

Wuthering Heights Summary

By Emily Brontë, 1847

Introduction

The social issues of the time; brutality of patriarchal power, the subordination of women, the injustice of inheritance law, and the fear of an outside, nonconformist religion.

Wuthering Heights is concerned with extreme opposites: Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange (grange often signifies a lonely place), light and dark, human and animal, love and hate, life and death.

Chapter 1

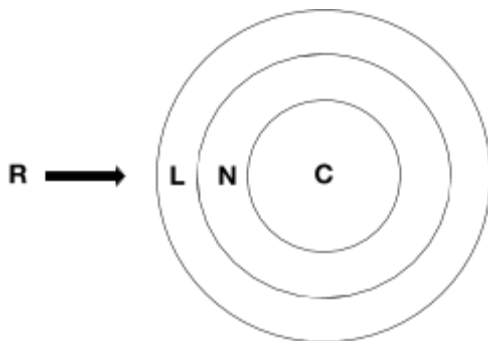
The story opens in 1801 and we know that Heathcliff dies in 1802, so the setting for the first chapter is approximately a year before his death. We also know that the novel takes place at Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, setting this third location, this apartment complex, away from the main story as well.

- All 3 locations are “completely removed from the stir of society”, and each house symbolizes its inhabitants.
 - Wuthering Heights: strong, wild, passionate
 - *“Wuthering’ being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather” (Brontë 2).*
 - Heathcliff is the personification.
 - Thrushcross Grange: passive, civilized, and calm.

Lockwood, is the unreliable narrator who tries to make sense of his surroundings and his landlord, providing us with a first glimpse of Heathcliff.

Frame Narrative: is a literary technique that serves as a companion piece to a story within a story, where an introductory or main narrative sets the stage either for a more emphasized second narrative or for a set of shorter stories.

- Nelly Dean’s version told by Lockwood, making her a homodiegetic narrator, which means that she is also a character in the story she is telling.



The **reader** (R) moves through **Lockwood**’s narration (L), and then **Nelly**’s (N), sorting out what seems to be genuine information from the vagaries of each story, until he/she arrives at the **core** of the novel (C).

Lockwood mentions twice that Heathcliff does not extend a hand to him, yet still considers him a gentleman. He draws comparisons between himself and Heathcliff, sharing an assumption, such as *“grass grows up between the flags, and cattle are the only hedgecutters’, but erroneously assumes that he has ‘a whole establishment of domestics”*.

- "*I have gained the reputation of deliberate heartlessness*" said by Lockwood about himself after drawing conclusions about Heathcliff, which instills a foreshadow of the telling of past heartless actions by Heathcliff.

Two other characters are introduced: Joseph, who has a nasty disposition and an extreme sense of religion, which makes it fantastical; the other character is described as a "*lusty dame*", whom we later identify as Zillah.

- These two characters are presented realistically because Brontë believed that having a sense of realism and authenticity is an important aspect to juxtapose against the romanticism.
 - The balance of romanticism (the exaggeration of real life subjectivity) and realism (what would realistically happen).
 - The primary and secondary narrators keep the realistic side of the story in check by letting us know that this remarkable romantic story takes place in an ordinary world.
 - Various elements of the romantic: the notion of an organic connection between humankind and nature; the rejection of society in favour of individual striving; freedom from social and familial oppression, and the search for forms of primal unity.

The ownership of this property's name is "*Hareton Earnshaw*", and although it is not explained, we yearn to know whether this Hareton is Heathcliff's nephew or if he was a past Earnshaw from 1500.

- Despite which Hareton is the owner, this still serves as another foreshadow, because we know at the end when Heathcliff dies, all three properties go to Hareton Earnshaw and Cathy Linton after they marry in 1803.

Chapter 2

Lockwood returns to Wuthering Heights, snow begins to fall, so he hastily knocks in vain. Joseph explains that no one will let him in because no one is willing to see him. Soon enough a young man appears allowing Lockwood to follow him inside, where he sees who he assumes is Heathcliff's wife. He tries to engage in conversation with her, but he has no success to which he continues to make his assumptions and suppositions until Heathcliff returns.

- The young man who lets him inside is Hareton, and the woman is Heathcliff's widowed daughter-in-law, Cathy, although her name isn't mentioned.
- Joseph shares that the mother of Mrs. Heathcliff went straight to the deuce (devil), but gives no more information, which creates mystery and allows Lockwood's mind to continue making assumptions.

The snowfall develops into a violent snowstorm and he asks for assistance to find his way back to the Grange. Unable to get help, he takes a lantern explaining he'll be back in the morning, but Joseph accuses him of stealing and commands the dogs to attack him. Lockwood ends up suffering a terrible nosebleed and is forced to indeed stay the night within Wuthering Heights.

- All these characters clearly dislike each other, but are somehow tied together in this strange house, to which Lockwood also finds himself trapped due to violent events (snowstorm and dogs).
 - What is ironic is Lockwood's entrapment is of his own doing; he chose to visit a man who did not invite him and in a snowstorm.
 - He has unrealistic expectations, which he presumes will be met; he shows up uninvited, isn't asked to be seated by *the missus* and then is demanded by Hareton, the weather is poor causing him to stay against his will.

Lockwood misidentifies a heap of rabbit skins as pets and misidentifies the woman as Heathcliff's wife, and after being corrected, misidentifies Hareton as Heathcliff's son.

- His inability to read people and situations make us suspect his narration.

Hareton is fiercely proud of his heritage and seems to be the only person who doesn't mind being there, Mrs. Heathcliff is a paradoxical beauty who is not permitted to leave, and Heathcliff has lost both a wife and a son.

- All the characters are intriguing, but not sympathetic.

Chapter 3

Zillah leads Lockwood to a chamber, which no one is permitted to enter, let alone stay. He discovers a bed hidden behind some panels and decides to spend the night there to be safe from Heathcliff.

By candlelight, Lockwood spots three names, "*Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Heathcliff, and Catherine Linton*" and some books. Unable to sleep he glances through the mildewed books. In one of the books, he finds a caricature of Joseph and many diary-type entries, which reveal that Catherine is friendly with Heathcliff, but her brother Hindley, treats him poorly.

- This is the first time that Catherine is mentioned, and her last names are a chronological order of her life.
 - There is symmetry between Catherine and Cathy depending on the order they are read. Earnshaw → Heathcliff → Linton for Catherine, and Linton → Heathcliff → Earnshaw for Cathy.
- Readers also gain the first insight into the enigmatic Heathcliff through seeing with facts how he was treated from both Catherine and Hindley.
 - We realize that he is a product of his environment and is perhaps rebelling against his tormentors.
 - From Catherine's perspective her brother is a much worse monster than Heathcliff could ever be.

While reading, Lockwood falls asleep and has two nightmares. He thinks a fir branch that is tapping on the window awakened him from his first dream, and during the second nightmare, he attempts to break off the branch. In order to reach the branch, he pushes his hand through the window, but instead of grabbing it, he touches an ice-cold hand. He struggles to free his hand, and hears a voice call

out, "let me in- let me in!". The voice is identified as Catherine Earnshaw. Unable to free himself from the ghost's grasp, he forces her wrist against the broken glass and becomes free. He then piles all the books against the hole, but they topple down and he screams. Lockwood crying out draws Heathcliff into the chambers waking him up.

- Brontë introduces the supernatural in this chapter, and readers need to determine if the ghost of Catherine has truly been walking the world for 18 years, waiting for Heathcliff.
- Catherine's spirit moves him from being an outside observer to an active participant in the plot.
 - This is done by what Lockwood does to the ghost instead of listening to its cries; instead of letting her in, he pulls the wrist against the broken glass, rubbing it, until blood runs down soaking even the bed-clothes.
 - This action is cruel to do to another.

Lockwood declares the room haunted and leaves immediately, noticing Heathcliff is distraught by the mention of Catherine's name. Lockwood finishes the night in the back-kitchen and as soon as dawn arrives, he returns to the Grange post-haste. Heathcliff shows him the way home.

- This is the first time Heathcliff seems to care about someone for he is tormented by the loss of Catherine. The man who is initially presented as cold and heartless has the ability to also be quite passionate
 - Throughout the novel, the primary characters, Heathcliff and Catherine, tend to demonstrate two sides, and these revelations make it extremely difficult for readers to maintain a constant vision of them.
- An important question is determining the source of Heathcliff's passion – is it Catherine or the act of revenge?

Chapter 4

Recuperating from his experience in Wuthering Heights, Lockwood asks Nelly about Heathcliff and his daughter-in-law. She informs him that the widow's maiden name was Catherine Linton, the daughter of her late master, and that Hareton is the nephew of her late master's wife. She also reveals that Heathcliff marries Mr. Linton's sister, Isabella.

- Cathy is the last of the Lintons and Hareton is the last of the Earnshaws.
- Lockwood heals his fright from witnessing Catherine's ghost by asking for answers

This juicy gossip piques Lockwood's curiosity so he encourages Nelly to tell him the history of the people and places he has encountered.

- Now it's Nelly's turn to become primary narrator through Lockwood's words.

Her story begins with her life at Wuthering Heights growing up with Catherine and Hindley Earnshaw. Mr. Earnshaw brought home an orphan from Liverpool and named him Heathcliff (after a son who died in childbirth) and grew to love the boy more than his own son.

- It is important that Heathcliff's origins are very obscure.
 - He is found by Mr. Earnshaw in Liverpool, which was a main port of entry into England from many parts of the world.

- “Dark-skinned gypsy in aspect”, which links him to a nomadic people whose origins remain shrouded in mystery and who are linked in legend, as is Heathcliff’s name (to notions of a *heathen*).
- Nelly’s explanation about Heathcliff’s introduction into the Earnshaw household provides sympathy for both Heathcliff and Hindley.
 - From Hindley’s perspective, Heathcliff has usurped the love of both his father and his sister.
 - Heathcliff is an orphan who is ready to accept the member of his new family that is not fully ready to accept him.

Catherine and Hindley both disliked Heathcliff originally, but Catherine grew to love him too. Hindley, however, grew to utterly despise him for displacing him with his father. After Mrs. Earnshaw died within two years of Heathcliff’s arrival, Hindley was completely separated from his family.

- Heathcliff and Catherine’s childhood provides the development of their characters and foreshadows their futures.
 - The passionate refusal to grow up for Catherine and Heathcliff (Hindley left to boarding school to mature) started at age 8, when the lack of steadying influence of a mother allowed them to grow up without moral restraints in an atmosphere of patriarchal brutality.
 - Heathcliff is a victim of a cruel upbringing and had not been socialized until adulthood.
 - This acts upon his direct desires and the fulfillment of those desires without the usual filter of convention and compromise.
 - The theories of Jacques Lacan, a psychoanalyst, are exemplified between the two of them in where they have failed to move from the Imaginary Order to the Symbolic Order; they have failed to separate themselves from a notion of unity between ‘self’ and ‘other’ into a world where they have accepted differences, such as male/female, father/son, sister/brother, etc.
 - When crossed, Catherine, the warm and loving daughter, can be defiant, headstrong, and cruel.
 - Heathcliff can be brooding, sullen, and capable of vindictiveness.
 - Their relationship begins to explore one of the primary themes of *Wuthering Heights*, namely that love can be capricious and its consequences, devastating.

Chapter 5

As Mr. Earnshaw’s health begins to fail, he becomes less tolerant of complaints about Heathcliff, and as a result sends Hindley away to school. As he nears death, Joseph’s religious words begin to penetrate his master.

Catherine continues to tease her father about her exploits with Heathcliff, never conscious of how sick he actually is. When Mr. Earnshaw dies, Catherine and Heathcliff console each other with talk of heaven.

- The bond between Catherine and Heathcliff grows stronger as Mr. Earnshaw grows weaker, and their mutual consolation.
 - The opposite themes are present between talk of heaven and angels against other religious terms like devil and Satan, that were used against them by Joseph.
 - Neither character is used very religiously, but the love for each other instigates organizational religious factors.

Chapter 6

Hindley returns for his father's funeral and brings his new wife, Frances. Taking control of the farmhouse with great vigour, he immediately makes chances to assert his dominance against Heathcliff. He immediately moves Joseph and Nelly to the back-kitchens and prohibits Heathcliff from receiving an education.

- Heathcliff is ill-treated by the patriarchal, land-owning class and is refused education and participation in church, in other words, he is set in the servant class.

Hindley does not pay much attention to Heathcliff or Catherine, so they live "as savages", skipping church and playing on the moors, furthering their chances at participating in a civilized society.

- Being able to roam free across the moors illustrates the wildness of these two.

One day both Catherine and Heathcliff disappear, and when they cannot be found, Hindley orders the doors be bolted. Nelly waits for them, but finds out that Heathcliff returns home alone. He explains that Catherine and he ended near Thrushcross Grange and peered into the windows to make fun of Edgar and Isabella. As Catherine and Heathcliff laugh at the Lintons, they are heard and runaway. Skulker, the dog, chases them and ferociously bites Catherine's ankle. Because of her injury, Catherine is unable to get away. A servant carries her into the Grange, where the Lintons are appalled at their behaviour, but still tend to her injuries, but send Heathcliff back into the night.

- Their candid behaviour illustrates a contrast between the dignified calmness of Thrushcross Grange.
 - The Linton children (safe, spoiled, and cowardly) serve as a characteristic contrast to Catherine and Heathcliff (self-willed, strong, rebellious).

Catherine is treated like a queen, but they scold Hindley for the manner in which he has raised his sister. Hindley threatens Heathcliff with banishment the next time he so much as talks to Catherine.

- For the first time, a difference between Catherine and Heathcliff is revealed; she is drawn to the civility and luxury present there while he is repulsed by it.
 - The main reason behind this is how she is welcomed, but he is threatened with weapons to leave.
- Heathcliff is once again an outsider, but for the first time, and with greater rejection.
 - He will never be welcomed, while Catherine will always be greeted and treated as royalty.

- This chapter signifies the first significant change in Catherine's character, for she experiences a positive new world at Thrushcross Grange that Heathcliff is not welcomed to.
 - Gradually, this change will lead to a shift in their relationship, whether she wills it or not.
 - The tragedy begins.

Within Nelly's narration, the events that transpired are told from Heathcliff's point of view.

- He immediately dislikes the Lintons and what they represent, and to instigate his fury further, they have what he cherishes the most, Catherine.
 - The narrative again, becomes slightly suspect and biased, they are either exactly as transpired, or he paints a slightly skewed picture. The latter is most probable because he is being fueled by rage.

Chapter 7

Catherine remains at Thrushcross Grange for 5 weeks. During her stay, Mrs. Linton works with her, transforming her from a childish, wild girl, to a sophisticated woman.

- She is receiving the mother-figure she was denied at an early age, putting her above Heathcliff, whom has tangibly lost everything.

When Catherine returns to Wuthering Heights she is barely recognizable. Hindley treats Heathcliff like a servant in front of her while greeting Edgar. Catherine kisses Heathcliff, but then also comments on his dirty appearance and compares him unfavourable to Edgar. Heathcliff is hurt by the changes in her appearance and attitude, and leaves the scene with a heavy heart.

- When Catherine returns to Wuthering Heights, the outward changes are readily apparent. Her demeanor toward Heathcliff is both understandable and expected, except by him.
 - For the first time she recognizes the differences in social standing.
 - It is important to remember the differences in social class were constantly recognized and dwelled upon for everything.
 - The Lintons also had more social standing than the Earnshaws.

Hindley invites the Lintons to dinner the following day as a thanks, but with an ulterior motive to further instigate Catherine to marry him. The Lintons accept with the one condition that they don't have to encounter Heathcliff. Nelly now convinces Heathcliff to make himself presentable.

- Nelly presents herself to Heathcliff in a most-sympathetic light, taking his side and encouraging him to clean himself up.
 - When things do not turn out as planned, the resulting situation sets up further conflict and tension between Heathcliff and Hindley and between Heathcliff and Edgar that will permeate the rest of the novel.

As the Lintons arrive, Hindley banishes Heathcliff to the kitchens. Edgar makes, what Heathcliff considers a patronizing and insulting comment on his appearance and throws applesauce at his face in

return. Hindley then proceeds to lock Heathcliff in the attic until dinner is over.

Catherine blames Edgar for getting Heathcliff in trouble and after dinner, while the others are listening to music, she sneaks away to visit her love. Nelly permits Heathcliff to go into the kitchen for a bite to eat. Heathcliff then admits to Nelly that he is plotting revenge against Hindley.

- For the first time, Heathcliff mentions his desire for revenge.

Chapter 8

During next summer, Frances gives birth to Hareton, but she dies a week later from consumption.

- Pulmonary tuberculosis

Nelly is expected to take complete control of the newborn for Hindley is distraught over the death of his wife and becomes even more tyrannical, forcing all the servants but Nelly and Joseph away. He also takes out his frustrations on Heathcliff further, but Heathcliff is enlightened to see the beginning of Hindley's downfall.

- After his wife dies, Hindley starts a disintegration from which he never recovers.
 - He avoid his son, becoming a tyrannical drunkard; his demise serves as an eerie precursor to Heathcliff's own downfall.
 - Karma hits them both.
- Heathcliff's delight in the downfall of others is shown and Nelly's dislike for Catherine is also revealed. "*I own I did not like her after her infancy was past*" and claims she is, "*as bad as marred (spoiled) child.*"
 - This admission immediately draws suspicion of Nelly's reliability further and exemplifies that she may like Heathcliff more than Catherine, although this does not remain constant.

Catherine begins to adopt a "double character"; behaving one way with Heathcliff and another with the Lintons. Heathcliff begins to keep track of how much time she is spending with Edgar and becomes increasingly angry at Catherine and her belittling of him, so he decides to confront her with this. Edgar arrives at the end of the argument.

- A connection between love and cruelty surfaces in this chapter and is repeated constantly and consistently throughout the novel.
 - These characters, especially Heathcliff who exhibits the strongest love, tend to be the cruelest.

Nelly keeps herself in the room with Catherine during Edgar's visit, and this annoys Catherine greatly. Unable to convince Nelly to leave, she ends up pinching Nelly and then denying it. Edgar tries to intervene, but then Catherine covers his ears.

- This is the first time that Edgar has seen Catherine's wild side.

Edgar leaves disturbed, but then when seeing her in the window, he returns later. Later, Nelly interrupts the sweethearts to inform them that Mr. Earnshaw has returned home, drunk again.

Chapter 9

In a drunken rage, Hindley accidentally drops Hareton over the bannister, but luckily Heathcliff is nearby and catches the baby.

- This is ironic because Heathcliff ends up saving his nemesis' heir and hierarchical embodiment.

Later, Catherine is in the kitchen speaking to Nelly, and thinking they are alone, Catherine tells Nelly that Edgar has asked her to marry him and she accepted. Catherine explains that she cannot marry Heathcliff because Hindley has degraded him so much; however, she expresses her love for Heathcliff. "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff", these are the words he overhears before he leaves, and then she says, "Heathcliff will never know how much I love him and he's more myself than I am".

- Catherine's dual nature reveals itself most fully in this chapter; in one breath she is able to declare her love for Heathcliff while simultaneously stating she cannot marry him. She agrees to marry Edgar yet naïvely thinks this marriage will not affect her relationship with Heathcliff.
 - Catherine like most Victorian social norms, views marriage as a social contract and not the ultimate commitment between lovers. In her eyes, she and Heathcliff are one, therefore her marriage to Edgar would not possibly affect the spiritual connection she has with him.
 - In addition to their spiritual connection, a symbolic connection is made as well. When Catherine arrives at Thrushcross Grange, she is as much an outsider there as Heathcliff was when he first arrived at Wuthering Heights.
 - Upon their arrivals, both wreak havoc and turmoil on the inhabitants, although Catherine chooses to marry and live with Edgar; she is out of her element.

Heathcliff leaves Wuthering Heights that same night and disappears for three years. Catherine spends the entire night outdoors in the rain. She comes down with a bad chill, catches a fever and almost dies. The Lintons allow her to recuperate at the Grange, but they both catch a fever and die.

- This is ironic, because if it weren't for her love for another man, Edgar's parents would have never died.
 - The curse of Wuthering Heights has struck his own family now.

Three years after his parents' death, Edgar marries Catherine. They convince Nelly to leave Hareton and Wuthering Heights and move to Thrushcross grange. When Nelly refuses to leave, Edgar and Hindley force her to move.