

Wuthering Heights

1847

Emily Bronte

1818-1848

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Themes

- Catherine and Heathcliff's passion for one another seems to be the center of *Wuthering Heights*.
- It is stronger and more lasting than any other emotion displayed in the novel, and that it is the source of most of the major conflicts that structure the novel's plot.

- The book is actually structured around two parallel love stories,
- the first half of the novel centering on the love between Catherine and Heathcliff,
- while the less dramatic second half features the developing love between young Catherine and Hareton.

- In contrast to the first, the latter tale ends happily, restoring peace and order to Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange.
- The differences between the two love stories contribute to the reader's understanding of why each ends the way it does.

- Catherine and Heathcliff's love is based on their shared perception that they are identical.
- Catherine declares, famously,
- “I *am* Heathcliff,”
- while Heathcliff, upon Catherine's death, wails that he cannot live without his “soul,” meaning Catherine.
- The two do not kiss in dark corners or arrange secret dating, as adulterers do..

- Given that Catherine and Heathcliff's love is based upon their refusal to change over time.
- The disastrous problems of their generation are overcome not by some climactic (**causing climax**) reversal,
- but simply by the inexorable passage of time, and the rise of a new and distinct generation.

- Ultimately, *Wuthering Heights* presents a vision of life as a process of change, and celebrates this process over and against the romantic intensity of its principal characters.

Gothic Elements

- The novel includes Gothic elements, with the haunting sequences
- Heathcliff
- very obscure, mysterious, *nobody knows where he comes from and how he gets rich.*

Architectonic Structure

- The novel has a classic pattern which is recurrent in literature since Greek tragedy
- BASED ON
 - Harmony
 - Destruction of Harmony
 - Restoration of Harmony

The Precariousness of Social Class

- As members of the gentry, the Earnshaws and the Lintons occupy a somewhat precarious place within the hierarchy of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British society.

- At the top of British society was ?
- the royalty,
- followed by ?
- the aristocracy,
- then by ?
- the gentry,
- and then by ?
- the lower classes,
- who made up the vast majority of the population.

THE GENTRY

- The gentry held a very fragile social position even if they had servants and often large estates.
- They didn't have TITLES like the aristocrats.
- A man might see himself as a gentleman but find, that his neighbours did not share this view

- A discussion of whether or not a man was really a gentleman would consider such questions as:
 - how much land he owned,
 - how many tenants and servants he had,
 - how he spoke,
 - whether he kept horses and a carriage, and whether his money came from land or “trade”.

- Catherine's decision to marry Edgar so that she will be
- “the greatest woman of the neighborhood”
- is only the most obvious example.

The Lintons

- The Lintons are relatively firm in their gentry status but nonetheless take great pains to prove this status through their behaviors.

The Earnshaws

- The Earnshaws, on the other hand, rest on much shakier ground socially.
- They do not have a carriage, they have less land,
- and their house resembles that of a “homely, northern farmer” and not that of a gentleman.

Motifs

Doubles

- Brontë organizes her novel by arranging its elements - characters, places, and themes into pairs.
- Catherine and Heathcliff
- They are closely matched in many ways, and see themselves as identical.

- Catherine and young Catherine are both remarkably similar and strikingly different.
- The two houses, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, represent opposing worlds and values.

Heathcliff

- He is mysterious
- (dark skin, curly hair – almost like a foreigner.
- He's the classic outsider
- Wild manners
- Earthy sensibility

Heathcliff

- In contact with elements
- He's passionate
- He has sexual power of attraction.
- He's devilish but
- He has an enormous capacity to love and be loved

Symbols

- *Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts*

Moors

- Wide, wild expanses, high but somewhat soggy, and thus infertile.
- Moorland cannot be cultivated, and its uniformity makes navigation difficult.
- The moors serve very well as symbols of the wild threat posed by nature. As the setting for the beginnings of Catherine and Heathcliff's bond (the two play on the moors during childhood),
- the moorland transfers its symbolic associations onto the love affair

Ghosts

- Ghosts appear throughout *Wuthering Heights*, as they do in most other works of Gothic fiction.
- Brontë always presents them in such a way that whether they really exist remains ambiguous.
- Whether or not the ghosts are “real,” they symbolize the manifestation of the past within the present, and the way memory stays with people, permeating their day-to-day lives.

The Conflict between Nature and Culture

- In *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë constantly plays nature and culture against each other.
- Nature is represented by the Earnshaw family, and by Catherine and Heathcliff in particular.
- These characters are governed by their passions, not by reflection or ideals of civility.

- Correspondingly, the house where they live Wuthering Heights comes to symbolize a similar wildness.
- On the other hand, Thrushcross Grange and the Linton family represent culture, refinement, convention, and cultivation.