

How does bronte use
this extract to reveal
the characters of
edgar and heathcliff...



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The extract that begins “ At about 12 o’clock” and ends “ I cannot live without my soul” focuses on the aftermath of Catherine’s death and how each character is effected, especially Heathcliff and Edgar Linton. This extract could be seen as being the turning point in the novel, as from here onward the change in both Heathcliff and Edgars characters are particularly noticeable, the woman that bound the two men together and gave them both so much happiness as well as sorrow is now gone. In the given extract Bronte uses the mournful time to reveal the true characteristics of both Edgar and Heathcliff. They are stripped down to just personality and character which allows the reader to get a much better understanding and idea of what the two are really like.

As well as just simply revealing the characters of Heathcliff and Edgar, through subtle reinforcement by Nelly, Bronte reveals how Catherine and she feel about the two men and it becomes clear who both women favour. The beginning of the extract tells the reader the time of Catherine’s death “ About 12 o’clock, that night, was born the Catherine you saw at Wuthering Heights...

and two hours after the mother died” the time marker helps set in the readers mind a desperate and sad scene but also of new life. 12 o’clock not only marks a new day but a new life also. Nelly goes on to tell Lockwood how Catherine never regained enough consciousness to “ Miss Heathcliff or know Edgar” Nelly puts Heathcliff first, insinuating that is what Catherine would do, always put Heathcliff before Edgar. She also uses the verb “ miss” to describe the emotion Catherine would have been feeling before death, whilst she only says that she was too ill to know Edgar, highlighting that even Nelly <https://assignbuster.com/how-does-bronte-use-this-extract-to-reveal-the-characters-of-edgar-and-heathcliff/>

was able to detect, to a certain extent, how strong Heathcliff and Catherine's bond was. If a person were to begin reading the book from the beginning of this extract they would become very aware of the unspoken bond between Catherine Linton and Heathcliff. The extract shows Nelly telling Lockwood how she planned to go and tell Heathcliff the news of Catherine's death, when really this was futile as Heathcliff already knew.

Throughout the novel the idea of Heathcliff and Catherine's soul as being one is reinforced, for example it is mentioned previously of their souls being one, when Catherine says to Nelly, " Nelly I am Heathcliff," and in this extract when Heathcliff shouts " I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul! " His life and soul is Catherine, he cannot live if half of him is dead, supporting why it was Heathcliff that confirmed with Nelly that Catherine was dead, he knew before she even told him. Bronte wants to declare to the reader that the bond that Catherine and Heathcliff share goes way beyond anything physical or sexual, their relationship and love for one another is so encompassing and real that it will go beyond this world and the next, their passion for one another is so great and Heathcliff demonstrates this very clearly in the extract, how passionate he can be. In the extract Heathcliff is given a greater amount of dialogue and description concerning the death of Catherine than Edgar. From the sheer structure of the extract the reader is able to identify who the most important character was to Catherine and how the character is feeling after the death. Heathcliff is shown to be completely grief stricken as Bronte begins with " He was there – at least a few yards further in the park; leant against an old ash tree, his hat off, and his hair soaked with the dew that had gathered on the budding

branches...” Bronte uses a lot of natural lexis here to describe how Nelly found Heathcliff, ‘ park’, ‘ ash tree’, ‘ dew’, ‘ budding branches’, by doing this Bronte creates the image of life going on, even after Catherine has died life will still continue and here is the proof, the newly budding branches, however she opens the text with ‘ He was there’ and then a hyphen, the dash separates Heathcliff from this spring scene and shows how he is stuck forever in winter, the last winter with Catherine. From this the reader can see how much Catherine meant to Heathcliff.

Bronte goes on to describe Heathcliffs hair as being ‘ soaked with the dew’ the imagery created here highlights the sadness Heathcliff is feeling and how his life now really has no meaning, it is almost like he is dead, he died when Catherine died. Heathcliffs character is gradually revealed as the extract moves forward, Bronte reveals more and more of his character as he begins to become more and more aware of the reality of the situation, that Catherine is gone. Bronte gives Heathcliff a passionate, animated monologue half way through the extract which is full of fluency features showing how his passion and rage has just boiled over. Bronte includes onomatopoeias such as ‘ Oh’ to again highlight the pain that Heathcliff is experiencing now that he knows how Catherine died happily and softly in her sleep, he wanted her to fight, and to fight for him.

The monologue is full of the confused emotions Heathcliff was feeling also, such as rage and anger, but love and despair also, this shows how powerful a hold Catherine had over Heathcliff, she was his everything and now she is gone he is completely lost without her. To emphasise

Heathcliffs rage, Bronte breaks up the sentences into much shorter and <https://assignbuster.com/how-does-bronte-use-this-extract-to-reveal-the-characters-of-edgar-and-heathcliff/>

disjointed ones, including interrogative tones and exclamatory tones to show Heathcliff's utter despair. He doesn't know where to begin, there are too many questions he needs answers to and by the use of the disjointed sentences, unmatched adjacency pairing and total confusion, the reader is able to begin to understand how important Catherine was to him. For example ' Why, she's a liar to the end! Where is she? Not there – not in heaven – not perished – where? Oh! ' The alliterative use of the ' w' sound creates the sense of wailing and crying, a man who never used to show his emotion is so overcome it seems as if he doesn't know how to react, he results to questioning and wailing aloud, and the broken phrases only highlights the confusion Heathcliff is feeling. For the first time in the novel, the reader is properly introduced to the character of Heathcliff, he does have emotion and is clearly not afraid to show it, but in this particular extract he is revealed in a more animalistic light than usual.

The animalistic character that Heathcliff presents can be looked at in one of two ways, one as him being an aggressive and irresponsible individual linking back to his past upbringing when he was a street orphan and having to fend for himself, his past memories and bad behaviours are returning or a person so deeply affected by the death of Catherine that the animalistic characteristics that the readers see are his only way of dealing with the pain of losing Catherine. He is so grief stricken that he cannot contemplate living without her as he says ' I cannot live without my life! He finds an outlet for his grief and emotion in the violence that is portrayed – ' He dashed his head against the knotted trunk; and lifting up his eyes, howled, not like a man, but like a savage beast'. The way Heathcliff's character is presented, especially in

this extract, shows him as being a 'true man' a man that every traditional woman would die for, his love for Catherine was and is so eternal and ongoing that nothing, not even death would stand in its way. He shows how much he loved Catherine by the sheer force of his passion, he broke through all his personal barriers that used to hold him back such as holding his tongue and doing what he was told, he completely breaks free and releases everything he has to show how much passion and desire for Catherine that he has and still has left. Bronte wants the reader to love Heathcliff, to understand his character and by the death of Catherine and the display of emotion that he shows the reader is able to possibly relate to or empathise more with his character and being to like him more and more.

Unlike Heathcliff, whose display of emotion goes beyond anything that Edgar Linton would be capable of, Edgar's character is revealed in a different way to Heathcliffs. He is given no direct dialogue and only a very small part of the extract is focused on him. From this the reader is able to build upon an idea of how important Edgar was to both Catherine and Nelly. Whereas Heathcliff was dedicated more than two pages, Edgars description of how he dealt with the death of Catherine was give just a few lines. Edgars character is revealed to be the paradox of Heathcliffs, he is portrayed as feeble and frail which is highlighted by the fricative 'His young and fair features', this phrase if read alone gives the impression of a young innocent child, not a fully grown man like Edgar. Bronte makes Edgar to appear the child in the twisted love triangle of Catherine, Heathcliff and Edgar, never really fitting in with their ways.

While Heathcliff embraced his grief with power and emotion, Edgar did the exact opposite and shut himself away from the world ' Edgar Linton had his head laid on the pillow, and his eyes shut. Throughout Bronte's novel the eyes are used as the window to their souls, because Bronte chooses to describe Linton as having his eyes shut it puts forward the idea of him not having a soul, or not having a deep soul like Heathcliff. Bronte creates a scene of clam and peace very unlike that of Heathcliff; she uses the alliterative ' h' sound ' his was the hush of exhausted anguish', which acts as a hushing agent almost like a lullaby, soothing Edgar's pain. Throughout the novel, Bronte uses many different methods to reveal both Heathcliff and Edgars anguish towards the death of their beloved Catherine. In the extract Bronte focuses mostly on the anguish revealed by Heathcliff, as for both reader and Nelly, Heathcliff is the one that draws more interest. In the beginning Bronte describes Heathcliff as being just part of the scenery and blending in with background of nature, portraying him as very grief stricken and simply just being, however as the extract progresses the anger, passion and anguish builds allowing Heathcliff to act in the way that the reader would expect, he is being tormented by the fact that his one true love and friend is gone and never returning to him.

He is disgusted by the fact that she was said to have died peacefully as he knows this cannot be the case, he wanted her to put up a fight for him to want to stay in this world with him. After finding out how she died ' Quietly as a lamb! ' I answered, aloud. She drew a sigh, and stretched herself, like a child reviving, and sinking again to sleep;' Bronte used the alliterative ' s' sound, a sibilance, to describe the scene of Catherines death, this has a

calming effect, comforting Heathcliff and assuring him that she didn't suffer at all, as well as the lexical set of innocence 'lamb' and 'child' adds to the innocence and purity of the deathly scene, painting an almost oxymoronic picture, one that Heathcliff cannot bare to imagine. It tortures him to think of him being alone in this world without Catherine. In his dramatic monologue, Heathcliffs anguish for Catherine is really revealed when he shouts 'May you not rest, as long as I am living! although this appears to have violent and deeply selfish connotations, when the reader looks into the true meaning, Heathcliff is so grief stricken that he cannot bare to be on this earth without her, he cannot come to terms with the fact that she has died and left him here alone.

Bronte uses the word 'rest' to describe the death of Catherine, suggesting that Heathcliff cannot bring himself to admit that she is really gone, but simply resting and waiting for him. Bronte gives Heathcliff many exclamatory sentences to highlight the desperation and sheer sense of loss that he is experiencing, his anguish goes way beyond any normal grief not only has he lost his only friend and first and last love he has lost a part of himself.' Oh, God! It is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul! Catherine literally meant everything to him and now that she is gone, he is completely lost. Heathcliff can in many ways be seen as both villain and victim within Bronte's novel. He was introduced to the novel by Lockwood's description of him, being a cold and unwelcoming man that would make him appear to be the villain of the story as he has the characteristics and appearance, has dark hair, dark eyes and a skin not of the local colour, he gives off the dangerous villainous impression. Also the idea of Heathcliff

being the villain is reinforced with the downfall of Hindley and the plans he has for the second comical generation, Cathy Linton and Linton Heathcliff.

Heathcliff takes advantage of the fall of Hindley and exploits his weaknesses for his own benefit, to gain ownership of Wuthering Heights and to seek revenge for his past. From this, Heathcliff appears to be the villain, only what the reader must remember is that this aggression and malice stems from the disjointed and unloving upbringing he underwent. He was brought into the Earnshaw family as an outcast, Mr Earnshaw found him wandering the streets of Liverpool and from the moment he arrived in the house he was isolated and made to feel unwelcome. The aggression that the reader witnesses towards Hindley, Cathy Linton and Linton Heathcliff can be explained by his hatred for both Edgar and Hindley, the two men who prevented him spending his life with Catherine. Because Hindley liked being the only son and getting the attention from his father, he didn't want Heathcliff to take this away from him, 'the young master had learned to regard his father as an oppressor rather than a friend, and Heathcliff as a usurper of his parent's affections and his privileges; and grew bitter with brooding over these injuries.

' therefore he shunned him away and attempted to kick him down so low he wouldn't want to be a part of their family any more. ' Take my colt, Gipsy, then! Said young Earnshaw. And I pray that he may break your neck: take him, and be damned, you beggarly interloper!..

. I hope he'll kick out your brains! ' The exclamatory tone expresses Hindley's hatred for Heathcliff and the use of the plosives ' pray', ' break', '

beggarly' and 'brains' adds to the aggression and hostility presented by Hindley. So from another point of view Heathcliff can be seen as the victim, he has always been put last he has always come second best. He was a child of the street and although he was supposedly rescued by Mr Earnshaw, he was also brought into a corrupt household where he received constant bullying and no love. He became very close to Catherine and began to fall madly in love with her, but an unconditional love that didn't need to be physical, it was an understanding that they both had, they understood one another wholly and couldn't bare to be apart from each other, but when Catherine was bitten by Skulker, she was told she would have to stay at the Grange until her ankle was better, this is when Heathcliff loses the only person that truly knows and appreciate him for who he is.

It becomes clear and understandable why Heathcliff responds the way he does later on in the novel, his unexplainable anger and brooding personality is result of the upsetting upbringing he has undergone. In my opinion Heathcliff is the tragic victim of the novel, he is misunderstood, confused character that desires nothing but to be with his one love, but when he realises he can't he drives all of his emotion and effort into ruining the lives of those who ruined his, for example Edgar Linton and Hindley. When finally Heathcliff dies and is reunited, we believe, with Catherine, I think that the reader really can see how Heathcliff is not the villain by the victim driven to be the way he is because of those around him, he is a vulnerable character that wants nothing more than to be with Catherine.