

**Dept. of English**

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**3<sup>rd</sup> Year Novel**

## **Facts about Wuthering Heights**

Full Title: Wuthering Heights

When Published: 1847

Literary Period: Victorian

Genre: Romanticism / Realism / Gothic (e.g., mysterious family relationships, vulnerable heroines, houses full of secrets, and wild landscapes)

Setting: Yorkshire, England, late 18th to early 19th century

Climax: Heathcliff and Catherine's tearful, impassioned reunion just hours before Catherine gives birth and then dies

Antagonist: Heathcliff (we root both for and against Heathcliff)

Point of View: Nelly Dean, a housekeeper, tells the story of the Lintons and Earnshaws to Mr. Lockwood, who passes along her story to the reader.

## **Wuthering Heights Summary**

Mr. Lockwood, an out-of-towner renting an estate called Thrushcross Grange, twice visits his landlord, Mr. Heathcliff, who lives at a nearby manor called Wuthering Heights. During the first visit, Heathcliff is gruff but compelling. During the second, Lockwood meets other mysterious residents of Wuthering Heights, is attacked by dogs when he tries to leave, and endures a ghostly visitation overnight. Lockwood asks the housekeeper at the Grange, Ellen Dean (a.k.a. "Nelly"), to tell him about Heathcliff and Wuthering Heights. She recounts a complicated story of two families, the Earnshaws and the Lintons.

Mr. Earnshaw, a gentleman, owns Wuthering Heights. He has two children, Hindley and Catherine, and adopts a third, Heathcliff. Hindley is jealous of Heathcliff because both his father and his sister are very fond of the youngster. To avoid strife, Mr. Earnshaw sends Hindley away to college, during which time Catherine and Heathcliff become extremely close. Mr. Earnshaw dies, and Hindley, with a new wife, returns to claim Wuthering Heights. Still bitter, Hindley forces Heathcliff to give up his education and treats him like a servant. Hindley's wife dies soon after giving birth to a baby boy, Hareton, however. Hindley descends into alcoholism, though he continues to abuse and mistreat Heathcliff.

Meanwhile, Heathcliff and Catherine grow interested in the Lintons, a well-to-do family who live at Thrushcross Grange. The Lintons have two children, Edgar and Isabella, who seem very cultured and refined to the somewhat wild inhabitants of Wuthering Heights. After suffering an injury while spying on the Lintons, Catherine Earnshaw spends five weeks with the Lintons, becoming close to Edgar. She finds Edgar's wealth and blonde beauty enticing, yet her feelings for Heathcliff are far more passionate. Even so, Catherine tells Nelly that she can't marry Heathcliff because of how Hindley has degraded him. Heathcliff overhears Catherine, and flees Wuthering Heights that night.

In Heathcliff's absence, a devastated Catherine marries Edgar Linton and moves to Thrushcross Grange. All is well—until Heathcliff returns, now rich and dignified, but just as wild and ferocious. Catherine is thrilled to see Heathcliff again. Edgar doesn't share her excitement. He tries to keep them apart, but Catherine continues to see Heathcliff despite her husband's disapproval. Heathcliff, meanwhile, moves into Wuthering Heights. Hindley, who has become a gambler, welcomes Heathcliff into his home because he lusts after Heathcliff's money.

Soon after, Catherine reveals to Heathcliff that Isabella has a crush on him. Not long after that, she observes the two of them embracing. The developing romance leads to a conflict between Edgar and Heathcliff, after which Edgar demands that Catherine choose between the two of them. Catherine responds by locking herself into her room and refusing to

eat for three days. On the third day, she is frenzied and delusional and believes herself near death. That same night, Heathcliff elopes with Isabella.

Edgar nurses Catherine for two months. Her health improves somewhat, though not completely. She also discovers that she is pregnant. At Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff treats Isabella terribly from the moment after their wedding. Edgar, however, refuses to have any contact with Isabella, and fears that Heathcliff wed Isabella solely as a way to try to take Thrushcross Grange from the Lintons. Two months after the wedding, Heathcliff, concerned about Catherine's health, pays a surprise visit to Thrushcross Grange while Edgar is away. In a tearful reunion, Heathcliff and Catherine profess their continuing and eternal love for each other, but Edgar soon returns and Catherine collapses. That night, Catherine gives birth to a girl, Cathy, and dies a few hours later. Catherine is buried in a spot overlooking the moors where she used to play with Heathcliff as a child.

Two days later, Isabella escapes from Wuthering Heights and goes to town outside London, where she gives birth to Heathcliff's son, Linton. Hindley dies six months later, so deeply in debt to Heathcliff that Heathcliff becomes the owner of Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff then places Hareton into the same kind of servitude into which Hindley once placed him.

Twelve years pass. Cathy grows into a beautiful young woman, while Hareton grows into a rough youth. Isabella dies, and Edgar brings Linton back to Thrushcross Grange, but Heathcliff insists that Linton come to live with him at Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff then carefully and deliberately cultivates a friendship between the weak and spineless Linton and the strong-willed Cathy. Though Edgar at first forbids Cathy from seeing Linton at all, as his own health fails he relents and allows her to meet with Linton at Thrushcross Grange or on the moors. One day, while meeting with Linton on the moors, Heathcliff forces Cathy and

Nelly to return with him and Linton to Wuthering Heights. He confines Cathy and Nelly in the house until Cathy marries Linton, which she ultimately does. Cathy escapes from Wuthering Heights long enough to be with her father as he dies, but is soon taken back to Wuthering Heights by Heathcliff. Edgar is buried next to Catherine. Linton dies soon after that, and Heathcliff, because of careful legal maneuverings, now owns both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. Cathy reluctantly lives with Heathcliff and Hareton (whom she constantly mocks for his illiteracy) at Wuthering Heights. This brings the story up to the present, when Lockwood has rented Thrushcross Grange.

Lockwood goes back to London, but passes through the region six months later. Much to everyone's surprise, Cathy and Hareton have fallen in love. Cathy has realized Hareton's nobility and kindness beneath his lack of education. Heathcliff, who sees strong a resemblance in both Hareton and Cathy to Catherine, no longer feels the need for revenge. He dies and is buried beside Catherine (on the side opposite where Edgar is buried). Cathy and Hareton, at last free of interfering adults, plan to marry and move to Thrushcross Grange.