

Wuthering Heights:

Introductory Notes

Dr. Amer Rasool Mahdi
Victorian Novel – 3rd Class
Department of English

Emily Bronte

1818-1848

- Born in northern England; grew up near the Yorkshire moors
- Never had a career, never married, never left her home (isolated from society)
- One of six children; sister Charlotte Bronte wrote the famous novel *Jane Eyre*
- Her mother died when she was only three
- She was an “intensely private” person
- Published *Wuthering Heights* in 1846

The Victorian Novel

- The Victorian Period is named after Queen Victoria
- It was a time when women were expected to be prim and completely centered on domestic life
- Romanticism was a popular movement at the time (novels characterized by gothic elements such as haunted mansions and twisted love stories)

Romanticism

- Stressed the importance of feeling rather than thinking
- Emphasis on the natural—the darker aspects of existence, especially human nature
- Focus on romantic attraction and strong emotions
- The “dark hero”- the protagonist who embodies the passionate, brooding, possibly evil nature

Yorkshire Moors

- “Wuthering” means stormy or turbulent/wild
- The moor is an essentially hostile environment but also beautiful.
- A desolate and isolated part of England
- The setting in *Wuthering Heights* reflects the area where Emily Bronte grew up
- Characterized by rugged hills with scattered, hard, black stones with little vegetation

Point of View

(the perspective from which a story is told)

- Events in *Wuthering Heights* are told from several different points of view
- The novel opens and closes from the point of view of Mr. Lockwood
- The next narrator of the story is Mrs. Ellen (Nelly) Dean; her point of view is “closer” to the story itself than Lockwood’s
- Embedded within the narration of Lockwood and Nelly are points when characters such as Isabella Linton and Cathy Linton speak for themselves.
- The reader must ultimately decide what he/she thinks about each character because of the varying points of view

Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange

- Bronte emphasizes the relationship of each house to the natural world around it.
- Wuthering Heights is located on top of a hill where it is exposed to the harsh weather and is dark and gloomy.
- Thrushcross Grange is located in a valley where it is protected by a stone wall. The Grange is also luxuriously decorated.
- The contrasting houses also directly reflect the inhabitants who live inside
- Thrushcross- Lintons; Wuthering Heights- Earnshaws

Characters

- Heathcliff: brought to WH as a young boy by old Mr. Earnshaw; has a wild, uncontrollable nature; consumed by his love for Catherine Earnshaw
- Catherine Earnshaw: a wild girl growing up at WH; befriends Heathcliff as a child; attracted to the refined life at TG; recognizes that she loves Heathcliff but is married to Edgar Linton
- Edgar Linton: a pampered, somewhat spoiled boy living at TG; polite and well educated; attempts to “civilize” Catherine but does not understand her passionate personality

Characters

- Earnshaw; used a pawn by Heathcliff to wreak revenge on Hindley; grows up to be big and strong with a bad temper
- Cathy Linton: daughter of Catherine Earnshaw and Edgar Linton; sheltered upbringing at TG; eventually brings peace and happiness to WH
- Hindley Earnshaw: despises Heathcliff for being favored by his father Mr. Earnshaw; unkind and self-destructive; mistreats and humiliates Heathcliff and Earnshaw's death
- Linton Heathcliff: the sickly son of Isabella Linton and Heathcliff; self-centered and unable to love anyone

Characters

- Isabella Linton: sister of Edgar Linton, raised at TG; shallow and weak; later becomes abusive and vengeful after marrying Heathcliff
- Mr. Lockwood: first narrator of the story; rents TG from Heathcliff; well-educated but doesn't like to be around people
- Mrs. Ellen (Nelly) Dean: second narrator of the story; once lived at WH then became housekeeper at TG; sensible and trusted by most characters in the story
- Joseph: elderly servant at WH; prone to evangelical ravings about sin/religious fanatic; speaks with a thick Yorkshire accent (sounds Scottish)

Literary Elements and Techniques

- Structure: The first half of the novel tells the story of Catherine Earnshaw, Heathcliff, and Edgar Linton. The second half mirrors the first by describing the actions of the children of the characters in the first half (Cathy Linton, Linton Heathcliff, and Hareton Earnshaw).
- Symbols: Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange
- Foreshadowing: the use of ghosts