



Teaching Three Great Books

with Dr. Flora Armetta

Lesson 9: Jane Eyre – Part 4

Outline:

We also see Romantic ideals of what it means to be a human in the characterization Mr. Rochester, who is a classic Byronic hero.

- Byronic hero: This term comes from George Gordon, Lord Byron. He was known for his book length poems. Byron gave his name to the brooding, moody figure who embodies a romantic love that trumps nearly all other values including conventional behavior.
- You can ask students to look for moments that show this in Mr. Rochester's character.

The idea of friendship in Jane Eyre

- Friendship first becomes possible when Jane and Mr. Rochester discuss Jane's art together. This helps demonstrate the benefits and limitations of the way Jane and Mr. Rochester relate to each other (reciprocity).
- There is a comparison between friendships with Rochester and River's sisters in the comparison of their thoughts about her art.
- Specific word choices (such as kin) used in the narrative can be taken a great distance. You could do a close reading of the sentences with your students.

Spiritual aspects in Jane Eyre, Jane's Christian struggle

- Jane quotes from the Bible quite often.
- Most critics argue that Bronte was forced or habituated to talking about Christianity, but these moves are subverted by the rest of her novel. As believers, it is important to listen to what she talks about.
- There is a great deal of mention of Christian hypocrisy, but not suggesting that we not worship Christ.
- There is the amazing moment when Jane, at her worst is wandering away from Thornfield, but Bronte has an advocacy of what it feels like to notice your own human limits and cast yourself on God (volume 3, page 324).
 - She falls asleep comforted, but wakes starving. The church bell shows her where a town is, and a whole new life with her cousins.
- Bronte is not simply setting aside Christian belief altogether.