In these excerpts of JANE EYRE, annotate for the following:

1. Vocabulary
2. Opposing ideas (think dichotomies)
3. The inner thoughts of Jane (she is reflective and very aware of how she was as a child)

Jane is an orphan who lives with her aunt (Mrs. Reed) and cousins (Eliza, John, and Georgiana) in a large mansion called Gateshead. Jane is aware that her position (poor and orphan) causes her to be ostracized from her relatives, who dislike her for her poverty. Right now she has been reading a book with exotic pictures and fantasizing about those places.

Chapter 1 Excerpt:

With Bewick on my knee, I was then happy: happy at least in my way.  I feared nothing but interruption, and that came too soon.  The breakfast-room door opened.

“Boh!  Madam Mope!” cried the voice of John Reed; then he paused: he found the room apparently empty.

“Where the dickens is she!” he continued.  “Lizzy!  Georgy! (calling to his sisters) Joan is not here: tell mama she is run out into the rain—bad animal!”

“It is well I drew the curtain,” thought I; and I wished fervently he might not discover my hiding-place: nor would John Reed have found it out himself; he was not quick either of vision or conception; but Eliza just put her head in at the door, and said at once—

“She is in the window-seat, to be sure, Jack.”

And I came out immediately, for I trembled at the idea of being dragged forth by the said Jack.

“What do you want?” I asked, with awkward diffidence.

“Say, ‘What do you want, Master Reed?’” was the answer.  “I want you to come here;” and seating himself in an arm-chair, he intimated by a gesture that I was to approach and stand before him.

John Reed was a schoolboy of fourteen years old; four years older than I, for I was but ten: large and stout for his age, with a dingy and unwholesome skin; thick lineaments in a spacious visage, heavy limbs and large extremities.  He gorged himself habitually at table, which made him bilious, and gave him a dim and bleared eye and flabby cheeks.  He ought now to have been at school; but his mama had taken him home for a month or two, “on account of his delicate health.”  Mr. Miles, the master, affirmed that he would do very well if he had fewer cakes and sweetmeats sent him from home; but the mother’s heart turned from an opinion so harsh, and inclined rather to the more refined idea that John’s sallowness was owing to over-application and, perhaps, to pining after home.

John had not much affection for his mother and sisters, and an antipathy to me.  He bullied and punished me; not two or three times in the week, nor once or twice in the day, but continually: every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh in my bones shrank when he came near.  There were moments when I was bewildered by the terror he inspired, because I had no appeal whatever against either his menaces or his inflictions; the servants did not like to offend their young master by taking my part against him, and Mrs. Reed was blind and deaf on the subject: she never saw him strike or heard him abuse me, though he did both now and then in her very presence, more frequently, however, behind her back.

Habitually obedient to John, I came up to his chair: he spent some three minutes in thrusting out his tongue at me as far as he could without damaging the roots: I knew he would soon strike, and while dreading the blow, I mused on the disgusting and ugly appearance of him who would presently deal it.  I wonder if he read that notion in my face; for, all at once, without speaking, he struck suddenly and strongly.  I tottered, and on regaining my equilibrium retired back a step or two from his chair.

“That is for your impudence in answering mama awhile since,” said he, “and for your sneaking way of getting behind curtains, and for the look you had in your eyes two minutes since, you rat!”

Accustomed to John Reed’s abuse, I never had an idea of replying to it; my care was how to endure the blow which would certainly follow the insult.

“What were you doing behind the curtain?” he asked.

“I was reading.”

“Show the book.”

I returned to the window and fetched it thence.

“You have no business to take our books; you are a dependent, mama says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen’s children like us, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mama’s expense.  Now, I’ll teach you to rummage my bookshelves: for they *are* mine; all the house belongs to me, or will do in a few years.  Go and stand by the door, out of the way of the mirror and the windows.”

I did so, not at first aware what was his intention; but when I saw him lift and poise the book and stand in act to hurl it, I instinctively started aside with a cry of alarm: not soon enough, however; the volume was flung, it hit me, and I fell, striking my head against the door and cutting it.  The cut bled, the pain was sharp: my terror had passed its climax; other feelings succeeded.

“Wicked and cruel boy!” I said.  “You are like a murderer—you are like a slave-driver—you are like the Roman emperors!”

I had read Goldsmith’s History of Rome, and had formed my opinion of Nero, Caligula, etc.  Also I had drawn parallels in silence, which I never thought thus to have declared aloud.

“What! what!” he cried.  “Did she say that to me?  Did you hear her, Eliza and Georgiana?  Won’t I tell mama? but first—”

He ran headlong at me: I felt him grasp my hair and my shoulder: he had closed with a desperate thing.  I really saw in him a tyrant, a murderer.  I felt a drop or two of blood from my head trickle down my neck, and was sensible of somewhat pungent suffering: these sensations for the time predominated over fear, and I received him in frantic sort.  I don’t very well know what I did with my hands, but he called me “Rat!  Rat!” and bellowed out aloud.  Aid was near him: Eliza and Georgiana had run for Mrs. Reed, who was gone upstairs: she now came upon the scene, followed by Bessie and her maid Abbot.  We were parted: I heard the words—

“Dear! dear!  What a fury to fly at Master John!”

“Did ever anybody see such a picture of passion!”

Then Mrs. Reed subjoined—

“Take her away to the red-room, and lock her in there.”  Four hands were immediately laid upon me, and I was borne upstairs.

Jane is then taken to a room that is believed to be haunted by her Uncle (her mother’s brother). This is the room in which he died. Remember, Jane is only 10 years old, and children have large imaginations and very real fears.

Chapter 2:

Daylight began to forsake the red-room; it was past four o’clock, and the beclouded afternoon was tending to drear twilight.  I heard the rain still beating continuously on the staircase window, and the wind howling in the grove behind the hall; I grew by degrees cold as a stone, and then my courage sank.  My habitual mood of humiliation, self-doubt, forlorn depression, fell damp on the embers of my decaying ire.  All said I was wicked, and perhaps I might be so; what thought had I been but just conceiving of starving myself to death?  That certainly was a crime: and was I fit to die?  Or was the vault under the chancel of Gateshead Church an inviting bourne?  In such vault I had been told did Mr. Reed lie buried; and led by this thought to recall his idea, I dwelt on it with gathering dread.  I could not remember him; but I knew that he was my own uncle—my mother’s brother—that he had taken me when a parentless infant to his house; 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.  Mrs. Reed probably considered she had kept this promise; and so she had, I dare say, as well as her nature would permit her; but how could she really like an interloper not of her race, and unconnected with her, after her husband’s death, by any tie?  It must have been most irksome to find herself bound by a hard-wrung pledge to stand in the stead of a parent to a strange child she could not love, and to see an uncongenial alien permanently intruded on her own family group.

A singular notion dawned upon me.  I doubted not—never doubted—that if Mr. Reed had been alive he would have treated me kindly; and now, as I sat looking at the white bed and overshadowed walls—occasionally also turning a fascinated eye towards the dimly gleaming mirror—I began to recall what I had heard of dead men, troubled in their graves by the violation of their last wishes, revisiting the earth to punish the perjured and avenge the oppressed; and I thought Mr. Reed’s spirit, harassed by the wrongs of his sister’s child, might quit its abode—whether in the church vault or in the unknown world of the departed—and rise before me in this chamber.  I wiped my tears and hushed my sobs, fearful lest any sign of violent grief might waken a preternatural voice to comfort me, or elicit from the gloom some haloed face, bending over me with strange pity.  This idea, consolatory in theory, I felt would be terrible if realised: with all my might I endeavoured to stifle it—I endeavoured to be firm.  Shaking my hair from my eyes, I lifted my head and tried to look boldly round the dark room; at this moment a light gleamed on the wall.  Was it, I asked myself, a ray from the moon penetrating some aperture in the blind?  No; moonlight was still, and this stirred; while I gazed, it glided up to the ceiling and quivered over my head.  I can now conjecture readily that this streak of light was, in all likelihood, a gleam from a lantern carried by some one across the lawn: but then, prepared as my mind was for horror, shaken as my nerves were by agitation, I thought the swift darting beam was a herald of some coming vision from another world.  My heart beat thick, my head grew hot; a sound filled my ears, which I deemed the rushing of wings; something seemed near me; I was oppressed, suffocated: endurance broke down; I rushed to the door and shook the lock in desperate effort.  Steps came running along the outer passage; the key turned, Bessie and Abbot entered.

“Miss Eyre, are you ill?” said Bessie.

“What a dreadful noise! it went quite through me!” exclaimed Abbot.

“Take me out!  Let me go into the nursery!” was my cry.

“What for?  Are you hurt?  Have you seen something?” again demanded Bessie.

“Oh!  I saw a light, and I thought a ghost would come.”  I had now got hold of Bessie’s hand, and she did not snatch it from me.

“She has screamed out on purpose,” declared Abbot, in some disgust.  “And what a scream!  If she had been in great pain one would have excused it, but she only wanted to bring us all here: I know her naughty tricks.”

“What is all this?” demanded another voice peremptorily; and Mrs. Reed came along the corridor, her cap flying wide, her gown rustling stormily.  “Abbot and Bessie, I believe I gave orders that Jane Eyre should be left in the red-room till I came to her myself.”

“Miss Jane screamed so loud, ma’am,” pleaded Bessie.

“Let her go,” was the only answer.  “Loose Bessie’s hand, child: you cannot succeed in getting out by these means, be assured.  I abhor artifice, particularly in children; it is my duty to show you that tricks will not answer: you will now stay here an hour longer, and it is only on condition of perfect submission and stillness that I shall liberate you then.”

“O aunt! have pity!  Forgive me!  I cannot endure it—let me be punished some other way!  I shall be killed if—”

“Silence!  This violence is all most repulsive:” and so, no doubt, she felt it.  I was a precocious actress in her eyes; she sincerely looked on me as a compound of virulent passions, mean spirit, and dangerous duplicity.

Bessie and Abbot having retreated, Mrs. Reed, impatient of my now frantic anguish and wild sobs, abruptly thrust me back and locked me in, without farther parley.  I heard her sweeping away; and soon after she was gone, I suppose I had a species of fit: unconsciousness closed the scene.

Jane is then treated by a doctor who suggests that Jane is fragile and needs to be in the fresh air and, perhaps, away from her current environment.

Mrs. Reed, unfortunately, decides that Jane should be sent somewhere worse. She sends for the headmaster of a horrible school to come and interview Jane and determine her worth.

Chapter 4:

I now stood in the empty hall; before me was the breakfast-room door, and I stopped, intimidated and trembling.  What a miserable little poltroon had fear, engendered of unjust punishment, made of me in those days!  I feared to return to the nursery, and feared to go forward to the parlour; ten minutes I stood in agitated hesitation; the vehement ringing of the breakfast-room bell decided me; I *must* enter.

“Who could want me?” I asked inwardly, as with both hands I turned the stiff door-handle, which, for a second or two, resisted my efforts.  “What should I see besides Aunt Reed in the apartment?—a man or a woman?”  The handle turned, the door unclosed, and passing through and curtseying low, I looked up at—a black pillar!—such, at least, appeared to me, at first sight, the straight, narrow, sable-clad shape standing erect on the rug: the grim face at the top was like a carved mask, placed above the shaft by way of capital.

Mrs. Reed occupied her usual seat by the fireside; she made a signal to me to approach; I did so, and she introduced me to the stony stranger with the words: “This is the little girl respecting whom I applied to you.”

*He*, for it was a man, turned his head slowly towards where I stood, and having examined me with the two inquisitive-looking grey eyes which twinkled under a pair of bushy brows, said solemnly, and in a bass voice, “Her size is small: what is her age?”

“Ten years.”

“So much?” was the doubtful answer; and he prolonged his scrutiny for some minutes.  Presently he addressed me—“Your name, little girl?”

“Jane Eyre, sir.”

In uttering these words I looked up: he seemed to me a tall gentleman; but then I was very little; his features were large, and they and all the lines of his frame were equally harsh and prim.

“Well, Jane Eyre, and are you a good child?”

Impossible to reply to this in the affirmative: my little world held a contrary opinion: I was silent.  Mrs. Reed answered for me by an expressive shake of the head, adding soon, “Perhaps the less said on that subject the better, Mr. Brocklehurst.”

“Sorry indeed to hear it! she and I must have some talk;” and bending from the perpendicular, he installed his person in the arm-chair opposite Mrs. Reed’s.  “Come here,” he said.

I stepped across the rug; he placed me square and straight before him.  What a face he had, now that it was almost on a level with mine! what a great nose! and what a mouth! and what large prominent teeth!

“No sight so sad as that of a naughty child,” he began, “especially a naughty little girl.  Do you know where the wicked go after death?”

“They go to hell,” was my ready and orthodox answer.

“And what is hell?  Can you tell me that?”

“A pit full of fire.”

“And should you like to fall into that pit, and to be burning there for ever?”

“No, sir.”

“What must you do to avoid it?”

I deliberated a moment; my answer, when it did come, was objectionable: “I must keep in good health, and not die.”

“How can you keep in good health?  Children younger than you die daily.  I buried a little child of five years old only a day or two since,—a good little child, whose soul is now in heaven.  It is to be feared the same could not be said of you were you to be called hence.”

Not being in a condition to remove his doubt, I only cast my eyes down on the two large feet planted on the rug, and sighed, wishing myself far enough away.

“I hope that sigh is from the heart, and that you repent of ever having been the occasion of discomfort to your excellent benefactress.”

“Benefactress! benefactress!” said I inwardly: “they all call Mrs. Reed my benefactress; if so, a benefactress is a disagreeable thing.”

“Do you say your prayers night and morning?” continued my interrogator.

“Yes, sir.”

“Do you read your Bible?”

“Sometimes.”

“With pleasure?  Are you fond of it?”

“I like Revelations, and the book of Daniel, and Genesis and Samuel, and a little bit of Exodus, and some parts of Kings and Chronicles, and Job and Jonah.”

“And the Psalms?  I hope you like them?”

“No, sir.”

“No? oh, shocking!  I have a little boy, younger than you, who knows six Psalms by heart: and when you ask him which he would rather have, a gingerbread-nut to eat or a verse of a Psalm to learn, he says: ‘Oh! the verse of a Psalm! angels sing Psalms;’ says he, ‘I wish to be a little angel here below;’ he then gets two nuts in recompense for his infant piety.”

“Psalms are not interesting,” I remarked.

“That proves you have a wicked heart; and you must pray to God to change it: to give you a new and clean one: to take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”

I was about to propound a question, touching the manner in which that operation of changing my heart was to be performed, when Mrs. Reed interposed, telling me to sit down; she then proceeded to carry on the conversation herself.

“Mr. Brocklehurst, I believe I intimated in the letter which I wrote to you three weeks ago, that this little girl has not quite the character and disposition I could wish: should you admit her into Lowood school, I should be glad if the superintendent and teachers were requested to keep a strict eye on her, and, above all, to guard against her worst fault, a tendency to deceit.  I mention this in your hearing, Jane, that you may not attempt to impose on Mr. Brocklehurst.”

Well might I dread, well might I dislike Mrs. Reed; for it was her nature to wound me cruelly; never was I happy in her presence; however carefully I obeyed, however strenuously I strove to please her, my efforts were still repulsed and repaid by such sentences as the above.  Now, uttered before a stranger, the accusation cut me to the heart; I dimly perceived that she was already obliterating hope from the new phase of existence which she destined me to enter; I felt, though I could not have expressed the feeling, that she was sowing aversion and unkindness along my future path; I saw myself transformed under Mr. Brocklehurst’s eye into an artful, noxious child, and what could I do to remedy the injury?

“Nothing, indeed,” thought I, as I struggled to repress a sob, and hastily wiped away some tears, the impotent evidences of my anguish.

“Deceit is, indeed, a sad fault in a child,” said Mr. Brocklehurst; “it is akin to falsehood, and all liars will have their portion in the lake burning with fire and brimstone; she shall, however, be watched, Mrs. Reed.  I will speak to Miss Temple and the teachers.”

“I should wish her to be brought up in a manner suiting her prospects,” continued my benefactress; “to be made useful, to be kept humble: as for the vacations, she will, with your permission, spend them always at Lowood.”

“Your decisions are perfectly judicious, madam,” returned Mr. Brocklehurst.  “Humility is a Christian grace, and one peculiarly appropriate to the pupils of Lowood; I, therefore, direct that especial care shall be bestowed on its cultivation amongst them.  I have studied how best to mortify in them the worldly sentiment of pride; and, only the other day, I had a pleasing proof of my success.  My second daughter, Augusta, went with her mama to visit the school, and on her return she exclaimed: ‘Oh, dear papa, how quiet and plain all the girls at Lowood look, with their hair combed behind their ears, and their long pinafores, and those little holland pockets outside their frocks—they are almost like poor people’s children! and,’ said she, ‘they looked at my dress and mama’s, as if they had never seen a silk gown before.’”

“This is the state of things I quite approve,” returned Mrs. Reed; “had I sought all England over, I could scarcely have found a system more exactly fitting a child like Jane Eyre.  Consistency, my dear Mr. Brocklehurst; I advocate consistency in all things.”

“Consistency, madam, is the first of Christian duties; and it has been observed in every arrangement connected with the establishment of Lowood: plain fare, simple attire, unsophisticated accommodations, hardy and active habits; such is the order of the day in the house and its inhabitants.”

“Quite right, sir.  I may then depend upon this child being received as a pupil at Lowood, and there being trained in conformity to her position and prospects?”

“Madam, you may: she shall be placed in that nursery of chosen plants, and I trust she will show herself grateful for the inestimable privilege of her election.”

“I will send her, then, as soon as possible, Mr. Brocklehurst; for, I assure you, I feel anxious to be relieved of a responsibility that was becoming too irksome.”

“No doubt, no doubt, madam; and now I wish you good morning.  I shall return to Brocklehurst Hall in the course of a week or two: my good friend, the Archdeacon, will not permit me to leave him sooner.  I shall send Miss Temple notice that she is to expect a new girl, so that there will be no difficulty about receiving her.  Good-bye.”

“Good-bye, Mr. Brocklehurst; remember me to Mrs. and Miss Brocklehurst, and to Augusta and Theodore, and Master Broughton Brocklehurst.”

“I will, madam.  Little girl, here is a book entitled the ‘Child’s Guide,’ read it with prayer, especially that part containing ‘An account of the awfully sudden death of Martha G---, a naughty child addicted to falsehood and deceit.’”

With these words Mr. Brocklehurst put into my hand a thin pamphlet sewn in a cover, and having rung for his carriage, he departed.