

Wuthering Heights Summary

By Emily Brontë, 1847

Chapter 20

The next morning, Nelly takes Linton to Wuthering Heights. In order to get him to go to a father he doesn't know, she assures him in all ways that she knows for a fact to be untrue. When they arrive, Heathcliff refers to his son as "property", and tells him directly that his mother was a "wicked slut". Despite his insults, Heathcliff readily admits that he does not love his son, and is relishing the opportunity to gain access of the Grange through him. Nelly leaves while Linton cries out to her.

- Nelly lies very easily to Linton, and is relieved that she no longer has to deal with him, for she believes that raising Linton would be worse than it had been raising Catherine.
- Heathcliff refers to his son as property because he only sees him as an objective tool to further his revenge plans against Edgar.
 - The fact that Linton is a spitting image of Edgar, angers him further, as well as his weak disposition.

Chapter 21

Three years later, with the memory of Linton erased from her mind, Cathy and Nelly are both bird hunting and exploring on the moors. Cathy moves more quickly than Nelly, and before she can catch up to her, Cathy starts conversing with Heathcliff. While she talks to him, she notices Hareton and claims to have met him before. Heathcliff mentions that she has met his son before and encourages Cathy and Nelly to visit his house. Nelly knows that this is a terrible idea, but is unable to convince Cathy not to go because she is eager to determine who Heathcliff's son is.

Heathcliff mentions to Nelly his desire to have the cousins fall in love and get married. When Cathy and Linton do meet, they don't recognize each other at first. Linton has grown taller, but is still quite sickly. Unwilling to show Cathy around the farmhouse at first, Linton stays inside while Hareton leaves to show his cousin Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff sends Linton after his cousins and as he leaves, Nelly hears Cathy mock Hareton's inability to read.

- Heathcliff reveals his plan to Nelly and the reader, along with his rationale that he is doing this, only as a safeguard against legal disputes.
 - It is interesting that he still considers Nelly a confidant.
 - Often in the past, she has taken his side, and he clearly thinks that he can still manipulate her.
 - He is correct in his assumptions because since he had convinced Cathy to meet Linton back at the Heights, Nelly hasn't admitted to Edgar any of the transpired events.
 - She claims she didn't want part of the blame.
- After Heathcliff reveals his plan and Nelly counters that Cathy would be Edgar's heir, Heathcliff's response foreshadows the fact that Edgar's lawyer is now on Heathcliff's payroll.

- The only way he could know what Edgar's will is, is by being privy to it.
 - Edgar's lawyer must have shown Heathcliff, or at least shared its contents.
- This also demonstrates that Edgar is also aware of Women's Inheritance rights and Women's Inheritance rights after marriage, for he is able to leave everything to her, unless she gets married, to which it goes to her husband.
- When Nelly and Cathy arrive at Wuthering Heights, Linton has grown but is still as disagreeable as ever. He joins Cathy in making fun of Hareton's lack of a formal education and whines about not being able to travel the four miles to Thrushcross Grange.
 - He embodies his Uncle Edgar physically, but also in personality, for making fun and dismissing Heathcliff when they were all younger, especially in front of Catherine, became a sport for him.
 - This usually stemmed from jealousy from both parties, but in Linton's case, he is jealous of the fact that Hareton is strong and healthy, unlike himself.

The next day, Cathy reveals everything about her visit to her father. Edgar tries to explain to Cathy why he kept her from her cousins and her uncle, but she doesn't understand his reasoning.

Edgar commands his daughter to not have any contact with Linton. This upsets Cathy greatly, and she begins to have a secret, letter-writing relationship with Linton. Nelly discovers what Cathy has been doing and destroys Linton's letters to Cathy, but Nelly doesn't tell Edgar.

- Nelly's priorities seem to be skewed because instead of telling Edgar about Cathy's letter writing, she takes it upon herself to burn them all, only threatening to tell Edgar, but in the end we know that she won't because she wants no part in the blame.
- Nelly keeps Cathy's secret the same way that Cathy kept her secret in Chapter 18, thus acting as her friend.
 - However, Nelly will not always keep Cathy's secrets, especially when she has to save herself.

Chapter 22

During the winter, Cathy has little time to think of Linton because she is nursing her father, whom she thinks is dying. While walking one day, Cathy's hat blows over the garden wall. Nelly helps Cathy over the wall to fetch it, but she can't climb over the other side by herself. Meanwhile, Nelly searches for a key to open the gate, until Heathcliff appears. He scolds Cathy for writing letters to Linton and then suddenly stopping. He then proceeds to accuse her of playing games with his son's affection, letting her know that he is now dying of a broken heart.

Heathcliff tells Cathy that he will be away for a week and encourages her to visit her cousin. Cathy feels extremely guilty about what Heathcliff has told her, so she and Nelly take off for Wuthering Heights the next morning.

- Nelly is convinced to do something that she shouldn't do again, like escorting Cathy to the Heights.
- Cathy is determined to prove her loyalty to her sick cousin and is eager to dote on him.

- Nelly's own devotion to Cathy illustrates the difference between Catherine and her daughter. Because of Catherine's selfishness and willfulness, Nelly had no trouble contradicting Catherine and making her life miserable, but with Cathy, Nelly's actions are a mite different.
 - Nelly is genuinely fond of Cathy and therefore has very little difficulty rationalizing a way to agree to Cathy's requests.

Chapter 23

Nelly and Cathy travel in the rain all the way to Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff is indeed not home and Linton is more pathetic than ever. He is complaining about the servants and whines to Cathy for not visiting or writing back. He also mentions the idea of marriage. This vexes Cathy causing her to push his chair, sending him into a coughing fit. He uses this to claim that she injured him and worsened his condition; he guilts her into thinking she can nurse him back to health.

- It is instrumental in Heathcliff's plan for Cathy to marry Linton, to have Cathy take care of him.
- When Cathy discusses her attraction to Linton, her words echo her mother's, "he'll soon do as I direct him with some flight coaxing."
 - Cathy, like her mother, enjoys the notion of having control over a man.

Nelly catches a cold from travelling in the wet weather, so Cathy spends her days nursing both Nelly and her father, but unbeknownst to Nelly and Edgar, she spends her nights riding across the moors to visit Linton.

- Nelly's sickness can be seen as a contrived plot that is entirely too convenient to be believable, however, it is of course entirely plausible since Nelly is now older and weaker.
 - Nelly is unable to watch over Cathy and her endeavours throughout the day, giving her free reins of her own decisions.

Chapter 24

After Nelly recovers, she notices that Cathy is agitated in the evening. Cathy then pretends to retire early, but when Nelly cannot find her anywhere in the house, she waits in Cathy's room for her to return. When she is caught, she attempts a feeble lie, but ends up admitting the truth.

- Because of Nelly's sickness, Cathy is now serving as primary narrator, telling Nelly, who in turn tells Lockwood, about her evening visits to Wuthering Heights.
- Readers question Cathy's devotion to Linton, just as we questioned Catherine's devotion to Edgar.

On one of her visits, Hareton stops her and tells her that he can read the name above the door, however, Cathy asks him if he knows the number that are alongside it, to which he admits he does not. She proceeds to make fun of him, enraging Hareton causing him to force Linton upstairs on one of her visits to him. Later Hareton attempts to apologize to Cathy, but she refuses to listen to him.

- Cathy ridicules Hareton again, but this time her words lead to an injury toward Linton, echoing Heathcliff's actions toward Edgar to sort out his frustrations with Catherine.
 - This tells us that Hareton loves Cathy.
 - And like Edgar with Catherine, Linton holds Cathy accountable for Hareton's actions.

Cathy visits three days later, but Linton blames her for the previous trouble, so she leaves. She returns again two days later and tells Linton that this is her last visit, but this news causes him trouble, and he apologizes for his behaviour.

- Cathy doesn't tolerate Linton's self-centered, annoying characteristics, exemplified by his blaming her for something she didn't do, and threatens to not visit him.

Nelly listens to Cathy's tale, and then immediately tells Edgar everything. He forbids Cathy to continue visiting Linton, but says he will write and invite Linton to visit the Grange.

- Nelly abruptly changes her character, and for the first time she does the responsible, adult thing, which is tell Edgar about Cathy and Linton's developing relationship.
 - However, she doesn't share with him quite everything; she leaves out the part about Linton being very sick, which ends up providing Edgar with a false sense of security that his daughter might eventually marry and keep her family home.

Chapter 25

Breaking from her narrative, Nelly tells Lockwood that these events transpired a little over a year ago. Lockwood, however, is so intrigued that he begs her to continue the story.

- This chapter is important because it establishes the time frame of the previous winter, which is around the time Lockwood arrives and establishes Edgar's mindset shortly before his death.
 - Because the current events just occurred the previous winter, the characters who Lockwood encounters at Wuthering Heights may still be closely affected by the events that have transpired.
 - At Lockwood's visit to Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff had just recently lost his son and Cathy who were married, and the way they all reacted to the loss was indicative of their true natures.

Cathy obeys her father's wishes and Nelly tells Edgar that Linton is of frail health, to which he admits that he fears for Cathy's happiness, but concedes that if marrying Linton will make her happy, he would be in favour of it despite losing to Heathcliff.

- Edgar is now a bit misguided, more focused on making peace and his daughter's happiness, for he was unable to provide that for her mother.
 - Despite his best efforts, he is also unable to provide happiness for their daughter.

Although Linton never visits the Grange, after much pleading, Edgar allows for Cathy to visit with Linton on the moors.

Chapter 26

At the time of the first agreed upon spot on the moors, Linton is nowhere to be found. Cathy and Nelly are concerned with his health, but he is found closer to Wuthering Heights and assured them that he is getting stronger. However, during their entire visit he is squeamish and scared and constantly looking back toward his house. When it is time to leave, Cathy assures Linton that she promises to meet him again next Thursday. On the way home, Cathy and Nelly discuss Linton's health and decide to wait until the next visit to determine the extent of his deterioration.

- Cathy has mixed emotions about meeting her cousin and senses that Heathcliff is the one pushing them to meet.
 - Since we as readers already know this to be true, we are grateful for her cautiousness.
- Linton is clearly dying, yet his father is still using him as a means of revenge.
- Nelly's inability to reveal anything to Edgar foreshadows the forthcoming abduction.