

# CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S *JANE EYRE*

**Do-Now:** Get out your notebooks! You will need to take notes today

# *Jane Eyre* the Novel

- ◆ Published 1847 under the pseudonym “Currer Bell”
- ◆ Shocking because:
  1. The heroine is small, plain, & poor
  2. The heroine is the first female character to claim the right to feel strongly about her emotions and act on her convictions
  3. This romantic ground had previously been reserved for males
  4. Such a psychologically complex heroine had never been created before



# Influences: Gothic Elements

- ◆ Purpose of Gothic fiction was to evoke a sense of mystery, suspense, fear and terror.
- ◆ Most Gothic stories include:
  - ◆ Mysterious happenings
  - ◆ Frightening scenes
  - ◆ Supernatural occurrences
  - ◆ Gloomy landscapes
  - ◆ Incidents of madness
  - ◆ Revelations of shocking secrets

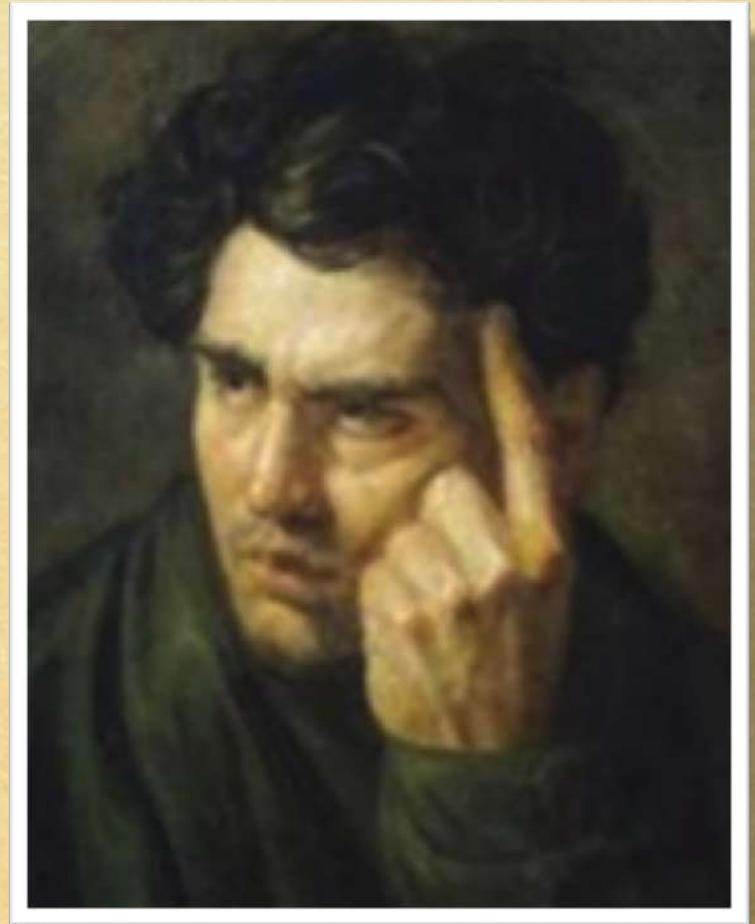
# Influences: Romantic Movement

- ◆ End of 18<sup>th</sup> Century
- ◆ Championed for the rights of the individual over the demands of society
- ◆ Believed that humans were inherently good
- ◆ Valued imagination over reason
- ◆ Inspired by nature



# Influences: Byronic Hero

- Reference to famous poet, **George Gordon, Lord Byron.**
- Byronic heroes are:
- Proud
- Gloomy
- Mysterious
- Passionate



# Legal Rights of Women

- ◆ As far as the law was concerned, women's rights were like those of children.
- ◆ Once married, a woman belonged to her husband.
- ◆ Husbands could divorce wives for adultery, but wives could not divorce husbands.
- ◆ Should a divorce be necessary, a husband received all property and possessions – along with rights to the children.



# Cult of True Womanhood

- ◆ **Piety** – believed to be more religious and spiritual than men
- ◆ **Purity** – pure in heart, mind, and body
- ◆ **Submission** – held in "perpetual childhood" where men dictated all actions and decisions
- ◆ **Domesticity** – Home was the woman's domain



# Cultural Issues: Education

- ◆ Education of women becomes fashionable, esp. as a status symbol
- ◆ Higher education closed to women until 1848
- ◆ Good schools were expensive
- ◆ Cultural skills valued:
  - ◆ Languages (French, German, Latin)
  - ◆ Painting
  - ◆ Needlepoint
  - ◆ Music



# Cultural Issues: Governess

1. Middle class families hired governesses, or live in teachers
2. Taught the students, usually young girls, the necessary subjects for ladies:
  - ♦ Foreign language, literature, painting, music, reading, basic math
3. Pay was poor, but it was one of the only jobs available to educated, yet impoverished young women

# Cultural Issues: Social Classes

- ♦ Limited social mobility and restricted romantic options
- ♦ Governess: socially shunned by servants and employers





# Cultural Issues: Disease and Illness

- ◆ Diseases misunderstood but feared
  - ◆ Tuberculosis (lungs fill with fluid)
  - ◆ Typhus (bacterial disease spread by lice and fleas)
- ◆ Mental illness regarded as an embarrassment
  - ◆ Poor, abusive conditions
  - ◆ Often locked in cages
- ◆ Physical disability and disfigurement

# Literary Terms: Breaking the 4th Wall

- ◆ Written in first person
- ◆ Jane occasionally addresses the reader: Breaking the fourth wall
- ◆ Note when she does this: Why does she point this out to you?