

Name _____

Stormy Heights

In the quiet countryside of England, two large estates stand in stark contrast to one another: Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. These homes are more than mere buildings; they represent the complex social class differences that drive much of the conflict in Emily Brontë's story.



At Wuthering Heights, the Earnshaw family is rooted in tradition but faces turmoil when Heathcliff, an orphan, is brought into their home. Heathcliff is treated differently by the family members due to his mysterious origins. Mr. Earnshaw treats him as an equal to his children, Catherine and Hindley, but after Mr. Earnshaw's death, Hindley reduces Heathcliff to the role of a servant. This change illustrates how inheritance and social status determine one's place in the household. Despite these hardships, Heathcliff forms a close bond with Catherine, though their relationship is complicated by her desire to improve her social standing.

Thrushcross Grange, home to the wealthy Linton family, contrasts sharply with Wuthering Heights. The Lintons embody a life of refinement and privilege. When Catherine visits the Grange, she becomes enchanted by its luxury and the social opportunities it represents. She decides to marry Edgar Linton, believing it will elevate her status. This decision causes a rift between Catherine and Heathcliff, whose love is strong but constrained by the barriers of class and wealth.

Heathcliff's ambition to rise above his station drives much of the novel's drama. After leaving Wuthering Heights and returning with newfound wealth, he begins to manipulate those around him to gain control of both estates. His actions reflect the deep resentment and ambition born from being denied respect and opportunity due to his origins.

The relationships in Wuthering Heights reveal how social class and inheritance shape people's choices and conflicts. Heathcliff's struggles and Catherine's decisions show how the pursuit of social status can both inspire and destroy relationships. In the end, the cycle of pain and revenge reveals the cost of letting social divisions dictate human connections.