

Loneliness in Literature and Its Historical Context and What We Learn From It

The specific topic of my research is exploring the theme of loneliness in both Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* by applying Palkeinen's four modalities of loneliness (lack of meaningful activity, a sense of insecurity, the feeling of being an outsider, and the feeling of longing) to address historical connotations in the novels and the psychology and sympathy we learn from reading them. The central questions of my research include: What are the similarities and differences of how *Jane Eyre* presents the theme of loneliness compared to *Wide Sargasso Sea*? How did Bronte's personal life influence her writing compared to Rhys? What do we learn about by reading these pieces? The goal of this research is to compare and contrast both *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *Jane Eyre*, and their historical connotations. The other goal was to find why reading a variety of literature is important even if they share the same theme. My research methods for this paper included only using research found through Google Scholar as my other sources, along with the books *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*. I found that they both present the theme of loneliness through the feeling of longing. *Jane Eyre* presents the theme through a lack of meaningful activity while *Wide Sargasso Sea* presents the theme of loneliness through insecurity. Both Charlotte Bronte and Jean Rhys used their schooling experience from when they were children for their characters. However, Rhys wrote about her own loneliness struggles and cultural and racial identity issues. Bronte used her experience of losing her mother while young to illness and her sisters to typhoid fever in her writing. Bronte also used her dreams of financial independence in *Jane Eyre*. Reading both teaches us about the psychology of the time *Jane Eyre* teaches us about Victorian

psychology, while *Wide Sargasso Sea* teaches us about 1960s psychology. From reading the theme of loneliness we are able to develop sympathy as we read about characters who experience things that we may not have.