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AP Literature and Composition

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| *Jane Eyre* Charlotte Bronte, p. 137 | Gothic Imagery, archetypal symbolism, foreshadowing, contrast, juxtaposition, symbolism, |
| I lingered at the gates; I lingered on the lawn; I paced backwards and forwards on the pavement; the shutters of the glass door were closed; I could not see into the interior; and both my eyes and spirit seemed drawn from  the gloomy house—from the grey-hollow filled with rayless cells, as it appeared to me—to that sky expanded before me,—a blue sea absolved from taint of cloud; the moon ascending it in solemn march; her orb seeming to look up as she left the hill-tops, from behind which she  had come, far and farther below her, and aspired to the zenith, midnight dark in its fathomless depth and measureless distance; and for those trembling stars that  followed her course; they made my heart tremble, my veins glow when I viewed them. Little things recall us to earth; the clock struck in the hall; that sufficed; I turned from moon and stars, opened a side-door, and went in. | In the following passage from Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre,* Jane is just coming back from a walk around her new home of Thornfield. At this point in the novel, walking has become a symbol for freedom; in the novel’s opening, Jane says, “there was no possibility of taking a walk that day” (Bronte 1). Now, Jane has progressed to being able to walk, but it is not enough for her: she desires so much more. This passage captures that longing for freedom dominating Jane’s character; however, it also conveys the restrictions that have been placed upon her by society.  Jane craves freedom and discovery beyond the confines of Thornfield. Bronte portrays Thornfield as being almost prison-like when Jane describes it as a “gloomy house”; “gray hollow filled with grayless cells” (137). Here, Bronte employs gothic imagery to make it seem as if Jane is confined to her position as a governess. Even the name, Thornfiled, acts as a way for Bronte to express Jane’s current predicament. A thorn pricks and the desire for freedom pricks at Jane over and over again. She looks to the sky that “expanded before [her]—a blue sea absolved from taint of cloud.” Here, Bronte contrasts Thornfield with what is beyond. Jane sees an open sky that is symbolic of freedom. She then sees “the moon ascending it in solemn march.” The moon is an archetypal symbol for guidance, and Bronte is perhaps foreshadowing that someday Jane will be guided out of the darkness of Thonrfield, only at this moment her reverie is quickly interrupted and her possibility of freedom is erased due to her obligation as a governess.  In this passage the striking of a clock acts as a possible symbol for Jane’s inability to move beyond her current position. Jane is gazing up at the sky and “the clock struck in the hall; that sufficed.” Time is a human construct and Bronte juxtaposes this clock with “the moon and stars.” Obligations set up by man,  represented by the clock, stop Jane from continuing to gaze upon nature. Jane desires to go out into nature and acquire freedom that during this time is restricted. The fact that Bronte depicts such a character and situation exemplifies the radical feminist ideas that she is proposing to Victorian society.  In this passage of *Jane Eyre*, Bronte contrasts freedom and restriction as well as nature and man. She does this to show the contrasting motivations of Jane’s character at this point in the novel. She is torn between what she wants to do and what she is obligated to do, and this works to illustrate the tension in the heart of many women during the Victorian Era. |