and then developed. *The evidence* is personal but honestly limited (*Admittedly, my experience is only one example*), and a verified historical fact widens it. *The proposal* is concrete and numbered in words (*three practical steps*). The register is formal but direct: no contractions, one concessive structure per paragraph (*Much as, Granted, For all, albeit*), and a short final paragraph that the editor could print as a headline. *Dear Editor* is closed with *Yours faithfully*.

Checklist. ✓ the article or event you are answering, named in the first sentence · ✓ one clear point · ✓ evidence: an example, a fact you have checked, an experience — honestly limited · ✓ a practical proposal · ✓ formal register, no contractions · ✓ two or three concessive structures, used accurately · ✓ *Dear Editor, … Yours faithfully*, your name and town · ✓ 220–260 words.

Task. A magazine for students has published an article claiming that "equal opportunities in science and technology have already been achieved: the rest is personal choice". Write a letter to the editor (220–260 words) agreeing or disagreeing, with evidence from your own school experience and one fact you have checked in a reliable source (say which).

LEARNING TO LEARN

INVALSI reading: questions first, then the text. The INVALSI English test of the fifth year is computer-based, tests reading and listening only, and reports a level (*non ancora B1*, B1 or B2); taking it is a requirement for admission to the exam, though the level reached is not (check the current year's rules on the MIM website). You learned to skim and scan in English 1 (Unit 2). In a timed test, use them in this order:

- **Read the questions before the text.** They tell you what to look for — and their order usually follows the order of the text.
- **Skim for gist** (about one minute): the title, the first and last lines of each paragraph. What is the text for — to inform, to argue, to tell a story?
- **Scan for detail:** for each question, find the paragraph by a key word, a name or a number, then read that part carefully. Watch for paraphrase: the question rarely repeats the text's words.
- **Do not get stuck.** If one item resists, mark it and move on; come back at the end.

Transfer. The same order works for the *comprensione* questions of the Italian *prima prova* and for a Latin *versione* with questions: read what you are asked before you read what you are given.

2.6 Connections: the Brontës and Deledda; Ada Lovelace

2.6.1 Two closed worlds: *Wuthering Heights* and *Canne al vento*

Grazia Deledda (1871–1936) was born in Nuoro, in the interior of Sardinia, and left school after the elementary years; she educated herself, published her first stories as a teenager and moved to Rome after her marriage in 1900. In 1927 she received the Nobel Prize in Literature for 1926 — the first Italian woman to win it — "for her idealistically inspired writings which with plastic clarity picture the life on her native island". Her best-known novel, *Canne al vento* (1913), opens like this:

> *Tutto il giorno Efix, il servo delle dame Pintor, aveva lavorato a rinforzare l'argine primitivo da lui stesso costrutto un po' per volta a furia d'anni e di fatica, giù in fondo al poderetto lungo il fiume: e al cader della sera contemplava la sua opera dall'alto, seduto davanti alla capanna sotto il ciglione glauco di canne a mezza costa sulla bianca collina dei Colombi.*
>
> — Grazia Deledda, *Canne al vento* (Milano, 1913), cap. I (text of the first edition, as transcribed on Wikisource)

"All day Efix, the servant of the Pintor ladies, had worked to strengthen the rough embankment that he himself had built little by little, through years of toil, down at the bottom of the small farm along the river; and as evening fell he contemplated his work from above, sitting in front of his hut under the blue-green ridge of reeds halfway up the white hill of the Doves." (translation by the editors)

The two novels are very different, but they share a pattern. Both describe a closed rural world, far from any capital, which their authors knew from the inside: the Yorkshire moors, the hills and river of the Sardinian Baronia. Both tell the decline of an old family — the Earnshaws, the noble Pintor sisters — and both give a central role to a servant who has spent a lifetime with that family: Nelly Dean, who tells the story, and Efix, through whose eyes most of it is seen. In both, the landscape is a moral force rather than a decoration. Emily Brontë measures her characters against rocks and storms; Deledda's title comes from Efix's own image of human beings, near the end of the novel: *Siamo canne, e la sorte è il vento* ("We are reeds, and fate is the wind", cap. XVI). The difference is the view of destiny: Deledda's world is shaped by fate, guilt and Christian expiation; Brontë's by passions that refuse any law, human or divine.

Women writers in Italy, too, used pen names. The Milanese novelist Anna Maria Zuccari (1846–1918) published all her work as *Neera*, a name taken from classical poetry, and wrote novels about the narrow lives of middle-class women. Deledda, by contrast, always signed with her own name.

2.6.2 Screen, music and art

Both novels have been adapted for the cinema and for television many times, from the silent era to the present. A famous early film of *Wuthering Heights*, directed by William Wyler in 1939, tells only the story of the first generation and leaves out Cathy and Hareton altogether — a choice many later adaptations have copied. The novel also reached the pop charts: in 1978 Kate Bush, who had written the song in one evening at the age of eighteen, spent four weeks at number one in the UK with "Wuthering Heights", sung in the voice of Catherine's ghost at the window — the scene Lockwood describes in chapter 3 of the novel. Bush was born on 30 July, the same day of the year as Emily Brontë. (We describe the song; song lyrics are never printed in this book.)

2.6.3 Ada Lovelace and the Analytical Engine

You met Ada Lovelace (1815–1852) in English 1 (Unit 6): Byron's daughter (English 4, chapter 13), brought up by her mother to study mathematics, and the friend of Charles Babbage (1791–1871), who designed calculating machines. His most ambitious design, the Analytical Engine, was never built, but it had the parts of a modern computer (Figura 2.5): a **mill** (*"mulino", l'unità di calcolo*) that carried out the arithmetic, and a **store** (*"magazzino", la memoria*) that held the numbers; instructions and data were to be fed in on punched cards borrowed from the **Jac-**

quard loom (*telaio Jacquard*), the weaving machine in which chains of cards set the pattern of a fabric.

The story has a Turin chapter. In 1840 Babbage presented the Engine to scientists in Turin; a young military engineer, Luigi Federico Menabrea — later Prime Minister of Italy — wrote a description of it in French, published in Geneva in 1842. Lovelace translated it into English and added seven notes, signed only "A.A.L.", which were longer than the article itself (1843). In Note A she wrote that the Engine "*weaves algebraical patterns* just as the Jacquard-loom weaves flowers and leaves". In Note G she set out, step by step, how the machine could calculate one of the **Bernoulli numbers** (*numeri di Bernoulli*) — a sequence of fractions used in the formulas for sums of powers — which is why the note is often called the first published computer program (historians debate how much of it was Babbage's). And in the same note she drew a limit that still matters:

> The Analytical Engine has no pretensions whatever to *originate* anything. It can do whatever we *know how to order it* to perform.
>
> — A.A.L., Note G, in L. F. Menabrea, "Sketch of the Analytical Engine invented by Charles Babbage", *Scientific Memoirs*, vol. 3 (London, 1843)

A hundred and seven years later, Alan Turing answered this sentence in a famous paper on whether machines can think, calling it "Lady Lovelace's Objection" (chapter 13). The question she asked — can a machine create, or only obey? — is the question we ask today of artificial intelligence.

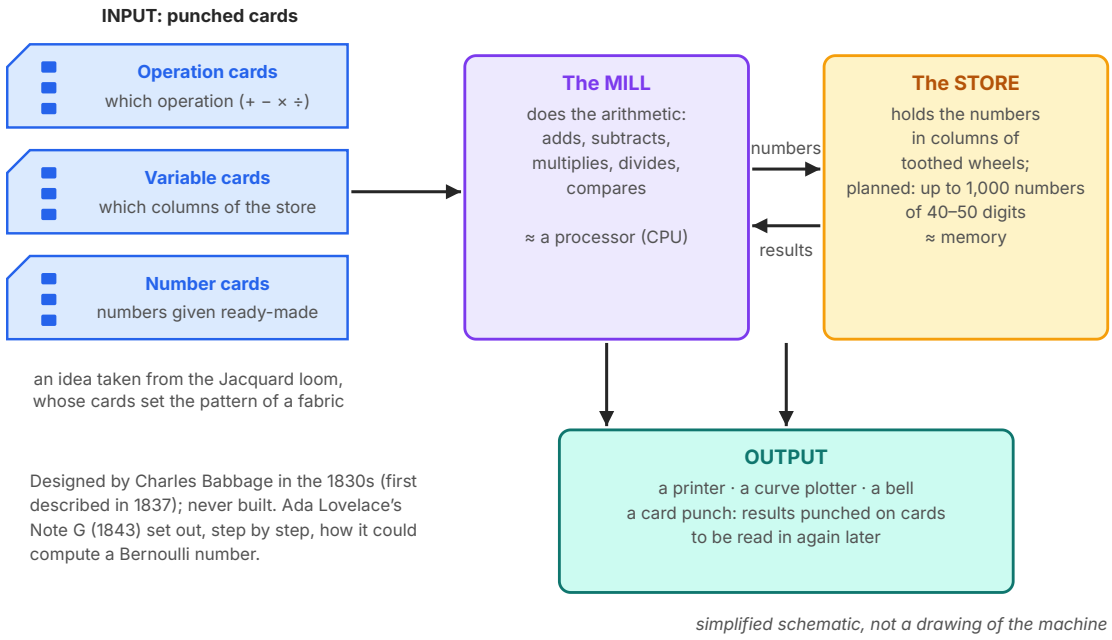

Figura 2.5 The Analytical Engine, simplified: cards carry the operations, the addresses in the store and the numbers; the mill calculates; the store keeps numbers and results; the output prints, plots or punches them. Specifications as planned by Babbage; the machine was never completed.

COLLEGAMENTI

Mathematics: what are the Bernoulli numbers for? You know that $1 + 2 + \ldots + n = n(n+1)/2$, and you may have met $1^2 + 2^2 + \ldots + n^2 = n(n+1)(2n+1)/6$ (check it: for $n = 10$ both sides give 385). The Swiss mathematician Jacob Bernoulli, in a book published in 1713, found one general rule for the sum of any power, $1^k + 2^k + \ldots + n^k$; its coefficients are the numbers that now carry his name: in today's notation $B_2 = 1/6$, $B_4 = -1/30$, $B_6 = 1/42$, $B_8 = -1/30$. Each one can be computed from the ones before it — a repetitive procedure, ideal for a machine. Lovelace's table computes the number she calls B_7, which is $B_8 = -1/30$ in today's numbering, by repeating a set of operations in what she called "cycles": an early idea of the loop.

Computer science. The mill and the store correspond to the processor and the memory; the operation cards to a program; the variable cards to addresses in memory. Babbage's design used decimal arithmetic, not binary.

DA RICORDARE

For the exam. Starting point — a quotation: “the growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts” (George Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 1871–72). Three links it opens:

- **Another English author:** Virginia Woolf and the women whose lives history did not record (chapter 10); or, back in time, Gray’s Elegy (English 4, chapter 10).
- **An Italian author:** Manzoni’s humble heroes, or Deledda’s Efix — lives of service that no history book records; Verga’s *vinti*.
- **Another subject:** history — the Married Women’s Property Acts, Mill and the vote (in Italy, women first voted in a national election on 2 June 1946); mathematics — Ada Lovelace, whose work was rediscovered a century later.

SINTESI

- The Victorian middle class imagined **separate spheres**: public life for men, the home for women — the "**angel in the house**" of Patmore's poem (1854–62). Working-class women always worked.
- For an educated woman without money, the main respectable job was that of **governess**: badly paid and socially ambiguous.
- Reforms came Act by Act: custody of young children (1839), divorce courts (1857), the **Married Women's Property Acts** (1870: earnings; 1882: all property).
- Women's higher education began with Queen's College (1848), Bedford College (1849) and Girton (1869); Cambridge gave women degrees on equal terms only in 1948.
- J. S. Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869) called for "perfect equality"; his 1867 amendment to give women the vote was defeated.
- Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë published as **Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell**; in 1847 came *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*.
- *Jane Eyre* is a first-person **Bildungsroman**: a poor governess who insists on her own judgement; Bertha Mason has been reread by Rhys and by feminist critics.
- *Wuthering Heights* is told through a frame (Lockwood → Nelly Dean → other voices), with no neutral narrator; its two houses and the moors measure the characters.
- **George Eliot** (Mary Ann Evans) wrote *Middlemarch* (1871–72), a "study of provincial life" whose omniscient narrator understands rather than judges, and whose image of society is a **web**.
- T1 turns the language of revolt to women's private lives; T2 moves from simile to identity ("I *am* Heathcliff!"); T3 ends on "unhistoric acts".
- C1 concession: *much as*, *Poor as she was*, *for all* + noun, *albeit*, *granted that*, *notwithstanding* — no *but* after them, and a formal register.
- Deledda (Nobel 1926) and the Brontës both wrote closed rural worlds seen by a servant; Ada Lovelace's Note G (1843) imagined a program — and its limits.

ESERCIZI

History and Literature

1. ● Under which names did the Brontë sisters publish their poems in 1846?

   A. Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë

   B. George, Henry and William Bell

   C. C., E. and A. Branwell

   D. Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell

2. ● What did the Married Women's Property Act of 1870 allow?
   A. Married women to keep the money they earned.
   B. Married women to vote in general elections.
   C. Women to obtain a divorce on the same terms as men.
   D. Women to take degrees at Cambridge.

3. ● Which statement about *Middlemarch* is correct?
   A. It is told in the first person by Dorothea.
   B. It was published in eight parts in 1871–72 and is set around 1829–32.
   C. It is set in Florence in the fifteenth century.
   D. It was published under the name Mary Ann Evans.

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

5. ●● True or false? Correct the false statements. a The ideal of separate spheres described the life of most Victorian women. b Charlotte and Anne Brontë both worked as governesses. c *Wuthering Heights* was published together with *Agnes Grey*. d Girton was founded in 1869, and its students received Cambridge degrees from the start. e George Eliot lived with George Henry Lewes from 1854. f Mill's amendment of 1867 gave women the vote.

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

7. ●●● Short answer (10–12 lines, 100–130 words): Why did the Brontës and Mary Ann Evans publish under men's names, and what does this tell us about the position of women writers in the 1840s–50s? Give a definition, an example and a link.

Text Analysis

8. ●● In T1, the list "making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags" is…
   A. a sincere description of Jane's favourite activities.
   B. a list of the duties of a governess at Thornfield.
   C. ironic: the small domestic tasks make the woman's "sphere" sound trivial.
   D. a quotation from Mrs Fairfax.

9. ●● T1: Find the three comparisons between women and men, and the words of politics and revolt. Then explain in 40–60 words how they work together in Jane's argument.

10. ●● T2: Explain the two similes in your own words. What does each image suggest about the two loves, and why does Catherine then say "I *am* Heathcliff"?

11. ●● T2: Nelly calls Catherine's speech "nonsense" and "folly", and Heathcliff has left the room. How does the narrative frame affect our response to this scene? Refer to Figura 2.3.

12. ●● T3: Paraphrase the last sentence in modern English, beginning: *The world is getting better partly because of…*

13. ●●● Compare T1 and T3 (80–100 words): both are about a woman with gifts and energy that her society does not use. How do the two narrative voices — a first-person heroine and an omniscient narrator — present this problem differently?

14. ●●● Write a PEE paragraph (Point, Evidence, Explanation; 80–100 words) on this point: "In T2, Catherine uses the landscape of the moors to express what she cannot say directly."

Language

15. ● Complete with ONE word. a _____ *as she admired Rochester, Jane would not stay as his mistress.* b *Poor* _____ *they were, the sisters published their poems at their own expense.* c *For* _____ *its success, Jane Eyre disturbed some reviewers.* d *The reform was real,* _____ *limited.* e _____ *that Lockwood is a poor judge, his diary is still useful.* f *Try as he* _____ *, Heathcliff could not forget her.*

16. ●● Rewrite each sentence using the structure in brackets. Keep the meaning. a *Although Dorothea was idealistic, she misjudged Casaubon.* (adjective + *as*) b *Despite all her talent, Anne Brontë is less famous than her sisters.* (*for all*) c *Although I like Nelly very much, I do not trust her.* (*much as*) d *The Act was a step forward, although it was a small one.* (*albeit*) e *However hard Jane tried, she could not stop thinking of Rochester.* (*try as*) f *It is true that the novel is long, but it is never boring.* (*may … but*)

17. ●● Key-word transformations (2–5 words, key word unchanged). a *Although she was very young, Catherine understood her own heart.* (YOUNG) _____ *she was, Catherine understood her own heart.* b *In spite of all his money, Heathcliff was never happy.* (ALL) _____ *money, Heathcliff was never happy.* c *I admit that the ending is quiet, but it is powerful.* (GRANTED) _____ *the ending is quiet, it is powerful.* d *Although she respected Mill, the writer disagreed with him.* (MUCH) _____ *Mill, the writer disagreed with him.*

18. ●● Error correction (✗). Each sentence has one mistake. Find it and correct it. a *Much as Jane loved Rochester, but she left Thornfield.* b *Albeit she was poor, Jane refused his money.* c *For all he was talented, Branwell achieved little.* d *Strange as may it seem, the poems sold two copies.* e *Child though was she, Jane answered back.* f *Despite of the law, some wives managed the family business.*

19. ●● Register. Rewrite this informal comment as two formal sentences for an essay, using one C1 concessive structure in each. *"OK, Nelly saw most of what happened. Still, she's not neutral. And yeah, Lockwood gets loads of things wrong, but we need him to start the story."*

20. ●●● Sentence building. Write one sentence about this chapter for each structure: a *much as* b adjective + *as* + subject + verb c *for all* + noun phrase d *albeit* e *notwithstanding* f *be that as it may*.

21. ●●● Translate into English, using a C1 concessive structure. a *Per quanto amasse Heathcliff, Catherine sposò Edgar.* b *Pur essendo povera, Jane rifiutò il denaro di Rochester.* c *La legge del 1870 fu un progresso, seppure limitato.*

Vocabulary

22. ● Complete with words from Tabella 2.5. a The campaign for women's _____ lasted from the 1860s to 1928. b Jane gains financial _____ when she comes into an _____. c Before 1882 a wife could not control _____ in her own name. d Charlotte feared the _____ of critics against women writers. e Dorothea's _____ was to do some great good. f Today, _____ against women at work is illegal.

23. ●● Gender-neutral language. Rewrite each sentence with a gender-neutral word from Tabella 2.6 or singular *they*. a *The chairman opened the meeting.* b *Every student must bring his own copy.* c *The firemen arrived in ten minutes.* d *This is one of the greatest achievements of mankind.* e *The headmistress spoke to the parents.* f *If anyone calls, tell him I'm out.*

24. ●● Collocations. Choose the correct verb. a *to come into / come up an inheritance* b *to fulfil / complete an ambition* c *to deny / refuse someone an opportunity* d *to make / win the vote* e *to promote / raise equality* f *to own / possess and control property* (both possible? say which is more natural).

Writing and Speaking

25. ●●● Write the letter to the editor in the Skills section (220–260 words). Use the five-part structure, the checklist and at least two C1 concessive structures; name the reliable source you checked.

26. ●●● Speaking (pairs, 2 minutes each). Your partner says: *"Jane Eyre is the first feminist novel."* Respond with a qualified opinion, give two reasons and one piece of evidence from T1, and end with a question for your partner. Use at least three phrases from Tabella 2.8.

Towards INVALSI

27. ●● (B1) Listening: *A Seminar on Jane Eyre* (Tabella 2.7). Choose the correct answer (A–D). 1 Nadia thinks the passage is modern because A it mentions the vote. B its claims could be used today. C it describes a governess. D it is set on a roof. 2 Sam thinks Jane mainly wants A a profession. B the vote. C experience of the world. D a better salary. 3 Tom says the words "rebellions" and "revolt" would have A amused readers. B made middle-class readers uneasy. C been unknown in 1847. D been censored. 4 The laugh Jane hears is really A Grace Poole's. B Adèle's. C Bertha's. D Mrs Fairfax's.

28. ●● (B2) Listening. True, false or not given? 1 Nadia first expressed her view about the passage in an earlier seminar. 2 Sam thinks the passage is about public political action. 3 Dr Morgan says Woolf admired the sudden change to Grace Poole's laugh. 4 Tom thinks the change to the laugh is intentional. 5 The students must write two pages for the next seminar. 6 Nadia has read *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

29. ●● (B2) Listening. Answer in no more than FOUR words. 1 Which year does Tom mention? 2 Which group held mass meetings? 3 Where is Rochester's wife locked away? 4 What does Dr Morgan want instead of summaries?

30. ●●● (B2) Multiple matching. Who expresses each opinion: Nadia (N), Sam (S), Tom (T) or Dr Morgan (M)? 1 In 1847 the passage's political words would have made readers uneasy. 2 The passage is political, but in a private way. 3 Bertha can be read as the side of Jane she must keep locked up. 4 Woolf may be partly right. 5 Jane's demands could be printed on a poster today. 6 The novel itself doubts Jane's freedom.

Towards the Exam

31. ●●● Colloquio starting point — a quotation: *"The Analytical Engine has no pretensions whatever to originate anything. It can do whatever we know how to order it to perform."* (Ada Lovelace, 1843). Talk for 3 minutes: explain the context, then link it to two other subjects.

PER APPROFONDIRE

- [NOR] S. Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. E: the introduction to the Victorian age ("The Woman Question") and the selections from Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot and Mill.
- [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 "Bildungsroman", "narrator" and "point of view".
- [SWA] M. Swan, *Practical English Usage*: the entries on *although*, *as* in concessive clauses, *albeit* and singular *they*.
- [HEW] M. Hewings, *Advanced Grammar in Use*: the units on contrast and concession.

Glossario del capitolo

Angel in the house
l'angelo del focolare — the Victorian ideal of the gentle, selfless wife and mother, named after Coventry Patmore's poem (1854–62).

Bernoulli numbers
numeri di Bernoulli — a sequence of fractions (1/6, −1/30, 1/42…) used in the formulas for sums of powers; computed in Lovelace's Note G.

Bildungsroman
romanzo di formazione — a novel about the moral and psychological growth of a young person towards adulthood, e.g. *Jane Eyre*.

Concessive clause
proposizione concessiva — a clause or phrase that admits a fact apparently contradicting the main statement, e.g. *Much as she loved him, …*

Gender-neutral language
linguaggio neutro rispetto al genere — words that refer to people without specifying their sex, e.g. *firefighter*, *chair*.

Governess
istitutrice — a woman employed to educate the children of a family in their home; in Victorian Britain, the main job for an educated woman without money.

Jacquard loom
telaio Jacquard — a weaving machine controlled by chains of punched cards, the model for the cards of the Analytical Engine.

Letter to the editor
lettera al direttore — a short formal text sent to a newspaper or magazine for publication, usually in reply to an article.

Married Women's Property Acts
leggi sulla proprietà delle donne sposate — the Acts of 1870 (own earnings) and 1882 (all property) that ended coverture over a wife's property.

Mill
"mulino", unità di calcolo — in Babbage's Analytical Engine, the part that carried out the arithmetic; today's processor.

Pen name
pseudonimo — a false name used by an author, e.g. Currer Bell (Charlotte Brontë), George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans).

Qualified opinion
opinione con riserva — an opinion that agrees or disagrees only in part and states where the limit lies.

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

Singular they
"they" singolare — *they / them / their* used for one person whose sex is unknown or irrelevant; found in English since the Middle Ages.

Store
"magazzino", memoria — in Babbage's Analytical Engine, the part that held numbers and results; today's memory.

Woman Question
la questione femminile — the Victorian name for the debate on women's rights, education, work and legal status.

Soluzioni

1. D (the initials were kept, the sex hidden).

2. A (the 1882 Act extended this to property of every kind; the vote came in 1918 and 1928; equal grounds for divorce only in 1923; Cambridge degrees in 1948).

3. B (A: it has an omniscient narrator; C describes *Romola*; D: it appeared as by George Eliot).

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

5. a F — it was a middle-class ideal; working-class women worked in mills, fields, service and (until 1842) mines. b T. c T (December 1847, three volumes). d F — Cambridge gave women degrees on equal terms only in 1948. e T. f F — the House of Commons rejected it; women won the vote in 1918 (in part) and 1928.

6. Model answers: a the Victorian middle-class idea that public life (work, politics) belonged to men and the home to women; e.g. the doctrine behind the governess's narrow choices · b the ideal of the gentle, selfless wife and mother, named after Patmore's poem (1854–62) · c a woman employed to educate a family's children at home, socially between family and servants; e.g. Jane at Thornfield, Anne Brontë in real life · d a novel of the moral and psychological growth of a young person towards adulthood; e.g. *Jane Eyre* · e a false name used by an author; e.g. Currer Bell, George Eliot, Neera.

7. Traccia: *definition* — a pen name hides the author's identity; the Brontës chose names that kept their initials but hid their sex. *Reasons* — Charlotte wrote that "authoresses are liable to be looked on with prejudice": reviewers judged women's books as women's, not as books; Eliot also wanted to keep her irregular private life (with Lewes) out of the reviews, and had argued in "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" that little was expected of women writers. *Example* — the success of *Jane Eyre* (1847) "edited by Currer Bell", and the curiosity about who "he" was. *Link* — the separate spheres: a woman with a public career broke the ideal of the angel in the house; in Italy, Anna Maria Zuccari wrote as Neera. (≈110 words)

8. C.

9. Comparisons: *women feel just as men feel*; a field for their efforts *as much as their brothers do*; they suffer *precisely as men would suffer*. Words of revolt: *condemned, doom, revolt, rebellions, the masses* (also *ferment*). Model: the comparisons claim that women and men have the same nature and needs; the political words show what happens when those needs are denied — a silent rebellion inside people. Together they turn a private complaint into an argument for equality.

10. Model answer: love for Linton = foliage: visible, pleasant, but seasonal — time will change it as winter strips the trees. Love for Heathcliff = the eternal rocks beneath: hidden, hard, giving *little visible delight* but permanent and *necessary*, the foundation of the landscape. After two comparisons (*like*, *resembles*) Catherine abandons comparison for identity: she and Heathcliff are not two beings who love each other but one being; the italic *am* stresses existence, not likeness.

11. Model answer: we hear Catherine only through Nelly, who reports her to Lockwood years later and does not understand or approve of her; the reader is therefore asked to judge both Catherine and the narrator. Dramatic irony: Heathcliff heard only that marrying him would "degrade" her and left before her declaration — so the reader knows what the character who most needs to know does not. The

frame creates distance from the passion and invites us to see more than any one witness.

12. Model: *The world is getting better partly because of the good things people do that history never records; and if life is not as bad for you and me as it could have been, that is half thanks to all the people who lived honest, unnoticed lives and now lie in graves that nobody visits.*

13. Traccia: Jane speaks for herself, in the present of her narration, with the language of revolt and a direct judgement on those who limit women (*narrow-minded*, *thoughtless*): the voice protests. Eliot's narrator looks at Dorothea from outside and at the end of her life, generalises calmly (*the growing good of the world*) and includes the reader (*you and me*): the voice reflects and partly consoles. Both see waste; Jane demands a wider field, Eliot finds value in the narrow one — though her river image (a great river divided into channels) also records the loss.

14. Model: *Point:* Catherine admits she *cannot express* her love, so she borrows the language of the landscape. *Evidence:* her love for Linton is *like the foliage in the woods*, which *time will change … as winter changes the trees*, while her love for Heathcliff *resembles the eternal rocks beneath*. *Explanation:* the moors give her two kinds of permanence — seasonal and geological — and so two kinds of love: one pleasant and passing, one hidden but foundational. Nature does the work that abstract words cannot, preparing the leap to identity: *I am Heathcliff*.

15. a Much · b as (or though) · c all · d albeit (*though*, *if* or *yet* are also correct, but the exercise practises *albeit*) · e Granted · f might (or may).

16. a *Idealistic as (though) she was, Dorothea misjudged Casaubon.* · b *For all her talent, Anne Brontë is less famous than her sisters.* · c *Much as I like Nelly, I do not trust her.* · d *The Act was a step forward, albeit a small one.* · e *Try as she might, Jane could not stop thinking of Rochester.* · f *The novel may be long, but it is never boring.*

17. a *Young as* / *Young though* · b *For all his* · c *Granted that* · d *Much as she respected* (*Much as he respected* if the writer is male).

18. a delete *but* · b *Although she was poor* (or *Jane, poor albeit proud, refused…*) · c *For all his talent* (*for all* + noun phrase) · d *Strange as it may seem* · e *Child though she was* · f *Despite the law* / *In spite of the law*.

19. Model: *Granted that Nelly witnessed most of the events, she is far from a neutral narrator. Lockwood may misread almost everything he sees, but his diary is the frame without which the story could not begin.* (Accept *much as, albeit, for all* used correctly.)

20. Model answers: a *Much as Charlotte loved her sisters, she outlived them all.* b *Unpopular as it was with some reviewers, Wuthering Heights is now a classic.* c *For all her learning, Mary Ann Evans could not attend a university.* d *The 1857 Act made divorce possible, albeit on unequal terms.* e *Notwithstanding Mill's arguments, the Commons rejected his amendment.* f *Some critics think the ending is a consolation; be that as it may, it is also a protest.* Accept any correct sentence.

21. a *Much as she loved Heathcliff, Catherine married Edgar.* b *Poor as (though) she was, Jane refused Rochester's money.* c *The 1870 Act was progress, albeit limited* (or *a step forward, albeit a limited one*).

22. a suffrage · b independence, inheritance · c property · d prejudice · e ambition · f discrimination.

23. a The chair (chairperson) opened the meeting. · b Every student must bring their own copy. · c The firefighters arrived in ten minutes. · d … one of the greatest achievements of humanity (humankind). · e The head teacher spoke to the parents. · f If anyone calls, tell them I'm out.

24. a come into · b fulfil · c deny · d win · e promote · f *own* is the natural verb (*own and control property*); *possess* is grammatical but more formal and less usual here.

25. Marking guide: *content* — the article answered is named; one clear point; evidence honestly limited; one checked fact with its source (e.g. Girton 1869 / Cambridge degrees 1948, from the college's website); a practical proposal · *organisation* — occasion, point, evidence, proposal, sign-off · *language* — formal register, no contractions, two or three concessive structures used accurately · *format — Dear Editor … Yours faithfully*, name and town, 220–260 words.

26. Model answer: “I’d go along with that up to a point. Jane certainly argues that women feel just as men feel and need a field for their efforts — that’s a claim for equality. But I wouldn’t go so far as to call it the first feminist novel: Mary Wollstonecraft had made similar arguments fifty years earlier, and Jane asks for experience, not for the vote or a profession. So, in a sense, it’s feminist in what it feels rather than in what it demands. Would you say a novel has to make political demands to be feminist?” (Qualified opinion, two reasons, evidence, a question.)

27. 1 B · 2 C · 3 B · 4 C.

28. 1 T (“you said last week”) · 2 F (“political in a private way… Nobody’s marching”) · 3 F (she complained that the jump to the laugh was awkward) · 4 T (“It’s deliberate”) · 5 F (one page) · 6 NG.

29. 1 1847 · 2 the Chartists · 3 (on) the third floor · 4 quotations.

30. 1 T · 2 S · 3 M · 4 S · 5 N · 6 N.

31. Traccia: *context* — Lovelace’s Note G to her translation of Menabrea’s description (1843) of Babbage’s Analytical Engine, which was never built; mill, store and punched cards from the Jacquard loom; Note G computes a Bernoulli number step by step. *Meaning* — a machine executes, it does not invent. *Links* — mathematics/computer science: the Bernoulli numbers, the loop, processor and memory; Turing’s answer, “Lady Lovelace’s Objection” (1950), and today’s debate on artificial intelligence; history: women in science in the nineteenth century (no degrees at Cambridge until 1948), Mill’s *The Subjection of Women*; Italian/history: Menabrea and Turin, 1840. Close with a personal view, qualified (“I’d go along with Lovelace up to a point…”).