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Wuthering Heights

Emily Brontë · *1847* · *original English text*

On the moors, a foundling and a daughter of the house form a bond that will not submit to God, law or mercy. Heathcliff's return as a man of property is a long act of revenge. The book is unsparing about what that passion does — and it lets a second generation, Cathy and Hareton, choose a gentler loyalty.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What does a love that will not repent, and a revenge that will not stop, do to a house?

"I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!"
Heathcliff, after Catherine's death · Chapter XVI

It lays waste to two families. Catherine's choice and Heathcliff's vengeance injure the innocent as well as the guilty. The hope of the book is not that their passion is a model, but that it ends, and that Cathy and Hareton are not bound to repeat it.

KEY CHARACTERS

Heathcliff
love turned to long revenge

Catherine Earnshaw
divided will; a destructive bond

Edgar Linton
gentleness without force

Nelly Dean
the nurse and narrator

Hindley
jealousy, drink, ruin

Isabella
infatuation punished

Cathy Linton
the daughter; a better courage

Hareton
degraded, then taught and loved

Lockwood
the outsider who hears the tale

CATHERINE'S CLAIM

> *"Nelly, I am Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being."*
> **Catherine** · Chapter IX

Grades 11–12
Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01
The Foundling
CHAPTERS I–VII

A house receives a child, and is never at peace again.

- Mr. Lockwood, the new tenant at Thrushcross Grange, meets the surly household at Wuthering Heights
- Nelly Dean tells the history: old Mr. Earnshaw brings home a dark-haired foundling, **Heathcliff**
- **Catherine Earnshaw** and Heathcliff become inseparable; Hindley, the son, hates the boy
- After the father's death, Hindley degrades Heathcliff to a servant
- Catherine is injured at the Lintons' and tastes a smoother life

02
The Choice
CHAPTERS VIII–IX

She will marry "up," and still claims Heathcliff as her soul.

- Catherine accepts **Edgar Linton**, who is gentle, rich and weak beside Heathcliff
- She tells Nelly that Heathcliff is "more myself than I am," yet she will not marry him in his degradation
- Heathcliff overhears only the refusal, not the rest, and vanishes
- Catherine falls ill; she nevertheless marries Edgar

> *"Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same; and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire."*
> **Catherine to Nelly** · Chapter IX

03
The Return
CHAPTERS X–XVII

Revenge takes the shape of a gentleman.

- Heathcliff returns, mysteriously richer, and is received at the Grange
- He lodges at the Heights and begins to gamble Hindley into ruin
- He elopes with Edgar's sister **Isabella**, whom he despises, to gain a claim on the Lintons
- Catherine, torn, falls into a last illness and dies after bearing a daughter, Cathy
- Heathcliff, in a terrible outburst, begs her ghost to haunt him

> *"May she wake in torment!"*
> **Heathcliff, at Catherine's death** · Chapter XVI

04
The Next Generation
CHAPTERS XVIII–XXXI

The same names, a tighter trap.

- Hindley dies; Heathcliff is master of the Heights and of Hindley's son, Hareton, whom he raises in ignorance
- Young **Cathy Linton** grows up at the Grange, sheltered by Edgar
- Heathcliff uses his sickly son, Linton Heathcliff, to draw Cathy into a forced marriage
- Edgar dies; the Grange too comes under Heathcliff's hand
- Lockwood sees the present misery that this history has produced

05
The End of the Revenge
CHAPTERS XXXII–XXXIV

The will to injure fails at last; a quieter love is left.

- Months later, Lockwood finds the Heights changed: Cathy is teaching Hareton, and they are growing toward one another
- Heathcliff, haunted and weary, cannot keep even his own hatred in motion
- He dies, having refused ordinary comfort and looking, it seems, for Catherine
- Nelly has him buried as he wished, beside her
- Lockwood, at the graves, cannot imagine "unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth"

> *"and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth."*
> **Lockwood, at the graves** · Chapter XXXIV

Revenge | Ungoverned Passion | Cruelty | The Next Generation | Mercy | Death & Rest

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 11–12

1. Do not take Catherine's and Heathcliff's speeches as the book's advice. The story shows what that bond costs everyone around them.
2. Heathcliff's "gentleman" return is a method, not a repentance. Watch how property, marriage and education become weapons.
3. The second Catherine and Hareton repeat names and places, not the same sin. What do they do differently?
4. Nelly is not a neutral camera. Notice when she acts, fails to act, or judges.
5. The ending is quiet on purpose: revenge burns out; a modest, teachable love remains.
6. The book is fierce (cruelty, obsessive love). Read the violence as warning, not as romance.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #768, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/wuthering-heights/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.