



Wuthering Heights
English – Leaving Cert
Quick Notes

Wuthering Heights

Chapter 1

The novel opens with Lockwood writing in his diary in 1801. He reflects on a recent first visit with his landlord, Heathcliff, and the first few days as a tenant at Thrushcross Grange, an isolated manor in Yorkshire. He describes Heathcliff; though he thinks of him initially as a “capitol fellow” (3) upon meeting Heathcliff, he finds him to be a surly, dark man “his black eyes [withdrawing] so suspiciously under their brows ... his fingers sheltered themselves, with a jealous resolution” (3). Upon entering Wuthering Heights he is met by the lonely “domestic” (4), Joseph, who is just as surly as his master and described as a “dark-skinned gypsy” (6). He is an old man and a religious zealot, who constantly grumbles and curses as he goes about his tasks. Lockwood briefly describes the manor, noting that “wuthering” is a colloquial term used to describe the stormy winds that characterise the area. The manor, though in poor upkeep as Joseph is the lone caretaker, appears strong, and has many gothic looking details, especially around the door. It is made clear by his lack of excitement at renting out Thrushcross Grange and the fact that he leaves Lockwood alone in a room of snarling dogs for a time that he does not trust Lockwood. He is saved by a “lusty dame” (8); a ruddy-cheeked housekeeper wielding a frying pan. When Heathcliff returns he is angry but simmers down when Heathcliff grins and offers him some wine. Though he still feels as if he is not truly welcome at Wuthering Heights he does not let his unease stop him and volunteers to visit the next day.

Chapter 2

Lockwood, planning to spend a lazy day lounging by the fire in his study, when confronted by a serving girl dustily cleaning out the fireplace, decides to make the four-mile walk “wading through heath and mud” (10) to Wuthering Heights. He arrives at the gothic manor just as the first flakes of a snow shower start to fall. Finding the gate locked, he jumps over it, only to find the door behind it also locked. He knocks until Joseph yells at him through the door and he is finally permitted entry by a rough-looking young man, who lets him into the kitchen. Seated by the fire he finds a beautiful girl whom he presumes is Heathcliff’s wife.

He tries to make conversation and she replies to him rudely, only saying to him that he should not have left the house and that the pack of aggressive dogs does not belong to her. When Heathcliff enters, unhappy to see Lockwood, he corrects his misconception; the young woman is not his wife but his daughter-in-law. This leads Lockwood to assume that the young man who did not treat the girl with much respect and looked like a “common labourer” (13) must be Heathcliff’s son. He is once again corrected; the young man, Hareton Earnshaw, is not his son, and the girl is the widow of his deceased son. The snow shower has now become a snowstorm and when Lockwood is ready to leave, having no one to guide him, takes a lantern to help him find his way back to Thrushcross, promising to return it in the morning. When Joseph sees him making his way through the snow with the lantern, he thinks he is stealing it, and lets the hounds, Gnasher and Wolf, on him. So excited, they floor Lockwood, who is furious and begins to curse, his anger giving him a bloody nose. He is forced to stay at Wuthering Heights, being looked after by Zillah, the housekeeper, who gives him a brandy and ushers him to bed.

Chapter 3

Zillah leads Lockwood upstairs to a bedroom out of the way, warning him that Heathcliff would not be happy to know anyone was sleeping there, as he has forbidden visitors to that room. He finds the room is curious, with sliding panels and windows. Inside he finds a bunch of old books and he finds that someone has scratched words into the paint on the ledge by the bed. Three names are repeatedly inscribed into the wood: Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Heathcliff, and Catherine Linton. In some of the books he finds journal entries written in the margins and blank pages of some of the books. The diary, written approximately twenty-five years prior, belonged to Catherine Earnshaw and it describes a day in Wuthering Heights. Shortly after the death of her father, during which Hindley, her cruel older brother who runs the house now that their father is gone, forces herself and Heathcliff to listen to Joseph’s tedious sermons. Between Hindley’s cruelties, treating Heathcliff like a servant and outsider, and Joseph’s oppressive preaching life in Wuthering Heights is pretty grim. Catherine and Heathcliff are very close and console one another by hiding under furniture or running out on the moors. In the present, Lockwood drifts into a nightmare where Joseph and he are in a chapel, sitting through an endless sermon by Reverend Jabez Branderham. The sermon ends with all in the chapel attaching on another, while the reverend hammers on the pulpit to try

and bring some semblance of order to the mob. A delirious, still half-asleep Lockwood awakens by the branch of a fir-tree tapping against the window. To quell the noise, he breaks the glass to tear the branch off, but instead of a branch he finds he is grasping an icy cold ghostly hand, which seizes his own. A moaning voice beckons him “Let me in – let me in!” (29) and identifies itself as Catherine Linton, declaring it has “come home” (29). To free himself, he rubs the ghostly wrist “to and fro” (29) across the broken glass of the window “till the blood ran down and soaked the bed-clothes” (29). The ghost releases him and he quickly tries to cover the hole with a pile of books, but the books begin to fall and he cries out in terror. Heathcliff, compelled by the noise, rushes in, visibly shocked to find Lockwood stumbling in the room. Lockwood cries out that the room is haunted, telling him about his dream and the ghost, and Heathcliff curses him. But, as Lockwood flees from the room, Heathcliff cries out to Catherine, begging her to return: “Come in! come in! ... Cathy, do come. Oh, do – once more! Oh! My heart’s darling, hear me this time – Catherine, at last!” (33). However, he is met with silence and no sign that there was ever a spectre at the window. Lockwood spends the rest of the night sitting in the kitchen, watching the various members of the household insult each other’ Heathcliff treats his daughter-in-law cruelly when he sees her. Heathcliff accompanies Lockwood back to Thrushcross, where the servants are delighted to see him, thinking him dead in the storm. Lockwood retreats to his study to escape further company.

Chapter 4

Having become lonely after his escape from company the night before Lockwood insists his housekeeper, Mrs Nelly Dean, to sit with him awhile and, after finding out she has been there for eighteen years, prompts her to tell him the history of the people living in Wuthering Heights. Only too willing, she attempts to clarify for him the family relationships; she explains Hareton Earnshaw is the cousin of Catherine, whom Lockwood met, and that she is the daughter of the Catherine who was Nelly’s first mistress at Wuthering Heights and Edgar Linton, who used to own Thrushcross Grange. The older Catherine, her first mistress and mother of young Catherine and aunt of Hareton, was the daughter of Mr Earnshaw, the late owner of Wuthering Heights. Catherine Heathcliff (nee. Linton) and Hareton Earnshaw are the last of the Lintons and Earnshaws respectively. She mentions that Heathcliff is a rich and greedy man, which is why he is renting out Thrushcross, and that is his wife, Isabella Linton,

is dead. Nelly informs him that she grew up as a servant in Wuthering Heights, alongside Catherine and her brother, Hindley, Mr Earnshaws children; and she goes on to tell of how a young Heathcliff joined the household. She knows his whole story except “except where he was born, and who his parents were, and how he got his money, at first” (40). She begins her story with saying that the old master, Mr Earnshaw, returns from Liverpool with a “dirty, ragged, black-haired child” (42) whom the Earnshaws name “Heathcliff” after a son who had died in childhood. Though Mr Earnshaw announces he will be raised as a member of the family a he was found starving and homeless on the streets, there is not much excitement or love from the two children, nor from Mrs Earnshaw herself, who doesn’t want the “gipsy brat” (42) in the house as they already have their own two children to feed. “From the beginning [Heathcliff] bred bad feeling in the house” (44) being initially disliked by all but Mr Earnshaw, whose protectiveness and favouritism made everyone, especially Hindley, dislike him more, but Catherine quickly grew to love him. As children, Heathcliff spends a lot of time threatening to tell on Hindley and Hindley calls Heathcliff a lot of insulting names. Catherine and Heathcliff become inseparable and Hindley falls into more disfavor with his family. Though Mrs Earnshaw continually distrusts him, Mr Earnshaw grows to love him more and more, favouring him over his own son. When Mrs Earnshaw dies only two years after Heathcliff is adopted into the family, Hindley is left without an ally.

Chapter 5

Time passes and as Mr Earnshaw grows older and frailer, he becomes more and more protective of Heathcliff and, disgusted of the feud between he and Hindley, sends Hindley away to college. Catherine has grown into a sweet and pretty, albeit somewhat troublesome, young woman who spends all her time with Heathcliff. As Mr Earnshaw gets sicker Joseph’s fanatical religious beliefs begin to hold more sway over him, and soon Mr Earnshaw dies. Catherine and Heathcliff then turn to religion for comfort, discussing the idea of heaven while they wait for the new master of Wuthering Heights to return; Hindley.

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