

Level II Winner

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Molly Keran
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Dear Charlotte Bronte,

It was my grandmother who bought me your novel, *Jane Eyre*, claiming it was a "classic," and I absolutely must have it. She insisted, even when I told I probably wouldn't read it. So I went home, positive it would gather dust. I picked it up once, tried to read it, but, frankly, the first sentence bored me to death. Finishing the first page was near impossible.

I did read it though, for lack of anything else to do. And as I began, I was annoyed by its namesake. She was so meek, so quiet, so subdued. Why didn't she scream at Mrs. Reed, stand up for herself for once? And then she did. She screamed, she yelled, she said exactly what I wanted her to. I was practically bursting with excitement. Maybe now the book would get good.

However, Jane again became the placid rock. Furious, I threw down the book and refused to read. Something about this girl just drove me up the wall.

But something gnawed at me, and I soon realized that I couldn't *not* read it. So I picked it up again and read, quiet, subdued Jane, wishing for another outburst. Only, when the outburst came, it wasn't from her- it was from me.

I had realized why I was so irritated by her- I am Jane. With every page I turned, I saw my reflection. Just like Jane, I keep my mouth shut, never stand up for myself, and just like Jane, I am a living, breathing doormat. Or at least I used to be.

That's a part of the reason why I love this book. It taught me about myself, more than any other book I've read. Sure its beautifully written, but more than that, I learned from it. And more than just about myself, but also about the world around me.

My senses have never been so heightened as when I read this tale of love and hope. When Helen died, I could feel her hand in mine, hear the faith in her words. When Jane finally revealed how she felt to her beloved, my heart was beating uncontrollably. And when Mr. Rochester stood at the alter and admitted to already being wed I felt as though it were my dreams that had been dashed.

Books, from *The Cat in the Hat* to *War and Peace*, have something to say. It's just that some books yell while others whisper. In this case, *Jane Eyre's* voice is loud and resonant, touching your mind, your heart, and your spirit. It taught me to speak louder than I ever would have thought I could, it helped me have faith in the powers of destiny, and it showed me that there's nothing wrong with following your heart. I also learned that fairy-tale happy endings aren't likely to happen- in my life or any others'. However, you can overcome problems (like Mr. Rochester's blindness) and have an "and-they-all-lived-happily-ever-after" ending. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Molly Keran, Grade 8