

## **The Use of Simile in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre***

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### **Abstract**

*In literary works, the use of beautiful language is used by the author as efforts to enrich the impression, and expand the imagination of the readers. Sometimes, readers often encounter difficulties in understanding the meaning of those unliteral words. One of the keys to understanding the meaning of words is to understand figurative language. Knowing figurative language especially similes can make us able to understand the implicit or explicit meaning of literary works. In this study, the writers analyze the simile used in Bronte's *Jane Eyre*. This qualitative study focuses on the simile type human, treats, and feelings as formulated by Reimer (2018). Reading the novel and labeling the data is the method of data collection then describing the data based on its semantic meaning is the method of data analysis. The research's results show that there are 29 utterances belong to similes type human treats, people, and feelings.*

**Keyword:** *Similes, Jane Eyre, Charlotte Bronte*

## **Introduction**

Literature is one of the studies that have an impact on human life. Literature is a way for humans to express their feelings, thoughts, experiences, emotions, expectations and beliefs. Although many people think that literary works must be expressed through standards literary works, such as movies, prose or poetry.

The language used in literature is the language that attracts readers. Although sometimes it takes a relatively long time to understand, its beauty usually attracts people. However, one cannot think that he understand language just because he speaks it. A person's ability to use language does not guarantee that he/she "knows" how language works. If you learn a language, people may be surprised by the complexity of the language, which has long become a challenge. They learn language in order to discover certain parts of the "mystery" of the language, such as "meaning". The language itself has both literal and non-literal meanings. Sometimes, readers often encounter difficulties in understanding the meaning of words. One of the keys to understanding the meaning of words is to understand figurative language.

Figurative language means a non-literal meaning which means a style of language that does not use an actual meaning or literal meaning. The term figurative language used language to communicate which the meaning is not straight to the point. Figurative language is used in any situation to make the meaning feel deep and it using people thought to imagine the meaning that has an ambiguous meaning. It used for the speech or writing to make it interesting (Tiarawati and Ningsih, 2019). Just like in a novel, the author uses figurative language words to modify his work, which requires more understanding to analyze the meaning. According to Abrams (1999: 96), affirmative figurative language is clearly different from the standard meaning of words or the standard order of words that language users understand in order to achieve a certain special meaning or effect.

Jane Eyre is a 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic novel written by Charlotte Bronte. The novel was published by Smith Elder & Co in London, England in 1848. Charlotte's novel is published under the name Currer Bell. She co-wrote the novel with her two younger sisters, Emily and Anne. They are known as a trio of women poets and novelists, and they have an important influence in English literature. Jane Eyre is the novel with the setting of the Victorian era.

The novel tells about Jane Eyre who is an orphan, growing up and later becoming an independent woman. As an orphan, Jane spent her childhood in a cruel aunt's family. When she spent in Gateshead (Mrs. Reed's house), she felt that she suffered because no one had loved and liked her. Her aunt hates Jane because she is ugly and poor. Mrs. Reid's servant also hated Jane. They think Jane is even uglier than servant. Although she is poor and ugly, she has an unbeatable great soul and straightforwardness, as well as keenness and boldness. At the age of 10, her aunt did not tolerate Jane, so she was sent to Lowood School. She spent years in Lowood School as a student and a teacher before she moved in the Gateshead Hall and started her love affair with Mr. Rochester, a man with a secret.

This novel brings strong personality and characteristic of the figures. Jane Eyre is the protagonist in the novel. Jane Eyre as an orphan is a lonely, ugly and poor person, she was growth became an independent woman who has an invincible soul and spirit, keenness and courage. Jane Eyre is a true fascination with the Victorian era and its social status. This novel has an undeniable appreciation for the role of women and recognizes the importance of women seeking their true identity. The setting and the plot was set in the Victorian Era, England in the early 1800s. Bronte uses different settings to show what her character is cutting. The plot of this novel is based on the form of a Bildungsroman, in which the story reveals the protagonist's life narrative path from child maturity to adulthood. This chronological structure focuses on the emotions and experiences of the characters, which helps to create and shape their personalities in the novel.

The story line of the novel is also interesting. Charlotte wrote this story vividly in the novel because it is equivalent to her life in a way. This story is different from other Roman novels. Romance novels usually tell the story of a handsome, beautiful character and the main character in a love story, but this novel tells the life of Jane Eyre and perfectly inserts a love story. There are many moral values in this bildungsroman novel.

From the beginning, Jane had a sense of self-worth and dignity, a commitment to justice and principles, a belief in God, and a passionate temperament. Her integrity is constantly tested throughout the novel, and Jane must learn to balance her often conflicting aspects to find satisfaction. As an orphan, Jane never went astray and did not do anything immoral.

In Lowood, she became more patient and optimistic. She was inspired by the way Helen Burns and Miss Temple deal with life issues. Helen Burns sees the strengths of others and will not hold a grudge against those who do bad things to her. She taught her that self-acceptance is the most important thing, you should treat others like others treat you. Jane Eyre is a true fascination with the Victorian era and its social status. This novel has an undeniable appreciation for the role of women and recognizes the importance of women seeking their true identity.

The novel uses lots of figurative language and after reading, similes take the dominant figurative language found. Based on the description, the writers analyze the similes in Jane Eyre considering that to understand a novel. As we know that there are types of similes, the writers will focus only on similes type human, treats, and feelings.

### **Literary Review**

Figurative language is language that uses words or expressions with a meaning that is different from the literal interpretation. Figurative language refers to words, and groups of words, that exaggerate or alter the usual meaning in figures of speeches of the component of words.

According to Harya in Nursolihat and Kareviati (2020) figurative language is language that uses words or expressions with a meaning that is different from the literal interpretation. So that inferring meaning of the words or expression is needed, because it may not understandable if the words interpreted literally by the meaning in the dictionary.

One among several figurative language which is mostly found in a literary work is simile. Simile is a comparison between two things which are not familiar in their essences by using connective words such as; seem, like, or as. Mezo (1999) states that simile is an “indirect” comparison between two different things using the word “like” or “as” or an equivalent term (x is like y).

Simile is generally the comparison of two things essentially unlike, on the basis of a resemblance in one aspect. Simile uses connective word such as word “like” and “as” to compare the similarity (Nurhaida & Marlina, 2017). For instance: “*You are like a murderer, you are like a slave-driver, you are like the Roman emperors!*” (Bronte, 1992: 6).

Simile comes from Latin which means “such as” Simile is comparison of two different things but considered has the same meaning. Simile is described explicitly by use of the words: such as, like, if as, as though, be like (Tarigan, 1986: 118).

Both Siswantoro (2002: 24) Wren and Martin (1981: 40) state that simile is a comparison between two objects or between two objects with different types, but have one thing in common. Similes are usually marked with the following words: like, as, so, more than. It can be seen from these examples taken from Charlotte’s novel; *She's like a mad cat* (Jane Eyre: 7); *the flame flickers in the eye; the eye shines like dew* (Jane Eyre: 176); *Amy and Louisa, return to your nests like a pair of doves* (Jane Eyre: 181).

According to Reimer (2018: 6), the types of vehicles in simile into 8 sub categories, namely: Human/ treats/ feelings, concrete objects, nature and its forces, animal, folklore/ mythology, abstractions, events, and church/ religion.

1. Human, treats, and feelings

This vehicle juxtaposes the subject (tenor) with other humans, certain characters, or things related to humans in general as a comparison. In its use, Bronte uses several words with this type of vehicle, for example the word servant in the sentence “*a person like a servant was standing at it*” (Bronte: 34), and the word child in the sentences “*She was a little small thing, they say, almost like a child*” (Bronte: 378).

2. Concrete Objects

In general, concrete objects are inanimate objects that are naturally caught by the senses. In its use, tenors are juxtaposed with these inanimate objects as a comparison of themselves. As the name suggests, this comparison is usually intended to show the equivalence of substances or properties between the tenor and the vehicle or to make the tenor clearer and more concrete. For example “*My impulse was to rise from it like a spring; their two pair of hands arrested me instantly*” (Bronte: 7). In the sentence above, the use of concrete objects such as spring clarifies the rhythm of Jane's movements.

### 3. Nature and its Forces

Nature is everything that includes the skies, the earth and their contents. In the “Nature and its forces” category, Reimer (2018) finds that all four elements such as water, air, earth and fire were represented. The water element is represented by similes referring to, for instance, clouds, dew, water, vapour, mist and cataract and in the air element, above all, wind and air, and the earth represented by earthquakes, mountains, trees or more.

### 4. Animals

Humans and animals are different creatures. In this sub-category, this difference is actually used as an "equalizer" between the tenor and the vehicle. For example, “*She is like mad cat*” (Bronte: 7). Jane's anger is clearly different from a mad cat, but in that sentence Jane's anger is equated with cat anger to show the same level of brutality.

### 5. Mythology and folklores

In using this category, Charlotte Bronte adapts fairy tales or folk tales such as Cinderella and Bluebeard and modifies the story to suit her own purposes. In addition, the supernatural image in this

vehicle is also clearly visible through the equivalent of a ghost or a phantom. The use of mythological creatures such as elves, fairies, and goblins are also examples of vehicles with this category in the novel.

#### 6. Abstractions

In this category, Brontë used comparisons to inexperience, dreams, liberty, death, echo and many others as vehicles. Contrary to the second sub-category, this vehicle cannot be seen by the senses. Its use is usually used to present something that is difficult to identify and describe. Abstract usually attracts the reader to find the essence of the object freely.

#### 7. Events

Event is defined as something that happens, especially important. As a vehicle, this category is used to explain how the subject is in more detail, through certain circumstances.

#### 8. Church and Religion

Religion is something related to God. In the novel, the use of this category is expressed in elements of Christianity. In the simile itself, this element is used simply, only to indicate a form that is structurally "similar" to what is in Christianity. For example to explain architecture or objects: *“a bed supported on massive pillars of mahogany, hung with curtains of deep red damask, stood out like a tabernacle in the centre”* (8), and *a great book, like a Bible, lay on each table, before the vacant seat* (37).

### **Research Methodology**

The type of this research is descriptive qualitative research. Descriptive qualitative research does not use calculations but description. The written or oral data is descriptively analyzed. The source of data is taken from the novel entitled Jane Eyre. The novel



was one of the greatest 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic novels written by Charlotte Bronte. The novel was published by Smith Elder & Co in London, England in 1848 under the name Currer Bell. The novel consists of 410 pages with 38 chapters. The technique of obtaining the data is reading the novel and identifying the data by labeling them. The identified data are then categorized and analyzed.

## **Discussion and Findings**

The finding of the study shows that there are 29 utterances belong to human, treats, and feeling category of similes. As the name suggests, this subcategory uses the human equivalent as a vehicle for comparison with tenors. The following are utterances with the type of simile that uses the vehicle human, treats, and feelings. These utterances mostly use connective words *like* and *as*.

1. *"I mounted into the window-seat: gathering up my feet, I sat cross-legged, like a Turk; and having drawn the red moreen curtain nearly close, I was shrined in double retirement"* (Bronte: 3). The sentence indicated by the word "like" which is written to compare Jane to "a Turk". The sentence sitting *like a Turk* is a denotative meaning. It is used to describe the way Jane sits in the same position as the way to sit in Turkish manners with her legs crossed.
2. *"...and yet there were certain introductory pages that, child as I was, I could not pass quite as a blank"* (Bronte: 4). In the sentence, the word "child" is a denotative meaning that places Jane as an immature person or a young person who doesn't know many things, while the word "blank" means that she can not think of anything about what she reads.
3. *"You ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen's*

*children like us, and eat the same meals we do”* ( Bronte: 6). The conflict begins with Jane reading her uncle's book behind a window, but she is caught by her cousin, John Reed. John forbids Jane to read his father's book and says "*You should beg, and not live here with boys like us, and eat the same food as us...*" John uses the word "like us" to compare poor Jane and orphaned with him who was the son of the noble who had everything. This means the caste difference between Jane and John Reed.

4. "*you are like murderer, you are like a slave driver, you are like Roman emperors!*" (Bronte: 6). In a fight between Jane and John, Jane says *you are like murderer, you are like a slave driver, you are like Roman emperors!*" to John.. The sentence above is not the real meaning. It compares to Murderer characters, or roman emperors. They have a harsh, rude, and arbitrary character. So that Jane compared John to them. Comparing him to Romans such as Nero or Caligula illustrates how cruel he is in Jane's eyes. It also signifies many things about John Reed including his early death, his habit of squandering possessions, and his perverted behavior.
5. *I was conscious that a moment's mutiny had ready renderedmellible to strange penalties, and, like any other rebel slave, I felt resolved, in my desperation, to go all lengths* ( Bronte: 7). Jane's fight is carried out as a rebellion against John Reed which ended with Jane's punishment. In the sentence above, *rebel slave* means Jane who wants to move against for her freedom from the unfair and cruel Reed family. Jane describes herself as a "rebel slave" for she is not going to accept the way she is being treated. She is strong and determined to fight back against the Reed's, but also society itself for placing her at the very bottom of the social hierarchy.

6. *Then she and miss Abbot stood with folded arms, looking darkly and doubtfully on my face, as incredulous of my sanity”* (Bronte: 7). Jane's resistance to Bessie and Miss Abbot's grip ends with Jane calming down. The word as in the sentence above indicates their disbelief towards Jane's attitude, which rarely gives in, suddenly calms down.
7. *“I was like nobody there, I had nothing in harmony with Mrs. Reed”* (Bronte: 10). Even early in her life, Jane did not really fit into her surroundings; She is an outsider from the start. What seems to set her apart from her aunt's family and household is her sense of injustice and her inability to let injustice wash over her. The word nobody is written to compare with Jane as "foreignness" in the Reeds.
8. *and that in his last moments he had required a promise of Mrs. Reed that she would rear and maintain me as one of her own children.”* (Bronte: 11). The word "own child" in the sentence is a denotative meaning. One time Uncle Jane asked his wife, Mrs. Reed, to promise to take care of his niece Jane Eyre. He wants Mrs. Reed to treat and equate Jane like her own child who she is carrying and has emotional attachments to.
9. *At last both slept: the fire and the candle went out for me, the watches of that long night passed in ghastly wakefulness; strained by dread: such dread as children only can feel”* (Bronte: 14). This sentence has an implied meaning. Jane compares her fear or dread to something only children can feel. The comparative word "children can only feel" can be interpreted as a shock or trauma in the past (childhood) she felt.
10. *This state of things should have been to me a paradise of peace, accustomed as I was to a life of careless reprim and and*

*thankless fagging*” (Bronte: 14). In this sentence, Jane indicates the circumstances that occurred where there is no Reeds' family at home, Abbott is in another room and Bessie who is doing her job, who occasionally greeted her well, could be said to be a very beautiful day "like heaven" when compared to the usual days the word "heaven" is used to signify how special and serene the day was without criticism, reproach, and indifference.

11. *“I doubted not that I might one day, by taking a long voyage, see with my own eyes the little fields, houses, and trees, the diminutive people, the tiny cows, sheep, and birds of the one realm; and the cornfields forest-high, the mighty mastiffs, the monster cats, the tower-like men and women, of the other”* (Bronte: 15). Jane hopes that one day she will go on a journey to see the vast outside world with everything in it such as the little fields, houses, and trees, the cornfields forest-high, the tower-like men and women and others. This sentence is a simile because it uses the word like. Jane compares men and women to something else like tower. The word tower can be interpreted that the men and women are tall, or can be said as "adults".
12. *“Fall! Why, that is like a baby again!”* (Bronte: 17). The situation where Jane is visited by an apothecary after the incident in the Red room. The apothecary asked Jane's condition followed by Bessie's answer saying that Jane had fallen. The sentence “like a baby again” is a simile to go with Jane as a joke which means she doesn't walk properly like a baby who has just learned to walk.
13. *...her usually cold composed grey eye became troubled with a look like fear; she took her hand from my arm, and gazed at me as if she really did not know whether I were child or fiend* (Bronte: 21). In the sentence above the word “fear” is a denotative meaning. This

word describes how Mrs. Reed's facial expression or emotion towards Jane's words which Mrs. Reed sees as something threatening and unpleasant.

14. "*They are almost like poor people's children!*" (Bronte: 27). The word poor children in the sentence above is a denotative meaning. The word is indeed used to describe how simple and innocent they look, the girls in Lowood are meant to be like children who do not like extravagance and are educated not to boast about the world.
15. "*... and a person like a servant was standing at it*" (Bronte: 34). In that quotation, the word servant is a denotative meaning. The appearance of the person Jane sees passing through her door is judged as that of a maid, whether it is the clothes she is wearing, or the service she performs.
16. "*... he treated you as an especial favourite*" (Bronte: 58). The simile is a presupposition sentence if Jane is treated like a favorite person or becomes someone who is Mr. Brocklehurst's favorite, then Jane will only find enemies in Lowood, people will be cold and unsympathetic to her, because no one should be a favourite even for Mr. Brocklehurst.
17. "*They let us ramble in the wood, like gypsies..*" (Bronte: 66). After illness and infection hit Lowood, Mr. Brocklehurst and the housekeeper never came to Lowood out of fear. After their departure, policy at Lowood changed. To avoid contracting those who are not infected with Lowood's internal disease, the school lets them ramble in the wood, like gypsies. Literally, gypsies are nomadic or free-spirited people. This word is used to indicate that Lowood students from morning till night; do what they like, go wherever they like.
18. "*I was noting these things and enjoyed them as a child*

*might,....*”(Bronte: 67). As a child might, that is how Jane compares herself back then. The word simile is used when Jane enjoys the beauty of the scenery around her, as a child means that she also enjoys every little simple happiness regardless of the bitterness of life she has. The same vehicle that is "child" is used several times as an analogy to represent a character or someone who is described as having the nature of the child itself, such as innocence, simplicity, submissive, easily sulky or even unruly nature. For example in the sentence why had the mere name of this unresisting individual — whom his word now sufficed to control like a *child* — (185), it would wail in its cradle all night long — not screaming heartily like any other *child*, but whimpering and moaning (204), Bertha, like a *dutiful child*, copied her parent in both points (258), And then she would pout like a *disappointed child*.” (325).

19. *“I saw a woman attired like a well-dressed servant”* ( Bronte: 77). In this segment, someone comes to Lowood looking for Jane. Like a well-dressed servant, it actually implies that the woman Jane met is a maid or servant , judging by her attire.
20. *“You look like a lady,.. “* (Bronte: 79). After years, someone met Jane at Lowood, and it was Bessie, the only person who sided with Jane, the servant of the Reeds. Bessie said "You look like a lady" to Jane about her appearance. A lady literally means a woman of prevalent social position, particularly one of respectable birth. Where Jane looks different from the past, the neglected orphan now looks mature and elegant and she has talent as if she is from another caste.
21. *“ She treats me like a visitor..”* (Bronte: 83). Literally a visitor is a person who makes a formal visit. Where Jane comes to Thornfield hall as a teacher to a child named Adele. It is used with the

meaning of "one who is taken care of" where she just felt at that moment, she was served a drink by the housekeeper, Mrs Fairfax and ushered to her room.

22. *there she sat and sewed — and probably laughed drearily to herself, — as companionless as a prisoner in his dungeon* (Bronte: 143). Literally, a prisoner in the Dungeon described as prisoners just sitting in the dungeon (prison), think about himself. The simile is used to compare Grace Poole where she is locked up for twenty-three of the twenty-four hours in a windowless room with the intellectually disturbed Bertha Rochester. The fact that he had only been out of her room for an hour shows how she is perceived as a coop.

23. *He took the sponge, dipped it in, and moistened the corpse-like face; he asked for my smelling-bottle, and applied it to the nostrils* (Bronte: 183). In the context of a sentence, a *face like a corpse* has a denotative meaning. The word corpse is used to describe how at that time the injured Mr. Mason looks helpless, pale and his blood clotted. Usually, after death most of the blood clots gradually and remains clotted for several days. However, in a relatively short time the blood is found to be fluid and cannot be coagulated before long after death.

24. *“When news came of her death, he wept like a simpleton* (Bronte: 204). In the sentence above, Mrs. Reed is still telling how little Jane really affected her life. When Jane’s mother died, her husband wept for her like a simpleton. In slang, the word is interpreted as foolish or stupidity. Mrs. Reed compares Mr. Reed with the word because she thinks he was so stupid to cry over his dead sister and even decide to raise her child. That is what make her hate Jane so much.

25. *The rooks cawed, and blither birds sang; but nothing was so merry or so musical as my own rejoicing heart* (Bronte: 227). In that monologue, Jane compares her heart to the chirping of a singing bird and the caw of rooks. Both are used as a description of Jane's heart being so happy and joyful after Rochester's love confession in Chapter 23. The phrase "nothing was so merry" shows that happiness is so great that nothing can beat that feeling.
26. *yet not one movement have I heard, nor one sob: five minutes more of that death-like hush, and I should have forced the lock like a burglar* (Bronte: 263). In the quotation there are two similes. First, Rochester compares Jane's silence with death, this has a denotative meaning because the silence that occurs seems to indicate Jane's absence in that place. In the second sentence "I should have forced the lock like a burglar", Rochester likens himself to a burglar or a thief who in this case forces himself to enter and open the lock at all costs to get to what is behind the door. If interpreted in another way, in this sentence Bronte wants to emphasize Jane's identity as a strong woman, even after the harsh reality that pierced her trust, she could still endure in silence without crying.
27. *"Concealing the mad woman's neighborhood from you, was something, like covering a child with a cloak and laying it down near a upas tree* (Bronte: 265). In the statement, Jane likens the secret of Bertha's existence to vehicles in the form of a child behind an upas tree. The "upas tree" is one of the most enduring European myths about Southeast Asia. The story of a tree so poisonous that it makes the atmosphere around it deadly. If represented in the context of this story, Jane likens the tenor to the vehicle with a message that hiding or maintaining a mad woman in the



neighborhood is very dangerous, it can even kill. Just as the upas tree can kill the child behind it. Bertha can also kill or harm the people of Thornfield.

28. *They could not be the daughters of the elderly person at the table; for she looked like a rustic, and they were all delicacy and cultivation* (Bronte: 293). In the above sentence, the old woman that Jane saw in the opposite building, she compared to a rustic. It means in appearance she looks simple, ordinary or even shabby. Because she looks different from the two women who look elegant, so Jane assumes she is not their mother.

29. *.....he sat calm and patient, leaning on his desk, and looking like a physician watching with the eye of science an expected and fully understood crisis in a patient's malady* (Bronte: 354). The simile above shows how he pays attention, and considers with his full mind he devotes to the point of the problem. The word is compared with John who wisely knows what to do in situations where Jane is depressed and crying in this passage.

## **Conclusion**

Studying figurative language helps readers understand the actual meaning in literary works. Author usually uses similes, as one of figurative language, to make the works imaginative and aesthetic. Author usually uses comparison to describe things, person, event, or any phenomena using the words: like, as, so, and more than. Analyzing similes found in literary works is important to help reader get the message of the text. Similes are the most dominant figurative language found in Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre. Among several types of similes, the writers found that there are 29 utterances belongs to human, treats, and feeling's category of similes. Further analysis might be done focusing on the other types of similes such as concrete objects, nature and its forces, animals, Mythology and folklores, abstraction, events, as well as church and religion – to find more varieties of similes especially in Jane Eyre.

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