

wuthering heights

The novel *Wuthering Heights* has a very complex storyline and the characters involved are also quite intricate. The story takes place in northern England in an isolated, rural area. The main characters involved are residents of two opposing households: *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange*. It is a tale of a powerful love between two people, which transcends all boundaries, including that between life and death. The author, Emily Bronte, used parallelism in this novel. Much of what happens in the first half of the story corresponds to events in the second half. This parallelism extends also to the characters; the first generation of characters is comparable to the second generation. Some might argue that these characters are duplicates of each other and that they share many traits. This is not the case for Catherine Earnshaw and Cathy Linton, a mother and her daughter. These two characters are different in numerous aspects of their personalities and lifestyles.

Catherine Earnshaw and Cathy Linton differ a great deal when it comes to their family life. Catherine's father did not love her because she was forever misbehaving. He once told her "Nay Cathy, I cannot love thee; thou'rt worse than thy brother. Go, say thy prayers, child, and ask god's pardon. I doubt thy mother and I must rue the day we ever reared thee!" (1) In relating the tale to Lockwood, Nelly noted that young Catherine was such a "wild, wicked slip" (Bronte, pg. 37) that she never seemed as content as when she was being scolded. Catherine also treated her brother Hindley poorly. As a child, she neglected him in favour of Heathcliff. As an adult, Catherine made no effort to help Hindley with his drinking problem after Frances died, nor did she try and prevent Heathcliff from taking advantage of Hindley. Cathy Linton, on the other hand, enjoyed a very loving atmosphere at *Thrushcross Grange*. She and her father, Edgar, were very fond of each other. Edgar was anxious to protect her from the twisted world of *Wuthering Heights*. Cathy demonstrated her love for her father when she devoted herself to nursing him during his illness. Cathy never had any siblings, but she wished that she had one. She once said "Pretty Linton! I wish you were my brother." (Bronte, pg. 219) The reader is certain that if Cathy had a brother they would have been very close.

Catherine Earnshaw was an intensely emotional character. From the time she was a child, she made choices based on her urges and feelings, and would become irritated if her will was not maintained. One time she became violently abusive when Nelly insisted on supervising her visit with Edgar. She pinched and slapped Nelly, shook Hareton when he began to cry and then slapped Edgar when he attempted to intervene. This sort of unstable emotional state made Catherine very frail she often became ill after an outburst. Following an argument she had with Heathcliff and Edgar, she became very ill and eventually died. It could be argued that her tendency for passionate outbursts drained the life from her. Cathy Linton was much more sensible than her mother was. She was able to effectively control her emotions at all times, even during confrontations with her tormentor Heathcliff, and remained strong and grounded throughout the novel. At no point was she abusive, except perhaps in her initial treatment of Hareton. The differences in the emotional character of Catherine and Cathy could be explained in the fact that Cathy did not experience a relationship like the torrential love affair Catherine had with Heathcliff. It was this relationship that was the root for all the tragedy in Catherine's life.

Heathcliff played a dominant role in both halves of *Wuthering Heights* and he interacted with both Catherine and Cathy. However, they had very different relationships with him. Catherine and Heathcliff were deeply in love with each other and had been soul mates ever since childhood. Heathcliff often evoked

powerful emotions from Catherine, and their encounters often left Catherine in emotional chaos. Cathy did not like Heathcliff and he did not like her. Edgar and Nelly informed Cathy of Heathcliff's terrible history and negative impact on her family. Once she moved into Wuthering Heights and lived with Heathcliff, Cathy was transformed from a bright, cheerful young girl into the sullen, foul-tempered person Lockwood meets during his first visit to the Heights. Heathcliff saw Cathy as the cause of her mother's death and she represented Catherine's betrayal of their love. Cathy inspired many feelings of rage from Heathcliff. For instance, when she accused him of stealing her property he burst out "Damnable witch! Off with her! Do you hear? Fling her into the kitchen! I'll kill her, Ellen Dean, if you let her come into my sight again!" (Bronte, pg. 292)

The mother and her daughter had contrasting views and experiences when it came to love and marriage. Catherine was desperately in attached to Heathcliff and the love they shared was the most powerful force in the novel. Catherine did not want to marry Heathcliff, though, because she felt it would degrade her. This displays Catherine's pride and ego, which led to her choice of Edgar for a husband. This union was not built on true love, but on Catherine's desire to have money, power and respect. In comparison, Cathy was forced into marrying Linton, with whom she would have rather had a brother-sister bond. Heathcliff forced this marriage because he wanted the property and assets that she was heir to. Cathy eventually fell in love with Hareton, despite the fact that he was a dirty, illiterate farm labourer. Unlike her mother, Cathy wanted to marry for love, not money or power. This is obvious because Hareton is poor and could offer neither.

Nelly Dean was another character who played an important role throughout the entire novel and had close relationships with both Catherine Earnshaw and her daughter Cathy. Catherine grew up with Nelly and since Nelly was several years older, Catherine treated her rather like a big sister. She often came to Nelly with problems, but Nelly did not show a great deal of concern for them because she had developed a dislike for Catherine because of her cruel, selfish actions. When Catherine came to her looking for advice about marrying Edgar, Nelly questioned her motives and put her down for being materialistic. Nelly had a huge impact on the lives of both girls. She would have altered the unfortunate path of Catherine's life if she had told her that Heathcliff had overheard her say that it would degrade her to marry him. Cathy Linton had a better relationship with Nelly and the two were very fond of each other. Nelly was like a mother to Cathy and was her constant companion during her childhood. Cathy trusted Nelly and told her many personal things. On several occasions, though, Nelly revealed these secrets to Edgar, who was reasonably upset about his daughter's deceits, like when he learned of Cathy's frequent, unpermitted visits to see Linton at Wuthering Heights. It could be argued that Nelly betrayed Cathy's trust in order to protect her from Heathcliff and Wuthering Heights. Nelly's sweet, innocent mistress may have been corrupted by too much exposure to such unsavory elements.

The characters of Catherine Earnshaw and her daughter Cathy Linton were different in numerous aspects of their personalities and lifestyles. They had very different family lives. Much of Catherine's character was based on emotions while Cathy is much more restrained. Heathcliff and Nelly both had relationships with the women, but these relationships were very distinct and often in contrast. Catherine and Cathy had opposing views on love and dissimilar experiences with marriage. Although the two characters never had a relationship, as one died giving birth to the other, it seemed as if Cathy had learned from her mother's mistakes and successfully avoided the same tragedies. This was accomplished mainly by recognizing Heathcliff as a monster. Cathy could never be completely at rest after Heathcliff and the world of Wuthering Heights was introduced into her life. It was in this same world, strangely, that Catherine Earnshaw had rejoiced, which is perhaps the most striking difference between mother and daughter. Heathcliff was at the same time the source of joy and the cause of pain in Catherine's life. .

Perhaps their love was so powerful that it could only be contained within the realm of the dead.

Word Count: 1407