



Back to Wuthering Heights

The following extract points out the distinction between life at Thrushcross Grange and at Wuthering Heights, and hints at the beginning of Heathcliff's tragedy.

Emily Brontë
Wuthering Heights
(1847)

Chapter 7

Cathy stayed at Thrushcross Grange five weeks: till Christmas. By that time her ankle was **thoroughly** cured, and her manners much improved. The mistress visited her often in the interval, and commenced her plan of reform by trying to raise her self-respect with fine clothes and flattery¹, which she took readily; so that, instead of a wild, hatless² little savage jumping into the house, and rushing to squeeze us all breathless³, there

5 'lighted⁴ from a handsome black pony a very dignified person, with brown **ringlets** falling from the cover of a feathered beaver⁵, and a long cloth habit⁶, which she was obliged to hold up with both hands that she might sail in⁷. Hindley lifted her from her horse, exclaiming **delightedly**, 'Why, Cathy, you are quite a beauty! I should **scarcely**

10 have known you: you look like a lady now. Isabella Linton is not to be compared with her, is she, Frances?' 'Isabella has not her natural advantages,' replied his wife: 'but she must mind and not grow wild again here. Ellen, help Miss Catherine off with her things – Stay, dear, you will disarrange your curls – let me untie your hat.'

I removed the habit, and there shone forth beneath a grand plaid silk frock⁸, white

15 trousers, and **burnished** shoes; and, while her eyes sparkled joyfully when the dogs came **bounding** up to welcome her, she dared⁹ hardly touch them lest they should fawn upon her splendid garments¹⁰. She kissed me gently: I was all flour making the Christmas cake, and it would not have done¹¹ to give me a hug; and then she looked round for Heathcliff. Mr and Mrs Earnshaw watched anxiously their meeting; thinking

20 it would enable them to judge, in some measure, what grounds they had for hoping to succeed in separating the two friends.

Heathcliff was hard to discover, at first. If he were careless, and uncared for, before Catherine's absence, he had been ten times more so since. Nobody but I¹² even did him the kindness to call him a dirty boy, and bid him¹³ wash himself, once a week; and

25 children of his age seldom have a natural pleasure in soap and water. Therefore, not to mention his clothes, which had seen three months' service in mire and dust¹⁴, and his thick uncombed¹⁵ hair, the surface of his face and hands was dismally beclouded¹⁶. He might well **skulk** behind the settle¹⁷, on beholding¹⁸ such a bright, graceful **damsel** enter the house, instead of a rough-headed counterpart of himself, as he expected.

30 'Is Heathcliff not here?' she demanded, pulling off her gloves, and displaying fingers wonderfully whitened with doing nothing and staying indoors.

'Heathcliff, you may come forward,' cried Mr Hindley, enjoying his **discomfiture**, and gratified to see what a forbidding young blackguard¹⁹ he would be compelled to present himself. 'You may come and wish Miss Catherine welcome, like the other

35 servants.'

Cathy, catching a glimpse of her friend in his **concealment**, flew to embrace him; she bestowed²⁰ seven or eight kisses on his cheek within the second, and then stopped, and drawing back, burst into a laugh, exclaiming, 'Why, how very black and **cross**

40 you look! and how – how funny and grim²¹! But that's because I'm used to Edgar and Isabella Linton. Well, Heathcliff, have you forgotten me?'

She had some reason to put the question, for shame and pride threw double gloom over his **countenance**, and kept him immovable.

'Shake hands, Heathcliff,' said Mr Earnshaw, condescendingly; 'once in a way, that is permitted.'

45 'I shall not,' replied the boy, finding his tongue at last; 'I shall not stand to be laughed at. I shall not bear it²²!' And he would have broken from the circle, but Miss Cathy seized²³ him again.

'I did not mean to laugh at you,' she said; 'I could not hinder myself²⁴: Heathcliff, shake hands at least! What are you sulky²⁵ for? It was only that you looked odd. If you

- 1 flattery. Adulazione, lusinga.
- 2 hatless. Senza cappello.
- 3 rushing ... breathless. Corre per stringerci fino a lasciarci senza fiato.
- 4 'lighted. Scese, smontò.
- 5 feathered beaver. Cappello di feltro piumato.
- 6 long cloth habit. Lungo soprabito.
- 7 sail in. Entrare con disinvoltura.
- 8 a grand plaid silk frock. Un magnifico abito di seta a scacchi.
- 9 dared. Osava.
- 10 lest ... garments. Per paura che le facessero festa sui suoi splendidi indumenti.
- 11 it would not have done. Non sarebbe stato appropriato.
- 12 but I. Tranne me.
- 13 bid him. Gli ordinava.
- 14 in mire and dust. Tra melma e polvere.
- 15 uncombed. Spettinati.
- 16 dismally beclouded. Cupamente offuscata.
- 17 settle. Panca.
- 18 on beholding. Nel vedere.
- 19 forbidding young blackguard. Repellente giovane canaglia.
- 20 she bestowed. Diede.
- 21 grim. Arcigno, torvo.
- 22 I shall not bear it. Non lo tollererò.
- 23 seized. Afferrò.
- 24 hinder myself. Trattenermi.
- 25 sulky. Imbronciato.



5 WRITE down the words and expressions referring to Heathcliff's

- clothes;
- hair;
- face and hands;
- attitude;
- looks.

How would you describe his personality? What insight does the passage give into the tie between Catherine and Heathcliff, and on what will eventually separate them?

6 CONSIDER the two houses, Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights.

- 1 Say what the following phrase tell the reader about the life at Wuthering Heights: 'fingers wonderfully whitened with doing nothing and staying indoors'.
- 2 What values is Thrushcross Grange associated with?

7 FOCUS on the main theme of the text, that is, the passage from childhood to adulthood. How are these two states connoted? Are both Catherine and Heathcliff able to accept such a change?

➤ **COMPETENCE: ESTABLISHING LINKS AND RELATIONSHIPS**

8 CONSIDER Cathy's conflict between a condition which offers few advantages and a socially acceptable one. Would you define her as a Victorian woman?

➤ **COMPETENCE: CONTRASTING AUTHORS**

9 DISCUSS. Compare the heroines presented by Jane Austen, William Makepeace Thackeray and Emily Brontë pointing out by what means these three characters achieve improvement, and whether they must accept compromise.