

Psychological approach – wuthering heights

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According to Freud, there are three different kinds of mental processes that result in three kinds of personalities. These are Id, Ego and Superego. These three parts in Freud's model of the psyche help explain mental maturity and development. In Emily Bronte's novel *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine symbolizes the impressionable ego and was pulled between Heathcliff, which represents the id, and Edgar, which represents superego. Her struggle between these two opposing forces and inability to choose between them is what ultimately lead her into delirium.

The id in Freud's model of the psyche is related to the man's instinctive attitude and desires. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, people seek to meet their physiological and safety needs before moving on to fulfill their desire for love and belonging. As a child, Heathcliff was far more occupied with trying to survive on the streets of Liverpool than emotional development. After being taken in by Mr. Earnshaw, and thus freed from these more basic desires, Heathcliff was allowed cultivate these feelings of love and belonging in Catherine.

Conversely, because of Hindley's abusiveness, especially in the wake of the death of their father, Catherine had to turn to Heathcliff to fulfill her desire for love and belonging. Perpetually, Heathcliff became representative of the fulfillment of these desires to Catherine. On the other hand, the superego is representative of society and focuses on balance, proper behavior, and goodness. Obviously, Edgar is the archetypal example of this idea. As the Linton siblings were born into privilege, both Edgar and Isabella had their physiological and safety needs fulfilled very early on.

They were raised to be sophisticated, independent, and developed members of society. During her stay at Thrushcross Grange, Catherine recognized these more developed traits in Edgar, and instinctively tried to gravitate towards developing her own superego in his presence. This was demonstrated in Catherine's desire to become more womanlike and cultured and her subsequent transformation at her return five weeks later from her stay at Thrushcross. Thus, as the result of her development of her id with Heathcliff and superego with Edgar, Catherine is heavily entwined in her relationships between both of these characters. The ego of Freud's model aims to keep a balance by negotiating with the id and pleasing the superego, and Catherine is the prime example of this as she tried to balance her life between Heathcliff and Edgar. Though Catherine intuitively gravitated to Edgar because of his more advanced psyche, she couldn't bear to leave Heathcliff, whom she believes is more representative of herself.

In fact, both Heathcliff and Catherine grew to be so emotionally intertwined that Catherine professed to Nelly, "I am Heathcliff," indicating that she put much more devotion and significance in her relationship with Heathcliff over Edgar. Therefore, this pull in her psyche between what she should be drawn to and what she actually desires is what ultimately makes Catherine spiral down into madness. Though there were other factors to take into consideration that lead to Catherine's descent into insanity, ultimately it is her ambivalence between her id (Heathcliff) and superego (Edgar) that pulls her into two.