

University of Mary Washington

Eagle Scholar

Student Research Submissions

Spring 4-22-2016

Cultural Studies, Pedagogy and Jane Eyre

Kaitlyn R. Berube

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.umw.edu/student_research



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Berube, Kaitlyn R., "Cultural Studies, Pedagogy and Jane Eyre" (2016). *Student Research Submissions*. 83.
https://scholar.umw.edu/student_research/83

This Honors Project is brought to you for free and open access by Eagle Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Student Research Submissions by an authorized administrator of Eagle Scholar. For more information, please contact archives@umw.edu.

CULTURAL STUDIES, PEDAGOGY AND JANE EYRE

An honors paper submitted to the Department of English, Linguistics, and Communication
of the University of Mary Washington
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Departmental Honors

Kaitlyn R Berube

April 2016

By signing your name below, you affirm that this work is the complete and final version of your paper submitted in partial fulfillment of a degree from the University of Mary Washington. You affirm the University of Mary Washington honor pledge: "I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work."

Kaitlyn Berube
(digital signature)

04/29/16

Cultural Studies, Pedagogy and

Jane Eyre

Kaitlyn Berube

University of Mary Washington

Abstract

The field of cultural studies is one that has received much academic attention. However, a vast majority of the research applies to higher education and college, with occasional forays into foreign teaching and writing classes. The idea of cultural studies teaching as it applies to secondary education is almost completely unexplored, especially the ways in which it can be placed into practice. The lack of study in this field is a serious problem due to the positive effects cultural studies can have on the critical thinking skills of students. Keeping cultural studies locked behind the gate of higher education keeps a large section of the population from the chance to develop those skills, and more should be done to push cultural studies into earlier schooling with a student-centered curriculum. The following article takes two stances-- first, the value of cultural studies as it applies to teaching in middle and high school and the reasons to do so. After a discussion on the values of cultural studies, an analysis will be done into implementing the study using the example text of *Jane Eyre* with the purpose of giving teachers an idea of how to implement cultural studies into their classrooms through literature.

Cultural Studies, Secondary Education and *Jane Eyre*

As educators, all teachers have a responsibility to educate their students not only in the material, but in skills that will assist them later in life. While it may not seem that basic education is entirely practical (a common complaint among students), learning skills such as math and English teach students to think logically and critically. However, in a learning environment that encourages “teaching for the test” and working towards achieving an aggregate test score high enough for the teacher’s work to be deemed acceptable, how can critical thinking be encouraged? These issues might seem impossible to overcome-- however, even though teachers are given a list of standards that they must have students meet, they are still given some leeway as to how these issues are approached. Instead of giving into temptation and teaching just to satisfy the requirements for students to pass into the next grade, teachers need to take on the admittedly difficult challenge of teaching requirements in a way that inspires inquiry and active learning. In my experience, the best way to involve students in lessons is to forge connections between the texts and their own lives. The problem then lies in how exactly to create these connections-- a problem that can be solved by incorporating a branch of study known as “cultural studies.”

Cultural studies is a branch that focuses on political meaning in texts and seeks to analyze the way in which certain texts fit into certain power paradigms. While it is a field of study that can be hard and even unwise to define, it mainly can be recognized by the way in which it tries to connect elements of popular culture and art and analyzes their political function and how they are meant to work in society. This study has gained popularity and academic credibility over time, but the experiment of “teaching cultural studies” in a classroom environment has been kept

mainly to higher education. Considering the possible complexities in understanding such connections, it is understandable that many teachers would choose to go with the most developed students available. However, the formative years of education and the time of childhood is a time in which advertising is most prevalent-- commercials, cartoons and companies all often seek to hook people at a young age and develop loyalty that will persist for a lifetime. Since this is the point where people are most influenced and learn principles that will remain with them for the rest of their lives, the lack of cultural studies teaching is highly regrettable. While the facts of child brain development make it improbable for elementary educators to introduce cultural studies into their work, there is no reason that current teachers should not supplement their lessons with cultural studies to help their students become engaged and work towards understanding the complex structures of power in society. Cultural studies encourages critical thinking skills which can help students far down the line. In this essay, I argue for the importance of cultural studies in middle and high school and the ways in which it can assist students in developing exigency and critical thinking skills towards literature. Furthermore, I will illustrate this with specific examples of how to read one text, Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, and teach it through a critical studies lens thoroughly by analyzing its sociopolitical context and exigency and how it might be taught to students.

I

In my experiences as a student teacher, I came across a certain classroom that was taught in a very traditional, restrictive way. The teacher of this classroom (hereby referred to as Mrs. G) introduced every lesson through a PowerPoint lecture received from the textbook company, gave an assessment through worksheets that were also created by the textbook company, and then

formed a test at the end of the week. The lessons themselves had no actual structure behind them, and the length of planning that Mrs. G put into each only involved writing the names of concepts on a calendar and copying the related worksheets. In this classroom, student motivation was at an all-time low, with students often staring at their desks or, in one case, falling asleep. The lack of motivation is obviously counter-productive to a healthy learning environment. As Dr. Teresa Coffman states, where there is no student motivation to explore and learn the topic “engagement will not happen and deep inquiry will not take place. When motivated, students are eager to learn, fascinated by their discoveries, and enjoy asking questions.” (2013, p. 6) Even though the basic concepts of the Virginia Standards of Learning were being taught and a number of students proved adept at reciting memorized information in the worksheets, student satisfaction in Mrs. G’s was very low. The student who often fell asleep was once asked by the teacher why he couldn’t stay awake, and his answer was that the class was “boring.” This perception of English as a boring subject has persisted in students throughout the classrooms which I have worked in. The lack of attachment between students and the texts they read is shocking. Furthermore, since the text fails to reach them in any meaningful way, they conclude that the study of English has no practical meaning and write it off as “something they have to do for school,” as one student said to me.

In order to counteract this failure of modern English education to connect with the student, we must first go to the base of the problem and analyze the current dynamic of power in the schools. Most instruction is done through a teacher-centered direct instruction/lecture model-- that is, information being delivered to students via the teacher and being expected to recite the information or work with it at a later time. However, the key to improving student

engagement lies in student-centered learning, defined by Dr. Teresa Coffman (2013) as an “opportunity [for students] to take the lead in their learning process” which contains “elements of constructivism where students can construct their own meaning” (p.88) of concepts and texts. By approaching teaching with these constructivist methods, students are put in a more active role where their learning is determined by their own motivation and interest, rather than passively accepting the definitions given to them by their teachers. The problem, then, falls in how to begin shifting the classroom to a student-centered one instead of a teacher-centered one. The change will not be an easy one for high school teachers, but the first steps can be made by implementing cultural studies into the secondary classroom.

As defined before, cultural studies is a method by which political power is analyzed through texts and the social and political implications of that text are also worked through. Specifically, as it applies to teaching cultural studies is a lens through which to teach that “calls for up-to-date and engaging thematic curriculums where culture, social structures, and historical circumstances are explored side by side with a particular emphasis on how those issues touch real people in the present day” (Carey-Webb, 2001, p.8). Cultural studies can thus be related into student-centered teaching through encouraging students to examine these relations between the text and the real world. By having students approach literary texts with a critical eye, searching for the many meanings of a text to both its contemporary society and the modern-day workings of authority and power, students can be encouraged to engage in “ethical, moral, and social questions” (Carey-Webb, 2001, p.8) about the world they live in. Cultural studies as a practice, if used wisely, can push students to engage with the material and encourage further research into any future works of literature the students may read. Dr. Eric Lorentzen, a professor at the

University of Mary Washington, found that applying cultural studies to a college class about Charles Dickens “led to both a better knowledge of the primary works and historical context, and a transcendent engagement with literature that spoke directly to real lives” (2009, p.160).

Furthermore, while teaching cultural studies to a class of secondary students, Allen Carey-Webb finds that “cultural studies fosters critical thinking and activism,” (Carey-Webb, 2001, p.8) bringing up how the study helps people connect literature to modern-day pop culture. Cultural studies, therefore, is a practice that should be implemented into the secondary English classroom in order to destroy current negative perceptions about the uselessness of English and push critical thinking in its students.

However, it is important to note that simply inserting cultural studies themes and practices will not engage students immediately, nor is it impossible to forge a bad lesson using said themes. Many higher educators in the field have examined and debunked the idea of cultural studies as a panacea for learning. John Beverley, a literary critic and professor working at the University of Pittsburgh, critically examines cultural studies and concludes that “instead of seeing Cultural Studies as an automatic solution to the problems of reforming knowledge, we must begin to subject it to the same kind of critique we have levelled against the limits of our disciplines” (1992, p. 21). On a similar note, Linda Shires, a professor at Syracuse University, confirms that teachers should “avoid [...] a utopian excitement about a new culture by adopting a critical realism,” (1999, p. 486) essentially driving teachers to work out both the benefits and drawbacks of cultural studies instead of accepting the practice with blind optimism. Cultural studies is not a simple theory, and care must be taken to implement it correctly. It is extremely important for teachers to make connections that engage students and make logical sense, rather

than simply connecting at random for the sake of connecting. Effective cultural studies needs “reader response if it is to avoid the danger of ‘political correctness’-- when teachers dictate, legislate, or otherwise pressure students to hold particular opinions rather than respecting their insights, experiences, ideas and perspectives” (Carey-Webb, 2001, p.9). Therefore, cultural studies can not be used as simply an add-on for teacher-centered, lecture-based learning. The very nature of cultural studies’s constructivism requires a massive shift in the power dynamics of the classroom. Furthermore, there has been little to no work in adapting cultural studies into a high school environment. The only truly significant work in this field is in Allen Carey-Webb’s book *Literature and Lives: A Response-Based, Cultural Studies Approach to Teaching English*. The branch certainly needs more study, and it may seem to be an insurmountable challenge for secondary teachers to adopt right now because of the lack of research in the field.

Ultimately, however, I find that cultural studies are extremely important to teach in the formative years of learning and should be tried widely as soon as is possible. As a pilot study, the goal of this article is to begin the push to implement cultural studies into secondary education. After the basics of cultural studies and modern, student-centered lesson plans are thoroughly looked into, it is easy to understand how the practice can be implemented for any text. Therefore, two lesson examples will be given for a secondary classroom using the example of Charlotte Brontë’s classic novel *Jane Eyre* with a thorough explanation of the relation of the text to the theory of cultural studies.

II

When teaching cultural studies, there are an almost infinite number of subjects to study. In this paper, we will be looking primarily at Victorian studies. As Lorentzen says, “the

nineteenth century proves an ideal moment to scrutinize, since it is [...] the age in which the past becomes the present” (2009, p. 153). Victorian studies may seem difficult to parse in a modern setting, but the reality of the Victorian time is that it works well for studying how the dynamics of power really work. Isobel Armstrong shoots down the view of the Victorian age as more idealized as “casuistry” born of “contortions” in the defense of the Victorians as a whole, pointing out the hypocrisy in Dickens’s support of the sanctity of marriage compared to his own murky relations (1999, p.514). Furthermore, the combination of Victorian studies and culture studies is an attempt by which we may “identify and hear voices other than an unmarked, bourgeois, white male voice” and to break out of the assumption that “there is such a thing as ‘the Victorians,’” (Williams, 1999, p.361) and begin to perceive a relation between their society and ours. Therefore, *Jane Eyre* was chosen as the example text to work towards breaking down the homogenized Victorian ideal by bringing in a female, more progressive voice as a representation for students to examine.

There were many aspects of Victorian society that were used to control the masses at the time, but perhaps the most obvious during the time in which *Jane Eyre* was written is the catechistic method. The catechistic method is a way of teaching in which students are asked questions repeatedly by the teacher and are expected to give one answer. The question-answer process is done until the students can repeat the instructions without error, and is meant for students to completely internalize the “right” answers. Through the constant drilling and memorization of the method, Victorian schools “became a ‘machine for learning’” (Richardson, 1989, p. 853) that “played a much greater role in the disciplining of the middle and especially the lower classes for an increasingly industrialized society” (Richardson, 1989, p. 854). By forcing

the desired answers into students' minds through constant repetition, the figures of authority who designed the questions and answers were able to easily instill whatever values they wanted in the hapless students. The catechistic method was an affront to the concept of student-centered learning and critical thinking, and made schools "yet another tool for maintaining hierarchical relations of power" (Richardson, 1989, p. 854) in Victorian society. This method is present throughout *Jane Eyre*, and should be focused on by any teacher in order to examine the ways in which education can be used as a tool. The two best examples of catechistic method and its flaws in *Jane Eyre* lie in Gateshead and Lowood, the first locations of the novel. These two locations and the events that occur within can be used to teach students the ideas of both inequality with gender and suppression of rebellion through silence and education through how the titular Jane is treated by her surroundings and how she reacts.

Before the two big lessons are discussed, however, it is important to note how small discussions and activities can be handled to encourage critical thinking throughout any classroom. Even topics as complicated as that of gender and power can easily be accessed through a quick in-class discussion in order to encourage students to consider them further on their own time. A strong example of how to teach gender roles and differences in a small discussion can be based around John Reed's abuses towards Jane Eyre when she lives at Gateshead. Gateshead is owned by Mrs. Reed, a distant relative of Jane who was made to promise that she would take care of Jane by her dying husband. She has great affection for her three children, but does not care for Jane due to Jane not being her natural child. This gives the three children the ability to treat Jane cruelly without repercussions, which the oldest son John Reed often takes advantage of. Jane has "no appeal whatsoever against either his menaces or his

inflictions” (Brontë, 1847, p.12) when John attacks her since the servants will not assist her, John’s sisters also dislike her and Mrs. Reed is quick to blame her when fights occur. Even though John Reed is merely a child, he is elevated to a position of privilege due because his position “as sole male heir gives him absolute power to harass his dependent female cousin” (Pell, 1977, p.400). This privilege extends to the point where no one questions his actions even though it is mentioned that he has committed numerous crimes such as attacking animals and being cruel to his mother. Teachers should ask students about John’s behavior, making sure to point out the passage in which Jane herself notes the discrepancy between the treatment of John and herself, saying, “I dared commit no fault; I strove to [fulfill] every duty; and I was termed naughty and tiresome, sullen and sneaking, from morning to noon, and from noon to night” (Brontë, 1847, p.18). Even though John openly defies society’s morals and perceptions of what a “good child” should be, he is given free rein to act out. However, Jane is restricted for much more minor offenses and is disproportionately punished.

In order to understand the interactions between John, Jane and the rest of the household, students should be driven to consider the difference in group discussions between how John and Jane are treated in the beginning of the novel. There are a number of possible leading questions, such as “Why do you think John is treated so well despite being so mean?” and “Why is Jane treated so badly by her adoptive family?” Through a series of further questions, teachers can then encourage students to consider the differences between how both Jane and John are treated due to their sex. Students should especially be encouraged to think about the concept of “boys being boys” and how girls who exhibit masculine interests are treated in modern-day society in order to provide them “with the critical tools they need to analyze themselves and the world” (Carey-

Webb, 2001, p.39) in terms of gender. Even though this is a small discussion that should only take about 15-20 minutes, it allows students to deeply consider the idea of gender differences and paves the way for future lessons.

In order to broach the topic of education and control, teachers should first do a sort of lead-in discussion to introduce the idea of power and how it can be used to suppress and control others. As the only ward of Mrs. Reed, Jane is subject to constant abuse when she speaks up and is forced to be silent through trauma. After the fight between her and John, Jane is locked in the room where Mr. Reed died as punishment while John receives no repercussion for his actions. When Jane screams in the red room under the belief that she has seen the ghost of Mr. Reed, Mrs. Reed locks her up and states that “you will now stay here an hour longer, and it is only on condition of perfect submission and stillness that I shall liberate you then.” (Brontë, 1847, p.21). She attempts to coerce Jane into complete silence and control her in this manner. Mrs. Reed’s response alone can be used to examine the ways in which power can be used against the weak. Even though Jane is terrified, Mrs. Reed will not listen to her pleas and will not be satisfied until her voice is entirely eliminated. Mrs. Reed is the figure of authority in this situation, and any speech from Jane is considered a challenge to her power. Students should thus be encouraged to consider ways in which voices might be suppressed today. Teachers should ask about the concept of “censorship” and how it might be connected to both the novel and the modern world, bringing up the banning of certain books from school libraries as an example. By talking about these events in terms of more recent examples of oppression and the silencing of voices, teachers can prep students for an examination of power under a cultural studies lens and get them interested in the topic.

After the trauma of the red room brought about by the fight with John, Jane is further suppressed, this time through the catechistic method. Jane eventually passes out from shock in the red room, at which point Mrs. Reed becomes determined to send Jane away to Lowood Academy, a religious school for girls, and be rid of her. The head of the school, Mr. Brocklehurst, comes to visit Jane and tries to apply the catechistic method to her. He asks her a series of questions about the Bible and whether she likes Psalms, and she responds that she does not because they are not interesting. Since the expected answer was that she did enjoy Psalms and the lessons it taught her, Mr. Brocklehurst is taken aback and says her response proves that Jane has “a wicked heart; and [she] must pray to God to change it: to give [her] a new and clean one: to take away [her] heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Brontë, 1847, p.40).

Brocklehurst’s reply to Jane’s ‘wrong’ answer demonizes her as wicked to the point where she is said to be terrible right down to the heart simply for believing that a portion of the Bible is uninteresting. Students should be asked about their ideas of Jane, and whether or not they truly believe that Jane has a wicked heart.

After determining that Jane is a ‘bad child’ by his standards, Brocklehurst gives Jane a small book and tells her to “read it with prayer, especially that part containing “an account of the awfully sudden death of Martha G--, a naughty child, addicted to falsehood and deceit” (Brontë, 1847, p.42). This is a clear indication that Brocklehurst is trying to scare Jane into acting well with the threat of divine retribution should she fail to do the “right” thing. Both of Brocklehurst’s responses show clear indications of scare tactics intended to frighten Jane into submission to the moral codes of her society. His cruel words towards her, as well as his gift of a story in which a similarly “naughty” girl dies suddenly, show the ways in which she is being educated to believe

that what she thinks is wrong and must be suppressed.

When teaching the idea of the catechistic method and Gateshead to students, teachers can relate the connections between Brocklehurst's teaching and the ways in which education can be used to control others. In order to incorporate active learning as well as cultural studies, we will use a concept known as a web inquiry activity for teaching these three concepts. A web inquiry activity is an activity that "uses the unfiltered Web to encourage students to explore and investigate information" (Coffman, 2013, p.83). Students use "raw data [...] so they can both manipulate and interpret [the data] to create meaning and sift through and discover possible solutions" (Coffman, 2013, p.83). This approach encourages students to develop stronger independence since while it first "relies on instruction that begins with a teacher's introduction of a concept or procedure through accessible materials," it then "has the students work initially on learning the concept or procedure in small groups that enable exploration and error without penalty" (Smagorinsky, 2008, p.22) in order to encourage a push away from complete dependence on the teacher. In order to implement this lesson, teachers must fill a series of parts. First, they need a hook that grabs student attention and interests them, a push for students to identify questions that interest them, guidelines for students to use inquiry to search for data, showing students how to explore data, and a way in which they can present their findings.

For the hook, teachers in this case will use the idea of the catechistic method. The students will be told that they are being hired to do a research project into the catechistic method and how it may have affected modern-day teaching. Students should be grouped, as grouping students "helps teachers lay the foundation for student success in a world that depends on collaboration and cooperation," (Dean, Hubbell, Pitler & Stone, 2012, p.35) and should be

encouraged whenever possible. However, in order for cooperative learning to be successful, teachers must promote both individual and group accountability, since it “discourages the tendency for a few individuals to carry the workload of the group” and “establishes a means by which each group member can demonstrate proficiency with regard to the knowledge and skills embedded within the goals of the cooperative learning activity” (Dean, Hubbell, Pitler & Stone, 2012, p.37). Therefore, students will be asked to evaluate each other as well as turn in multiple progress reports over the course of two weeks. The group sizes should be small, preferably no more than three since studies show that “as groups get larger, external and internal motivation tend to decrease, and members of larger groups tend to feel that their individual contributions will go unnoticed” (Dean, Hubbell, Pitler & Stone, 2012, p.41). In order to ensure that the groups are not unbalanced, students should be assigned to groups before the activity based on their achievement level. There should ideally be one high-performing student, one average student, and one struggling student per group to avoid any possible inequalities in work.

In this case, groups will be taking on different “roles” in researching the catechistic method. One student will spend their time researching the catechistic method and how it was used in the Victorian age, while another student researches more modern education practices such as religious education and standards of learning. The last student will moderate both of their research and present it to the class, providing them ways in which to direct their learning with the ultimate goal of giving a five-minute presentation on the catechistic method and how it relates to a modern topic of their choice. By allowing students to choose their own topic, the lesson “helps [students] find relevant, real-world applications” of the lesson and “enable[s] them to take control of their own learning, which increases their intrinsic motivation” (Dean, Hubbell, Pitler

& Stone, 2012, p.17). Furthermore, this allows the idea of cultural studies and the exploration of connections to fit in with modern standards of learning, as the skills to present and research online information are both part of many high school standards. Students will be monitored by teachers through the aforementioned progress reports, but will mostly be allowed to direct themselves as they research material online. Therefore, such a lesson encourages student self-moderation, technology integration into the classroom, and a deeper understanding of the novel's theme of oppression through education.

For another example of social control and two-facedness to students, teachers should use the example of Lowood Academy in *Jane Eyre* to examine the possible hypocrisy of those in power after teaching the lesson on Gateshead and catechistic method. At Lowood Academy, the head of the school Mr. Brocklehurst denies the girls such basic necessities as edible food, preferring to give them porridge which is often burnt, and forces them to live in poor conditions. He hides these obvious cost-cutting measures behind a pious exterior and states that his reasons for keeping the girls in such poor conditions is “not to accustom them to habits of luxury and indulgence, but to render them hardy, patient, self-denying.” (Brontë, 1847, p. 75). Mr. Brocklehurst continues on and states that “my mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh, to teach them to clothe themselves with shamefacedness and sobriety, not with braided hair and costly apparel” (Brontë, 1847, p. 76) when he sees that certain girls have been allowed to grow their hair out. Mr. Brocklehurst ignores the suffering of the children under his care, and even justifies their miserable state with appeals to morality and goodness. Teachers should direct students to this passage and discuss the ways in which the poverty and poor conditions of the school are excused by encouraging desirable values such as humility in its students. By being

asked questions such as “Do you think Mr. Brocklehurst really believes what he is saying?” and “Do you think that the students of Lowood are treated fairly?” students can use this passage to connect the idea of Lowood to the ideas of control and power presented in the previous lesson. The ultimate lesson however, comes when his hypocrisy is exposed as his wife and children walk into Lowood:

“[Mr. Brocklehurst’s family] ought to have come a little sooner to have heard his lecture on dress, for they were splendidly attired in velvet, silk and furs. The two younger of the trio (fine girls of sixteen and seventeen) had gray beaver hats, then in fashion, shaded with ostrich plumes, and from under the brim of this graceful head-dress fell a profusion of light tresses, elaborately curled; the elder lady was enveloped in a costly velvet shawl, trimmed with ermine, and she wore a false front of French curls.” (Brontë, 1847, p. 77)

The hypocrisy demonstrated by Mr. Brocklehurst is made incredibly clear by the appearance of his family in contrast with what he expects of the students of Lowood. Despite his constant stigmatization of bad behavior in students, he completely ignores the vanity and excess he preaches in his own family. Students can be driven to construct ideas about power and how it relates to both John Reed and Mr. Brocklehurst’s family, and why Brocklehurst chooses to force the values of humility and self-denial on children in his care when he allows his family to wallow in luxury.

In order to assign this portion in a way that can be used in a secondary classroom, a Socratic seminar format can be used. The Socratic seminar is a lesson format that “tends to focus on open-ended or controversial questions [...] that have no unequivocal resolution” (Estes, Mintz & Gunter, 2011, p.190). It is based around the idea of whole-class discussions, led by the teacher

through questions meant to encourage students towards understanding “sophisticated cognitive, social, and emotional objectives” (Estes, Mintz & Gunter, 2011, p.191). The model is not to be used for questions about memorization or mere facts-- in fact, it is structured entirely around higher modes of thinking and pushes students to “think critically about a text (written, visual, or auditory) through a cooperative and respectful discussion based on personal reactions to the material” (Estes, Mintz & Gunter, 2011, p.192) and does not rely on “memorizing discrete pieces of information,” nor does it “tolerate superficial coverage.” (Estes, Mintz & Gunter, 2011, p.192). Therefore, it is extremely suited towards teaching cultural studies because of its encouragement of making connections.

The teacher should create questions grouped under one topic. That topic question will serve as an “umbrella” for all other questions. There are many questions that can be asked in order to encourage student thinking. For this example, we will say that the umbrella question is “Why does Mr. Brocklehurst act the way he does towards Jane and the students of Lowood?” From there on, the teacher must determine how to lead students to discuss the possible implications of his hypocrisy with questions such as “Why does he allow his family to wear such nice things when he doesn’t want the students to wear them?” or “Is Mr. Brocklehurst being fair towards the students and why?” Furthermore, the teacher must be prepared with basic response questions to student lines of thought. The categories of questions to be asked in a Socratic seminar are questions of clarification, questions of assumptions, questions that probe reasons and evidence, questions that probe implications and consequences, questions about the question, and questions about viewpoints and perspectives (Estes, Mintz & Gunter, 2011, p.193). While these questions will shift depending on student responses, teachers should come prepared to encourage

discussion rather than stifle it with preconceived notions. For example, questions of clarification should avoid being stigmatizing, and should instead follow the ideas represented by students. For example, if a student makes a statement without providing evidence, teachers should ask some variation of “Why do you think that happened?” or “Can you explain further?” Finally, teachers must determine a level of assessment to be administered to students to see if they grasped the concept. A quiz is not sufficient for this type of level, as the assessment should also encourage higher modes of thinking. Participation grades are also not sufficient, as certain students with social anxiety may have understood the themes even though they did not speak in the discussion. Therefore, teachers should assess their students by having them write down what they learned in the class and what they thought about Mr. Brocklehurst and Lowood. Students should then be graded on either their participation or their responses, depending on which one has more evidence of comprehension. As a result, teachers can avoid putting pressure on students who are nervous speaking, encourage critical thinking by avoiding the stigma of having an assessment with “right” and “wrong” answers, and accurately assess what students gained from the Socratic seminar.

These projects only tap the surface of what can be done with *Jane Eyre* or any literary text in the classroom using cultural studies. The lessons and discussions presented only cover the first two parts of *Jane Eyre*, and even within these two parts there are more avenues that can be explored and more types of lessons with which to incorporate active learning. As can be seen from the two lessons above, the theory of cultural studies is certainly not impossible to apply to the classroom. All of the lessons incorporate the idea of power dynamics and cultural studies through student-centered learning, and it is important to note that such work can be applied to

any text from any time period. One of the appeals of cultural studies is its universality-- power dynamics exist in any iteration of society, and these power dynamics can be explored and related to modern day no matter how seemingly distant the time periods are.

There has been little work in incorporating cultural studies into the secondary education field. Besides Carey-Webb's book, no substantial piece of research has been created to show the results of applying cultural studies to the secondary classroom. However, as the above lessons have shown, it can certainly be accomplished and the lessons which arise can encourage student motivation, critical thinking and connection skills. More work should be done in incorporating cultural studies practically and academically into the secondary level, allowing students to engage meaningfully with the work without having to enter the ivory tower of higher education. For future research, the above lessons and others designed in a similar fashion should be applied practically and adjusted to fit the needs of students. With successful application to classrooms, the cultural studies approach could undoubtedly change secondary education for the better.

References

- Armstrong, I. (1999). Victorian studies and cultural studies: A false dichotomy. *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27(2), 513-516.
- Beverley, J. (1992). Cultural studies. *Latin American Literary Review* 20(40), 19-22.
- Brontë, C. (1847). *Jane Eyre*. London, UK: Penguin Classics.
- Burke, J. (2013). *The English teacher's companion* (4th ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Carey-Webb, A. (2001). *Literature and lives: A response-based cultural studies approach to teaching English*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.
- Coffman, T. (2013). *Using inquiry in the classroom: Developing creative thinkers and information literate students*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.
- Dean, C. B., Hubbell, E. R., Pitler, H. & Stone, B. (2012). *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Estes, T. H., Mintz, S. L. & Gunter, M. A. (2011). *Instruction: A models approach* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Freeman, J. H. (1984). Speech and silence in Jane Eyre. *Studies in English Literature* 24(4), 683-700.
- Lorentzen, E. (2009). 'Only connect': Doing Dickens, cultural studies, and anti-disciplinarity in the university literature classroom. In R. G. Kristensen & R. M. Claycomb (Eds.), *Anti-disciplinarity in the writing and cultural studies classroom* (pp. 147-169). Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books.

- Pell, N. (1977). Resistance, rebellion, and marriage: The economics of Jane Eyre. *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 31(4), 397-420. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2933083>.
- Pundak, D., Herscovitz, O. & Shacham, M. (2010). Attitudes of face-to-face and e-Learning instructors toward 'active learning.' *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning* 2. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ914964.pdf>.
- Richardson, A. (1989). The politics of childhood: Wordsworth, Blake, and catechistic method. *ELH* 56(4), 853-868. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2873162>.
- Shires, L. (1999). Victorian studies and cultural studies: Interdiscipinarity, the market, and a call of critical realism. *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27(2), 481-486.
- Smagorinsky, P. (2008). *Teaching English by design: How to create and carry out instructional units*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Thomas, S. (1999). The tropical extravagance of Bertha Mason. *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27(2), 1-17.
- Williams, C. (1999). Victorian studies and cultural studies. *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27(2), 355-363.