

# *Jane Eyre*

by Charlotte Brontë (1816-55)

*features and themes of the novel*

The plot of the novel includes many **autobiographical elements**.

The novel is given an autobiographical feel through the **use of the first-person narrator**, which allows the reader to see things from Jane's point of view.

Her way of describing the events is mediated by her **feelings** and **emotional responses**.

For this reason, even if Jane is a fairly traditional female character (because of the limitations of the social conventions of her time), **when the novel first came out it was a shock for some readers**.

**This was because it went against the Puritanical tradition that a good woman should not feel the need to **explore** the realm of physical passion.**

*Jane Eyre* mixes the elements of the **BILDUNGSROMAN** with several conventions of Gothic fictions.



## ***BILDUNGSROMAN***

***novel of formation, which deals with the life of the main character from infancy to early adulthood.***

## *autobiographical elements*

Jane's character is deeply conditioned by her childhood experiences:

her hard upbringing by her heartless aunt and then the strict boarding school.

## ***GOTHIC FEATURES***

Among the **Gothic features** of the novel are the atmosphere of the settings, often described in dark and threatening shades, as well as mysterious events.



Some Gothic features can be found in the description of Bertha Mason, the *mad* wife:

she looks like a savage woman, surrounded by an aura of fear and mystery.

According to some critics, Bertha - the *mad woman in the attic* - represents the repressed animal side of Jane.

In Victorian conventions, **passion and rage** (that in this novel are expressed by a woman!) had to be kept underground; or - as in this case - **locked in the attic**.