



A Breath of Eyre

By Eve Marie Mont

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Reading Level: Ages 12 and up

Reader's Guide

This reader's guide may be duplicated for classroom, book club, or related purposes.

About the Book: Emma Townsend has always believed in stories—the ones she reads voraciously, and the ones she creates in her head. Perhaps it's because she feels like an outsider at her exclusive prep school, or because her stepmother doesn't come close to filling the void left by her mother's death. And her only romantic prospect—apart from a crush on her English teacher—is Gray Newman, a long-time friend who just adds to Emma's confusion. But escape soon arrives in an old leather-bound copy of *Jane Eyre*...

Reading of Jane's isolation sparks a deep sense of kinship. Then fate takes things a leap further when a lightning storm catapults Emma right into Jane's body and her nineteenth-century world. As governess at Thornfield, Emma has a sense of belonging she's never known—and an attraction to the brooding Mr. Rochester. Now, moving between her two realities and uncovering secrets in both, Emma must decide whether her destiny lies in the pages of Jane's story, or in the unwritten chapters of her own...

Author Biography: Eve Marie Mont lives with her husband and her shelter dog in suburban Philadelphia where she teaches high school English and creative writing. Her young adult debut, *A Breath of Eyre* (Kensington/KTeen April 2012), is about a girl who gets transported into her favorite novel, *Jane Eyre*. Eve is hard at work on the sequel, *A Touch of Scarlet*, which continues the literary adventures of Emma Townsend as she travels into *The Scarlet Letter*.

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Questions for Discussion:

- Why do you think Emma falls into *Jane Eyre* in particular? What does Jane's world offer her that her real world does not?
- Several characters in both Emma's contemporary world and in the world of *Jane Eyre* are haunted by their pasts. How do guilt and regret affect each of them? What helps them to move on?
- Both Emma and Michelle have lost their mothers. How does this bond help them connect? How does each girl deal with her grief?
- Michelle does not know her father. How does this affect her sense of belonging and self-esteem?
- What is the role of Michelle's Aunt Darlene in the narrative? How does Emma incorporate Darlene's voodoo beliefs into her own story?
- Emma treasures her mother's dragonfly necklace. What does the dragonfly represent for her? Why do you think people cling so tightly to mementos with sentimental value?
- Describe how Emma's relationship with her father changes throughout the story. What are the reasons for this change?
- Many of the students in the novel have hobbies or passions such as horseback riding, writing, swimming, or music, but they are often forced to compete against others. Do you think the competition fostered in high schools is healthy or destructive? Why is it so important for teens to be good at something?
- Why is Elise so hostile to Michelle and Emma? Do we ever find any reason to justify her actions, or is she just a villain?
- How does the book convey the power of writing? What are some of the purposes writing serves in the book?
- On the surface, Gray and Emma seem like opposites. Why do you think opposites often attract? What attracts Emma and Gray to each other?
- What is the significance of water in the novel? Consider all the scenes in which water plays a role. How might this relate to Emma and Gray's growth as characters?

Writing Exercises:

- Compare Jane and Rochester's relationship with Emma and Gray's relationship. In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different? Does Emma make the right choice in the end?
- Write a scene in which you meet a famous character from literature. How do you think you'd get along? What kind of questions would you ask him or her?
- If you could get lost in any novel, what would it be and why?

Activities and Projects:

- Using one of the following types of media (music, video, Powerpoint, collage, photography), explore one of the following themes from the novel *A Breath of Eyre*:

Coming of Age
The Power of Writing
Friendship
Family
First Love
Self-expression
Self-confidence
Coping with Loss

(This could easily be turned into a writing assignment by requiring each student to write a paper explaining his or her individual project. Students could also present the paper to the class.)

- After reading *A Breath of Eyre*, read *Jane Eyre*, and write a paper comparing the two books. How does Emma's presence in *Jane Eyre* change certain elements of the original? Which events in Emma's modern world parallel specific events in *Jane Eyre*?
- Create your own book trailer for *A Breath of Eyre*. Or, create a casting call video in which you select the actors and actresses you would cast to play the main characters from the book.
- Create your own music playlist for *A Breath of Eyre*. For each song, explain which character, scene, or theme it relates to.
- Choose a favorite novel that is set at least 100 years in the past. How would you adapt the novel into a modern retelling? Which elements would you change? Which would you keep the same?
- Emma keeps a journal in which she writes her hopes and dreams, poems and ideas. For one week, keep a journal every day, and put anything in it, so long as you write for at least fifteen minutes. At the end of the week, sum up anything you learned about yourself or your creative process.

Research:

- Do a research paper on Charlotte Brontë or the Brontë sisters.
- Do a research paper on any of the following topics in the Victorian era: gender roles, class differences, education, mental illness, the Gothic novel.

Related Reads:

- *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë
- *Jane* by April Lindner
- *Little Women and Me* by Lauren Baratz-Logsted
- *Timeless* by Alexandra Monir