



# Teaching Three Great Books

with Dr. Flora Armetta

## Lesson 13: Using Images to Teach Great Books

### Outline:

How to bring works of art and imagery into your classroom discussions

- Six images that could be fruitful for *Huckleberry Finn*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Great Expectations*
  - You don't choose a picture to illustrate the story, rather you are looking for ways that that word and image can operate together and enhance each other. Each one can speak about the ideas that come from the story.
  - Image: Thomas Hart Benton: Mural, Huck & Jim, 1936
    - Benton had been commissioned to paint murals that depicted the social history of Missouri.
    - Why does it seem appropriate that this kind of image not be exactly real or correct? This is not illustrating one particular scene. What does this have to do with who Huck and Jim are?
  - Image: E.W. Kemble, original illustration, "Out of Bondage"
    - This is an illustration from the end of the book, when Jim has been freed by his owner.
    - This illustration is one of the only ones that is appropriate to talk about in classrooms today.
    - Kemble used a model to draw the pictures, but he only used one model for all of the illustrations in the book.
    - Ask students, "What is the artist suggesting by the way he put together this picture? Why is Jim in the middle? Can you figure out which one is Huck and which one is Jim? All three are standing in the same position in a way that shows they are on equal ground in some strange way.
  - Image: Henry Lamb, "Portrait of a Young Woman," early 20<sup>th</sup> century
    - This portrait was created about 100 years after *Jane Eyre* was published.
    - This painting is precisely from the period in which Virginia Wolfe was writing her critique.
    - You might ask the students, "What is it about this image that makes a person say that this perfect for the cover of *Jane Eyre*?"
    - "Why do we focus in so tightly on her head and her face? What does this tell us about who she is?"
    - The girl has a humble expression on her face. There is a sense of anonymity to who this person is. This is insight into being a governess.



- Image: Thomas Bewick, illustration from *A History of British Birds*, 1797-1821
  - This is from Bronte's period.
  - This is the image that Jane refers to on the second page of the novel. She calls the fiend pinning down the thief's pack was an object of terror.
  - Ask students, "Why would we have a picture of someone struggling to carry this load, and what does that have to do with the devil?" His guilt is weighing him down so that he cannot move forward.
  - If you are Charlotte Bronte, you don't see pictures twenty-four seven, so the ones you do see speak to you much more specifically.
- Image: J.M.W. Turner, "Chichester Canal," 1829
  - This is a cover image chosen for *Great Expectations*. This is only a detail, small piece, of the larger image.
  - This is an atmospheric and moody painting in a way that is gorgeously evocative of the fog and anxiety that Pip feels in the beginning of the novel.
  - Ask students, "Why a ship? Why would the editor choose this image?" The book begins and ends with a ship that doesn't save an imperiled man.
- Image: Hablot Knight Browne ("Phiz"), "A Model of Parental Deportment," *Bleak House*, 1853
  - *Great Expectations* was the only novel published without pictures.
  - Phiz has evocative and hilarious drawings that are poking at social mores, these are somewhat cartoonish.
  - In this picture, the key figure, is Mr. Turveydrop, who is a neglectful parent who runs a school of deportment. He uses his students as slaves. He is much too important to do anything.
  - In the back of the image is a picture of King George seated in a similar position (King George, neglectful of his subjects).
  - Ask students, "What do you find appealing about that image?"