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After reading Foster's *How to Read Literature Like a Professor* I was perturbed by how much I was missing from stories, movies, and other entertainment. Following Foster's three main principles I have only the basics of what Foster describes in his book and remnants of past plots, patterns, and symbols that I could call my literary memory. With symbols I'm just assuming whatever object, person, or event sticks out and has a heavy description probably has some sort of additional meaning. Another important point Foster brings up is that authors apply important traits to their characters and plot early on in a story and I've attempted to tie that in with some of the topics I'm going to discuss (Foster 205).

Right out the gate, first paragraph, Bronte depicts a boring rainy day where there "was no possibility of taking a walk that day. From what I learned with Foster rain does a whole lot and is "never just rain." Bronte's rain first and foremost creates the bored, dreary, almost sad atmosphere that characterizes the beginning of the novel. The rain acts as a catalyst for Jane's conflict with John and later punishment by Mrs. Reed through its ability to trap people in doors and force them together, which is very similar to Foster's reference to the story *The Three Strangers* (Foster 76). Rain can also cleanse, dirty, and really change a character.

Through Foster's description I would expect a character would need to be physically in the rain, but for *Jane Eyre* I sensed that this early rain is an indicator that the norm in the Reed household is about to change.

Specifically Jane lashes out when she is restrained – not something she used to do, and then when Jane is sent off to Lowood after her red-room breakdown. Feels like a transition to adulthood/teenager. Sticking with the

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beginning of the story is violence or hostile relationship between Jane and John Reed. Now Foster describes violence and an intimate and personal action that is deliberately set up by the author (Foster 87-96), and I would agree.

Jane's relationship with John is defined by John's abuse and she compares him to a slave driver, murderer and even the Roman emperors who are known for their dominating ruthlessness. Bronte describes John and gives him a bit of an ugly appearance, but it's her description of the interactions between John and Jane that show how John is ugly on both the inside and out. The relationship also helps define Jane as a strong lead capable of dealing with brutality. The conflict in the book results in a cut on Jane's head and while that may seem insignificant it's the years of abuse and probably many cuts that build up to really strengthen Jane. I also found Mrs.

Reed's blissful ignorance to her son's tormenting preferences to be very interesting and how John is still a source of pain due to his failures and especially when he dies. Chapter 3 – Jane has awakened. It's amazing the amount of depth in such a short amount of writing, or at least I hope I'm not imagining things. At the beginning of Chapter 3 Jane is given some food by Bessie and is allowed to use a special plate – one that she had been eyeing. The plate in particular is china and has an image of a bird of paradise.

Bronte mentions and details this bird because I assume it's a symbol. I believe Foster would support that proposition with his spiel on almost how everything is probably a symbol of some sort (Foster 97-98). Now the bird itself represents flight and according to Foster flight is freedom (Foster 128).

Jane doesn't actually fly, but she internally yearns for freedom and is able to fly away from her home through her attendance at Lowood. When Jane starts to attend Lowood she has some odd experiences, one of which is with the food. Jane deals with some burnt porridge to begin, which shows some of the crumbling faults with Lowood.

Due to the state of the food Miss Temple surprises everyone with some fresh bread and butter. Later Jane gets to eat some very well made porridge and thus improving her whole day. The quality of food itself provides some ups and downs to the story and assists with revealing some character traits such as Miss Temple's kindness and caring personality. Food also works as a character bond. Foster in his book explains how the gathering of people to share food is communion and important for developing relationships (Foster 8-9).

There haven't been any specific and drawn out meal scenes, yet Bronte's descriptions have given a sense of lacking and piazza to the girl's meals and the meal times give Jane a chance to meet some of the other girls. One character that has to allow Jane to enter Lowood is Mr. Brocklehurst, who is the head clergymen of the school. At first a lot of the Bible references and conversations were pushing me toward making a Bible connection, but then I realized they were too direct. Reading further I found that while Brocklehurst is supposedly a man of God he is actually greedy and abusive. He treats everyone terrible and we see that when his family appears they are covered in wealth.

Mr. Brocklehurst is a hypocritical, materialistic, clergyman. As Foster would say “ irony trumps everything” (Foster 235-244). The second to last chapter Foster explains how important irony is and now I can see with a prime example how much depth it adds. The irony creates resonating waves of conflict and in the case of Jane Eyre it makes Jane’s time at Lowood much less enjoyable.

The irony of the entire situation is entirely enhanced when, sadly, lots of people at the school start dying at the beginning of spring – the season of life. It is a very weird situation. Works Cited Bronte, Charlotte. Jane Eyre. Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008. Print.

Foster, Thomas C. How to Read Literature like a Professor: A Lively and Entertaining Guide to Reading between the Lines. New York: Quill, 2003. Print.