

**DESCRIPTION OF GENDER ISSUES IN THE NOVELS OF
CHARLOTTE BRONTE**

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Annotation: As Charlotte Bronte gives a lot of attention to gender issues in her novels, it is convenient to take a better look at the life of female in Victorian times. Upper- and middle-class women were usually set apart from the commercial and intellectual world. Female frame of mind and role in society in general was something of significant interest to Charlotte Bronte, as she herself was a woman wanting to break through the limitations of her era. Gender issues in the novels of Charlotte Bronte is outlined in this article.

Key words: role of women, female strength, society, gender issues, the life of female, to address, reflect, English Literature.

Literature is the mirror of life, so it clearly reflects people's reality, dreams, attitudes, etc. It's not a matter of words and fantasy. It should have relation with human's life though. Works of literature, at their best, provide a kind of blueprint of human society. From the writings of ancient civilizations such as Egypt and China to Greek philosophy and poetry, from the epics of Homer to the plays of William Shakespeare, from Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte to Maya Angelou works of literature give insight and context to all the world's societies.

Charlotte Bronte was an English novelist and poet, the eldest of the three Bronte sisters who survived into adulthood and whose novels became classics of English Literature. She wrote during the Victorian Age of British literature, which lasted from 1833-1901, named in connection with the reign of Queen Victoria.

In this article, I would like to focus on the description of gender issues in the novels of Charlotte Bronte.

As Charlotte gives a lot of attention to gender issues in her novels, it is convenient to take a better look at the life of female in Victorian times. Upper and middle class women were usually set apart from the commercial and intellectual world and the prosperity among tradesman was often accompanied by a separation of business from home, which absolutely detached women from the money-making world and responsibility leaving them with basically nothing left to do to occupy themselves – this concept of so called refinement basically prescribed that all women outside the working class should not be looking for any employment except in cases of extreme necessity. The only acceptable options for middle-class women in Victorian times were

actually either marriage, dependence on the family patriarch or becoming a governess. The latter became the occupation of Charlotte Bronte and despite her hating this occupation; it also gave her lot of inspiration for her work.

Female frame of mind and role in society in general was something of significant interest to Charlotte Bronte, as she herself was a woman wanting to break through the limitations of her era. In this manner, Charlotte started a revolution of her own, by raising literary topics never used before in such extent, and which in her times were not entirely understood or accepted. In Victorian era, women were supposed to preside over the private, domestic spheres, whereas the public sphere belonged to men, even though through most of the nineteenth century it was a woman who sat on the English throne.

Throughout her professional career, Charlotte Bronte kept returning to certain themes in her novels. In *The Professor* as well as in *Jane Eyre*, she explores the topic of gender issue, equality, self-fulfillment, religion, education or search for independence. In her second novel, Bronte had a chance to explore the theme of gender issue in a more relatable and realistic way as she put a female character in the centre of the story and could thus make a better use of her own emotional experience. Though the marriage in both novels is based on love and equality, Jane's relationship with Rochester was evolving in the course of the novel and was directed towards reaching equal status since its beginning – in *The Professor*, the relationship of William Crimsworth and Frances Henri is basically 'in charge' of the male protagonist right until their marriage when Frances expresses her ambitions and William does not object.

Charlotte Bronte would probably never achieve such success in the literary world if it was not for her liberal upbringing, influence of her siblings and the inspiring environment of the wild nature of the moors right behind her window. Though readers and critics often wonder how she, a woman from a village somewhere in Yorkshire, could write such imaginative novels.

In conclusion, we can say that as a woman of strong urge for independence and ambition, Bronte made these issues one of her main focus in her novels. Although in our present day, it is somewhat expected, if not required, for people to raise awareness of topics connected with the issues in society, it was not the case in the Victorian era. It was not a place for women to criticize their status and it was definitely not a place for them to do so publicly in the form of literature. Bronte, however, was a brave woman who was not afraid to address the 'Woman question' in her work, and she did it so masterfully that her novels are up to this date a representation of female strength and capability. As the historical context was thus also an important element in Bronte's development, both as a woman and as a writer.

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