

"wuthering heights" by emily bronte essay sample

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“ Wuthering Heights” by Emily Bronte Essay Sample

One of the chief disagreements amongst critics with respect to Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* has been Catherine’s decision to marry Edgar instead of Heathcliff. Her reasons to marry Edgar Linton foreshadow the beginning of the end as complete chaos breaks out hereafter; nonetheless, her rationale did seem just at the time. Heathcliff’s love for Catherine is blind, and Catherine, is to some extent the same, as she decides to marry Edgar for Heathcliff’s benefit and this explains why Heathcliff and Catherine were not meant for this world. Catherine was the mirror image of Heathcliff and they were too alike for their own good. Also, Catherine is well aware of her social surroundings and she was able to avoid being a servant to her brother by marrying Edgar. Finally, given this book took place in the Victorian Era, social status was fairly important and there was lots of potential for her to grow by marrying Edgar. Therefore, I argue that her reasons to marry Edgar Linton were based on helping Heathcliff, social status and finally getting the best of both worlds.

For Catherine, it was either Heathcliff or Edgar. The problem with Heathcliff and Catherine getting married is similarity. They are just too alike and Catherine acknowledges this when she states “ he’s more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same” (102).

Essentially, they are one; the same person and Catherine see’s eye to eye with this when she says “ I am Heathcliff!” (102). This symbolizes why their love is not suited for this world. Given the time period and the way events followed one another, their love was best suited in the next realm. Edgar was

everything she needed in this lifetime whereas Heathcliff was everything she wanted in every lifetime to come. Bronte's decision to allow Heathcliff and Catherine to be one and together in the next lifetime was the right decision as their love was so alike they ended up repelling each other. Opposites attracted, as Catherine refers to it as " Frost from fire" (102) and Edgar ended up marrying Catherine. Edgar was the love she needed to survive this world, to live a happy life and more or less to follow what society wanted from her, considering it was the Victorian Era.

Emile Bronte is an exceptional author. Her ability to relate real life experiences at her time to the events in the novel are brilliant. When Emily Bronte wrote this novel, the boy in the family would receive all the inheritance and the girl would receive none. In a sense, she relates her life experiences to this novel and allows Catherine to demonstrate realities in life that was occurring at Bronte's time. Once Catherine's father, Mr. Earnshaw, passed away, all the belongings of Wuthering Heights was given to Hindley, Catherine's brother. This leaves Catherine in a very tough situation because her marrying Heathcliff means living at Wuthering Heights under her brother's command. She would spend the rest of her life as a servant to her own brother, which she definitely did not want to happen.

Therefore, she marries Edgar simply due to practicality. Either she marries Edgar, who is wealthy, respected and a well mannered person, and live a very decent life, or, becomes a servant in her own house to her brother, Hindley. After all, there is nothing wrong with Edgar as he is a very desirable man, and also considering she lives in an isolated placed, her choice is quite

limited. By being able to marry Edgar, it allows her to free herself from years and years of unhappiness living at her own home, Wuthering Heights.

Apart from the inheritance being passed to Hindley, he also gains authority to control Heathcliff as is now the man of the house. Growing up, he was never fond of Heathcliff and this was his opportunity to seek revenge on Heathcliff, as Mr. Earnshaw favoured Heathcliff more than his own son. As a result, he now controlled him and turned him into a servant of the house. Catherine, whose love for Heathcliff is eternal, believes marrying Edgar will have its own benefits in helping Heathcliff out of this miserable life. As she explains to Nelly, " did it never strike you that if Heathcliff and I married we should be beggars? Whereas, if I marry Linton, I can aid Heathcliff to rise, and place him out of my brother's power?" (101). Truly, it did not work out this way, but it's quite obvious that marrying Edgar was partly a sacrifice to help her true love to succeed.

Catherine is a master-mind. She lives the life of two characters and she also gets the best of both worlds; the world that she currently lives in, and the world that she experiences after passing away. She has the ability to play the double character phenomenally and she is well aware of this. This also ties in to why she is a very complex character. Deep down, Catherine is part of the Romantic era; and so is Heathcliff and everything else relating to Wuthering heights. After spending 5 weeks at the Grange, she shadows her Romantic side and more emphasis is placed on her Victorian personality. This merging of the two, Romantic and Victorian Era, drives Heathcliff crazy because he cannot fully understand Catherine's split personality. A major

characteristic of the Victorian Era is placed on social emphasis, civilization and class of an individual.

These are qualities she learns at the Grange and it's because of this she marries Edgar, which now makes her " the greatest woman of the neighbourhood" (97). She realizes her potential to grow in status by marrying Edgar and also recognizes marrying Heathcliff would just lower her status and remain a servant to her brother. This certainly does not mean she is a gold digger as she reveals her love for Edgar to Nelly when she states, " I love the ground under his feet, and the air over his head, and everything he touches, and every word he says - I love all his looks, and all his actions, and him entirely" (97). She appreciates the security she will receive by marrying Edgar, in terms of financial and emotional, and makes a very womanly, practical decision to marry him. This action of marrying Edgar is relevant to the Victorian Era and also to life as it was when Emily Bronte wrote this novel.

It is quite clear that Catherine's physical love is Edgar whereas her metaphysical love is Heathcliff. Catherine's decision to marry Edgar Linton symbolized the beginning of the end even though her actions at the time seemed reasonable. She did not want to live the rest of her life as a servant to her brother and marrying Edgar would eliminate this problem. Also, Edgar is a very wealthy and respectable man. Given that this novel occurs in the Victorian Era, she marries him so she could improve her status and live a very pleasant and fulfilling life. Heathcliff, who is present throughout all this, is madly in love with Catherine and vice versa. However, because Catherine

and Heathcliff is relatively the same person, they are incompatible to be together in this lifetime and are reunited in the lifetimes to come.

References:

Bronte, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. New York: Random House, Inc., 2000