



## Catherine's ghost

Emily Brontë  
**Wuthering Heights**  
(1847)

Chapter 3

*Mr Lockwood has to spend the night at Wuthering Heights because of the terrible weather. He is taken to a bedroom that has not been used for quite some time as Heathcliff keeps it shut. In the room he finds three diaries, which have the following names written on them – Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Heathcliff and Catherine Linton. Lockwood reads their contents: they reveal that Cathy is fond of Heathcliff, but that her brother Hindley treats Heathcliff badly. Lockwood falls asleep, but a tapping on the window wakes him up.*

This time, I remembered I was lying in the oak closet, and I heard distinctly the gusty wind, and the driving of the snow; I heard, also, the fir bough repeat its teasing sound<sup>1</sup>, and ascribed it to the right cause; but it annoyed me so much, that I resolved to silence it, if possible, and, I thought, I rose and endeavoured to unhasp the casement<sup>2</sup>. The hook was soldered into the staple<sup>3</sup>, a circumstance  
5 observed by me when awake, but forgotten.

'I must stop it, nevertheless!' I muttered<sup>4</sup>, knocking my knuckles through the glass, and stretching an arm out to seize the importunate branch<sup>5</sup>, instead of which, my fingers closed on the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand!

The intense horror of nightmare came over me; I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand  
10 clung to it<sup>6</sup>, and a most melancholy voice sobbed, 'Let me in – let me in!'

'Who are you?' I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself<sup>7</sup>.

'Catherine Linton,' it replied, shiveringly (why did I think of Linton? I had read Earnshaw twenty times for Linton), – 'I'm come home, I'd lost my way on the moor!'

As it spoke, I discerned, obscurely, a child's face looking through the window. Terror made me  
15 cruel, and, finding it useless to attempt<sup>8</sup> shaking the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro<sup>9</sup> till the blood ran down and soaked the bedclothes; still it wailed<sup>10</sup>, 'Let me in!' and maintained its tenacious grip, almost maddening me with fear.

'How can I!' I said at length. 'Let me go, if you want me to let you in!'

The fingers relaxed, I snatched<sup>11</sup> mine through the hole, hurriedly piled the books up in a  
20 pyramid against it, and stopped my ears to exclude the lamentable prayer. I seemed to keep them closed above a quarter of an hour; yet, the instant I listened again, there was the doleful cry moaning on<sup>12</sup>!

'Begone!' I shouted. 'I'll never let you in, not if you beg for twenty years.'

'It is twenty years,' mourned the voice, 'twenty years. I've been a waif<sup>13</sup> for twenty years!' Thereat  
25 began a feeble scratching<sup>14</sup> outside, and the pile of books moved as if thrust forward<sup>15</sup>.

I tried to jump up, but could not stir a limb<sup>16</sup>, and so yelled aloud, in a frenzy of fright<sup>17</sup>. To my confusion, I discovered the yell was not ideal. Hasty footsteps approached my chamber door; somebody pushed it open with a vigorous hand, and a light glimmered through the squares at the top of the bed. I sat shuddering<sup>18</sup> yet, and wiping the perspiration from my forehead<sup>19</sup>; the intruder  
30 appeared to hesitate, and muttered to himself.

At last, he said, in a half-whisper, plainly not expecting an answer, 'Is any one here?'

I considered it best to confess my presence, for I knew Heathcliff's accents, and feared he might search further, if I kept quiet.

With this intention, I turned and opened the panels – I shall not soon forget the effect my  
35 action produced.

1 the fir ... sound. Il ramo d'abete ripetere il suo suono tormentoso.  
2 endeavoured ... casement. Cercai di aprire la finestra a battenti.  
3 The hook ... staple. Il gancio era saldato nella toppa.  
4 I muttered. Borbotai.  
5 to seize ... branch. Per afferrare il

ramo importuno.  
6 clung to it. Si aggrappava a esso.  
7 to disengage myself. Per liberarmi.  
8 useless to attempt. Inutile tentare.  
9 rubbed it to and fro. Lo strofinai avanti e indietro.

10 it wailed. Gemeva.  
11 I snatched. Sottrassi.  
12 the doleful cry moaning on. Il grido dolente che continuava a lamentarsi.  
13 waif. Derelitta, abbandonata.  
14 a feeble scratching. Un debole grattare.

15 thrust forward. Spinta avanti.  
16 stir a limb. Muovere un muscolo.  
17 frenzy of fright. Accesso di terrore.  
18 shuddering. Rabbriuvendo.  
19 wiping ... forehead. Asciugandomi il sudore dalla fronte.



Heathcliff stood near the entrance, in his shirt and trousers; with a candle dripping<sup>20</sup> over his fingers, and his face as white as the wall behind him. The first creak of the oak startled him<sup>21</sup> like an electric shock: the light leaped<sup>22</sup> from his hold to a distance of some feet, and his agitation was so extreme, that he could hardly pick it up.

40 'It is only your guest, sir,' I called out, desirous to spare him<sup>23</sup> the humiliation of exposing his cowardice<sup>24</sup> further. 'I had the misfortune to scream in my sleep, owing to a frightful nightmare. I'm sorry I disturbed you.'

'Oh, God confound you<sup>25</sup>, Mr Lockwood! I wish you were at the –' commenced my host, setting the candle on a chair, because he found it impossible to hold it steady<sup>26</sup>. 'And who showed you up to this room?' he continued, crushing his nails into his palms, and grinding his teeth to subdue<sup>27</sup> the maxillary convulsions. 'Who was it? I've a good mind to turn them out of the house this moment!' [...]

Scarcely were these words uttered<sup>28</sup> when I recollected the association of Heathcliff's with Catherine's name in the book, which had completely slipped<sup>29</sup> from my memory till thus awakened. I blushed at my inconsideration, but, without showing further consciousness of the offence, I hastened to add<sup>30</sup>, 'The truth is, sir, I passed the first part of the night in –' Here I stopped afresh – I was about to say 'perusing<sup>31</sup> those old volumes,' then it would have revealed my knowledge of their written, as well as their printed contents, so, correcting myself, I went on, 'in spelling over the name scratched on that window-ledge<sup>32</sup>. A monotonous occupation, calculated to set me asleep, like counting, or –'

55 'What *can* you mean by talking in this way to *me*?' thundered<sup>33</sup> Heathcliff with savage vehemence. 'How – how *dare* you<sup>34</sup>, under my roof? – God! he's mad to speak so!' And he struck his forehead with **rage**.

20 dripping. Che gocciolava.

21 startled him. Lo fece trasalire.

22 leaped. Balzò.

23 to spare him.

Di risparmiargli.

24 cowardice. Vigliaccheria.

25 God confound you. Dio

La maledica.

26 steady. Ferma.

27 grinding ... subdue. Digriugnando i

denti per controllare.

28 uttered. Pronunciare.

29 slipped. Scivolata via.

30 I hastened to add. Mi affrettai ad aggiungere.

31 perusing. Analizzare.

32 scratched on that window-ledge.

Inciso su quel davanzale.

33 thundered. Tuonò.

34 how dare you. Come osa.

## READING COMPETENCE

### 1 READ the text and match the highlighted words with their Italian translation.

- 1 polso .....
- 2 presa .....
- 3 nocche .....
- 4 urlai .....
- 5 rabbia .....
- 6 a causa di .....
- 7 a raffiche .....
- 8 piane .....
- 9 inzuppò .....
- 10 con un tremito .....
- 11 stanzino .....

### 2 READ the text again and do the following activities.

#### 1 Write down what the two settings are.

- 1 .....
- 2 .....

#### 2 The verb 'resolved' in line 3 means

- A knew.
- B decided.
- C calculated.

**3** Complete the sentences about Lockwood.

- 1 When he stretched his arm out of the window, he touched .....
- 2 He could not draw his arm back because .....
- 3 A voice asked to be .....
- 4 He could see the ..... of a ..... through the window.
- 5 He pulled its ..... until it .....
- 6 He ..... some ..... against the hole in the window.

**4** Describe Lockwood's feelings.**5** Who does the ghost say she is?**6** How long does Lockwood think he has been listening to her? How long does she say she has been waiting?**7** Decide whether the following statements about the text are true or false.

- 1 Lockwood's shout brings Heathcliff to the door. .... **T F**
- 2 Heathcliff is holding a torch in his hand. .... **T F**
- 3 The light falls off his hand when he hears a noise. .... **T F**
- 4 Lockwood tells him he screamed because of a bad dream. .... **T F**
- 5 Heathcliff is pleased that someone let Lockwood sleep in that room. .... **T F**

**8** Where does Lockwood say he has found Cathy's name?**9** The passage is narrated in

- A the first person.  
B the third person.

**3** **COMPLETE** the summary with the words from the box.

more  
nails

reliable  
wax

Gothic  
rest

manners  
unfriendly

locked  
ghost



The setting of the extract is **(1)** ....., a mysterious room that has been **(2)** ..... for years. It is a stormy night, there is a ghost, a nightmare and a mystery. There is frightening violence and blood: the broken glass, Cathy's arm and the hot candle **(3)** ..... on Heathcliff's hand. Heathcliff, the owner of the house, is **(4)** ....., a passionately savage man outside conventional behaviour. Even though he is rude and angry and crushes his **(5)** ..... into his hands, he too is afraid, as he hesitates after hearing the scream and obviously knows of the **(6)** ..... Cathy is mysterious – she has three names, and is lost and not at **(7)** ..... – so the reader knows that there is a complex story here and he wants to know **(8)** ..... Lockwood is portrayed as a normal person with feelings and conventional **(9)** ..... ; therefore we trust him to be a **(10)** ..... and truthful narrator and believe the story he is telling.

**> COMPETENCE: ESTABLISHING LINKS BETWEEN TEXT AND GENRE****4** **DISCUSS.** Point out similarities and differences between the Gothic tradition (→ 4.6) and the way Emily Brontë uses it.