

**WOLFNOTE SUMMARY OF...**

**EMILY BRONTE'S**

**WUTHERING HEIGHTS**



**Context**

Wuthering Heights is a series of flashbacks and narrations from different characters in the book. At the end of this précis is a chronological list of the main events of the story.

The book starts in the year 1801 and tells us about a man, Lockwood, who has taken on the tenancy of Thrushcross Grange in the isolated moors of North England.

The landlord of the Grange is a moody, brooding man called Heathcliff who lives in Wuthering Heights. After two frightening and disturbing visits to Wuthering Heights, Lockwood manages to persuade Heathcliff's housekeeper, Nelly Dean, to tell him the story of Heathcliff and explain his encounter with an apparent ghost while spending the night at Wuthering Heights. Nelly is in a good position to do this because she has known the family since she was a young girl.

The head of the family was Mr. Earnshaw and he had two children, Hindley and Catherine (called Cathy). One day, Earnshaw brings home an orphan boy from Liverpool and although the two Earnshaw children both dislike this newcomer, Cathy quickly grows to love him. The two become inseparable and spend many happy times on the moors.

Hindley continues to resent this interloper whom Earnshaw treats as one of his own children, and in fact prefers him to Hindley.

On the death of Mrs. Earnshaw, Hindley becomes even more alienated from his father, and treats Heathcliff cruelly. Hindley is sent away to college while Heathcliff is kept at home.

On the death of Mr. Earnshaw, Hindley inherits Wuthering Heights and together with his wife, Frances, they take control of the farm. Heathcliff is treated as a common laborer, forced to work in the fields.

Cathy and Heathcliff remain close, and one night they wander to Thrushcross Grange to tease the spoilt Linton children, Edgar and Isabella. Cathy is bitten by a dog and is forced to stay at the Grange in order to recuperate. Heathcliff is unceremoniously ushered from the house.

Mrs. Linton strives to turn Cathy, the wild girl, into a proper young lady. Cathy is in awe of her wealthy surroundings and is smitten with Edgar. This complicates her relationship with Heathcliff for whom she still has passionate feelings.

Frances gives birth to a baby boy who is named Hareton and she dies shortly afterwards. Hindley becomes a heavy gambler and an alcoholic after this event and continues to treat Heathcliff badly.

Despite her passionate love for Heathcliff, Cathy wishes to improve her position socially and becomes engaged to Edgar. Unaware of Cathy's strong feelings for him, Heathcliff runs away from Wuthering Heights when he learns that Cathy cannot marry him.

Cathy and Edgar marry and shortly afterwards, Heathcliff returns, a very wealthy man. He fuels Hindley's gambling and drinking habits to the extent that he has to sign over Wuthering Heights to Heathcliff.

Heathcliff feels wronged by Cathy and the Lintons and seeks revenge on them all. His aim is to inherit Thrushcross Grange by marrying Isabella Linton. This will also make Cathy jealous. She realizes that she has made a mistake in marrying Edgar because Heathcliff is not willing to share her with anybody else. She gives birth to a daughter, Catherine and then dies. She had sought forgiveness from Heathcliff, but he curses her spirit to remain on earth and haunt him; anything as long as she does not leave him alone.

Isabella is unable to take Heathcliff's cruelty any longer and flees to London where she gives birth to Heathcliff's son, named Linton.

Thirteen years pass, during which time Nelly is Catherine's nursemaid at Thrushcross Grange. She has her mother's beauty and is also headstrong, but this is tempered by her father's more peaceful influence. Edgar protects her from the knowledge of Wuthering Heights and the two cousins that she has. It is only now that she becomes aware of Hareton, and they start to play together. Also at this time Isabella dies and Linton comes to live at the Grange, but is soon collected by Heathcliff to stay at Wuthering Heights. Linton is a sickly child and Heathcliff treats him cruelly.

A further three years elapse and one day while Catherine is out of the watchful eyes of her father and nursemaid, she meets Heathcliff. He is anxious for Catherine to marry Linton so that he can be sure of securing Thrushcross Grange on the death of the sickly Edgar.

Edgar forbids Catherine to meet with Linton and so they exchange letters.

When Nelly discovers this she destroys the letters so Catherine begins to sneak out at night to spend time with Linton. It is clear that Linton is pursuing Catherine, only because Heathcliff is forcing him in order to have his revenge on Edgar Linton.

Heathcliff needs to force the situation and he lures Nelly and Catherine to Wuthering Heights where he holds them prisoner. Catherine marries Linton and Edgar dies shortly afterwards.

The sickly Linton dies soon after this, and now Heathcliff has both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. He forces Catherine to remain at Wuthering Heights and she is treated like a servant.

Thrushcross Grange is rented to Lockwood.

This is the story as told to Lockwood by Nelly. He is appalled and ends his tenancy at the Grange and returns to London.

Six months elapse and Lockwood returns and is curious to know how the story has developed.

Although Catherine had teased Hareton about his illiteracy, she has now mellowed and feels guilty for this earlier treatment. She now has grown to love Hareton and they live quite happily at Wuthering Heights.

Heathcliff has lost the desire to see his vengeful schemes to an end for he is now totally haunted by the memory of Cathy, so much so that he speaks to her ghost. Everything he sees in Wuthering Heights reminds him of Cathy and what he has lost. The fact that between them Hareton and Catherine have so much in common with Cathy, and also that there is a growing love between them, means that Heathcliff has to divorce himself from the world in order to obtain some sort of peace. Eventually after spending a night on the moors where he presumably met Cathy's ghost, he returns to Wuthering Heights more contented. Partly through starvation, Heathcliff dies.

Hareton and Catherine inherit Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange and plan to be married on the next New Year's Day.

Lockwood goes to visit the graves of Cathy and Heathcliff; whose spirits roam the moors.

Wuthering Heights is the name of the family home of the Earnshaws, being completed in the year 1500 by presumably Hareton Earnshaw. This is marked on the stone above the main door.

Nelly, who was born in 1758, three years before Heathcliff and Cathy, tells the majority of the story. Nelly becomes a servant at Wuthering Heights and grows up with our two main characters. Mr. Earnshaw brings Heathcliff to Wuthering Heights in 1767, and he soon replaces Hindley, Cathy's older brother in Mr. Earnshaw's affections.

Initially, Hindley and Cathy treat Heathcliff cruelly, she considers him to be coarse and rough, but soon the two become great friends. They spend much of their time playing on the moors inventing stories and pretending to be kings and queens. There they have a special place. Earnshaw sends Hindley away to college. Hindley marries Frances and on the death of Mr. Earnshaw in 1777, takes possession of Wuthering Heights.

Heathcliff's education is cut short and he becomes the farm laborer. In this year, Cathy has her first visit to Thrushcross Grange where she is attacked by a guard dog and is forced to recuperate in the Grange where Mrs. Linton endeavors to transform her from a wild girl into a socialite.

In 1778, Hareton is born to Hindley and Frances, and she dies shortly afterwards. Hindley grieved at his loss, turns to alcohol and gambling in order to escape his grief.

Two years later, Heathcliff overhears Nelly and Cathy talking him. Cathy reveals that she is attracted to the wealth and glamour of Thrushcross Grange and could never marry Heathcliff. He leaves Wuthering Heights and doesn't hear the remainder of the conversation where Cathy reveals her undying love for Heathcliff.

Cathy becomes engaged to Edgar Linton and they are married in 1783. Shortly after this, Heathcliff arrives back at Wuthering Heights. He now has a vast fortune and he starts to put into motion his plan for revenge on all those that have hurt and humiliated him.

Cathy is clearly excited at Heathcliff's return and Edgar realizes that she still has strong feelings for Heathcliff. Cathy realizes that she has made a mistake in marrying Edgar, but still thinks that she can enjoy the best of both worlds, her status with Edgar and her freedom and love with Heathcliff.

Heathcliff is hurt by Cathy's marriage and wishes to exact revenge on her. He also hopes to obtain Thrushcross Grange for himself and, therefore, takes advantage of Isabella Linton, Edgar's sister's infatuation for him. Heathcliff wants to use her in order to inherit the Grange and make Cathy jealous.

In 1784 Heathcliff and Isabella elope. Cathy is taken ill and just prior to her death, she gives birth to Catherine.

The next year Isabella can no longer take the cruelty from Heathcliff and she moves to London where she gives birth to Linton.

In 1785, Hindley dies and Heathcliff inherits Wuthering Heights as he holds the mortgage on the property, brought about by Hindley's spiraling debt to him.

Twelve years elapse and it is now 1797, and Edgar has been extremely protective of Catherine, and she does not know about her cousins Hareton and Linton. Catherine finally meets Hareton and visits Wuthering Heights for the first time. She teases him about his lack of education.

A year later, Isabella dies in London, and Linton is brought back to the Grange where Edgar hopes to continue his upbringing. However, Heathcliff insists that his son is returned to him at Wuthering Heights.

In 1800, Heathcliff is anxious that Catherine and Linton should marry. In this way, he will be able to achieve his goal by obtaining control of Thrushcross Grange. Heathcliff is anxious that the marriage takes place before the failing Edgar dies, and in order to secure this he abducts Catherine and Nelly who are kept prisoner at Wuthering Heights. On Edgar's death, Heathcliff obtains control of the Grange. Nelly stays at the Grange and is given permission to rent it out, hence Lockwood's entrance on the scene. When Lockwood hears all the details of the story, he decides that he no longer wishes to take on the tenancy of the Grange.

However, in 1802 he returns, where he finds out that Heathcliff has died.

Catherine and Hareton are in love. They plan to marry.

## Author

### Emily Bronte (1818 – 1848)

Rev. Patrick Bronte and Maria Branwell Bronte lived in Thornton, Yorkshire and had six children, Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte, Emily, Anne, and Branwell. Three of these children were to become famous novelists and poets.

Emily only wrote the one novel in 1847, which was **Wuthering Heights**. It is clear that Emily's environment and work greatly influenced this literary piece. Her father was of Irish extraction and was known for his poetry and imagination, and clearly had an effect on Emily's writing. This one novel was greatly criticized at the time for its dark and brooding atmosphere. In fact, her sister Charlotte, in the preface of the book which was written shortly after Emily's death, says 'whether it is right or advisable to create beings like Heathcliff, I do not know. I scarcely think it is'.

The mood of the book was not acceptable to the early Victorian audience, unlike the works created by her sisters such as Jane Eyre, for although these included the same gothic gloom, the central character, Heathcliff stepped across the bounds of acceptable behavior, even for these times.

Her life was cut short when she caught a severe cold after attending her brother's funeral. This spread to her lungs and she died of tuberculosis on 19<sup>th</sup> December 1848. One can only surmise what further work Emily would have gone on to create. She, along with her other two gifted sisters, only really started their literary careers when the two oldest Bronte children, Maria and Elizabeth, had died. It is clear that death at an early age was quite common in this society, a fact that is mirrored in the collective works of the Bronte sisters.

The sisters' works had been published under the name 'Bell' with Charlotte using the male pseudonym Currer Bell, Emily using Ellis Bell and Anne using Acton Bell. It was assumed by their reading audience that all three 'Bells' were the one author. After the deaths of Emily and Anne, Charlotte disclosed to the reading public the true identities of the authors' works such as Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights, Agnes Grey and The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, together with the sisters' numerous poems.

Long after its initial publication, Wuthering Heights became one of the classics of English literature, being fully appreciated by later generations of readers.

## List of Main Characters

### Heathcliff

He is the main character of Wuthering Heights around whom the story is woven. He was orphaned as a child and brought from the city of Liverpool to the bleak North English moors. The one love of his life was Catherine (Cathy) Earnshaw and although they agreed that they were soul mates, Cathy wished to improve herself socially, and married Edgar Linton. As a result of this betrayal, Heathcliff spends the majority of his life seeking revenge on those that have wronged him. Cathy's ghost is instrumental in bringing about Heathcliff's madness and death towards the end of the book.

### Catherine (Cathy) Earnshaw

As a child Cathy was wild and headstrong and her determination enables her to get everything that she wants. Although she only loves Heathcliff, she has a choice between him and Edgar Linton, as he too loves her. She chooses Edgar because of his status, but ends up hurting both him and Heathcliff. She dies prematurely after the birth of her daughter Catherine, and it is reputed that her ghost haunted Heathcliff for over eighteen years.

**Edgar Linton**

He is the son of a wealthy and respected family and he falls in love with and marries Cathy. On Cathy's death, he brings up Catherine, their daughter, in a protective atmosphere.

**Linton Heathcliff**

He is the son of Heathcliff and Isabella, Edgar's sister. He is a sickly child and is manipulated by his father as part of his plan for revenge on the Linton family. He marries Catherine Linton at Heathcliff's insistence.

**Catherine Linton**

Catherine is the daughter of Cathy and Edgar Linton and she possesses many of her mother's characteristics including a rebellious spirit. She does obtain happiness at the end of the novel, thanks to the good upbringing she obtained from Edgar Linton.

**Hareton Earnshaw**

He is the son of Hindley, Cathy's brother and Frances and is, therefore, Cathy's nephew and rightful heir to Wuthering Heights. Although circumstances meant that he did not receive a proper education, he is nevertheless an honorable person, despite being bullied by Heathcliff. He eventually recognizes Heathcliff's failings, but is able to forgive him and is actually the only character to mourn Heathcliff's death. He eventually feels guilty regarding his behavior and is able to love Catherine and they marry at the end of the story.

**Hindley Earnshaw**

He is Cathy's older brother, extremely jealous of Heathcliff who has usurped him in the Earnshaw household. After the death of his father he treats Heathcliff badly obtaining revenge on this interloper. On his wife, Frances' death, he becomes an alcoholic and gambler and loses control over Wuthering Heights to Heathcliff in exchange for payment of his debts.

**Frances Earnshaw**

She is Hindley's sickly wife who dies soon after Hareton is born.

**Isabella Linton**

She becomes infatuated with Heathcliff who marries her in order to eventually inherit Thrushcross Grange, the Linton family home. She flees from Heathcliff's brutality to London, where she lives with their son, Linton, until her death.

**Ellen (Nelly) Dean**

Nelly is the main narrator of Wuthering Heights, servant to Cathy and later nursemaid to Catherine. She is able to tell the majority of the story, not without bias.

**Lockwood**

He becomes the tenant of Thrushcross Grange when Heathcliff gains control over this house. As an outsider, he becomes instrumental in bringing the story to a climax, as he is the only other character apart from Heathcliff to encounter Cathy's ghost.

**Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw**

Mr. Earnshaw, Cathy and Hindley's father, brings Heathcliff into the family and soon favors the orphan over his own son. Mrs. Earnshaw favors her own son to Heathcliff.

**Mr. and Mrs. Linton**

These are Edgar and Isabella's parents and are instrumental in introducing Cathy to life in the upper circles of society. They die soon after nursing Cathy back to health.

**Zillah**

She is Nelly's source of information at Wuthering Heights, being Heathcliff's housekeeper.

**Chapters 1 and 2****Summary**

A Mr. Lockwood has traveled from London to take up the tenancy of Thrushcross Grange. He visits his landlord, a Mr. Heathcliff who resides at Wuthering Heights, the title of the novel. Above the door of Wuthering Heights are the date 1500 and the name Hareton Earnshaw.

Lockwood does not receive a warm welcome and the house servant, Joseph, is brusque. There is a pack of dogs running around the farm buildings.

Heathcliff seems not to trust Lockwood and leaves him alone with the fearsome dogs. Despite this inhospitable treatment Lockwood decides to return to Wuthering Heights, and on this occasion, he knocks at the door, but there is no response.

A storm starts to develop and eventually a young man appears and requests Lockwood to follow him. Inside he sees a woman who he assumes to be Heathcliff's wife. He is advised that Heathcliff is out on the moors, which seems strange to Lockwood as a full-blown snowstorm is developing. Lockwood asks for help in finding his way back to the Grange, but this is not forthcoming. Taking a lantern, Joseph, the servant, thinks he is stealing the lamp and orders the dogs to attack him. He receives a bad nosebleed and is forced to spend the night at Wuthering Heights.

### **Interpretation**

This book is set in the desolate Yorkshire Moor country where the Bronte family was brought up. The name 'Wuthering', is a north of England term used to describe the bleak and wild, windswept countryside, and in particular, the wild storms that are prevalent in this area.

The whole story is set against this backdrop and the harsh forces of nature that prevail in this part of England influence the main characters.

Heathcliff is a brooding man with a vengeful soul.

The narrator of the story, Lockwood, tries to make sense of his surroundings and Heathcliff. Lockwood suggests that although Heathcliff did not shake his hand, he is a gentleman nonetheless and although it is clear that Heathcliff has no desire to see Lockwood again at the end of Chapter 1, he still plans to visit Wuthering Heights once more. One must, therefore, assume that Lockwood is not the most reliable of narrators.

We are also introduced to two servants in Chapter 1, firstly, Joseph who is a cantankerous old man who appears to be fastidious to extremes, and secondly, Zillah who is Heathcliff's housekeeper. It is she who saves Lockwood from the pack of dogs. She will also be the source of much information as to the happenings at Wuthering Heights for Nelly, who is the primary narrator of this tale (Catherine's servant).

The date above the door '1500' is possibly the date when the house was completed.

It is clear from the initial chapters that Bronte goes to great lengths to provide the reader with a detailed picture of life on the moors at this time, which is 1801, when Lockwood took up the tenancy of the Grange. This detail provides the reader with a sense of realism and authenticity regarding the set and the story. The significance of the name 'Hareton Earnshaw' is, however, not made clear, but Bronte is making the point that Wuthering Heights has been in the possession of the Earnshaw family since it was built.

In Chapter 2 we obtain some information about those who currently reside in Wuthering Heights. Apart from the servants Joseph and Zillah, there is Heathcliff's widowed daughter-in-law, though her first name is not mentioned yet. She is referred to as 'the missis'. Joseph also mentions 'the mother' stating that she died and went straight to the devil. Again this serves to add mystery regarding the occupants of Wuthering Heights. There was no sense of family existing within this house. It is clear that these characters do not get on well together, let alone like one another, but they are inexorably bound together.

You have to question Lockwood's judgment in returning to Wuthering Heights for a second time when he clearly is unwelcome, especially when the weather is turning for the worse. In the end it is Hareton (no connection to the inscription) who brings him inside. He incorrectly assumes that the woman is Heathcliff's wife and then mistakes Hareton for Heathcliff's son. Lockwood's inability to analyze situations correctly makes his narration suspect.

We learn in Chapter 2 that Mrs. Heathcliff, despite the surroundings, is a beautiful woman and that Hareton is proud of his heritage.

Heathcliff broods over the loss of his wife and son. The reader, however, is unable to sympathize with these characters because of the way Bronte has presented them.

## **Chapters 3 and 4**

### **Summary**

Zillah takes Lockwood to a bedroom that has not been used for quite some time as Heathcliff keeps it sealed. In the room he discovers three diaries, which have the following names written on them – Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Heathcliff, and Catherine Linton. Lockwood decides to read the contents. The entries reveal that Cathy is friendly with Heathcliff, but that her brother Hindley treats Heathcliff badly.



Lockwood falls asleep, but a branch tapping on the window awakens him. In order to reach the branch Lockwood pushes his hand through the window, but an ice-cold hand grabs him. He tries to struggle free, but then hears a voice crying out 'Let me in, let me in'. The voice identifies itself as Catherine Linton. Eventually he breaks free and piles the books against the hole in the window. When they begin to fall, he screams. Heathcliff bursts into the room declaring that it is haunted and Lockwood must leave. When Lockwood mentions the name Catherine, this brings anguish to Heathcliff's face.

Lockwood spends the rest of the night in the kitchen and when it is dawn he returns to the Grange, soaked and chilled.

When Lockwood recovers from his ordeal he is very curious about the occupants of Wuthering Heights and he asks Nelly for any information. Nelly advises him that Catherine Linton (Cathy) is the daughter of her late master, Mr. Earnshaw. Nelly was a servant at Wuthering Heights when Cathy, her brother Hindley, and Heathcliff were growing up. Cathy is the last of the Lintons and Hareton is the last of the Earnshaws. Nelly also reveals that Heathcliff had married Mr. Linton's sister Isabella.

These snippets of information only increase Lockwood's curiosity further and he encourages Nelly to tell him the complete history of the events.

She begins her story at Wuthering Heights when Mr. Earnshaw, the master, brought home an orphan boy from Liverpool and named him Heathcliff, after a son of his who had died in childbirth. Mr. Earnshaw had two children, Cathy and Hindley, but over the years he grew to love Heathcliff more than his own son Hindley. Cathy initially disliked the sallow-skinned Heathcliff but soon grew to love him, and they would spend many happy hours running over the moors.

Hindley was sent away to school, thus increasing the rift with his father.

Mrs. Earnshaw died within two years of Heathcliff's arrival.

### **Interpretation**

In this note we refer to Catherine Linton, nee Earnshaw (Heathcliff's love) as Cathy.

What we have seen of Heathcliff in the first two chapters gives the reader the impression that he is heartless and cold, but there is now an indication that he is a deeply passionate man, tormented over the loss of Cathy.

The reader is already aware that there is a complex and intriguing tale to be told, but Bronte cleverly introduces another element, that of the supernatural, in Chapter 3.

Lockwood has come into direct physical contact with the ghost of Cathy, who died 18 years previously, and this specter is waiting for Heathcliff. Cynics may say that she is a product of Lockwood's imagination, and it is clear that Bronte has presented these facts in this way so that the reader can make up his or her own mind on the subject. The ghost of Cathy is not a true spirit, for Lockwood in order to release himself, pulls Cathy's wrist down onto the broken glass causing blood to flow.

Bronte also cleverly whets the reader's appetite by revealing important extracts from the diaries, almost like a prelude to what is about to be revealed.

Lockwood's experiences at Wuthering Heights prompt him to ask Nelly Dean, also known as Ellen, to give him details about the history of Wuthering Heights. From this point, Nelly becomes the primary narrator of the novel. Her description of Heathcliff's arrival at Wuthering Heights makes the reader sympathetic for both Heathcliff and Hindley. Hindley's reaction is understandable, as Heathcliff has replaced him in the home, although he was closer to his mother, when she dies 2 years later, he is left utterly alone.

The description of Cathy and Heathcliff's childhoods clearly indicates that these were happy times for them both when they were away from the house. Although Cathy is portrayed as a loving daughter, she could also be defiant and cruel. In reaction to the negative side of Cathy's nature, Heathcliff would be sullen and vindictive. These early chapters are important in understanding how the characters of Cathy and Heathcliff develop.

### **Chapters 5, 6 and 7**

#### **Summary**

Mr. Earnshaw's health is failing and he will not hear a bad word against Heathcliff, further alienating Hindley, who is sent away. His servant, Joseph, who is a religious fanatic, has more and more influence over his master.

Cathy does not realize the seriousness of her father's condition and this only hits her when he dies.

Heathcliff consoles Cathy with talk of the afterlife.

Hindley returns for his father's funeral accompanied by his new wife, Frances. He immediately takes control of the farmhouse, moving the servants Joseph and Nelly to the back kitchen, and Heathcliff is to receive no education. He forces him to become the farm laborer.

Heathcliff and Cathy are still able to escape the real world and play on the moors.

One day, the pair disappears and Hindley orders the doors to be bolted when night draws in. Nelly waits up for them, but Heathcliff returns alone saying that Cathy is at Thrushcross Grange. They had

entered the gardens of the Grange with a view to watching Edgar and Isabella Linton, the children of the Linton household in order to make fun of them. They were discovered, and the Lintons' dog bit Cathy, and she was unable to escape. A servant came out and carried Cathy into the Grange. Mr. And Mrs. Linton say that Cathy's injury is too serious, and she must spend the night at the Grange, but Heathcliff is sent away. Mr. Linton calls on Hindley the next day and chastises him over the way he is raising his sister. Hindley takes his anger out on Heathcliff, telling him that he will be thrown out if he ever talks to Cathy again. Cathy remains at the Grange for 5 weeks, during which time Mrs. Linton is determined to transform the wild girl from the moors into a young lady.

When she eventually returns to Wuthering Heights she has undergone a transformation. She humiliates Heathcliff in front of Hindley by saying that he looks dirty and is no comparison to Edgar Linton. Heathcliff is deeply hurt by this insult and by the change that has taken place in Cathy. Hindley decides to invite the Lintons for dinner and they agree, provided that Heathcliff is kept away from their children. Hindley agrees. Despite this, Nelly encourages Heathcliff to make himself presentable for when the Lintons arrive.

When the Lintons arrive, Heathcliff is sent to the kitchen, but he overhears Edgar insulting him and he throws hot applesauce in Edgar's face. Heathcliff is locked in the attic. Cathy blames Edgar for getting Heathcliff into trouble and after dinner she sneaks away to visit Heathcliff. Heathcliff tells Nelly that he will get his revenge on Hindley one day.

### **Interpretation**

Up until this point, the reader is somewhat confused regarding the complex relationships between all the Earnshaws, Lintons, Heathcliff and the two Catherine's, but now that we are finally hearing the complete story from the start, the pieces of the jigsaw will start to fall into place.

Bronte deliberately makes these early chapters ambiguous in an attempt to arouse the curiosity of the reader and this succeeds, especially with the hint that there is a supernatural element to the tale. This is highlighted by Heathcliff's reaction to the news that Lockwood has seen a ghost and the reader can now be certain that they will be told a dark gothic story.

In Chapter 5, we see how the bond between Cathy and Heathcliff grows and the extent of their love is demonstrated when Mr. Earnshaw dies.

Although none of the Earnshaw household can be described as religious, good and evil are present throughout the story. Joseph's religion is more superstition, and Cathy and Heathcliff's view of heaven is more fitting of a fairy tale.

We have the first indication that the feelings Cathy and Heathcliff share are not related to earthly love, but more a spiritual bond. When they are together on the moors they become wild creatures, or as Hindley describes 'as savages'. It is only here that you can see their true nature. They enjoy the rough freedom of this environment, which is in sharp contrast to the world of Thrushcross Grange.

Cathy's confinement here enables her to experience a totally different world, a world that is safe from the harsh elements of the moors. This is where the Linton children have grown up, spoilt and unfulfilled, and unprepared to face the harsh reality of the real world.

When Cathy recovers from her run-in with the Lintons' dog, she has undergone a transformation thanks to Mrs. Linton. She now wishes to improve herself socially and recognizes Heathcliff, not as her rebellious friend, but as a member of the lower classes, because of his untidy appearance. It should be noted that the Lintons had a higher social standing than the Earnshaws.

Cathy wishes to live in a world of luxury and sophistication and in doing so she rejects everything that Heathcliff stands for. At Thrushcross Grange, Cathy was treated like a queen, whereas Heathcliff was shown the door. He will never be welcomed at the Grange. One must remember, however, that this is Nelly's narration, obtained from details given to her by Heathcliff, so the reader is obtaining this information third or even fourth-hand. It is safe to assume that the actual facts may have been twisted by Heathcliff's account of them.

During Chapter 7, we obtain details of the first major change in Cathy's character, but there is still a bond between them as indicated by her secret visit to Heathcliff when he is locked in the attic.

### **Chapters 8, 9 and 10**

#### **Summary**

Hindley's wife, Frances, is suffering from consumption and she is also pregnant. Soon after giving birth to Hareton, she dies, and Nelly is expected to bring up the baby. The death of his wife causes Hindley to become even more dominant, which causes all the servants to leave except Nelly and Joseph. Hindley treats Heathcliff more cruelly, who secretly delights in Hindley's misfortune.

At this time Cathy has almost a split personality, being wild and free when with Heathcliff, and a demure young lady when with the Lintons.

Heathcliff becomes jealous about the amount of time Cathy is spending with Edgar and decides to confront her with this. Cathy responds by belittling him.

Nelly insists on being a chaperone to Cathy and Edgar, which greatly annoys Cathy. On one occasion, Cathy pinches Nelly in order to try and get her to leave. Edgar tries to intervene, and Cathy slaps him about his ears. This is the first time that he witnesses Cathy's wild temper.

Meanwhile, Hindley more and more drowns his sorrow with alcohol. During one such episode, he accidentally drops Hareton over the banister, and fortunately Heathcliff is there to catch the baby.

Heathcliff overhears a conversation between Cathy and Nelly. Cathy states that she could never marry Heathcliff, as this would degrade her. This is not only because Heathcliff appears rough and coarse, but also because he allows Hindley to bring him down low. Heathcliff is upset at these words from Cathy and decides to leave Wuthering Heights before he has heard the rest of the conversation.

Cathy feels she must marry Edgar because she would then become a lady of high standing in the area. Cathy goes on to tell Nelly that she loves Heathcliff more deeply than anything else in the world. They are so alike at heart that they are essentially the same person, the same soul.

On the night of his disappearance Cathy had spent the time looking for him in the rain. As a result she came down with a bad chill, which led to a fever from which she almost died. Once again, she recuperated at the Grange. Unfortunately, both Mr. and Mrs. Linton catch the fever and die.

Three years after his parents' deaths, Edgar marries Cathy, and Nelly leaves Wuthering Heights and Hareton and moves to Thrushcross Grange. She is forced to do this by both Edgar and Hindley.

Six months later, Heathcliff suddenly appears and arrives at the Grange. Nelly to Edgar, Cathy being in the kitchen, introduces him. On learning of Heathcliff's arrival, Cathy is excited. It is clear that Cathy and Heathcliff still love each other. Heathcliff surprises those present by saying that he is staying at Wuthering Heights.

There is much coming and going between the two houses and Isabella becomes infatuated with Heathcliff. Heathcliff does not reciprocate her feelings, but is only interested in becoming the heir to Thrushcross Grange. This can be achieved by marriage to Isabella.

### **Interpretation**

Hindley undergoes a slow degeneration after the death of his wife. He has a drinking problem and hardly has any contact with his son, leaving Nelly to bring the child up.

Heathcliff takes pleasure in witnessing Hindley's downfall.

The reader is also clear that Nelly dislikes Cathy, considering her to be a spoiled child.

The situation now sets character against character. There is hatred between Heathcliff and Hindley, and also between Heathcliff and Edgar, and Heathcliff is bent on obtaining revenge.

Cathy wishes to have her cake and eat it, and she develops a dual personality in order that she can be with Heathcliff and Edgar, and enjoy the best of both worlds. She obviously thinks that she will be able to marry Edgar and yet still carry on a relationship with Heathcliff. Her plan may well have succeeded if Heathcliff had not overheard her conversation with Nelly. If he had stayed to hear the whole conversation, then this may have inspired him to improve himself and keep Cathy, but he leaves Wuthering Heights with a feeling of total rejection, unaware of the spiritual connection Cathy has for him. It was only the love that he received from Cathy that enabled Heathcliff to endure the cruelty received from Hindley.

In Chapter 10, the reader clearly sees that Cathy is bored with her life at the Grange, and she misses Heathcliff. His unexpected arrival excites Cathy and Edgar is aware that she still holds strong feelings for Heathcliff.

Bronte introduces many questions for the reader, e.g. where has Heathcliff obtained his wealth? Has he improved himself? Will he be able to win Cathy back from Edgar? Why is this man of status residing with the man he hates, Hindley, at Wuthering Heights?

Bronte, by introducing these posers, ensures the attention of the reader.

The reader may suspect that it is revenge that is motivating Heathcliff, and that his transformation may only be superficial.

There is interesting duality here in that Cathy was an outsider when she arrived at Thrushcross Grange, just as Heathcliff was an outsider when he arrived at Wuthering Heights. These insecurities will always be with our two main characters, and that is a reason why they only feel comfortable together away from both these houses on the moors.

### **Chapters 11 and 12**

#### **Summary**

After her long absence from Wuthering Heights, Nelly decides to return in order to speak with Hindley. However, instead she meets Hareton who does not remember her and greets her with a hail of stones and curses. No doubt these actions have been copied from Heathcliff. Nelly runs away.

The next day, Heathcliff comes to the Grange and embraces Isabella, much to the annoyance of Cathy. Heathcliff tells her 'I'm not your husband, you needn't be jealous of me.'



Edgar challenges Cathy and Heathcliff regarding their relationship. Heathcliff takes the position that Cathy has wronged him and that he will be revenged. Cathy taunts Edgar encouraging him to fight with Heathcliff. Edgar strikes Heathcliff and then goes to get assistance in order to have him removed from the house. Heathcliff, realizing that he will be outnumbered, leaves. Cathy is asked to choose between Heathcliff and Edgar, but Cathy will not answer her husband. Instead, she locks herself in her room refusing to eat. Edgar then decides to persuade his sister Isabella to pursue Heathcliff, as their relationship would end the link between Cathy and Heathcliff.

After a few days without food, Cathy calls for Edgar begging forgiveness. She is delirious and talks about her childhood with Heathcliff and she has a foreboding of her death. Nelly insists on keeping the windows in her bedroom closed, but Cathy staggers to them and throws them open claiming she can see Wuthering Heights. She goes on to speak about her death, but that she will wander the world until she is with Heathcliff. Edgar is appalled to find Cathy in such a weakened state and scolds Nelly for not telling him sooner.

That night Isabella runs away with Heathcliff and Edgar disowns his sister for this scandal.

The doctor arrives and predicts that Cathy will not survive the illness.

### **Interpretation**

Heathcliff is already setting the wheels in motion regarding his revenge against those who have wronged him at Wuthering Heights, principally Hindley. In his childhood, Heathcliff had taken Hindley's father away from him, and now he is doing the same with his son. He has assumed a parental role regarding matters relating to Hareton. He delights in teaching him bad habits. Just as Hindley ended Heathcliff's formal education, so Heathcliff has done the same with Hareton.

Heathcliff now turns his attention to Thrushcross Grange and encourages Isabella's infatuation. He has no feelings for her because she is only a pale shadow of what Cathy is. He only wants to use her. Heathcliff still harbors a great hurt from the time when he was removed from the Grange as a child and he is determined to acquire it.

It is clear that marriage to Edgar is having adverse effects on Cathy's mental and physical state. The rebel inside Cathy wants to see the two men in her life fight over her. Both these men cannot understand Cathy. Edgar cannot fathom Cathy's attraction to Heathcliff who he considers to be rough and coarse and Heathcliff cannot come to terms with Cathy's marriage to a sniveling, weak Edgar. Edgar shows how much he loves Cathy by acting out of character by striking Heathcliff, and although this was done in the security of his own home, it still required significant courage.

Nelly shows little sympathy towards Cathy, taking the attitude that she has brought the situation upon herself. Clearly she has not provided any support for Cathy. Despite her brash exterior, Cathy shows that she is indeed vulnerable and has an unnatural fear of being alone. She has always had somebody to care for her every need, whether it was her father, Nelly, Heathcliff or Edgar. She is drawn back to her childhood and the happy days she spent on the moors as a child. This is symbolized by her opening of the windows. She is clearly unsettled and fears she will not find peace until she is together again with Heathcliff. By her pining for Heathcliff, she shows Edgar that she does not want him. She seems prepared to take on the role of martyr for the love she feels for Heathcliff.

The character of Heathcliff becomes clearer over these chapters. He is now larger than life, almost a supernatural figure, charismatic and powerful, full of villainy. He curses the Linton family for making him unworthy in the eyes of Cathy, who he considers has betrayed him.

The rest of the novel deals with the elaborate plan Heathcliff has to wreak revenge against those who have wronged him.

### **Chapters 13, 14 and 15**

#### **Summary**

Cathy is in fact pregnant and Edgar tries to nurse her back to health. He hopes for a male heir.

Isabella has married Heathcliff and writes to Edgar begging his forgiveness, but this is ignored. She then writes to Nelly and asks her to visit Wuthering Heights. She is distraught at the way Heathcliff treats her. In the letter she tells of her loneliness, as Hareton, Joseph and Hindley are rude to her. She regrets having married Heathcliff and cannot see any way for her to escape.

When Heathcliff learns of Cathy's illness he blames Edgar for this.

Nelly visits Wuthering Heights, but she can give no words of comfort to Isabella from Edgar who still will have no contact with her. Heathcliff is eager to learn about Cathy's situation, clearly hurting Isabella. Heathcliff wants to see Cathy and asks Nelly to arrange this. She refuses, and Heathcliff responds by saying that he will go to the Grange and Nelly will be kept at Wuthering Heights. Nelly then reluctantly agrees to take a letter to Cathy.

Four days pass before Nelly is able to deliver the letter to Cathy while the rest of the household are at church. Cathy is close to death and cannot even summon up the strength to hold the letter. Just then Heathcliff bursts into the room and Cathy accuses him and Edgar of breaking her heart. They embrace

and then Heathcliff accuses Cathy of neglecting herself, bringing death upon her. The distraught Cathy cries and begs forgiveness. Heathcliff says that she is responsible for breaking both their hearts. He tells her, 'I forgive what you have done to me. I love my murderer, but yours! How can I?' He considers Cathy to be the murderer of both of them. Cathy begs Heathcliff to stay and Edgar returns from church, and bursting into Cathy's room Heathcliff puts Cathy's body into Edgar's arms begging him to take care of her before he attacks Heathcliff.

Nelly promises to keep Heathcliff advised of Cathy's condition.

### **Interpretation**

Edgar obviously loved Cathy when they were married, but it does not compare to the passionate love Cathy and Heathcliff have for each other. The reader may wonder if Edgar's attentiveness to Cathy is merely concern over his unborn heir, especially as Edgar's rival would inherit the property, being married to his sister Isabella.

The reader must also be skeptical about Nelly's narration concerning Heathcliff and Isabella. She portrays Heathcliff as a totally evil man. Although there is evidence to suggest that Heathcliff blames Edgar for Cathy's condition and takes this out on Isabella, his actions stem from the wrongs he has suffered at the hands of the Lintons and Cathy. Isabella's life at Wuthering Heights is dire, being surrounded by the unsavory presence of Hindley, Hareton and Joseph.

In these chapters we obtain an explanation of the depth of Heathcliff's love for Cathy. He compares it to the love Edgar has for Cathy and states 'If he loved with all the powers of his puny being, he couldn't love as much in 18 years as I could in a day.'

Nelly is astonished at Heathcliff's fervor and this is one of the factors that eventually persuade her to take a letter from him to Cathy. She gives the impression that she clearly dislikes him, but she allows herself to be manipulated by the persuasive Heathcliff.

The scene between Heathcliff and Cathy is very revealing. She blames Heathcliff and Edgar for breaking her heart, and although she reaffirms her feelings for Heathcliff she does not once say that she regrets marrying Edgar. Heathcliff responds by saying that she had broken both their hearts. Heathcliff is unable to forgive Cathy and perhaps this is one of the factors that will haunt him later in the novel. When she collapses into Heathcliff's arms we obtain a clear picture of how Nelly views the scene. She thinks that Cathy has died and makes the remark 'Far better that she should be dead than a lingering burden and misery maker to all about her.' Despite Heathcliff's feelings, which are running high in this scene, he realizes that the best place for Cathy is with Edgar and this is symbolized by his passing her body to Edgar.

Bronte makes it clear to the reader that Cathy's death will be a blessing to Nelly, but will signify the start of Heathcliff's torment.

The central theme of Wuthering Heights is the love between Cathy and Heathcliff, and Bronte has written the book in such a way that the reader realizes that the cruel actions of Heathcliff stem from the pain of his love for Cathy. Although Heathcliff dishes out much misery to those around him, the reader can sympathize to some degree. Isabella receives harsh treatment from Heathcliff and she can be regarded as an innocent victim, yet the reader tends to overlook her suffering because their imagination is linked to the passion between Heathcliff and Cathy.

## **Chapters 16 and 17**

### **Summary**

Cathy gives birth to a daughter called Catherine. She is two month's premature and shortly after, Cathy dies.

Heathcliff soon learns of Cathy's death and is angered to learn that she did not mention his name during her dying moments. He curses her spirit while grieving over his loss. Before the funeral Edgar watches over Cathy's body by day and Heathcliff watches by night. Cathy wears a locket around her neck, which contains a lock of Edgar's hair. Heathcliff removes this and replaces it with a lock of his own hair. Nelly finds the strands of Edgar's hair and ends up entwining both his and Heathcliff's in the locket. Cathy is buried in the plot closest to the moors away from her relatives and also the Linton tomb.

Isabella arrives at the Grange in a poor state, but she knows that Edgar will not allow her to stay. She is merely seeking assistance. There has been confrontation at Wuthering Heights, for when Heathcliff returned from keeping vigil at Cathy's grave, Hindley locked him out. Hindley wants to murder Heathcliff. Eventually Heathcliff gains access and beats Hindley viciously. The next day the fighting resumes and Isabella makes her escape. After this, Isabella went to London and gave birth to a son, Linton. The brother and sister engage in correspondence and are reconciled to some extent. Isabella dies 13 years later.

Hindley died 6 months after Cathy's death and Nelly returned to Wuthering Heights in order to bring young Hareton back to Thrushcross Grange. It transpires that Hindley was in debt, and Heathcliff had

loaned him large amounts of money in order to feed his gambling habits, and he now owns Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff tells Nelly that he will raise Hareton and that he also plans to take his son, Linton, from Isabella in London.

### **Interpretation**

Edgar receives a double blow, firstly, the birth of a daughter who cannot legally inherit Thrushcross Grange, and secondly, the death of his wife. He never really recovers from this and retires from society.

Heathcliff's reaction to Cathy's death by requesting that she haunts him 'I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!' indicates that he is devastated by the loss of his one true love.

Edgar shows that he did have a deep love for Cathy and appreciates her love for the moors, and therefore orders her to be buried next to them. His wish for Cathy is that she will find peace.

So far the reader has been tolerant of Heathcliff's behavior, but the severe beating he gives Hindley is a further indication that he has become bitter and twisted.

It is not made clear the cause of Hindley's death shortly afterwards, but the probable answer is that he was driven to suicide by Heathcliff and literally drank himself to death.

It is now revealed that Heathcliff has designs on the future of both Linton and Hareton, and one should note that he refers to his son Linton as 'it'. In effect, Hareton has been robbed of the family home. Heathcliff controls the property, as he owns the mortgage on it.

The end of Chapter 17 signifies the half way stage of the novel. One might say that it marks the end of the first generation, and the beginning of the second. Heathcliff and Hareton are at Wuthering Heights, while the now reclusive Edgar and Catherine are at Thrushcross Grange. In the second part of the novel, there is a certain duality of plot, with Heathcliff pursuing his vengeful scheming, determined to destroy anyone who crosses his path.

## **Chapters 18, 19 and 20**

### **Summary**

During the next 13 years, Catherine grows up at the Grange under the guidance of a very protective Edgar. She is not allowed to leave the grounds on her own and she is totally unaware of Wuthering Heights. However, she is an inquisitive girl and has learned about the fairy cave at Penistone Crag (a place well-known to her mother). She asks her father to take her there, but he is not willing to go as the road passes Wuthering Heights.

Around this time, Isabella writes to Edgar informing him of her impending death. She requests that he comes to London to bring Linton back to the Grange in order to keep him out of the clutches of Heathcliff. Edgar leaves to go to London, leaving Nelly in charge of Catherine.

One day Catherine goes missing and it transpires that her pony leaped the hedge and made for the Penistone Crag. Catherine ended up at Wuthering Heights where she spent the day with Hareton. They had a great time together.

Nelly insists on getting Catherine back to the Grange. A servant at Wuthering Heights tells Catherine that Hareton is her cousin. Catherine in turn tells Hareton that his father is off to London to fetch her cousin back to the Grange. This further upsets Nelly and she tells Catherine not to mention their visit to Wuthering Heights to her father.

Edgar returns from London with the pale, delicate Linton who greatly resembles Edgar. Catherine treats him like a pet because he is too weak to play with her. Edgar hopes that Heathcliff will allow Linton to stay at the Grange, but that night Joseph arrives, demanding to take Linton to Wuthering Heights. Edgar says that he will deliver him the next morning.

Nelly takes Linton to Wuthering Heights and she tries to comfort Linton by making up falsehoods concerning his father. When he arrives, Heathcliff refers to his son as property and calls Isabella a wicked slut. Linton is distraught at being left at Wuthering Heights, pleading with Nelly not to leave him.

### **Interpretation**

Given the responsibility by Edgar to look after Catherine, Nelly makes a mess of things. The one thing Edgar would not have wished is for Catherine to go to Wuthering Heights and learn about her cousin there, and give information about his trip to London to fetch Heathcliff's son. Therefore, the reader must realize that Nelly's narration is geared to her self-preservation.

We have stated that the second part of the novel has certain duality with the first. Here we see Hareton and Catherine spend a happy day at Penistone Crag, just as Heathcliff and Cathy had. Also, Catherine disapproves of Hareton's lack of education, similar to her mother's rejection of Heathcliff.

The unfortunate treatment of Linton in Chapter 20 shocks the reader, and again we must question Nelly's involvement in this episode. She will, obviously, be relieved to have Linton away from the Grange, and she lies to Linton in order to make the transfer easier. The fact that his Uncle Edgar cared

for him makes the jolt to Wuthering Heights even more severe when facing his uncaring father. It will not help Linton's position that he looks like Edgar.

## **Chapters 21, 22 and 23**

### **Summary**

It is now 3 years later and Catherine delights in playing on the moors under the watchful eye of Nelly. However, the exuberant Catherine is no match for Nelly who has difficulty in controlling Catherine when she runs wildly through the heather. She is thus unable to prevent Catherine from speaking to Heathcliff who has Hareton by his side. On this occasion Heathcliff asks Catherine and Nelly to come to the house and despite Nelly's reservations, they agree. Catherine is curious about Heathcliff's son. According to Nelly, it is Heathcliff's intentions that the two cousins should fall in love and get married. Linton is still delicate although he has grown in height. Hareton offers to show Catherine around Wuthering Heights and Heathcliff orders Linton to follow his cousins so as not to be left out. Catherine is overheard mocking Hareton's poor education and his difficulty in reading.

Back at the Grange, Catherine tells her father about her visit to Wuthering Heights. Edgar tries in vain to explain to Catherine why he has kept her from her cousins. He specifically asks her not to have any further contact with Linton. This action only serves to make Catherine liaise with Linton via a series of secret letters. Nelly eventually discovers what is going on and destroys Linton's letters to Catherine.

Winter approaches and Edgar's health starts to fail, and Catherine spends most of her time nursing him. When out walking one day Catherine and Nelly happen to meet Heathcliff who scolds Catherine for stopping the letters to Linton, accusing her of trifling with Linton's affections. He has become sicker and is dying of a broken heart. He goes on to tell Catherine that he has to go away for a week and hopes that she will visit her poorly cousin. Feeling guilty about what Heathcliff has said to her, she and Nelly decide to visit Wuthering Heights the next day.

On their way to Wuthering Heights, the weather turns for the worse and eventually when they arrive they find Linton in a poor state. He complains about the servants and the moans at Catherine for not visiting sooner and the cessation of the letters.

Clearly Heathcliff has put the notion of marriage into Linton's mind, and Linton mentions this to Catherine, which angers her, and when she pushes Linton's chair, he has a coughing fit. Linton tries to make Catherine feel guilty about her behavior and hopes that she will help to nurse him back to health. Nelly and Catherine return to the Grange, but Nelly develops a severe cold due to getting wet the previous day, and now Catherine has two patients to care for, but at night time she rides across the moors to visit Linton without the knowledge of Nelly and Edgar.

### **Interpretation**

Heathcliff has clearly identified that Nelly is a key player in his plans for obtaining revenge against the Linton family, and obtaining the Grange, for it is she that now acts as guardian for Catherine due to Edgar's failing health. Rightly or wrongly, he feels that he can confide in Nelly and reveals his plans to her regarding the marriage of Catherine and Linton. Nelly's only reservations are that if Edgar finds out that she is conniving with Heathcliff, she may lose her position at the Grange.

Heathcliff has, in fact, done his homework for it is revealed that Edgar's lawyer is in the pay of Heathcliff who has established that there is no clause in Edgar's Will securing Catherine's inheritance. Nelly had assumed that Catherine would be Edgar's heir.

Again we see some duality concerning the behavior of Catherine and Linton regarding Hareton's lack of formal education, when Heathcliff first arrived at Wuthering Heights, he received the same treatment from Hindley and Cathy. It is difficult to judge how clever Linton is, or whether he is just acting in accordance with Heathcliff's wishes, but Linton advises Catherine that he is too sick to travel to her, so she must visit him.

We again have an insight into Nelly's twisted view of proceedings. Instead of advising Edgar about the secret letters, she decides to burn Linton's letters to Catherine and only threatens to tell Edgar. Possibly the only reason for destroying the letters is so that Edgar will not discover them, and not that she disapproves of the relationship.

It is interesting to see how much loyalty Catherine has to her sick cousin and she seems willing to care for him. Nelly, too, is willing to go along with Catherine's wishes and shows some measure of commitment to Catherine, which she did not show to her mother, Cathy. In fact, some of her actions made Cathy's life miserable. Perhaps she wishes to make amends to the daughter, hoping that she will find some happiness. However, events seem to be escalating, and Nelly obviously fears that Edgar will find out about the secret relationship between Linton and Catherine. It is, therefore, convenient that she is taken ill at this time, and is thus removed from the equation with the hope that if Edgar does find out, she will not be blamed. Remember, it is Nelly's narration that we are going by and it may be that she was taken ill, genuinely. It is up to the reader to decide.

One of the key elements of Heathcliff's plan is for Catherine to marry Linton. Although Catherine cares for her weak cousin, she also is excited by the idea of having control over a man, something that her mother was fascinated with as well.

It should be noted that the story is now close to the present day in the novel, when Lockwood first came to the area. This will come as a surprise to the reader, for up till now these events seem to have been in the distant past. Lockwood now understands more clearly the events he experienced and why the characters at Wuthering Heights behaved so strangely.

Although Heathcliff's main objectives are to possess both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, he is also obtaining subtle degrees of revenge, which must give him some pleasure, e.g. he bullies Hareton, just as Hindley bullied him; he obtains satisfaction by persecuting the children of those that persecuted him. The reader can now find no redeeming features regarding Heathcliff's behavior. One might think that he is hoping for his son's happiness through the marriage to Catherine, but he is merely using his son as a tool, for he hopes that Catherine and Linton will marry before the sickly Linton dies. His way for claiming Thrushcross Grange must be through Isabella Linton's son marrying Edgar Linton's daughter.

## **Chapters 24, 25 and 26**

### **Summary**

Nelly 'recovers' her health and becomes aware of Catherine's strange behavior of retiring early to bed. One night she goes into Catherine's room and finds her missing and waits for her return. Catherine tries to lie her way out of her predicament, but eventually she tells Nelly the truth.

On one of the occasions when she is at Wuthering Heights, Hareton stops Catherine and says that he can read the name above the door. Catherine says to him 'do you know what the numbers are?' and he is unable to respond. This angers Hareton and he takes his anger out on Linton. Later Hareton apologizes to Catherine regarding his behavior, but she refuses to listen to him. Linton blames Catherine for angering Hareton so Catherine leaves and doesn't return for some time. When she does go back, she tells Linton that she cannot visit him any more, so he apologizes for his behavior.

It is at this time that Nelly decides to tell Edgar what has been happening and he forbids Catherine to visit Linton, but says that he will write inviting Linton to visit the Grange. Catherine agrees to abide by her father's wishes. He only wants Catherine to be happy, and would even allow her to marry Linton if she really desired this, even although it would mean that Heathcliff would achieve his perverted aims. Linton does not accept the invitation, and eventually Edgar allows Catherine to visit Linton on the moors.

As arranged, Nelly and Catherine go onto the moors to meet with Linton, but he is not at the meeting place. They eventually find him within view of Wuthering Heights and he seems to be apprehensive about venturing far from his home. Both Catherine and Nelly are concerned about Linton's health, but they agree to meet again in a few days.

### **Interpretation**

The reader will observe that there is a slight change in the narration in Chapter 24. Lockwood is hearing the story relayed to Nelly by Catherine and the main flaw will be Catherine's account of her caring for Linton. The reader can assume from the evidence available that Linton is a whining disagreeable person, and it must be quite difficult for anyone to get close to him. He behaves like a petulant child, blaming Catherine for all his misfortunes. He is, therefore, holding a measure of guilt over Catherine's head showing that he is totally self-centered.

It should also be noted that Nelly finally advises Edgar what has been going on, and she lets him form the notion that Catherine might obtain a secure position by marrying Linton because Nelly does not tell Edgar of Linton's frail condition. Edgar thinks that Catherine will be able to marry Linton and keep her family home.

In Chapter 25, we realize that these events happen just over a year previous to Lockwood's arrival. During this year, therefore, the reader realizes that Linton dies and that the characters Lockwood met at Wuthering Heights are still suffering from this loss. Also Edgar has died, going to his death realizing that he was unable to secure Catherine's happiness, just as he was unable to make her mother, Cathy, happy.

Again we have duality regarding the moors as a meeting place, initially for Heathcliff and Cathy, and now for Catherine and Linton, the difference being that Heathcliff required no prompting to escape to the moors to be with his love, Cathy, whilst Linton is being cajoled by Heathcliff to meet Catherine. Perhaps Heathcliff hopes that the magic he found there can be rekindled with Catherine and Linton. Heathcliff is single-minded regarding his objectives, having no feelings for Linton, using him up before he dies.



## **Chapters 27 and 28**

### **Summary**

Edgar's health continues to fail, but Catherine still visits Linton by horse.

Heathcliff is now worried that Linton might die before Edgar does, so he confronts Catherine asking how ill Edgar is. Heathcliff then asks her to walk Linton back to Wuthering Heights, but she refuses, stating that her father has forbidden her to go to the farmhouse. Linton cries out in anguish and with Heathcliff threatening to lose his temper, Catherine consents to go to Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff imprisons Catherine and Nelly and he will not release them until the couple is married. Nelly is held in a locked room and Hareton acts as her jailer. After five days, Zillah tells Nelly that the whole village is gossiping about the missing women from the Grange, believing them to be lost in the marshes. Linton tells Nelly that Catherine is being held prisoner and, therefore, Nelly returns to the Grange.

Nelly advises Edgar that Catherine is safe and will be home shortly. She sends servants to Wuthering Heights to bring Catherine home, but they are unsuccessful.

Edgar now sees the danger and sends for his lawyer in order to change his Will. Before the lawyer arrives Catherine comes in. She has escaped with Linton's help. She goes to the dying Edgar who is deluded by thinking that his daughter is happily married. When the lawyer arrives, he takes charge of the Grange, dismissing all the servants with the exception of Nelly. He arranges for Edgar to be buried in the chapel, but Nelly knows that his Will clearly states that he wished to be buried next to Cathy.

### **Interpretation**

Linton treats Catherine badly once she has been lured to Wuthering Heights, his actions prompted by the overbearing Heathcliff. Catherine feels desperate after Linton reveals Heathcliff's plans for her.

The reader sees how desperate Heathcliff is to have his plans succeed, for he now commits a crime by kidnapping Catherine and Nelly. If these events had taken place anywhere other than on the moors, he would have faced the full wrath of the law, but due to the isolation of Wuthering Heights, he feels that he is above the law. At this stage the reader hopes that Catherine will be a match for Heathcliff and somehow thwart his plans.

Although Nelly is unable to give an account of the wedding, Catherine and Linton do indeed marry.

Nelly does show some compassion towards Edgar by not telling him the whole truth, and he dies thinking that Catherine is happily married.

We also see a change in Linton who finally stands up to his overbearing father by helping Catherine to escape.

We also now view Nelly's role in this whole affair in a new perspective. It is clear that Heathcliff regards her as an ally, or a plant, in the Thrushcross Grange household, and at this stage the reader has to determine the extent of Nelly's involvement bearing in mind that when the lawyer arrives after Edgar's death, he takes charge of the household and dismisses all the servants except for Nelly. Remember, Heathcliff has paid the lawyer who is quite willing to sacrifice one client for another.

## **Chapters 29, 30, 31 and 32**

### **Summary**

Heathcliff forces Catherine back to Wuthering Heights. Legally, he through Linton, has the greater claim to the Grange, thus Catherine has no choice, but to obey her father-in-law. Heathcliff will need Catherine at Wuthering Heights in to work for her keep. Ominously, Heathcliff states that he has punished Linton for crossing him in allowing Catherine's escape and that he will not cross him again.

Heathcliff tells Nelly that since Cathy's death eighteen years ago, her ghost has haunted him and that Cathy does not wish Nelly to visit Wuthering Heights.

At Wuthering Heights, Catherine cares for her husband. She receives no assistance from Zillah or Hareton. After Linton's death, she becomes a solitary figure at Wuthering Heights.

Heathcliff advises Nelly that she may look for a tenant for the Grange.

Lockwood on visiting Wuthering Heights has a message from Nelly to Catherine. Hareton takes the note, but eventually gives it to Catherine who mocks him because he is unable to read the note. Being embarrassed by this Hareton throws his books into the fire.

There is, however, a disturbing development unforeseen by Heathcliff in that Hareton warms towards Catherine. Heathcliff starts to notice Hareton and his similarity to his Aunt Cathy. It seems to gnaw at Heathcliff, as there is now a constant reminder in his home concerning his lost love.

After a further six months, Lockwood returns to the area to learn that Nelly is now at Wuthering Heights. He is eager to find out what the developments have been since his first visit. Nelly had been summoned to Wuthering Heights to be company for Catherine because Zillah had left. Catherine regrets having humiliated Hareton in the past, and he now avoids Catherine. Heathcliff has become totally reclusive. The unfortunate Hareton is involved in a shooting accident and Catherine eventually

agrees that the two should be proper cousins. Catherine even offers to teach Hareton how to read, and tells him that she will not tease him again.

### **Interpretation**

Bronte was much criticized for her morbid and disturbed writing, and it is safe to assume that she has drawn back from giving the full details of Heathcliff's cruelty to Linton, being the punishment for crossing him. This is left to the reader's imagination, but it is safe to assume that this treatment contributed towards Linton's death soon after.

Over the previous chapters, the reader has lost all sense of sympathy for Heathcliff, but now Bronte rekindles this by the revelation that the ghost of Cathy has haunted him ever since her death eighteen years previously. It is maybe difficult for the current day reader to understand the statement, but certainly for the more superstitious Victorian reader, some sympathy will have been felt for Heathcliff's ordeal. All he really wishes is to be reunited with Cathy who is always just out of reach for him.

For Chapter 30, there is a further change in narration in that Nelly is not part of the Wuthering Heights' household and she obtains her information from Zillah. This brings Nelly's narrative full-circle, back to Chapter 1 when Lockwood first visited Wuthering Heights.

It is interesting to see that there is a kind of friendship developing between Hareton and Catherine which is upsetting to Heathcliff, mainly because he cannot abide seeing anyone else happy when he is so miserable.

We also see a slight chink in Heathcliff's armour, and it seems that his plans for total revenge are not quite as important to him any longer.

In Chapter 32, Lockwood gives his account of his visit to Wuthering Heights and he notices significant changes. On this occasion it is summer and the moors have a totally different feel about them, compared to the bleakness of the winter landscape. When he arrives at Wuthering Heights, the door is unlocked where previously it had been barred. Heathcliff has become withdrawn from everyone and he has allowed a friendship to develop between Catherine and Hareton.

Again we have an example of duality, just as Cathy had sought Heathcliff's forgiveness at her death, now Catherine seeks forgiveness from Hareton, and where Heathcliff was unable to forgive Cathy, Hareton finds that he can forgive Catherine. Catherine and Hareton are allies against the evil that Heathcliff has created. Such action means that the second generation will not repeat the mistakes of the first.

The dark, menace that is Heathcliff prevents light coming into the lives of the second generation all the while he lives.

The reader has noted Heathcliff's obsession, but it is not with gaining absolute revenge, it is with Cathy who haunts him.

Bronte gives us an insight into this obsession by Heathcliff imagining that he can gaze upon Cathy's decomposed face, hoping that when he dies, his remains can mix with hers and he feels jealousy over the fact that Edgar's remains will be allowed to decompose next to hers. The pressures being suffered by Heathcliff, whether from the supernatural world or whether they are self-inflicted, are having the effect that he is losing control over the happenings in the real world within the farmhouse.

Finally, we need to look critically at Nelly's narration and her motivation. It is clear that she has not revealed her true relationship with Heathcliff and her part in helping him to achieve his revenge. It is curious that she wishes to promote Catherine, especially in Lockwood's eyes. It may be that she considers him to be a potential partner for her and the means by which she can escape from her situation. Yet in many ways, Catherine's behavior is similar to Cathy's, and Nelly clearly undermined Cathy at various stages, whereas she now supports Catherine fully and wishes to help her. This is probably one of the reasons why Nelly was keen to narrate the whole story to Lockwood in the first place, and that is why she paints a good picture of Catherine while she does the opposite with Cathy. Therefore, the reader should always take into account Nelly's motives and realize that she may not be giving an unbiased account of the story.

The reader, therefore, has to consider the validity of all those that have narrated this story and also consider what has not been said when viewing the story as a whole.

The reader also realizes that we are not heading towards a dramatic climax in this gothic romance. The tension that has been relevant throughout the whole story emanates from Heathcliff himself, and this is now slowly being released as the effects of Cathy's ghost reduce Heathcliff physically and mentally.

### **Chapters 33 and 34**

#### **Summary**

The next day, Hareton and Catherine side against Heathcliff and he threatens to strike Catherine, but is able to control himself. More and more, Heathcliff sees Cathy in Hareton, and he reveals to Nelly that he has no desire to finish his revenge. He is being constantly reminded of Cathy, both inside and outside of Wuthering Heights. He hardly eats at all and a few days later he stays out all night,

presumably on the moors. When he returns, he acts in an unusually friendly way, although he continues to reject all food. Nelly wants him to send for the Minister, but he just laughs and reminds her regarding his burial wishes. The doctor arrives to see him, but Heathcliff refuses.

That night Heathcliff dies. Nobody mourns his passing except for Hareton.

He is buried according to his wishes, but the superstitious villagers swear that he and another roam the moors.

### **Interpretation**

Despite all that has gone on between them, Catherine and Hareton have become friends. This gives them the strength to stand up to Heathcliff, but he is now only a shadow of his former self. He is being driven mad and now seeks solitude on the moors. Inside Wuthering Heights he sees reminders of Cathy, in Catherine's eyes and forehead and more so in Hareton's general demeanor. He also starts conversing with Cathy's ghost and one must assume that this brought some relief to Heathcliff, for after his return from a night on the moors, he is strangely cheerful. Perhaps he finally realizes that he will be reunited with Cathy. He does not for one moment think that he will be reunited with her in heaven because he refuses to allow Nelly to call for a Priest. He hopes to be reunited with her on the moors, the only place they were happy together.

The reader can take away the satisfaction of knowing that the surviving members of the second generation will find happiness at last. Catherine and Hareton now only appear to have their parents' redeeming features, for Catherine feels guilt over her taunting of Hareton, while Hareton is willing to forgive Heathcliff and mourn his passing. It is fitting that Hareton will now inherit Wuthering Heights, sharing the name that is carved over the entrance to the farmhouse.

Again we have the strange duality; just as Cathy took no food prior to her death, the same is happening with Heathcliff. He feels the loss of Cathy even more, especially when he realizes that there is love growing between Catherine and Hareton. He no longer needs nourishment from food. The only thing that can feed his demented soul is nourishment from the supernatural world, which he longs to enter.

The fiend that was Heathcliff has now been reduced to a sorrowful shell of a man.

The moral of the tale is that love will conquer hate in the end.

### Questions for study with ideas for answers

**Q:** When Cathy dies, Heathcliff curses her for the pain she has caused him, and pleads with her spirit to haunt him for the rest of his life. Anything, so that she does not leave him alone. Why is this the key element of Wuthering Heights?

**Ideas:** What gives Wuthering Heights an extra dimension is the supernatural content. This is not just a story of vengeance and revenge, but it is also the fulfillment of the main character's plea to be haunted and have no peace. This factor is not made fully clear to the reader until later on in the book, although Bronte hints it at. As a result, the reader's sympathies towards Heathcliff vary throughout the novel. Bronte cleverly describes the monster, but the reason he behaves in such a manner is because of the supernatural elements, which haunt him. This eventually leads to his breakdown both physically and mentally. Initially, Heathcliff is driven by revenge, but latterly he receives no satisfaction from the material things he has gained and realizes that he can only obtain peace through death and being reunited with his one true love.

**Q:** Wuthering Heights is one of those novels, that when you start to read it, you feel you cannot put it down. How does Bronte achieve this rare feat?

**Ideas:** \*The opening chapters portray a confusion concerning the relationships between the grim characters described, which arouse curiosity in the reader.

\*Bronte also provides previews to what will be told later in the book by having Lockwood read extracts from the diaries he discovers.

\*In addition to they're being clearly a complicated family structure; there are now hints of a program of revenge being carried out by Heathcliff, coupled with a supernatural dimension.

\*There is also not one single narrator, but there are others who contribute to the tale.

\*To conclude, therefore, there are three plots intertwined; firstly, discourse between the Lintons and the Earnshaws; secondly, a campaign of vengeance pursued by Heathcliff; and thirdly, a love story which transcends death and, therefore, makes this a true gothic romance.

**Q:** Comment on Nelly's narration of Wuthering Heights.

**Ideas:** The reader must decide whether Nelly is merely the narrator of the tale, or whether she is also a major character of the book. In other words, does she share the same status as Joseph and Zillah, or is she more than a mere servant?

It is clear that Nelly is indeed a survivor, and one suspects that all along she has been a close ally of Heathcliff. This is partly concealed from the reader, but by reading between the lines, there are key factors that indicate that she aided Heathcliff in his pursuit of revenge. For example, she deliberately disobeyed Edgar by allowing Catherine to liaise with whose at Wuthering Heights; she did not advise Edgar regarding the secret letter writing between Catherine and Linton and only told him the full story for fear that he might discover it anyway. One wonders whether she had any feelings for Heathcliff for she always tried to undermine Cathy in his eyes.

Her narrative, therefore, does contain bias and the reader should be mindful of this when analyzing the motives of some of the characters.

**Q:** Wuthering Heights is full of contrasts and duality between what we call the first and second generation of characters. Give some examples of this.

**Ideas:** \*The similarity between the relationships of Heathcliff and Cathy and that of Catherine and Linton, which are kindled on the moors, is shown. It is a place where both Heathcliff and Cathy can escape to, and also Catherine escapes from the confinement of Thrushcross Grange. She shares a free spirit with her mother.

\*We have a contrast between the two families, those in Wuthering Heights and those at Thrushcross Grange. The Wuthering Heights household tends to be strong, wild and passionate, whereas the household at the Grange is calm, peaceful and civilized.

\*Just as Cathy humiliated Heathcliff for his lack of education and social standing, so does Catherine humiliate Hareton.

\*As Hindley treated Heathcliff as a boy, so Heathcliff treats Hindley's son, Hareton.

\*Just as Cathy's death is brought on by a lack of food causing general weakness, so Heathcliff fasts himself in order to finally be with Cathy.