

‘WUTHERING HEIGHTS’ EMILY BRONTË



REVISION GUIDE

Contents:

1. Reminder of Assessment Objectives
2. Glossary of key terms
3. Contextual overview
4. Themes/concerns
5. Chronology of novel
6. Character summaries
7. Setting
8. Critical interpretations
9. Revision activities
10. Secondary reading; using the critical anthology
11. Sample question

Glossary of key terms

Binary opposition: A pair of theoretical opposites that rely on each other in order to make sense e.g. love and hate; civilised and uncivilised or indeed, *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange*

Focalisation: When the narrator chooses to focus upon particular characters or aspects of the story. For instance, what evidence is there of focalisation throughout Nelly's narrative and what might the reasons be for this?

Frame narrator: The narrative of the frame narrator contains all the other narratives within the story e.g. Lockwood

Interdependent divisions: Two contrasting ideas that cannot be separated; they rely on each other to exist e.g. good/evil, chaos/order.

Intrinsic reading: Focus on language/ words on the page

Narrative content: Collection of represented events, along with participants and circumstances of these events.

Narrative form: How events are represented through a particular medium.

Omniscient author: An all-knowing narrative voice, usually evident in texts written in the third person; particularly relevant in the case of *Pride and Prejudice* and arguably absent in *Wuthering Heights*.

Gothic novel: Derives its name from architectural style popular in Europe between the 12th and 16th centuries, which were suggestive of a supernatural presence.

Motif: Recurring structures, contrasts or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes

CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

Emily Brontë

Sealed in her art-world, the moor strategically placed for escape above the house, no domesticating and limiting mother to weaken her capacity for identification with whatever sex she chose to impersonate at a particular moment, polite society at a safe distance, and a father who seems to have selected her as an honorary boy to be trusted with fire-arms in defence of the weak, Emily Brontë's life exemplifies a rough joy in itself, its war-games, its word games and its power to extend its own structuring vision out upon the given world. (Davies)

Emily Brontë was born at Thornton, Bradford, Yorkshire, and just after the birth of her sister Anne (20 April 1820), she moved with her family to Haworth, near Keighley, Yorkshire, where she spent most of her life. Today remembered chiefly as the author of the eighteenth-century romance *Wuthering Heights* (1847), set in her native Yorkshire, Emily Brontë was the second surviving daughter and fifth child of Cornishwoman Maria Brontë and the Ulsterman Reverend Patrick Brontë (1777-1861), "perpetual curate" (rector) of the remote village of Haworth on the Yorkshire Moors from 1820 until his death in 1861. Maria died on 15 September 1821, survived by her husband, five daughters, and a son, Branwell (1817-48). Emily and her sisters (except Anne) attended Cowan Bridge School, a Church of England clergymen's daughters' boarding school (the original of Lowood in Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*). Emily spent a total of just six months there: 25 November 1824 to 1 June 1825. The eldest sisters, Maria and Elizabeth, became so ill that they had to be taken home, and died shortly after their return, the former on 6 May and the latter on 15 June 1825. From then until 1830 the surviving children remained at Haworth. From 29 July through October 1835 Emily taught at Miss Wooler's School at Roe Head, where Charlotte had taught in 1831-32.

The girls' real education, however, was at the Haworth parsonage, where they had the run of their father's books, and were thus nurtured on the Bible, Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton, Byron, Sir Walter Scott and many others. They enthusiastically read articles on current affairs, lengthy reviews and intellectual disputes in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and *The Edinburgh Review*. They also ranged freely in Aesop and in the colourfully bizarre world of *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments*.

After service as a governess in Halifax, Yorkshire (the second half of the year 1838), in 1842 Emily accompanied her surviving sisters, Anne and Charlotte, to Brussels, where from mid-February through the beginning of November they attended the Pensionnat Héger with the goal of improving their proficiency in French in order to start their own school. Their 1844 plans for their own school, however, foundered, and the sisters were reunited at Haworth in August 1845. When in the autumn of 1845 Charlotte accidentally discovered the manuscript of Emily's *Gondal* verses, she initiated the publication of a volume of poems by all three sisters, who as a clergyman's daughters thought it advisable to adopt the *noms des plumes* Currer (Charlotte), Ellis (Emily), and Acton (Anne) Bell (probably with a pun on "Belle"). In the preface to the 1850 edition of the poems, Charlotte herself recalls the moment of discovery: 'Of course, I was not surprised, knowing that she could and did write verse: I looked it over, and something more than surprise seized me, — a deep conviction that these were not common effusions, not at all like the poetry women generally write. I thought them condensed and terse, vigorous and genuine. To my ear, they had also a peculiar music — wild, melancholy, and elevating.'

A year after the publication by Thomas Cautley Newby, London, of *Wuthering Heights* (December 1847), Emily died of tuberculosis. On 19 December 1848, she suddenly expired as she stood with one hand on the mantelpiece of the living room in the Haworth parsonage. She was just 30 years old but had already produced a romantic tragedy in novel form, written over the course of 1845-46, yet to be surpassed in the English language. As Paul Lieder points out, 'Emily Brontë wrote so little in her short life that it is difficult to appraise her work with any surety. One point is generally agreed upon: that in both her prose and poetry there is, in spite of minor faults, a rare power.'

Historical background

Consider how the text challenges or supports this contextual information:

- **The Brontë sisters** lived a sheltered life in Haworth, Yorkshire and had a distinct lack of contact with male company apart from their brother and father. All of the Brontë sisters were published writers- Charlotte (*Jane Eyre*), Emily (*Wuthering Heights*) and Anne (*Agnes Grey*). They had one brother, Branwell and their father was a Clergyman.
- **Emily loved Gothic novels** which were extremely fashionable at the time. They usually contained medieval castles, ghosts, madness and mystery.
- **The role of the novelist** within society was like that of the preacher; shaping the moral outlook of their readers and instruct, as well as entertain. Many of Brontë's contemporaries, such as Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell used their fiction to address the social injustices of the period, such as poverty, the lack of universal education, sexual inequality and the dehumanising effects of industrialisation.
- **Education** was a key issue for Victorians. There were very few schools and the education offered was often irrelevant and inadequate. In the 1830's, only around a third of men and two thirds of women could write.
- **Christianity** was the primary religion during the Victorian period and was often used as a form of social control; good behaviour and acceptance of one's place in society would be rewarded with a place in heaven. Many religious figures used the concept of sin to control, punish and suppress those weaker or less intelligent than them.
- **Marriage** was seen as the social 'norm' and the proper goal for any healthy woman. For poorer families, marriage was seen as a release from the threat of poverty or at least, the sharing of burdens. Once married, a woman became the property of her husband; he was her 'Master'. A popular Victorian dilemma, particularly amongst female writers, was the intelligent young woman's right to love and be loved, yet still retain her independent spirit.
- **The word 'prudery'** is synonymous with the Victorian period. Women were taught to think of sex as a shameful necessity to be endured for their husband's sakes.
- **Men and women were very rarely 'friends'**. Such relationships were looked down upon and it was unheard of for a man and woman to live together without the bond of marriage.
- **With the advent of Darwin's theory of evolution** during the 1850s and 1860s, there was a clear paradox at work in society. If humans had evolved through natural selection and a 'survival of the fittest', there was no place for God in this version of human development.

THEMES AND CONCERNS

LOVE

- Different types of love presented throughout the novel. The Greeks classified different types of love to include *agape* (altruistic, charitable love), *ludus* (the playful affection of children and lovers), *pragma* (the understanding that exists between a long married couple), *storge* (the love that develops between comrade or sibling after they have been through much together) and finally *mania* (obsession) which was strongly linked with *eros* (sexual passion)
- Book is structured around two parallel love stories
- Separation of those who should be together brings havoc and misery. Love presented as one-ness and inseparability, rather than two separate people caring for each other.
- Emotions verge between passionate love and hatred/rage. Arguably the two are interdependent, hence the extremity of the language and actions of protagonists and vivid/forceful imagery.
- Catherine and Heathcliff's passion seemingly the centre of novel. Passion condemned as immoral by Nelly and Victorian readers but could interpret as a love that transcends social boundaries and idealise them as romantic hero/heroine.
- Catherine and Hareton's love is less dramatic but restores harmony and equilibrium. It is based on growth, change and mutual improvement. Love denies difference and is perhaps asexual. However, Lockwood is forced to recognise the strength of their love: 'Together, they were afraid of nothing...Together they would brave Satan and all his legions.'

SOCIAL CLASS

- Earnshaws and Lintons members of gentry. In late 18th/19th century, gentry's position is precarious (underneath royalty and aristocracy), as it is unestablished and fluid. Lockwood for instance, is puzzled by their position.
- Considerations of class status inform much of the characters' decisions. Catherine marries Edgar so she can be 'the greatest woman in the neighbourhood'.
- Heathcliff represent shifting status making transition from homeless waif to gentleman, although Lockwood remarks that he is similar only to a gentleman in 'dress and manners,'

NATURE V CULTURE

- Nature represented by Earnshaw (Cathy and Heathcliff in particular) and culture represented by Lintons.
- 'Nature' governed by passions/ wildness
- 'Culture' governed by convention, civility, refinement and ideals.
- In ways, nature corrupts culture in this novel as the world of WH dominates that of TG. Similarly, Brontë reverses expectations when the 'cultured' characters are often presented as silly and shallow. However, we cannot define the novel as an allegory for either side winning; it defies social expectations. Could be compared to *Jane Eyre* where the heroine seeks her own personal/moral code, although it depends whether you view the ending as reconciliation/compromise with the uniting of Cathy and Hareton.

RELIGION

- Religion is more personal and related to 'this world' than the next (see Cathy's speech to Nelly about her idea of heaven)
- Characters have variety of outlooks:
 - o Joseph; emphasis on hell/damnation/sin which is a possible parody of evangelical attitudes prevalent in Victorian period
 - o Edgar; representative of conventional morality/ reunion of souls after death
 - o Nelly; believes in higher power, perhaps because of her social position. She constantly reminds that it is not our place to judge/moralise/ take revenge as it is God's privilege.
 - o Catherine and Heathcliff; heaven is within the moors and within each other, hence their longing for death so they can be together.

POWER AND REVENGE

- Both explored through social view of novel; close knit community where hierarchy is firmly established.
- 2 houses symbolise the sheltered and protected world of the upper class and the exposure of the Earnshaws is brought about by decline of household. Heathcliff however, corrupts Thrushcross Grange and slowly erodes it.
- Heathcliff's status as 'gypsy' lacking in social status or a name changes to owner/heir of both TG and WH.
- Money/power essential to survival.
- Heathcliff's revenge for thwarted passion is based upon acquiring social status and power. This is perhaps reflective of Victorian society where status is all.
- Heathcliff presented throughout as an outside, forcing his way in literally and symbolically. His power represented by association with fire/storms; fierce love and implacable hatred. He is even described as devilish/ vampire/ it/ ghoul suggesting he is outside humanity altogether.
- Narrators are also socially placed despite the fact they are in control of the story; they anchor the wildness of the story itself.

Other aspects to consider:

- Good versus evil
- Crime and punishment
- Passion versus rationality
- Selfishness, division and reconciliation
- Chaos and order
- Health and sickness
- Rebellion and conformity
- The conflicting nature of love: it can destroy and rebuild.
- Parent and child
- Nature v Nature

CHARACTER SUMMARIES

Heathcliff

- Origins are a mystery; only has one name, given to him by the 'master', Earnshaw. First meeting he is described as 'it', 'gipsy brat and that 'not a soul knew to whom it belonged'
- Subsequent to the death of Mr Earnshaw, Hindley is able to treat Heathcliff in any way he desires and therefore relegating him to the status of servant and seems to encourage others to do the same. Whilst Heathcliff wishes (if only temporarily) that he "was dressed and behaved as well" as Edgar, he cannot avoid acting out his violent nature when Edgar is rude to him. Heathcliff seems to have learnt some of his bad behaviour from Hindley whose 'bad ways and bad companions formed a pretty example for Catherine and Heathcliff' after the death of Frances.
- Whilst the treatment meted out to Heathcliff by these characters is obvious prejudice, it does not particularly affect him. It is only when Catherine declares that "It would degrade me to marry [Heathcliff] now" that he fully appreciates the fact that his social position is a hindrance to his progression in life. Leaving the area, he goes away for three years and returns, having tried to better himself. This does not, however, alter the fact that certain people still refer to him as 'the plough boy'. It seems, therefore, that he cannot escape from his origins, or rather the lack of them.
- Powerful, amoral, worldly, profoundly romantic; a paradox perhaps. He recognises drive, personality and passion rather than class.
- Heathcliff takes romantic conventions and manifests them into a new form with Cathy. His love is all consuming and in the end, it does indeed consume him, but this is apparent throughout the novel e.g. Ch29, 'Heathcliff paused and wiped his forehead; his hair clung to it, wet with perspiration... a painful appearance of mental tension towards one absorbing subject.'
- Heathcliff often presented using savage animal imagery representing his untamed side, particularly where his love for Catherine is concerned ('he gnashed at me and foamed like a mad dog, and gathered him to her in greedy jealousy...I [was not] in the company of a creature of my own species.')
- The main point of sympathy is perhaps after the death of Cathy. One of the most noticeable is the way in which his speech is presented within the text. In order to demonstrate the fact that he is confused and lacking in concentration, Brontë has him speaking in an extremely fractured manner, using short sentences with many pauses, for example: "Be with me always – take any form – drive me mad!" This suggests to the reader a deep sense of loss – he cannot even formulate complete sentences, such is his despair.
- Negative points include:
 - o He destroys Hindley. He doesn't care that his wife has died and does not feel any guilt about having a part to play in Hindley's premature death.
 - o He uses Isabella as a vehicle for his revenge. He does not treat her as a human being.
 - o He treats Linton and Hareton badly and is glad when Edgar is dead
 - o He hangs Isabella's dog (chapter 12) and this is a warning of the violence that exists between the two families and clearly shows the Gothic side to his character.

Catherine Earnshaw

- When we first hear about Cathy as a child (although we have already met her as a ghost) we hear of her 'wild, wicked' side. Her childish, perverse character is revealed through her initial response to Heathcliff.
- As a child, she is always 'in mischief' but she is also manipulative and manipulates people to be the same ('plaguing everybody who would not do the same.'). The contrast between this 'wicked' nature and her 'sweetest smile' and 'meaning no harm', Brontë allows us to see how her character develops after events with Heathcliff and Edgar.
- Cathy's early childhood rebellion against religion and her elders would have been highly condemned during the Victorian period and could reflect Brontë's own childhood where she and her siblings were always trying to escape her dogmatic aunt.
- During childhood, Nelly's language suggests how fond she was of her ('she had the bonniest smile') however when she spends time with Heathcliff her rougher side is emphasised and when she visits the Lintons, this contrast between her two sides becomes more apparent. ('instead of a wild, hatless little savage jumping into the house... there lighted from a black pony a very dignified person, with brown ringlets.')
- Juxtaposition and binary oppositions form a large part of how the reader perceives Cathy. Nelly's descriptions of her seem conflicted from the time she meets Edgar onwards. The deterioration of Cathy is perhaps due to this psychological turmoil inflicted by a clash between civilisation and nature. The fact that she is buried between the two on the moors is representative of this; however, it is significant that after death, it is WH not TG she tries to return to. In death, she longs for union with the wildness of the Heights and indeed, with Heathcliff. Perhaps this because in death she is free from social restraints.

Ellen Dean/ Nelly

- Various critical views of Nelly; Gossip, confidante, villain, sentimental Puritan, local historian, servant, story teller.
- Active narrator; her narrative is largely unfolded through the words of other character. Sense of actuality is conveyed through her use of concrete detail.
- Brings us close to the action of the stories/events she describes. Arguably, she is reliable because she has lived there her whole life.
- However, she is emotionally attached to character, so possibly biased. She can also choose which event to omit, or elaborate on. Brontë's inclusion of lot of dialogue from the principal characters however, ensures that a sense of objectivity is not lost.
- Narrator reports past from present so has the benefit of hindsight.
- Take great pride in housework and has respect for social conventions ('an elderly woman and a servant merely')
- Despite her assertions that it is not her place to moralise, she often passes judgement throughout with her sayings/ Yorkshire born values ('proud people breed sad sorrows for themselves'/ 'a good heart will help you to a bonny face'). She also offers a glimpse of the differences between rural and urban life through both her values and her speech- particularly when compared to Lockwood's narration.
- Not always honest ('I invented and reiterated at intervals throughout the way')

- Surprisingly knowledgeable for a servant; 'You could not open a book in this library that I have not looked into,' she tells Lockwood. This serves to establish our trust in her as a narrator.
- Immersion in reality of day-to-day events leaves her unable to comprehend the love of Cathy and Heathcliff.

Edgar Linton

- As a child Edgar can be seen as in opposition to Heathcliff; however in the second part of the novel, his subsequent care for his daughter reveals a different side to him.
- Descriptions of Edgar emphasise his 'doll' like appearance next to Heathcliff as well as his 'light hair and fair skin'. The focus on appearance by Nelly at an early stage may suggest he lacks depth, however it is important to remember that at this point in the novel, Nelly is very much on Heathcliff's side (think how she helps him to dress up when the Lintons come to visit and encourages him to pursue his affections for Cathy)
- His behaviour as a child is unappealing; he 'cried for mama at every turn and trembled if a country lad heaved his fist against you' and the effeminate/melodramatic language used about and by him also reflects this. Brontë/Nelly ensures the reader will prefer Heathcliff.
- Later in the novel, Nelly's presentation of Edgar is far more sympathetic, perhaps because he is her 'master' now.
- The profound sense of grief at Catherine's death represents a turning point in our perception of Edgar; similarly his passion for new born daughter demonstrates his ever-present capacity to love- a quality Catherine inherits as shown through her love for Linton in spite of his weakness.
- His conventional, solitary love for his wife after her death contrasts with Heathcliff. He pays 'solitary visits' to her grave and 'recalled her memory with ardent, tender love'. Victorian readers would have appreciated this, as it was seen as the 'proper' way to mourn and indeed, love.

Lockwood

- Frame narrator; we quickly become aware of his limited point of view.
- Brontë would be aware that many of her readers would have sympathised with Lockwood being young, wealthy, educated and from the south of England but it becomes clear that he is a parody of the typical fictional 19th century hero. The three opening chapters are subversive social comedy, arguably on a par with Jane Austen.
- Brontë's imitation of his stilted middle class speech is incredibly effective; language is used as a shield by him to protect himself from the cruel, inhospitable nature of the Heights. For instance:
 - o 'inspecting the penetralium'; going indoors
 - o 'atmospheric tumult'; storm
 - o 'Bracing ventilation'; strong wind
 - o 'Constrained to demand assistance'; called for help
 - o 'With vexatious phlegm'; angrily
 - o 'A lusty dame'; fat
 - o 'She turned her vocal artillery'; she shouted
- Presents himself as a Romantic hero; sensitive, disillusioned. Compared to the Byronic hero that is Heathcliff, he is a shallow parody. He is searching for a 'hero and

heroine', to the point he hijacks the narrative to tell what he considers to be the point of high romance in the novel when Cathy and Heathcliff unite as she lies dying.

- He compares himself to Heathcliff (both 'misanthropists'), which is ironic as he is clearly the opposite. When he 'realises' this when he leaves Yorkshire, proclaiming it 'godforsaken' and miserable, it is amusing.
- Misinterprets events throughout the novel
- He emphasises the power of Nelly's narrative. Even his responses to the story are bland and unemotional; 'In truth, I felt rather disposed to defer the sequel of the narrative myself', emphasising the 'style' and 'manner' of the story, rather than connecting with the emotions/characters.
- His lack of interpretation forces the reader to take responsibility; we listen when he does, but we have cannot help but correct the perception he lacks. He even notes, 'What a realisation of something more romantic that a fairy-tale it would have been for Mrs Linton Heathcliff had she and I struck up an attachment.'
- He finished the tale unable to imagine 'unquiet slumbers for those sleepers in that quiet earth', which is arguably ridiculous when the reader has experienced the emotional turmoil of the past few hundred pages.

Hindley

- 'Rightful heir' of Wuthering Heights but is soon usurped by Heathcliff when it is clear when that his father prefers him. Earnshaw 'took to Heathcliff strangely'.
- Hindley's childhood jealousy of Heathcliff turns far more sinister when he returns with Frances. He becomes the landlord/master who treats him vindictively. Brontë represents this change physically; he has 'grown sparer, and lost his colour, and spoke and dressed very different.
- However, he also reflects 19th century attitudes; most readers would have understood his actions/attitudes in banishing the servants, Heathcliff included, to the 'backquarters' of the house.
- Nelly does not allow us to feel sympathy for Hindley, comparing his attitude towards his son after his wife's death to Edgar's.
- Descriptions of Hindley become increasingly dehumanised; he is the 'worse and weaker man'. Perhaps because he rejects religion/Christian values.
- The difference between Hindley and Edgar emphasises the spiritual divide between the two houses; they are 'so opposite in similar circumstances' She illustrates the evil of Hindley by balancing it up against the good of Edgar. The concept of men taking a certain path seems spiritual, something Victorian readers would have been able to relate to; 'they chose their own lots and were righteously doomed to endure them'
- The violence inflicted upon Hindley in Chapter 17 removes all sympathy for Heathcliff and although it is 'revenge' fulfilled, we cannot help but pity Hindley, whom modern audiences may recognise as a depressed alcoholic. Even sadder is that Heathcliff continues to exact his revenge on Hindley long after he is dead.

Frances Earnshaw

- Frances described as young, 'rather thin' and 'so afraid of dying'; strong suggestion she will die soon through descriptions of ill health. Strong sense of foreboding created around her. Supports Nelly as a 'storyteller' with hints of what is to come.
- Nelly thinks her 'half silly' and long list given describing her hyperactive personality- she would 'express such joy' at the merest trifle, 'kissed', 'ran about' and 'prattled

with Cathy'. She reflects the stark differences between more childlike, innocent characters and the wiser, wordly ones.

- Her birth/origins also unexplained; compare to Heathcliff.
- She dislikes Heathcliff (perhaps because she is similar in status to him?) but she is the reason Hindley becomes increasingly cruel to him.
- 'We don't in general take to foreigners here' is said with reference to Frances and again, is indicative of the insular, elemental world of Wuthering Heights.
- Frances's death sparks the deterioration of Hindley, the abuse of Heathcliff and the rejection of Hareton. Facilitates the plot and the events that follow.

Isabella

- Sister of Edgar and initially presented as 'shrieking' with Edgar. It would be easy to condemn her as shallow/superficial. She is described as 'terrified and repelled' at Cathy's passion.
- She is drawn to Heathcliff's uncivilised, rugged appearance; perhaps comparable to Lockwood's perception of the Romantic hero.
- She however, does not allow social prejudice to ruin her love for Heathcliff as Cathy does; she elopes and is isolated from her family, home comforts, social protection.
- Isabella's letter after she has married Heathcliff and the intervention of her dialogue in Chapter 17 before she leaves Heathcliff add a varying viewpoint to Nelly's narrative and reassure us that Heathcliff is as monstrous as Nelly suggests.
- She draws attention to the wild uncivilised nature of the Heights, offering another outsider's perspective. She asks Nelly, 'How did you preserve the common sympathies of human nature when you resided here?'
- She can be viewed as a strong female character. She leaves Heathcliff, which in the Victorian period would have been unheard of. She brings her son up alone and unsupported.

Hareton

- Raised by Heathcliff as an uneducated savage and is used by him to gain revenge on Hindley.
- Hareton is illiterate and quick tempered but easily humiliated, yet shows a good heart and desire to better himself, culminating in his marriage to Catherine Linton.
- In Chapter 11, he is described as an 'apparition' of Hindley; 'elf locked...brown eyed... ruddy countenance'. Despite Nelly's attempt to embrace him (after all, she did raise him), he rejects her, moving out of 'arms way' and picks up a 'large flint' to throw at her, demonstrating his degradation at the hands of Heathcliff.
- Hareton can be seen as a symbol of the suffering Heathcliff endured as a child. He is directly compared to Heathcliff as a man- full of 'malignity', corrupted as a tool for adult revenge. A Victorian audience would have been incredibly shocked by a child behaving in this way.
- Hareton refers to Heathcliff as 'devil daddy' and is surprisingly attached to him. He weeps when he dies and in spite of the treatment meted out to him by Heathcliff, does not reject or him, or seek revenge.
- It is Catherine Linton who begins to penetrate Hareton's persona. He attempts to improve himself for her sake. The final image of Hareton is 'civilised' and he is presented as a 'softened man' who is 'respectfully dressed'- even to the point that Lockwood doesn't recognise him. He can finally gain his rightful inheritance.

Catherine Linton

- Arguably, she has inherited the best qualities of her parents
- First description appears in Chapter 2; she is inhospitable towards Lockwood, although the fact that she holds her own in such a male dominated environment may be seen as admirable by the reader. Harsh language emphasises her mannerisms with adverbs/adjectives such as 'scornfully' and 'snapped'. There is also irony in initial presentation as Lockwood describes her as an 'amiable hostess'. Reader realises she is unhappy though; in her eyes is a 'kind of desperation'.
- Much of Catherine's positive qualities are filtered through Nelly's narrative; biased motherly perspective perhaps?
- She has the capacity to love deeply/ unconditionally, much like her father Edgar. She loves Linton despite the fact the reader cannot help but despise him. She says of her father also, 'I love him better than myself', offering a contrast to Heathcliff and Cathy's selfish, all-consuming love.
- She stands up to Heathcliff ('you have nobody to love you; and, however miserable you make us, we will still have the revenge of thinking that your cruelty arises from your greater misery') and reconciles her apparent hatred for Hareton because of his status by educating him. Arguably succeeds where her mother fails.

Linton

- Son of Heathcliff and Isabella and presented by Nelly as a sickly, whining 'effeminate' man. He cannot survive Wuthering Heights and is constantly described as ill ('languid, and his form extremely slight')
- Linton mocks Hareton for his inability to read and 'giggles'. He also tries to play Master, remarking, 'You can't open your mouth without me. Do try to behave like a gentleman, now do!'
- Brontë presents him as extremely self-pitying and almost gently satirising his weakness. April Van Angelis's production in 2008, presented him as a comic figure in fact. It is also clear that Nelly does not like him so this influences the reader's level of sympathy for him ('the invalid complained of being covered in ashes').
- Heathcliff rejects him completely: 'a pitiful, shuffling, worthless thing.'
- He is increasingly wicked as the novel progresses, particularly towards Catherine Linton who as Nelly reminds him, has done nothing but love him. Very little time is given by Nelly to his death which suggests how she feels about him.

Joseph

- 'An elderly man nay an old man, very old perhaps though hale and sinewy'
- Inhospitable, unwelcoming: 'vinegar faced' Joseph
- His first words are 'Lord help us' suggesting his dogmatic attitude to religion we see later in the book.
- Comical element/ stock Gothic character also. He often comments upon the action and instances such as when he attempts to set the dog on Lockwood are amusing.
- Part of the landscape of WH; Cathy's diary reveals he has been there for many years.
- Has very traditional religious values, reflecting period of time. When H and C can't go to church he spends hours preaching to them. Bronte grew up in a parsonage so this

may be reflective of the conventional attitudes and social expectations she struggled against.

- Joseph's religion is a direct contrast with the more natural elemental beliefs of Heathcliff and Cathy. His views and opinions on the events at WH mirror typical Victorian views and perhaps, anticipated critical reviews of the novel at the time of publication.
- Joseph's Yorkshire accent/dialect remind us of the setting and contrast Lockwood's, reminding us he is an outsider. Josephs also reminds us 'we don't in general take to foreigners here' reminding us of the isolated and insular world of the moors.
- Joseph cannot accept Cathy and Hareton's relationship ('he's witched') and can't accept they have a relationship based on love and trust. At the end he is still focused on his 'blessed book'.
- Provides novel with continuity; he has a biblical saying for every situation throughout. Along with other characters such as Zillah, Dr Kenneth and Nelly, he provides the book with some reality as the reader can believe in the unlikeliness of events because these normal, everyday characters are included.

Zillah

- Servant at Wuthering Heights during the banishment of Nelly to Thrushcross. She is introduced in Chapter 2 as the only person in WH that is civil and helpful to Lockwood. By highlighting this, Brontë emphasises how uncivil and introverted the other inhabitants of the house are.
- It is Zillah who leads Lockwood to the haunted bedroom, instigating the supernatural turn of events.
- She speaks in the provincial Yorkshire accent dialect, reminding of setting and contributing to the reality of the story.

SETTING

- Emily Bronte has positioned the houses in opposition to each other. She achieves this by using dissimilar settings.
- WH is the epitome of the storm as can be seen in the description given by Lockwood in Chapter 1. He says that the name comes from a local word which is "descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather". So WH is representative of that which is wild and uncivilised.
- Lockwood also describes the surrounding vegetation of this house – "by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way as if carving alms of the sun." The stunted plants reflect the inability of anything to grow or flourish at WH, just as characters find it difficult to fulfil their own strong passions and seek aid from outside sources to realise their needs.
- When Lockwood sees the interior of the house for the first time, he notes that the "corners [were] defended with large jutting stones", that the "kitchen [was] forced to retreat altogether into another quarter" and that "the chairs [were], high-backed, primitive structures ... one or two heavy black ones lurking in the shade"
- Bronte gives the house human characteristics (personification) using detailed descriptions to give the impression of a defensive and unwelcoming environment. Therefore, the protagonists themselves can be seen in this way.
- Bronte's language gives WH the powerful impression of a passionate human pulsating with the same energies as its inhabitants.

- Thrushcross Grange on the other hand is more enclosed and surrounded by hills. In a deeper sense, the walls of the Grange protect the Lintons and Catherine from the dangerous influences of Heathcliff and the Heights itself.
- It is also described as being “buried in trees” - the plants flourishing in a more welcoming environment, just as the characters are more able to grow beyond their initial differences which impeded their neighbours.
- Really this is pointing at Heathcliff as he hasn't been able to grow due to the tragedies in his life, so he prevents the other characters in his household from growing themselves.
- The natural setting of garden and flowers which brings forth the sense of cheerfulness, beauty and hope that is lacking in WH.
- The Grange was first seen by Heathcliff and Catherine exudes a more luxurious and pleasant atmosphere – “... a splendid place carpeted with crimson, ... a shower of glass drops hanging in silver from the centre, and shimmering with little soft tapers.” (chapter 6) This description shows a warm, wealthy household which is a complete contrast to WH, just as the characters are more sedate and cultured.
- Further on in the book, it is clear that this cultured background is all a façade and the reader is able to see the shallowness and even brutal violence that emerges.
- The Grange lures Catherine and Heathcliff in but once inside, they cannot escape from its influences.
- The characters in the Grange are in complete contrast to those at WH.

CRITICAL INTERPRETATIONS

- 'It manages to be a number of things: a romance that brilliantly challenges the basic presumptions of the "romantic"; a "gothic" that evolves—with an absolutely inevitable grace—into its temperamental opposite; a parable of innocence and loss, and childhood's necessary defeat ...' **Joyce Carol Oates (1983)**
- 'The history of the Earnshaws and the Lintons begins to seem a history, writ small, albeit with exquisite detail, of civilization itself.' **Joyce Carol Oates (1983)**
- **Armstrong** believed that the character of Heathcliff blurs sharp 'literary categories' meant to distinguish 'between romance and realism' and leaves the question of *Wuthering Heights*' genre open to 'debate'.
- 'Like Blake, Emily Bronte is concerned solely with those primary aspects of life which are unaffected by time and place. Looking at the world, she asks herself not, how does it work? What are its variations? – but what does it mean.' **David Cecil**
- Critic **David Cecil** suggested that the natural settings help us to understand why the marriage of Cathy and Edgar is unnatural. Cathy and Heathcliff are 'untamed children of the storm', whereas Edgar is a child of civilisation, as represented by his home, Thrushcross. He premised that, because Emily was concerned with what life means, she focused on her characters' place in the cosmos, in which everything—alive or not, intellectual or physical—was animated by one of two spiritual principles: the principle of the storm, which was harsh, ruthless, wild, dynamic and wild, and the principle of calm, which was gentle, merciful, passive, and tame. The usual distinction between human being and nature did not exist for her, for they were alive in the same way; an angry man and an angry sky both literally manifesting the same spiritual principle of storm. **David Cecil**

- **When first published**, *Wuthering Heights* shocked its readers with what was considered to be obscenity and monstrosity.
- "*Wuthering Heights* is a strange, inartistic story. There are evidences in every chapter of a sort of rugged power—an unconscious strength—which the possessor seems never to think of turning to the best advantage. The general effect is inexpressibly painful. We know nothing in the whole range of our fictitious literature which presents such shocking pictures of the worst forms of humanity...." **Atlas, January 22, 1848**
- "She looked out upon a world cleft into gigantic disorder and felt within her the power to unite it in a book. That gigantic ambition is to be felt throughout the novel—a struggle, half thwarted but of superb conviction, to say something through the mouths of her characters which is not merely "I love" or "I hate," but "we, the whole human race" and "you, the eternal powers..." the sentence remains unfinished." **Virginia Woolf**
- **FR Leavis** excluded it from the great tradition of the English novel because it was a 'sport', in that it had no meaningful connection to the fiction which preceded it, or influence on the fiction which followed it.
- People have considered *Wuthering Heights* as a novel in the **Romantic tradition** in that the protagonists are driven by irresistible passion—lust, curiosity, ambition, intellectual pride, envy. The emphasis is on their desire for transcendence, to overcome the limitations of the body, of society, of time; rather than their moral transgressions. They yearn to escape the limitations inherent to life and may find that the only escape is death. The longings of a Heathcliff cannot be fulfilled in life.
- **Van Ghent** was the first to identify the significance of the numerous windows and doors in this novel, arguing that such formal boundaries represent the tension between two conflicting realities. She draws attention to the ways in which different characters aim to cross these physical boundaries and unite the two kinds of reality, and argues that although for Catherine Earnshaw the attempt results in her death, suggesting that the choice is really about irreconcilable realities, by the end of the novel, Catherine Heathcliff does succeed in achieving the domestic romance.
- Heathcliff is described throughout the novel as a 'savage'; and although *what* he actually is remains unclear throughout, it is clear that this could refer to him as a half-caste, an outsider, or a slave brought in on slave ships docking at Liverpool, or he could be a famish Irish immigrant, escaping the Irish potato famine (rife at the time Emily Bronte was writing). **Meyer**
- **Eagleton** sees the novel as centred around the eternal class conflict – between the landed gentry and the working classes. He sees Cathy's seduction by the bourgeois glamour of the Grange as opposed to Heathcliff's rejection of it. Heathcliff represents, for Eagleton, the turbulence of a mobile social workforce, who were moving in increasing numbers to urban areas looking for work. He reminds us of Heathcliff's ambition: 'the triumph of seeing my descendents fairly lord of their estates! My child hiring their children to till their father's land for wages'. He is destructive to the established order because he has no social or domestic status. He disturbs the establishment because he has no legitimate place within its system. He is both a threat and an opportunity for it to be reinvented. Eagleton's analysis turns on the issue of liberty and oppression. The fact that there is no opportunity for freedom either within or outside the system is a consequence of bourgeois society. He can be

seen as a parody of capitalist activity, yet he is also a product of and a participant in that system. The contradiction of the novel, Eagleton claims, is that Heathcliff both embodies and antagonises the values which he wishes to contest.

- **Kettle** writes, '*Wuthering Heights* is about England in 1847. The people it reveals are not in a never-never land, but in Yorkshire. Heathcliff was not born in the pages of Byron, but in a Liverpool slum. The language of Nelly, Joseph and Hareton is the language of the Yorkshire people. The story of *WH* is concerned not with love in the abstract but with the passions of living people, with property ownership, the attraction of social comforts, the arrangement of marriages, the importance of education, the validity of religion, the relations of rich and poor.' Kettle goes on to examine how Heathcliff rebels against the values represented in *Wuthering Heights*, the values which reflect the specific tyranny of Victorian capitalist society.
- **Elaine Showalter** writes more specifically about Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Bertha Mason, Rochester's mad wife in the novel. However, you can link her theories to the presentation of female 'madness' in the characters of Catherine Earnshaw and Isabella Linton in *Wuthering Heights*: 'Brontë offers several explanations for Bertha's madness, all taken from the discourse of Victorian psychiatry. As Rochester tells the story [...] after their marriage, Bertha becomes 'intemperate and unchaste', a monster of sexual appetite who finally is pronounced mad by 'medical men'. Brontë's account echoes the beliefs of Victorian psychiatry about the transmission of madness: [...] the reproductive system was the sources of mental illness in women [...] and is linked to the periodicity of the menstrual cycle [...] Bertha suffers from the 'moral insanity' associated with women's sexual desires.'
- **Gilbert and Gubar's** interest in the ambivalent presentation of gender focuses upon their reading of Heathcliff as 'female'. This is in the sense that second sons, bastards and daughters are feminine. Heathcliff is 'female' because he is dispossessed of social power. He has no status, no social place and no property. He is only Heathcliff, not Mr Heathcliff, or the Master, in contrast to Edgar Linton. Heathcliff's rebellions against the social conventions of class, marriage and inheritance similarly suggest that he can be read as 'female' since endorsing such conventions only serves the interest on patriarchal culture. They focus also on the issue of names in the novel, suggesting that the writing of the name Catherine, in its various manifestations (Earnshaw, Heathcliff, Linton) on the windowsill reveals the crucial lack of identity that is common to all women under patriarchy, 'what Catherine, or any girl must learn is that she does not know her own name, and therefore cannot know who she is or whom she is destined to be'.
- 'the puzzles of *Wuthering Heights* may be best resolved if the novel is read as a statement of a very serious kind about a girl's childhood and the adult woman's tragic yearning to return to it. Catherine's impossible love for Heathcliff becomes comprehensible as a pre-adolescent (but not pre-sexual) love modelled after the sister-brother relationship. The gratuitous cruelties of the novel are thus justified as realistic attributes of the nursery world – and as frankly joyous memories of childhood eroticism' **Ellen Moers**

REVISION ACTIVITIES

Some key quotes... but who said them, when, and what relevance do they have to the novel as a whole?

- A perfect misanthropist's Heaven – and Mr. Heathcliff and I are such a suitable pair to divide the desolation between us.'
- 'He'll love and hate, equally under cover.'
- 'On that black hill top the earth was hard with a black frost, and the air made me shiver through every limb. Being unable to remove the chain, I jumped over, and, running up the flagged causeway bordered with straggling gooseberry bushes, knocked vainly for admittance, till my knuckles tingled and the dogs howled.'
- 'What vain weather-cocks we are.'
- 'T' maister's dahn in t'fowld.'
- 'We don't in general take to foreigners here, Mr Lockwood, unless they take to us first.'
- 'I'd not exchange, for a thousand lives, my condition here, for Edgar Linton's at Thrushcross Grange.'
- 'Your eyes ... that couple of black fiends, so deeply buried, who never open their windows boldly, but lurk glinting under them, like devil's spies?'
- '... how lightly she dismisses her old playmate's troubles.'
- 'His treatment of the latter was enough to make a fiend of a saint.'
- 'I own I did not like her.'

- 'The contrast resembled what you see in exchanging a bleak, hilly, coal country for a beautiful fertile valley.'
- 'It expressed ... the intensest anguish at having made himself the instrument of thwarting his own revenge.'
- 'I am Heathcliff.'
- '... the gunpowder lay as harmless as sand, because no fire came near to explode it.'
- 'a hero of romance.'
- 'You deserved this. You have killed yourself.'
- 'Be with me always – take any form – drive me mad! only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! it is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot love without my soul!'
- 'He's not a human being, ..., and he has no claim on my charity. I gave him my heart, and he took it and pinched it to death; and flung it back to me.'
- "He was too good to be thoroughly unhappy long. He didn't pray for Catherine's soul to haunt him."
- "A pale, delicate, effeminate boy, who might have been taken for my master's younger brother, so strong was the resemblance, but there was a sickly peevishness in his aspect that Edgar Linton never had."

- 'He wanted to lie all in an ecstasy of peace; I wanted all to sparkle and dance in a glorious jubilee. I said his heaven would be only half alive; and he said mine would be drunk: I said I should fall asleep in his; and he said he could not breathe in mine...'
- 'Mr Heathcliff, you have nobody to love you; and, however miserable you make us, we will still have the revenge of thinking that your cruelty arises from your greater misery! You are miserable, are you not? Lonely, like the Devil, and envious like him? Nobody loves you – nobody will cry for you when you die! I wouldn't be you!'
- 'I never relent in exacting my due from anyone.'
- 'I shall envy no one on their wedding day: there won't be a happier woman than myself in England!'
- "I wondered how anyone could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth."

Write down some quotations of your own:

Find evidence for the following assessments of the novel:

Using the list of features in the table and rank in order of importance from 1-10 according to which you think best characterises the novel for you as a reader. You can also add your own feature if you feel it is lacking. Find evidence for each to support the various views.

Ranking	Feature	Evidence from the text
	With an unusual narrative structure	
	Containing a passionate central relationship	
	Contrasting the experiences of two generations	
	With a vivid regional flavour	
	About conflict and violence	
	Containing distinctive imagery from nature	

	Exploring loss and separation	
	About love and romance	
	Containing episodes with a Gothic style	
	Exploring social class differences	

When and **how** do they first appear in the novel?

Four adjectives to sum up their **personality**:

Physical appearance (direct quotations from text)

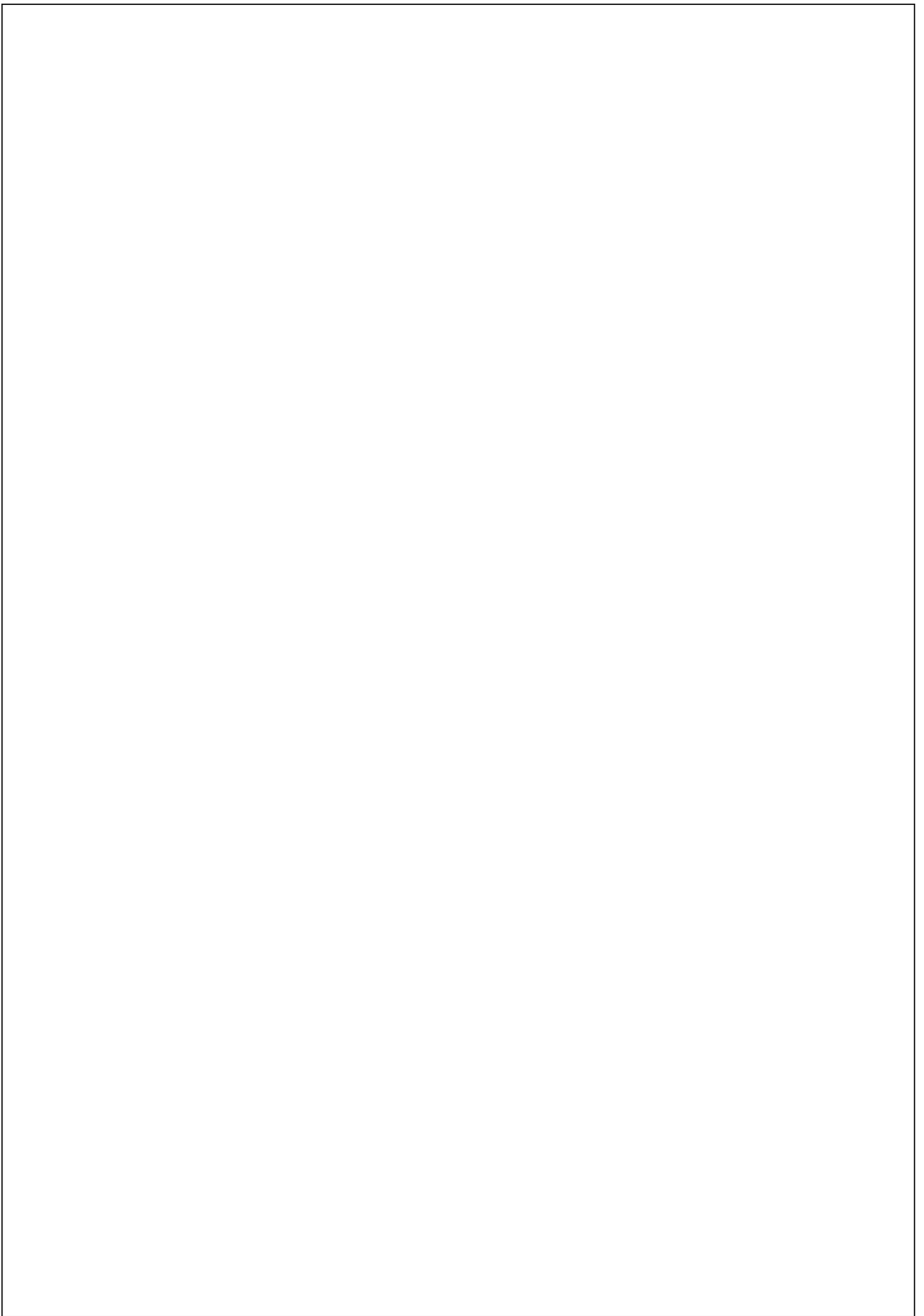
Direct quotations from the text about their **temperament**:

Character's **voice**:

Imagery associated with character:

Relationships with other characters:

What **themes** is this character associated with?



Essay questions

- In *Wuthering Heights*, the setting is vital to the story. How far and in what ways do you agree with this comment on the novel?
- The most important relationships in *Wuthering Heights* are those between generations. How far and in what ways do you agree with this view?
- Heathcliff is frequently seen by readers as a devil rather than a human. How far and what ways can this comment be seen as fair?
- Nelly Dean is not merely a narrator- she is active in the plot. How far and in what ways do you agree with this view.
- 'Meaningless, gratuitous cruelty coupled with incomprehensible passion in an atmosphere of remorseless grinding bleakness.' How far and in what ways do you agree with Stephen Wakefield's assessment of the novel
- 'It is a love story of immense emotional and imaginative force.' How far and in what ways do you agree with this assessment of the novel as a 'love story'?
- It is an exploration of two contrasting worlds and moral orders, represented by Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights. How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of the novel?
- It is a tale of revenge which knows no bounds. How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of the novel?