Portrayal of Powerful Women Characters in Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* and Alice Walker’s *The Colour Purple*

**Introduction to the Author:**

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Women play a major role in the society. Throughout history women have always struggled to gain equality, respect and the same rights as men. Women are totally exploited such as wives, daughters, nieces and sisters in the family, or simply in the house or family. The tragedies of women are very personal, very real, unusual bleak and black. In order to overcome all these problems, writers started to explore their troubles through their characters and they focused mainly on powerful women characters. Here in this article, Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* and Alice Walker’s *The Colour Purple* is taken to explain the **Portrayal of Powerful Women Characters**. The characters are Jane from *Jane Eyre*, Celie and Shug Avery from *The Colour Purple*. *Jane Eyre* is a Victorian novel and *The Colour Purple* is an Afro-American novel.

In Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*, the main character Jane, explores the depth at which woman act in the society and finds her own boundaries in Victorian England. Charlotte Bronte created *Jane Eyre* to support and spread the idea of an independent woman who works for herself, thinks for herself and acts of her own accord. The first part of *Jane Eyre* is seen in terms of a learning process, whereas the second part is seen in terms of putting the knowledge gained into practice.
In the novel *Jane Eyre*, the central consciousness is the narrator and the heroine Jane herself, who narrates the story of the first thirty years of her life. Charlotte Bronte in *Jane Eyre* not only gives the picture of the evolution of Jane from childhood to adulthood, in the central events of education, independence, falling in love and marriage, but also depicts the internal change that take place in Jane’s personality at the significant period of her life.

The first section of the novel *Jane Eyre* portrays the natural predisposition of the child, begins with Jane at the age of ten, an orphan, living at Gateshed Hall with her aunt Mrs. Reed and ends when she is sent to school. The second section is set in Lowood School, where she gained intellectual learning. She spends eight years at the school. The third section which covers a period of one year, describes Jane’s life as a governess at Thornfield. The fourth section is set at Moor House, where Jane found her blood relations. The final section is set at Ferdean where Jane marries Mr. Rochester. In each section, the development of Jane’s character is depicted.

The first section gives her the impression of the spirit and self-confidence. In the second section, Jane becomes more intellectual and for the first time she gains love and affection. In this section she is successful in her career. Jane wants to attain a certain fulfilment in her life by involving in more spontaneous and creative activities. This is one of the characteristics of self-actualizing adult. In the fourth section Jane refuses to give into a man’s patriarchal attempts and Jane learns to evaluate her own personality. In the final section Jane became free and enjoys her freedom at the end of the novel.

*Jane Eyre* has certain strong characteristics. She is passionate and imaginative. Human sympathies and affections have a powerful hold on her. She longs for a wide experience of life. She is clear-sighted and candid. She cannot dissemble or be deceitful. Every single incident in the novel is seen through the eyes and mind of Jane.
*Jane Eyre* is concerned with the account of Jane’s struggles against isolation, solitude and finally the temptation first to become Rochester’s mistress, then to become St. John’s wife in a loveless marriage. At Gateshead, Jane is deprived of love, security, education, and status. At Lowood, her loneliness, misery, agonizing sense of injustice give way to love and friendship. She acquires qualities like forgiveness, humility, patience and faith. Finally, in the remaining three sections she acquired love and affection, courage and freedom.

Alice Walker is one of the leading literary personages in America is known for her revolutionary fiction. Through her novels she is successful in redefining the – negative images prevailing concerning black women. Walker has presented them as capable of realizing their potentials and when given a chance they come up as liberated individuals. *The Colour Purple* articulates the complexity of the struggles of black women in America and illuminates their indomitable will which enables them the burgeon as individuals, defying the exploitative constraints of a society dominated and conditioned by white people and black men.

Celie is the protagonist of the novel *The Colour Purple* represents this type of character. As the novel is written in the form of letters, the very first letter reveals Celie’s confused state of mind because of the sexual abuse she endured from the man whom she calls pa. Walker through the character of Celie represents the enduring power and the spirit of self-sacrifice among black women. Celie endures sexual, physical and emotional abuses to save her mother and sister Nettie. Celie has the ability to love unconditionally; this can be seen with the arrival of Shug which marks a turning point in her life. They become friends and then it is Shug who acts as a catalyst to empower Celie.

Like Shug, Sofia is also a source of inspiration to Celie. Celie has the ability to suffer without getting angry but Sofia rebels. She cannot take any king of oppression. At the end, Celie
is able to break away from all the oppressions of her life. Celie took up pant making as a business, suggestive of the fact all women may be free from domination of men. Celie’s new relationship with the world is manifested by the way she now writes her letters and interacts with people. Shug through the sheer force of her personality transforms Celie’s life and allows her to take charge of her own destiny. Shug is more or less able to understand the psyche of Celie and therefore encourage her to speak about the abuses she has suffered at the hands of Pa and Albert.

Charlotte Bronte by telling the story *Jane Eyre* in first person narrative depicted the inner life of Jane, which simultaneously portrays Jane’s outward actions. Finally, Jane attains her social status in the Victorian society.

Alice Walker has given a true picture of life in the novel *The Colour Purple* through presentation of both good and bad characters. She has juxtaposed strong with weak character as a literary technique to develop her characters. The black female characters are presented as an epitome of strength and courage. It shows their will to fight. Walker has presented an array of characters thereby representing black community as a whole and complete in itself.

In both the novels *Jane Eyre* and *The Colour Purple*, the novelists portrayed the unique powerful character of a woman. Through each stage and incidents in their life, both the character becomes powerful. Through their courage and will power, they became the role model for other women in their society.

**Works cited**


