

Wuthering Heights

Emily Bronte

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Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is a great read for readers interested in love stories, tragedies, and England's social class systems of the nineteenth century. The novel revolves around the romantic relationship between the protagonists Catherine and Heathcliff—a colored and poor gypsy. Catherine's father, Mr. Earnshaw, adopts Heathcliff out of pity when he sees him out in the streets in poor condition. Fearing the hardship Heathcliff will face for his social status, Mr. Earnshaw does everything he possibly can to make his life less miserable. In doing so, however, Mr. Earnshaw leaves his own son, Hindley, embittered for his lack of affection. As a result, after the death of his father, Hindley avenges Heathcliff by abusing him physically and verbally. In return, Heathcliff vows to get him back. In the meantime, he falls in love with Hindley's sister Catherine, an emotion that she too feels for him. Although she loves him, she ultimately chooses to marry Edgar Linton because she doesn't want to lose her social status; bringing with her decision, a tragic end to her own love story. Upon realizing that Catherine chose her social status over him, he goes off to in search of financial success. His return as a successful man arouses affection from Edgar's sister Isabella. Heathcliff marries Isabella as a means to avenge Edgar for taking away his Catherine. As for Hindley, Heathcliff gets his revenge by lending him excessive amount of money for gambling; eventually, the debt becomes overwhelming and Hindley has to give up his home—the Wuthering Heights—to Heathcliff. Besides his marriage to Isabella, Heathcliff's return ruins Catherine's marriage to Edgar, as Edgar can't stand the chemistry between the two lovers. In the end, he makes Catherine choose between Heathcliff and him—something that she can't do. Eventually, she dies broken hearted. Before she dies, she gives birth to a baby girl who is named after her. After years, Heathcliff later tries to have the latter Catherine fall in love with his own son, Linton. This doesn't really workout as Linton soon dies from his meek condition. Soon after, Heathcliff drives himself crazy with memories of his lover Catherine and dies. In the end, the late Catherine falls in love with Hindley's son Hareton, thereby, removing any traces of Heathcliff.

One of the most interesting aspects about the novel is its ambivalence in everything, especially class systems. Bronte characterizes her protagonist Heathcliff as a colored orphan with no financial background. This low social status makes him prone to abuse. Seeing that Heathcliff is being abused for something that he has no control over draws sympathy from the reader, making the reader question if there is any reason for the existence of social class. At the same time however, Bronte portrays him as an intruder. Indeed, he intrudes the peace among the Earnshaws; he ruins the Linton family when he marries Isabella; he ruins the marriage between Catherine and Edgar; and he has the ultimate hand in driving Catherine crazy before her death. This events make one hate Heathcliff and his kind. Thus, in the end, the reader doesn't really know whether or not to support the social class systems.

This ambivalence along with a lot of other twists and turns make the novel interesting for anyone and everyone to read, especially for those interested in the nineteenth century life in England. In addition, with its multiple themes and symbols, the novel is great for analyzing, for writing papers in particular. Overall, *Wuthering Heights* is a good read for anyone who can understand it (age seventeen and up).

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Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen

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