

# Wuthering Heights Summary

By Emily Brontë, 1847

## Chapter 10

Heathcliff reappears suddenly one September afternoon, approximately 6 months after Catherine and Edgar marry. Nelly doesn't tell Catherine who the visitor is, but she does tell Edgar, to which he suggests that Catherine hosts in the kitchen. She insists on the parlour.

- The jealousy between Edgar and Heathcliff has reached a new high, since they both know that Catherine is bored with the Grange, and Heathcliff has shed his servant-status and has become a capitalist.
- Her reaction to his arrival bothers Edgar as much as it pleases Heathcliff, and Catherine enjoys the attention from both.

Catherine's excitement over Heathcliff's return was not what he expected, but was pleased nonetheless. Their words and actions towards each other reveals very clearly that Catherine and Heathcliff still love each other. Heathcliff surprises everyone by stating that he is staying at Wuthering Heights.

- As Edgar's wife, she is able to be the socialite, and as Heathcliff's love, she is able to be true to her innermost desires and passion.
- Catherine's wilful behaviour may be put down to her inability to achieve anything significant in this society, and despite the relative inactivity of their lives, few women writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had as much to say about the disadvantaged nature of female lives in their society as the Bronte sisters.

Catherine and Isabella often visit the Heights and Heathcliff visits the Grange. During these visits, Isabella becomes more and more infatuated with Heathcliff. He in turn is not interested in her, but rather that she is her brother's heir. Nelly is concerned about Heathcliff's return, vowing to observe for any signs of impropriety.

- Heathcliff has not forgotten his revenge against Hindley, and while we don't know what he has been up to or how he has been making his money in the past three years, we assume that because of his newfound greed he has been able to capitalize on many vulnerable men.
  - Heathcliff's greed foreshadows the extent to how far he will go on to take his revenge against Edgar as well.
  - Heathcliff changes directly from the oppressed to the oppressor and his 'fleeing' of these two families can be taken as a savage parody of that fierce capitalist activity, which was, even now, driving the Industrial Revolution and creating the British Empire.

## Chapter 11

Nelly ventures back to Wuthering Heights to talk with Hindley, but instead she encounters Hareton, who has no memory of her. He greets her with a barrage of stones and curses- actions he has learned from Heathcliff. When Heathcliff actually does appear, Nelly runs away.

- Heathcliff is now acting as both father and teacher to Hareton, mirroring the relationship between Heathcliff and Mr. Earnshaw, his adopted father.
  - Heathcliff has taken both Hindley's father and his son away from him.
  - Hindley ended Heathcliff's formal education at Wuthering Heights, and now Heathcliff does the same to Hareton, which is part of his act for revenge.
    - Hareton is capable of much, but he is being raised in such a way that prevents his natural abilities from being developed; he was never taught to read or write; never rebuked for any bad habit, which did not annoy his keeper; never led a single step towards virtue, or guarded by a single precept against vice.
      - Education and virtue go hand in hand.

The next day at the Grange, Nelly witnesses an embrace between Isabella and Heathcliff, and when Catherine confronts him he tells her, "I'm not your husband: you needn't be jealous of me." This leads Heathcliff to reveal that he knows Catherine has wronged him and that he will be avenged.

- After working his way back into Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff then aims for Thrushcross Grange, instigating the second part of his revenge towards Edgar by encouraging Isabella's infatuation.
  - He has no passion or love for her, he only wants to use her, so he does.
  - Heathcliff was violently removed from the Grange as a child, so now he wishes to acquire it, and Isabella supplies the means for him to do this.

Edgar confronts both Catherine and Heathcliff about their indiscretions, to which Catherine locks the door, taunting her husband into a fair fight with Heathcliff. Edgar punches Heathcliff in the throat and then rushes off to get assistance. Realizing he cannot fight three men with weapons, Heathcliff leaves.

- The theme of patriarchal brutality is exemplified.
- Edgar cannot understand how she can love someone so crass and wild; and Heathcliff cannot fathom how she can be attracted to someone so sniveling and weak as Edgar.
  - Ironically, Edgar is the one to wildly lash out at Heathcliff, while he runs away.

Edgar then demands that Catherine choose between himself and her lover. Catherine doesn't answer and instead, locks herself in her room, refusing to eat for 2 days. Unable to get through to Catherine, Edgar warns his sister that if she pursues a relationship with Heathcliff, it would mean the end of their relationship.

- Catherine's hysterics, followed by her refusal to eat illustrate both her weakening mental and physical self.
- Her peak of romanticism occurs when she locks Heathcliff and Edgar together, throwing the key into the fire.
  - She portrays herself as a Gothic/ Romantic heroine that needs to be rescued and fought over valiantly, and the key represents her heart.

## Chapter 12

After three days of starving herself, she finally agrees to eat. Mistified, she wonders how Edgar has not come to see her for she is

dying. She begs for forgiveness and in a state of delirium, she talks about her childhood with Heathcliff and speaks of her impending death.

- As Catherine's condition worsens, essential character traits are unmasked; she is afraid of being alone because she is used to having someone at her disposal: Heathcliff, Edgar, her father, etc.
  - Her not eating is a cry for attention, to which she ends up killing herself, but she doesn't realize that her actions are precisely why she is alone.
- Catherine is most cruel when she is most honest, telling her husband, "I don't want you Edgar; I am past wanting you", to which she expected him to tend to her in her weakened state, oblivious to her torment and anguish she has subjected him.
  - Edgar didn't give in to her childish and cruel ways.
- Catherine enjoys playing the martyr; feeling she will suffer for her love.

Nelly refuses to open her window, so Catherine staggers to it, throws it open and claims to see Wuthering Heights. Before passing out, she explains that after she is buried, she will not rest until she is with Heathcliff. Edgar finds Catherine in such a weakened state and scolds Nelly for not letting him know sooner. She goes away to seek medical attention for Catherine, to which the doctor predicts that she will not survive this illness.

- Nelly's reliability is called into question again, for she also claims early in the chapter, "*the Grange had but one sensible soul in its walls, and that lodged in my body*".
  - This attitude demonstrates superiority above all others and validation of her questionable decisions, limiting her own responsibilities.
- Close to her death, Catherine longs for a simpler time, when it was just her and Heathcliff, running in the moors, when it was acceptable to act like a child, because she was one.
  - Her restlessness exemplifies and foreshadows Heathcliff's restlessness, creating another connection between the two.

During the same night, Isabella runs away with Heathcliff and when Edgar finds out about his sister's actions, says that she is only a sister to him in name.

### Chapter 13

Edgar nurses Catherine for the next two months and it is revealed that she is pregnant. Edgar longs for a male heir to prevent Heathcliff and Isabella from inheriting the Grange.

- Catherine knows that the next time she goes out to the moors will be her last.
- She doesn't allow Edgar to comfort her or himself for that would be a false sense of hope and sincerity.
  - However, Edgar nurses Catherine tenderly and attentively as best as he can, but it is more likely he is doing this out of love for his unborn child.
    - Without an heir, and since Isabella is married to Heathcliff, he would inherit Thrushcross Grange as her husband upon his death, which is the last thing he wants.

Six weeks after she runs away, Isabella sends a letter to Edgar announcing her marriage and begging for forgiveness. He doesn't

reply, to which she then sends a letter to Nelly questioning the humanity of Heathcliff and explaining that they are at Wuthering Heights longing for her to visit. Isabella encounters Hareton, Joseph, and Hindley, who are all uninviting and uncaring; the opposite to the Grange. She realizes her mistake, but is too late.

- We get a new perspective of Heathcliff from Isabella's point of view, narrated by Nelly from the letters that were sent to her since they eloped.
  - Isabella questions if Heathcliff is really a man and not some form of evil incarnate.
- Isabella realizes that marrying Heathcliff was a mistake, but also is mature enough to realize that she cannot atone for her error.

When Heathcliff returns, he tells Isabella that Catherine is sick and that it is all Edgar's fault and promises her that he will make her suffer in place of Edgar.

- Heathcliff may or may not be evil, but he is using Isabella to take out his frustrations on her, much like was done to him by Hindley.