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Wuthering Heights: Introduction and Characters

By: Emily Bronte

Who is Emily Bronte?

Emily Jane Bronte was a British novelist and poet, now best remembered for her only novel *Wuthering Heights*, a classic of English literature. Emily was the second eldest of the three surviving Bronte sisters, being younger than Charlotte Bronte and older than Anne Bronte. She published under the masculine pen name Ellis Bell.

Emily was born in Thornton, near Bradford in Yorkshire to Patrick Bronte and Maria Branwell. She was the younger sister of Charlotte Bronte and the fifth of six children. In 1824, the family moved to Haworth, where Emily's father was perpetual curate, and it was in these surroundings that their literary oddities flourished.

It was the discovery of Emily's poetic talent by Charlotte that led her and her sisters, Charlotte and Anne, to publish a joint collection of their poetry in 1846, *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell*. To evade contemporary prejudice against female writers, the Bronte sisters adopted androgynous first names. All three retained the first letter of their first names: Charlotte became Currer Bell, Anne became Acton Bell, and Emily became Ellis Bell. In 1847, she published her only novel, *Wuthering Heights*. Its innovative structure somewhat puzzled critics. Although it received mixed reviews when it first came out, the book subsequently became an English literary classic. In 1850, Charlotte edited and published *Wuthering Heights* as a stand-alone novel and under Emily's real name.

Like her sisters, Emily's health had been weakened by the harsh local climate at home and at school. She caught a chill during the funeral of her brother in September, and, having refused all medical help, died on December 19, 1848 of tuberculosis.

Emily Bronte wrote the famous novel *wuthering Heights* in 1847. It is a lonely novel for Emily before her death in 1848. This novel is classical literary production treats the social

problems and classes of society. Wuthering Heights focuses on a person Heathcliff, who is a mysterious gypsy-like person. Heathcliff rises in the family who had adopted him and then he was reduced to the status of a servant there. Further, he ran away from the young woman whom he loved very much and decided to marry another.

Characters List of 'Wuthering Heights'

Heathcliff - An orphan brought to live at Wuthering Heights by Mr. Earnshaw, Heathcliff falls into an intense, unbreakable love with Mr. Earnshaw's daughter Catherine. After Mr. Earnshaw dies, his resentful son Hindley abuses Heathcliff and treats him as a servant. Because of her desire for social prominence, Catherine marries Edgar Linton instead of Heathcliff. Heathcliff's humiliation and misery prompt him to spend most of the rest of his life seeking revenge on Hindley, his beloved Catherine, and their respective children (Hareton and young Catherine). A powerful, fierce, and often cruel man, Heathcliff acquires a fortune and uses his extraordinary powers of will to acquire both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, the estate of Edgar Linton.

Catherine - The daughter of Mr. Earnshaw and his wife, Catherine falls powerfully in love with Heathcliff, the orphan Mr. Earnshaw brings home from Liverpool. Catherine loves Heathcliff so intensely that she claims they are the same person. However, her desire for social advancement motivates her to marry Edgar Linton instead. Catherine is free-spirited, beautiful, spoiled, and often arrogant. She is given to fits of temper, and she is torn between her wild passion for Heathcliff and her social ambition. She brings misery to both of the men who love her.

Edgar Linton - Well-bred but rather spoiled as a boy, Edgar Linton grows into a tender, constant, but cowardly man. He is almost the ideal gentleman: Catherine accurately

describes him as “handsome,” “pleasant to be with,” “cheerful,” and “rich.” However, this full assortment of gentlemanly characteristics, along with his civilized virtues, proves useless in Edgar’s clashes with his foil, Heathcliff, who gains power over his wife, sister, and daughter.

Nelly Dean - Nelly Dean (known formally as Ellen Dean) serves as the chief narrator of *Wuthering Heights*. A sensible, intelligent, and compassionate woman, she grew up essentially alongside Hindley and Catherine Earnshaw and is deeply involved in the story she tells. She has strong feelings for the characters in her story, and these feelings complicate her narration.

Lockwood - Lockwood’s narration forms a frame around Nelly’s; he serves as an intermediary between Nelly and the reader. A somewhat vain and presumptuous gentleman, he deals very clumsily with the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights. Lockwood comes from a more domesticated region of England, and he finds himself at a loss when he witnesses the strange household’s disregard for the social conventions that have always structured his world. As a narrator, his vanity and unfamiliarity with the story occasionally lead him to misunderstand events.

Young Catherine - For clarity’s sake, this Spark Note refers to the daughter of Edgar Linton and the first Catherine as “young Catherine.” The first Catherine begins her life as Catherine Earnshaw and ends it as Catherine Linton; her daughter begins as Catherine Linton and, assuming that she marries Hareton after the end of the story, goes on to become Catherine Earnshaw. The mother and the daughter share not only a name, but also a tendency toward headstrong behavior, impetuosity, and occasional arrogance. However, Edgar’s influence seems to have tempered young Catherine’s character, and she is a gentler and more compassionate creature than her mother.

Hareton Earnshaw - The son of Hindley and Frances Earnshaw, Hareton is Catherine's nephew. After Hindley's death, Heathcliff assumes custody of Hareton, and raises him as an uneducated field worker, just as Hindley had done to Heathcliff himself. Thus Heathcliff uses Hareton to seek revenge on Hindley. Illiterate and quick-tempered, Hareton is easily humiliated, but shows a good heart and a deep desire to improve himself. At the end of the novel, he marries young Catherine.

Linton Heathcliff - Heathcliff's son by Isabella. Weak, sniveling, demanding, and constantly ill, Linton is raised in London by his mother and does not meet his father until he is thirteen years old, when he goes to live with him after his mother's death. Heathcliff despises Linton, treats him contemptuously, and, by forcing him to marry the young Catherine, uses him to cement his control over Thrushcross Grange after Edgar Linton's death. Linton himself dies not long after this marriage.

Hindley Earnshaw - Catherine's brother, and Mr. Earnshaw's son. Hindley resents it when Heathcliff is brought to live at Wuthering Heights. After his father dies and he inherits the estate, Hindley begins to abuse the young Heathcliff, terminating his education and forcing him to work in the fields. When Hindley's wife Frances dies shortly after giving birth to their son Hareton, he lapses into alcoholism and dissipation.

Isabella Linton - Edgar Linton's sister, who falls in love with Heathcliff and marries him. She sees Heathcliff as a romantic figure, like a character in a novel. Ultimately, she ruins her life by falling in love with him. He never returns her feelings and treats her as a mere tool in his quest for revenge on the Linton family.

Mr. Earnshaw - Catherine and Hindley's father. Mr. Earnshaw adopts Heathcliff and brings him to live at Wuthering Heights. Mr. Earnshaw prefers Heathcliff to Hindley but nevertheless bequeaths Wuthering Heights to Hindley when he dies.

Mrs. Earnshaw - Catherine and Hindley's mother, who neither likes nor trusts the orphan Heathcliff when he is brought to live at her house. She dies shortly after Heathcliff's arrival at Wuthering Heights.

Joseph - A long-winded, fanatically religious, elderly servant at Wuthering Heights. Joseph is strange, stubborn, and unkind, and he speaks with a thick Yorkshire accent.

Frances Earnshaw - Hindley's simpering, silly wife, who treats Heathcliff cruelly. She dies shortly after giving birth to Hareton.

Mr. Linton - Edgar and Isabella's father and the proprietor of Thrushcross Grange when Heathcliff and Catherine are children. An established member of the gentry, he raises his son and daughter to be well-mannered young people.

Mrs. Linton - Mr. Linton's somewhat snobbish wife, who does not like Heathcliff to be allowed near her children, Edgar and Isabella. She teaches Catherine to act like a gentlewoman, thereby instilling her with social ambitions.

Zillah - The housekeeper at Wuthering Heights during the latter stages of the narrative.

Mr. Green - Edgar Linton's lawyer, who arrives too late to hear Edgar's final instruction to change his will, which would have prevented Heathcliff from obtaining control over Thrushcross Grange.