



# Teaching Three Great Books

with Dr. Flora Armetta

## Lesson 8: Jane Eyre – Part 3

### Outline:

A number of concepts in Jane Eyre derive from the Romantic period (1790s-1830s) of art and literature.

- Charlotte Bronte would have been well versed in the poetry of her age and many of the ideas in Jane Eyre reflect a general Romantic attitude about the world.
- Exercise: Read Wordsworth's famous poem written on *Tintern Abbey*.
  - Ask students what Wordsworth seems to be suggesting about the natural world, what meaning does nature hold for him in this passage? What effect does nature have on him?
  - We begin to see a contrast between the lowly qualities of man and the forces of nature that seem almost worthy of worship.
  - There is a sense of sublimity in nature (Burke).
    - The sublime = awe-ful (terrible or painful)
      - Scripture, the Lord's presence
      - Power, vastness, infinity
    - The beautiful = more pleasing (a lesser sensation of affection)
      - Smallness, smoothness, delicacy, grace
      - This is different from the classical notion of beauty. This is not Beauty.
- Identify several places where Bronte shows us the power of the natural world. Look for areas where Jane's experience is mapped onto the natural world.
  - Read aloud because it is the best way to start a class discussion. Share your own dramatic reading with students or have a student read. Help the students look for specificity of meaning. Go to the passage and have the students read the words again for clarity of insight for them.
  - Where is the sublimity and where is Jane alive with nature?
- Look at some works of art.
  - Jane's description of her own works of art:
    - Jane's insistence that she has visions, her creativity is unable to stop expressing these things that she at least sees in her mind.
    - One of the first meetings between Jane and Rochester:
      - Rochester asks her to see works of art. Jane speaks to the reader about what the images are.
      - In her drawings she is showing man overcome by the sublimity of nature. The natural world has taken over all of man's ambition to sail on the fast sea.



- Image: Charlotte, “A Fisherman Sheltering Against a Tree,” copy from Bewick’s Birds, 1829 (20:45)
- Image: Caspar David Friedrich, “Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog,” 1818 (24:10)
  - This is the small man facing the sublime natural world.
- Image: Albert Bierstadt, “Storm in the Rocky Mountains, Mt. Rosalie,” 1866 (26:14)
- Having asked your students to look for these ideas in art, they will be able to tell you that man is small and nature is powerful.
- Take students out one day in the fall or the spring and ask them to draw a Romantic image of what they can see. Students can do this even in the city setting. There is always a way for students to see that man is small in his environment.