

Power struggle in wuthering heights

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Wuthering Heights was first published in 1847, in the 19th century, in England when class was the primary determiner of an individual's power. People in the upper class possessed all the power while those in the lower class, the poor, worked for them as servants. People remained in the classes they were born.

If your parents were wealthy, you would also be rich, and if your parents were poor, you would most probably be poor. It was a different time back then, it was challenging for one to change their social classes. In Wuthering Heights, Bronte shows that the will to improve one's status can result in unhappiness and failure. Characters in the story yearn to elevate their social status, but in most instances, they fail, or they result in loneliness and depression. The characters in the novel have an undying desire for power that hinders or motivates them from changing their social status. As a result of the want to move up in the social class, we take a closer look at just how greedy and depressed certain characters get.

Owing to his low social status, Emily Bronte shows how Heathcliff is in some way related to animals. It is evident through Nelly's description of Heathcliff's background and how he became acquainted with Cathy, Mrs. Earnshaw, Mr. Earnshaw and Hindley. In the description, Nelly narrates how Mr. Earnshaw travelled to Liverpool and was almost killed. According to Nelly, at the end of the journey, Mr. Earnshaw could be to death. This means that Mr. Earnshaw fought with someone else, which is something a person of his social status would not do. After highlighting the incident, Nelly reveals the dirty, ragged, black-haired child. From the words used, it is clear that Heathcliff is not of a high social class. Mr. Earnshaw says that Mrs. Earnshaw should not take it as

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a gift from God, because due to its darkness, it came from the devil. (31). Mrs. Earnshaw is disappointed and she asks her husband, why he brought the gipsy brat in the house. From the language, it is clear the Heathcliff and Mrs. Earnshaw are of different social status. Even though Bronte does not reveal where Heathcliff comes from, the reader can assess that he is from a poor background. Bronte describes him as big enough to walk and talk and its face looked older than Catherine. This shows how ill he is treated due to his looks.

Furthermore, the language used to describe Heathcliff is the one used to describe animals. For instance, after arriving, Nelly describes where Heathcliff stayed. She says, I put it on the landing stair, hoping it might be gone on the morrow (Bronte, 32). Nelly uses ? it to describe him, and this dehumanizes Heathcliff, equating him to animals. The language also shows that he is different from the Earnshaws since they wished that he would eve in the morning like a dog in a strange home. Nevertheless, once he is christened, the Earnshaws reference Heathcliff differently. They see him as a person and not as a thing or an animal, and from then on, Heathcliff gained confidence.

Heathcliff switches social classes the most, and he is willing to manipulate anyone to get power. In the beginning, he is a nameless orphan in the streets of Liverpool, but Mr. Earnshaw takes him and nurtures him as his own. The adoption elevates Heathcliffs social class to the aristocratic class since he becomes a country gentleman. Heathcliff struggles to fit in the new status and world, but he tries his best, not to disappoint Mr. Earnshaw. Those

living in Wuthering Heights disregard him, but since he desires acceptance, he engages himself regardless of the physical and emotional abuse he receives. Due to these abuses, he yearns to elevate his social status. This realization is also quickly noticed when Catharine rejects him because he is unable

to advance her socially, she says "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now." (Bronte, 92). Heathcliff feels upset and does everything he can to prove the society wrong and to prove that he is more than what people think.

Heathcliff leaves Wuthering Heights to transform himself into a wealthy man, and he returns to show Catherine that he can be a powerful man in the society. He is eating himself alive by his love for Catherine, and he is overcome by the urge to prove himself to her. Heathcliff's obsession for Catherine is a result of his alcoholic lifestyle his for status and power since she represents everything he has always wanted, power, wealth and recognition in society. He does anything to get more power even abusing and using those who are close to him. He uses Linton and Isabella to get more land and money since he knows that after he marries Isabella, he will get Linton's inheritance after Edgar dies. Bronte states, "Her brother, who loved her tenderly, was appalled at this fantastic preference. Leaving aside the degradation of an alliance with a nameless man, and the possible fact that his property, in default of heirs male, might pass into such a one's power" (Bronte, 82) He also manipulates Linton, forcing him to marry Catherine Linton after his plans with Isabella abort. Marriage between Linton and Catherine gives him the Thrush cross Grange and Catherines inheritance

boosting his power in the community. He says, My son is prospective owner of your place, and I should not wish him to die till I was certain of being his successor. (Bronte, 43) Heathcliff continually raises his power by manipulating other people.

According to Eagletons, literature exhibits the relationship between history and literature. From the analysis, Heathcliff is a literary vampire because he sucks the life out of those close to him by manipulating them, just like a vampire. He shows readers what the upper class in the 19th century was all about. The upper class were known for being manipulative and controlling to the other social classes. This is obvious through Isabella and his son. He manipulates them to acquire wealth from the Lintons. Also, Heathcliff is not a Marxist hero, he is capitalist villain because he does not want to demolish social classes, he wants to control them. He only thinks of revenge and proving the other characters wrong and this turns himself into a monster or a Vampire.

Bronte uses Wuthering Heights to educate the reader on power struggle and social structures in the society. In the nineteenth century, people remained in their social settings, and social mobility was challenging. However as Bronte has shown, anyone who desired a higher status, had to sacrifice a lot, in this case Heathcliffs sanity. Heathcliff begins from the lowest social status as an orphan and even has no name, but he ends up a wealthy man. Nonetheless, to achieve this, he had to compromise his relationships with those close to him such as Linton and Isabella. His yearn for power turned him into a monster destroying everyone provided he got what he wanted. In

the grand scheme of things, Heathcliff reached the social class he was working towards. But in the end, He definitely did not get the last laugh as a result of him dying unhappy.