

# Wuthering Heights

## Themes

- ▶ ***Wuthering Heights** centers around the moral agency of forgiveness: without the power to forgo, without the mercy are doomed; with it they can transcend outward circumstances and inward tension and arrive at the moral and psychic maturity upon which the civilization rests.*

# Masculinity and Femininity

- ▶ Masculinity and Femininity is one of the major theme of Wuthering Heights. Written when gender roles were far more rigid and defined than they are now, Wuthering Heights examines stereotypes of masculinity and femininity. Emily Bronte constantly contrasts masculinity and femininity, but not all of the comparisons are simple; sometimes boys act like girls and girls act like boys. Edgar Linton and Linton Heathcliff, for instance are men but Bronte frequently describes them as having the looks and attributes of women. Likewise, Catherine Earnshaw has many masculine characteristics even though she is outrageously beautiful, she loves rough, outdoor play and can hold her own in any fight. She is a complex mix of hyper feminine grace and loveliness and ultra-masculine anger and recklessness. Heathcliff with his physical and mental toughness, has no such ambiguities- he is exaggeratedly masculine and scorns his wife Isabella for her overblown femininity.

- ▶ Emily Bronte seems to favour masculinity, over femininity, even in her women. In general, she portrays weak, delicate characters with contempt, while she treats strong and rugged characters like Heathcliff, both Cathrines and Hareton with compassion and admiration, despite their flaws.

# Love and passion

- ▶ Wuthering Heights explores a variety kinds of love. Loves on display in the novel include Heathcliff and Catherine's all consuming passion for each other, while noble in its purity is also terribly destructive. In contrast the love between Cathy and Edgar is proper and civilized rather than passionate. Theirs is a love of peace and comfort, a socially acceptance love but it can't stand in the way of Heathcliff and Catherine's more profound connection.
- ▶ The love between Cathy and Linton is a grotesque exaggeration of that between Catherine and Edgar. While Catherine always seems just a bit too strong for Edgar, Cathy and Linton's love is founded on Linton's weakness. Finally there is the love between Cathy and Hareton which seems to balance the traits of the other loves on display. They have the passion of Catherine and Heathcliff without the destructiveness and the gentleness shared by Edgar and Catherine without the dullness or inequality in power.

## *Gothic Literature and the Supernatural*

- ▶ Gothic literature and the supernatural is one of the major theme of this novel. From beginning to end *Wuthering Heights* is a novel full of ghosts and spirits. Dead characters refuse to leave the living alone and the living accept that the deceased find ways of coming back to haunt them. In a hauntings are sometimes welcome. Heathcliff for instance repeatedly seeks out visitations from the ghost of his beloved Catherine. He even digs up her grave in order to be closer to her. Bronte uses otherworldly figures to emphasize the ferocity of Heathcliff's and Catherine's love; their connection is so powerful that even death can't stop it.

# Class

- ▶ Understanding the importance of class in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain is essential to understanding Wuthering Heights. Generally at the time people were born into a class and stayed there; if your parents were rich and respected (like Edgar's) you would be too; if your parents were servants (like Nelly Dean's) you probably would be too.
- ▶ In Bronte's novel, however class distinctions are constantly changing much to the confusion of the characters. There are two primary examples of this ; Heathcliff & Hareton. Because no one knows anything about Heathcliff's background, they all treat him differently. Mr Earnshaw adopts him and treats him like a son, but the snobby Linton refuse to socialize with him. When he disappears for a few years and comes back rich the characters struggle even more over how to approach him- he now has money and land ,but many of them still consider him a farm boy.
- ▶ Likewise Hareton has a hard time gaining respect. The son of Hindley Hareton should be the heir to Wuthering Heights. With land and standing he ought to be gentleman. However Heathcliff refuses to educate him and everyone else mostly ignores him, so his manners are rough and gruff.

- ▶ Considerations of class status often crucially inform the character's motivation in *Wuthering Heights*, Cathrine's decision to marry Edgar so that she will be the greatest woman of the neighborhood is only the most obvious example.



# Revenge and Repetition

- ▶ Nearly all of the action in Wuthering Heights results from one or another characters desire for revenge. The result are cycles of revenge that seem to endlessly repeat. Hindley takes revenge on Heathcliff for taking his place at Wuthering Heights by denying him an education and in the process separates Heathcliff and Catherine. Since his childhood, Heathcliff was humiliated by Hindley and the environment. This has changed him into a wild person filled by hatred. So the hatred inside Heathcliff grows up from day to day, and leads him to take revenge. The environment itself is an enemy for him. He is so wild that he even sacrifices his own son for his revenge feelings. Heathcliff then takes revenge up on Hindley by first dispossessing Hindley of Wuthering Heights and by denying an education to Hareton, Hindley's son. Heathcliff also seeks revenge on Edgar for marrying Catherine by marrying Cathy to Linton.

- ▶ Yet while Heathcliff's revenge is effective, it seems to bring him little joy. Late in the novel, Cathy sees this and tells Heathcliff that her revenge on him, no matter how miserable he makes her is to know that he, Heathcliff is more miserable. And it is instructive that only when Heathcliff loses his desire for revenge is he able to finally reconnect with Catherine in death and to allow Cathy and Hareton, who are so similar to Heathcliff and Catherine to find love and marry.

# Nature and Civilization

- ▶ Emily Bronte promotes the Romantic idea that the sublime the awe inspiring almost frightening beauty of nature is superior to man made culture. She makes this point by correlating many of the characters with one side or the other and then squaring them off against each other. For instance Heathcliff whose origins are unknown and who roams the moors is definitely on the nature side, while his elrival the studious Edgar Linton is in the civilized camp. Other pairings include Hareton Earnshaw Vs Linton Earnshaw, Catherine Vs Isabella, and Hareton Vs Cathy . In all these cases Bronte makes one character a bit wild while portraying the other as somewhat reserved.
- ▶ But nothing is black and whtin Wuthering Heights. Many of the characters exhibit traits from both sides. While Bronte argues that nature is somehow purer, she also lauds civilization particular in terms of education. Hareton Earnshaw Personifies this combination of nature and Civilization. Bronte associates the young orphan with nature as well as civilization.

The background features abstract, overlapping green geometric shapes, primarily triangles and polygons, in various shades of green, creating a modern and dynamic visual effect.

**Thank you**