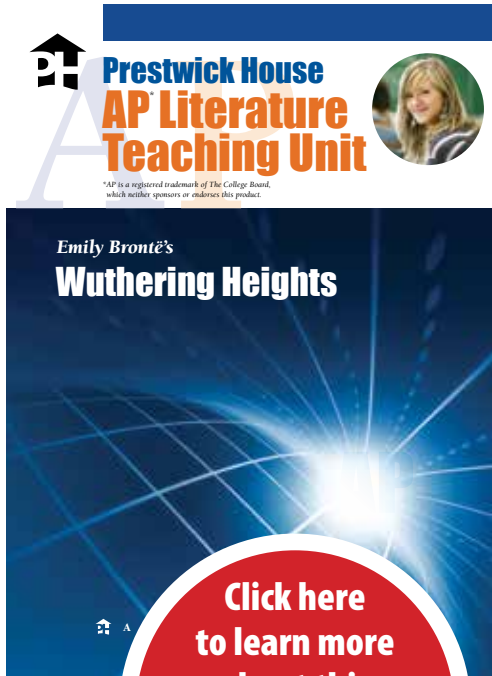




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**Teaching Unit**

**Wuthering Heights**

by Emily Brontë

written by Christina Taneyhill



**Prestwick House**

Item No. 302020

# Wuthering Heights

## Objectives

*By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:*

1. analyze the characters of Catherine, Heathcliff, Hindley, Nelly, Edgar, Isabella, Hareton, Cathy, and Linton and their relationships to each other.
2. identify and explain the impact of the frame narrative structure and shifting point-of-view on the story.
3. discuss Brontë's use of dialect and analyze its function in the story.
4. analyze the importance of literary elements such as foreshadowing on the development of the plot.
5. examine and explain the role of social class in the novel and its effect on various characters.
6. identify the motifs of doubles, windows, and weather throughout the novel and explain their significance.
7. explain the ways in which the novel does and does not meet the characteristics of Romantic literature.
8. identify in what ways the novel does and does not fit into the Gothic genre.
9. discuss the role of women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as portrayed in the novel, and analyze how the novel comments on these roles.
10. identify the various forms of love throughout the novel and analyze the effects of the various types.
11. analyze the theme of revenge throughout the novel and its impact on each character in the story.
12. discuss the role of the supernatural in the novel and the purposes it serves.
13. evaluate the focus on death in the novel and explain its impact on various characters and the plot.
14. analyze the importance of the physical setting to the novel and explain how it contributes to the plot and various themes.

## Lecture Notes

### EMILY BRONTË'S LIFE

Emily Brontë was born on July 30, 1818, in England. She was one of six children, five girls and one boy. When Emily was two, the Brontës moved to Haworth, a village near the Yorkshire moors, a wild and desolate area of England. Emily lived there until she died thirty years later, and her home was the inspiration for the setting of her only novel, *Wuthering Heights*. The Brontës endured a difficult and tragic existence, with the specter of disease and death a constant presence. Emily's mother died from cancer when Emily was three; by the time she was ten, her two oldest sisters had succumbed to tuberculosis. Her father, Reverend Patrick Brontë, was a withdrawn man, and the children were raised by their aunt, Elisabeth Branwell. Although she was an authoritarian figure who brought a religious zeal to the household, Elisabeth did not stifle the children's imaginations. They read many books from the large family library and constructed their own worlds of imaginary people and situations.

In 1846, Emily and her two sisters, Charlotte and Anne, published a collection of their poems. To prevent judgment of their work based on their sex, the sisters' male pseudonyms, Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, appeared on the collection. The book sold only two copies, but this disappointment did not discourage them, and each sister began writing a novel during 1846.

Emily's novel, *Wuthering Heights*, and Anne's novel, *Agnes Grey*, were both accepted for publication while Charlotte was still writing *Jane Eyre*. However, the publisher delayed printing of the novels until after *Jane Eyre*'s release in 1847. *Jane Eyre* was an instant success and became a best seller. The original reviews of *Wuthering Heights* were mediocre, and critics at the time considered *Jane Eyre* the superior of the three sisters' novels. However, modern critics generally consider *Wuthering Heights* to be the greatest of the Brontë sisters' novels, citing the innovative structure and originality of the subject matter. *Wuthering Heights* is now a literary classic.

Emily died on December 19, 1848, only a year after the publication of *Wuthering Heights*. Her brother, Branwell, died only three months before her; Emily caught a serious cold at his funeral which led to her death from tuberculosis. Anne died shortly after Emily, in May 1849, leaving Charlotte the only survivor of the six Brontë siblings, until her death in 1855.

### THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

#### **Industrial Revolution and Social Class:**

Emily Brontë wrote *Wuthering Heights* circa 1847, which was a time when capitalism and the Industrial Revolution were the dominant forces in the British economy and society. The nineteenth century in England was a time of rapid, often confusing, and occasionally violent social change. Groups opposed to the growing industrialization of England, such as the Luddites, engaged in violent riots, destroying wool and cotton mills. While wealth had traditionally been measured by land ownership, the eighteenth century had begun a trend toward a cash-based economy, and the

# Wuthering Heights

## Chapter I

1. Where and when does the story begin? How do these aspects of the setting inform your reading?

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2. Briefly describe the landscape and the architecture found in the first chapter. Relate them to both the Gothic novel literary genre and Romanticism.

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3. What inscription over the door does Mr. Lockwood notice, and why does he not question Mr. Heathcliff about it? What effect might this detail have on the reader?

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4. What is the narrative point of view of the first chapter?

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5. What can the reader expect from a story told from this point of view?

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6. Characterize Mr. Lockwood. What is his present situation?

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**Chapter IV**

1. How does Mr. Lockwood compel Nelly to discuss the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights with him? Are there any underlying motives suggested by his interest?

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2. How does Nelly characterize Heathcliff's monetary status?

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3. In what way does the narrative change in this chapter? What effect does it have on the story?

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4. How does Heathcliff come to reside at Wuthering Heights? What are the class implications of his background, given the setting?

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5. How does Heathcliff's presence affect the relationships between other members of the family?

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6. What is Heathcliff's attitude toward Mr. Earnshaw?

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7. Relate Heathcliff's origins to the Byronic Hero character type.

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## Chapter XII

1. How does Nelly compare herself to the other household members? How might her characterization affect the reader's perception of her subsequent behavior?

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2. What effect does Nelly's description of Edgar's studies have on Catherine?

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3. What behavior on the part of Catherine causes Nelly to begin to believe in the seriousness of her illness?

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4. What is the focus of Catherine's rantings? How is the scene characteristic of Romantic writings?

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5. Relate Catherine's declaration above to Lockwood's experience at Wuthering Heights in the beginning of the novel. What did Brontë likely intend the reader to believe?

"But, Heathcliff, if I dare you now, will you venture? If you do, I'll keep you. I'll not lie there by myself: they may bury me twelve feet deep and throw the church down over me, but I won't rest till you are with me. I never will!"

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6. What does the window seem to represent to Catherine?

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## Chapter XXI

1. What conditions does Linton live under at Wuthering Heights according to servants there?

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2. What characteristics of Cathy's lead to her encounter with Heathcliff?

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3. What is Heathcliff's purpose in having Cathy visit Wuthering Heights? Is it odd that he confides his goals in Nelly?

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4. What is the meaning of this exchange between Nelly and Heathcliff? How might Heathcliff know what is contained in Edgar's will? What literary device is employed?

“If Linton died,” I answered, “and his life is quite uncertain, Catherine would be the heir.” “No, she would not,” he said. “There is no clause in the will to secure it so: his property would go to me: but, to prevent disputes, I desire their union, and am resolved to bring it about.”

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5. What complex feelings does Heathcliff have towards Hareton? Why are his expectations concerning the boy satisfied?

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6. What metaphor does Heathcliff use to compare Hareton and Linton? How does Heathcliff delight in this comparison?

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