

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Fences, by August Wilson.

Author's Background

August Wilson was an American playwright whose work includes a series of ten plays.

August Wilson's original name was Frederick August Kittel, (born April 27, 1945, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.—died October 2, 2005, Seattle, Washington), American playwright, author of a cycle of plays, each set in a different decade of the 20th century, about black American life. He won Pulitzer Prizes for two of them: *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*.

His notable works are “*Fences*”, “*The Piano Lesson*”, “*Joe Turner’s Come and Gone*”, “*Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom*”, “*Gem of the Ocean*”, “*Radio Golf*”, “*Two Trains Running*”, “*King Hedley II*”, “*Seven Guitars*”

Wilson grew up in the Hill District of Pittsburgh, a lively poor neighbourhood that became the setting for most of his plays. Together with five siblings, he was raised by his mother, Daisy Wilson, after his father, Frederick August Kittel, left her and their children. Daisy Wilson later remarried, and in 1958 the family moved to a suburb of Pittsburgh.

August Wilson is the most accomplished of all African American dramatists in the last half of the 20th century.

The complexity of Wilson’s experience of race while growing up would be expressed in his plays. His mother was black, his father white, and his stepfather, David Bedford, black. The Hill District was mostly black, and the suburb, Hazelwood, was predominately white. Wilson and his family were the target of racial threats in Hazelwood, and he quit school at age 15 after being accused of having plagiarized a paper. He turned to self-education, reading intensively in a public library and returning to the Hill District to learn from residents there. He changed his last name from Kittel to Wilson, and in the late 1960s he embraced the Black Arts movement. In 1968 he became the cofounder and director of Black Horizons Theatre in Pittsburgh. He also published poetry in such journals as *Black World* (1971) and *Black Lines* (1972).

PLOT SUMMARY

The play begins in 1957. Troy Maxson and his friend Jim Bono share stories and a bottle of whiskey on a Friday night. Troy's wife, Rose, tells Troy that their son Cory is being recruited to play college football. Troy is disgusted with the idea. Troy had once been a star in the Negro Leagues, but he was heartbroken by his barrier from the majors. He sees no better future in sports for his son. His older son Lyons stops by to ask his father for money; Troy is not pleased that Lyons is a struggling musician, but he accepts that Lyons is his own man and is making his own way in life.

The next day, Troy and Rose get into an argument over his son's apparent laziness. Rose tells him that he has gone to football practice. Gabriel Maxson enters, he is Troy's brother. Gabe suffered a head injury in World War II and now believes he is the Angel Gabriel. He carries a trumpet around his neck to blow and open the gates of heaven. Gabe has recently moved out of Troy's house and into his own apartment, something he is very proud of. It is soon learned that Troy used Gabe's disability wages from the Army to buy his house.

Few hours later, Cory returns from football practice. Rose tells him that Troy is furious that he did not help him build the fence in the yard. Their conversation turns contentious after Troy asks Cory about his football scholarship and his job at the A and P. Troy demands that he quit the team and get back his job at the grocery store. After Cory leaves, Troy tells Rose that he doesn't want his son to be like him in any way. She tells Troy that Cory just wants to hear that he has done a good job, but Troy says he can give no more than he already does to his family.

Two weeks later, Troy and Bono come home from work and report how Troy confronted his boss and received a promotion to be the driver of the garbage truck. Troy tells the story of his own father, and how his father beat him and kicked him out of the house at fourteen years old. Troy hates his father but respects his sense of responsibility to his family. After coming to Pittsburgh as a young man, Troy killed a man while trying to rob him and went to prison for fifteen years. This is when Lyons was born. Cory returns from his football practice and is upset because his coach told him he couldn't play. Cory knows that Troy went to the coach to have him kicked off the team. He and his father argue, and Troy tells him that he shouldn't strike out with him.

The next morning, Cory stands by the tree in the yard and practices his baseball swing, but he is more awkward than his father. Troy returns from the police station after having been called to bail out Gabe for disorderly conduct. Bono and Troy begin to build the fence and Bono chides Troy for his scandalous relationship with a woman named Alberta. Bono implores Troy to hang onto Rose. When Bono leaves, Troy admits to Rose that he is having an affair and that he is fathering an illegitimate child. Rose tries to explain how she worked to be a good wife and mother to him and his child. Troy insists that he has done nothing wrong except follow his own desire. She tells Troy that he takes a lot from her and this makes him angry. He goes towards Rose and Cory steps in and shoves Troy. Troy almost retaliates violently before Rose stops him and Troy tells Cory not to strike out.

Six months pass by. Troy is going to see his newborn child when the hospital calls - Alberta has died in childbirth. Troy is enraged and begins engaging a personified Death in conversation. He assures death that he will closely guard everything that belongs to him. A few days later, Troy comes home with his baby in his arms. He pleads with Rose to care for the child even while he remains unapologetic for his infidelity. Rose accepts the child but rejects Troy.

Two more months pass by. Cory has graduated and is now looking for a job. Troy initiates a confrontation with him. Cory tells Troy that he doesn't count in the house anymore. They have a physical fight and Troy wrestles the baseball bat away from Cory. Instead of hitting him, Troy kicks him out of the house. As Cory leaves, Troy again taunts death.

Eight years pass. It is 1965 and Rose, Lyons, and Bono gather in the Maxson home for Troy's funeral. Rose has been raising Raynell, Troy's daughter. Cory comes into the yard dressed in a Marine's uniform. It is the first time he has been home in eight years. He and Raynell sit on the front porch and sing Troy's old blues song about his dog, Blue. Cory tells Rose that he is not going to Troy's funeral but Rose tells him he must make peace with his father now.

Gabe enters the yard. It had been uncertain as to whether the mental institution where he lives would let him come, but he arrives with his trumpet, ready to blow Troy into heaven. He tries to blow the trumpet but no sound comes out. Undeterred, Gabe starts to dance, pushing Lyons away from him. As he dances, the gates of heaven open for Troy and Gabe tells them all, "That's the way that go!"

Character Analysis

Troy Maxson

The protagonist of *Fences*, Troy is a responsible man whose thwarted dreams make him prone to believing in self-created illusions. Troy begins the play by entertaining Bono and Rose with an epic story about his struggle with a personified Death, or Devil, character. Another example of Troy's ability to live in a fictitious world is his denial to his best friend, Bono about the reality of his extramarital affair with Alberta. *Fences* is largely Troy's story. What all of the play characters have in common is a complicated relationship with Troy. Troy's character creates the large and small conflicts with everyone else in *Fences*. Troy instigates conflict as a result of his ability to believe in self-created illusions and his inability to accept other's choices in life when they differ from Troy's own philosophy. Rose often contradicts his stories about himself and versions of what happened in the past. Troy also aggressively disagrees with Lyons' decision to be a musician and Cory's decision to play football in college, as well as Rose's habit of playing the numbers.

Troy's last name, Maxson, is an amalgamation of Mason and Dixon, after the Mason-Dixon line, the name for the imaginary line that separated the slave states from the free states. Troy's name symbolically demonstrates Troy's character as one who lives on a line between two opposing ideas. Troy's history is equal parts southern and northern, half-full of hope and half-filled with disappointment. He was once at the top of an exciting career opportunity as a ball-player that nose-dived into a life in a dead-end job.

The son of an unsuccessful sharecropper, Troy provides a bridge to the Maxson family history in the south and to the effects slavery had and continues to have on generations of black lives. The south and the north define Troy's history and this duality drives a dividing line between him and his sons, Lyons and Cory who grew up believing that they could achieve their dreams without unjust restraint. Through song and story-telling, Troy's character serves as the family grit, a traditional role in African cultures as a paternal oral historian whose stories provide an understanding of the context of their loved ones' lives.

Troy is the protagonist of *Fences*. He is a working class African-American man who lives with his wife, Rose, and son, Corey, in the Hill District of Pittsburgh. He works for the Sanitation Department as a garbage collector. Troy is dedicated to a fault to providing for his family and to making sure his sons have better lives than he has had. He was once a great baseball player in the Negro Leagues, but he was too old to join the Major Leagues when they were integrated. His past mistakes and failures greatly influence his outlook on life and his relationship with his sons.

Another duality is Troy's hypocrisy. Troy demands that his loved ones live practical, responsible lives while he has the freedom to have an affair, rebel against racist practices of his employers by protesting the limitation of black workers as lifters not drivers on the trash trucks. Troy refuses to see life in any way presented to him but the way he perceives events in his own head.

Troy Maxson is a classically drawn tragic-hero. He begins the play loved, admired and getting away with his secret affair. But eventually, Troy's death leaves many negative attributes as an inheritance for his family to sort out and accept.

Rose Maxson

Rose's name, like August Wilson's mother's name, Daisy, is the name of a flower. Flowers, seeds and planting comprise a motif that Wilson uses in *Fences* to represent nurturing, loving, kindness, and care because of the parallel qualities these attributes share with all living things that need nurturing to grow or change, like love and patience and forgiveness. Rose Maxson exemplifies these traits of compassion in all of her relationships, especially as a parent. Unlike Troy, Rose is a fair judge of character. She puts her faith in her husband and son and hopes for a better future while not begrudging the stagnant present situation. Rose is Troy's second wife, who he married after being released from prison. Troy maintains an affectionate patriarchal relationship with Rose, demanding respect from her as the head of the household and primary bread winner, though he is greatly influenced by her realistic take on the changing world. Rose is the mother of Corey, Troy's youngest son.

Gabriel Maxson

Gabriel, or Gabe, is Troy's brother. He suffered a traumatic head injury in World War II that left a metal plate in his head. Because of his diminished mental capacity, he acts in a childlike manner and believes that he is the Angel Gabriel, waiting for St. Peter to open the gates of Heaven for all of the saved. Troy used Gabe's disability check from the army to buy the house in which the play takes place. At the time of the play, Gabe has moved into his own apartment, a fact that weighs on Troy.

Jim Bono

Bono is Troy's best friend and drinking buddy. Several scenes of the play revolve around Troy and Bono's conversations in Troy's backyard while drinking on Friday nights. Troy met Bono while in prison. Bono both remembers Troy's past and serves as a moral compass for Troy in his relationship with his wife, Rose.

Lyons Maxson

Lyons is Troy's eldest son, fathered with his first wife. Lyons works as a jazz musician in Pittsburgh but often has a hard time making ends meet. Lyons often appears on Fridays, Troy's payday, to ask for money. Troy's complicated relationship with Lyons encompasses his admiration for his son's attempt to do something he loves with his life, but contempt for his refusal to be a breadwinner and responsible head of household.

Cory Maxson

Cory is the son of Troy and Rose. Cory has a relationship of conflict and violence with Troy. He believes that Troy is trying to hold him back in life by refusing to sign papers that would allow him to go to college on a football scholarship. Troy insists that Cory get a real job and be responsible. In the play's final scenes, Cory is kicked out of Troy's house after a violent struggle, only reluctantly returning eight years later for Troy's funeral.

Raynell Maxson

Raynell is Troy's daughter, fathered out of wedlock with Alberta, Troy's mistress. Alberta dies in childbirth and leaves Troy to raise Raynell. Rose agrees to raise his husband's daughter for her sake, not for his. The audience only sees Raynell as an infant and then as a small girl just before Troy's funeral.

SETTING:

The setting is the yard which fronts the only entrance to the Maxson household, an ancient two-story brick house set back off a small alley in a big-city neighborhood. The entrance to the house is gained by two or three steps leading to a wooden porch badly in need of paint.

A relatively recent addition to the house and running its full width, the porch lacks congruence. It is a sturdy porch with a flat roof. One or two chairs of dubious value sit at one end where the kitchen window opens onto the porch. An old-fashioned icebox stands silent guard at the opposite end.

The yard is a small dirt yard, partially fenced, except for the last scene, with a wooden sawhorse, a pile of lumber, and other fence-building equipment set off to the side. Opposite is a tree from which hangs a ball made of rags. A baseball bat leans against the tree. Two oil drums serve as garbage receptacles and sit near the house at right to complete the setting.

Themes of Fences

The Creation of Order

The overarching theme of the play, alluded to in the title, is the idea of the creation of order - a fence is not a barrier in this reading, but a way to compartmentalize the world into understandable, manageable chunks. Troy Maxson is chiefly responsible for this desire for order, though for a different reason his wife Rose also craves it. Troy is caught in a world in which he feels he does not belong. He carries with him the scars, oppression, and disorder of his Southern childhood, the abuse of his father, and an unwelcome Pittsburgh. On the other hand, he is also a part of the growing African American middle class. He is promoted for a job he feels he does not deserve and he is unable to accept the idea that his children might have the freedom to create their own lives. For Troy, a fence is a way to section off part of the world as his own - his desire for a fence is a desire to find his place in the time and culture of twentieth century America.

The American Dream

Troy Maxson is the embodiment of an African-American generation, growing up in the post-World War era that finds itself finally able to realize the American ideal of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Troy has become more successful than his father, who remained a poor sharecropper and never owned his own land or property but, instead, paid all his wages and his life to an unjust land owner. Troy has bought his own house (though he feels guilty about the methods of payment). And in his sexual relationships he has embodied the freedom of a man to follow his own desires in a pursuit of happiness. Troy Maxson embraces his desire to be an individual.

This pursuit of the American Dream, however, is not without conflict. Troy cannot envision a generation doing more than his own accomplished. He cannot imagine his son achieving an even

greater dream, and he cannot imagine a life unburdened by responsibility to family. In this way, Troy remains chained to his expectations of what a man can accomplish in the world.

African American Difference

In *Fences*, as well in his other plays, August Wilson seeks to point out the idea of difference between races and culture more than the monocultural ideal of sameness. The Civil Rights era of the 1960's and '70's can be broadly construed as African American's struggle for the same rights as whites. By the 1980's, Wilson saw this struggle for equality morphing into a culture that was attempting to erase the differences between races and peoples. African Americans, according to Wilson, were different than whites or any other races. They have their own distinct culture, history, and society. No people should have to become part of the majority culture just to enjoy the majority's rights and privileges.

Maintaining this difference is painful, and often destructive, as *Fences* shows. In his son Corey, Troy sees a generation that not only aspires for their own success in the world but also seeks to fold themselves into the white culture of the day. Sports is a metaphor for this; while Troy is bitter at losing his chance to play in an integrated Major Leagues, he still idealizes the Negro Leagues as symbol of African American pride. When Corey seeks a college scholarship to play football, Troy fears that his son will lose the difference of his race in his drive for success. This conflict of difference ultimately, and perhaps necessarily, destroys their relationship.

The Ideal of Responsibility

Troy Maxson is a man who takes seriously his responsibility for his family. His seriousness also becomes his greatest liability. Troy is a man caught between his own desire for freedom, embodied in his affair with Alberta and his fathering of an illegitimate child, and his fierce sense of loyalty to his wife, children, and brother.

Troy's sense of responsibility comes from his own father's bitter care for him and his siblings. His father's loyalty to his family can be seen as poisonous; his father's betrayal poisons his own relationship with Corey. Ultimately, Troy becomes his father. He abandons Rose for another woman and stubbornly refuses to repent for his sins. He also abandons his own brother and son, severing his relationships in his own quest for freedom. Troy demonstrates the idea that responsibility becomes as much a liability as a virtue.

Personal Apocalypse

Troy's brother Gabriel is a symbol of the personal apocalypse of Troy Maxson. Apocalypse, in its original meaning, connotes a revelation, or an understanding of the world that brings about some kind of ending. In *Fences*, Troy's struggles with his family and with his sense of purpose reveal to him the nature of death and the impermanence of his own life. Gabriel, thinking that he is the literal angel Gabriel, foretells this revelation in Troy's life. He insists that Troy's life is written in St. Peter's book, though his mortality is not a concept of which Troy can conceive. The tragedies of Troy's life serve as a series of death events; the abandonment by his father, his own abandonment of his son, the death of his lover, and ultimately the end of his own life all remind Troy that he is not in control of his own life, even as he attempts to control everyone around him.

Changing African American Culture

August Wilson's "Pittsburgh Cycle" portrays African American life in Pittsburgh during each decade of the twentieth century. *Fences* resonated with audiences partly because it so accurately captured the unique situation of African Americans during the 1950's and '60's. This was a time of great change for African American culture. The Civil Rights movement was in its nascent stages. African Americans were slowly moving into a respectable middle class and out of the destitute poverty of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The post-World War II generation was first embracing the ideal of personal freedom.

There are several instances of this changing culture in *Fences*. One is Troy's own advancement in his job. Troy is a trash collector, a seemingly undesirable job, yet his promotion to truck driver bestows on him a level of authority and purpose that he feels he has otherwise not achieved in his life. His discomfort with his own advancement is seen in his desire to retire shortly after getting his raise. This changing culture also creates bitterness in Troy. This is seen in his love/hate relationship with the game of baseball. On the one hand, Troy loves the game for the identity that it once gave him; on the other hand, he despises the game for its segregation and for robbing him of his chance at greatness. Troy is caught in the changing culture and represents a generation lost in their understanding of the world around them.

Freedom vs. Protection

The fence in August Wilson's play serves as a symbol of conflicting desires. In one sense, Troy and Rose seek to build a fence to keep the world out of their lives. Rose's desire for a fence symbolizes the way in which she seeks to protect her family. She knows that Troy's checkered past is always there and that he is, perhaps, only moments away from making decisions that forever affect her and her child. Rose's fence seeks to keep the family in and the dangerous world out. It is a symbol of protection.

Though Troy seeks to protect his family and his way of life, the fence also becomes a symbol of discontent in his own life. In his confrontation with Rose, Troy exclaims that he has spent his whole life providing for the family. He has been the protector and defender of a quiet, normal life. The fence, therefore, does not protect Troy but instead keeps him from achieving his ultimate desire for individuality and self actualization.

Racial Discrimination

The play is made up of African-American characters since after the end of slave trade in America. The effects of slave trade are still pressing down on the black Americans and they stand to deal with racism. Troy raised a question on why the garbage is picked by the blacks while the whites drive the truck. Cory on the other hand really wants to play football. Troy, his father, did his best to stop him, saying that "White man saints gonna let you nowhere with that football, no way". For Troy, he has seen the segregation and race discrimination among whites.

Interpreting and Inheriting History

Much of the conflict in Wilson's plays, including *Fences*, arises because the characters are at odds with the way they see the past and what they want to do with the future. For example, Troy Maxson and his son, Cory see Cory's future differently because of the way they interpret history. Troy does not want Cory to experience the hardship and disappointment Troy felt trying to become a professional

sports player, so he demands that Cory work after school instead of practicing with the football team. Cory, however, sees that times changed since baseball rejected a player as talented as Troy because of the color of his skin. Cory knows the possibility exists that the professional sports world will include, not exclude him. In Act One, Scene Three, Cory provides examples of successful African American athletes to Troy. Cory says, "The Braves got Hank Aaron and Wes Covington. Hank Aaron hit two home runs today. That makes forty-three." Troy responds, "Hank Aaron ain't nobody." Cory's sport, football, integrated its players, years before baseball. For Troy to accept this change in the world would cause Troy to accept the death of his own dreams. Troy refuses to see Cory's potential because it would mean accepting his own misfortune. Troy and Cory see history in a way that benefits their worldview. Unfortunately, this conflict pushes father and son away from each other. Troy, who learned a responsible work ethic from his otherwise abusive father, means well when he insists that Cory return to work at the A&P because he sees the job as fair, honest work that isn't at the mercy of powerful whites' sometimes arbitrary decisions, as in Major League baseball. But by attempting to insure Cory of a harmless future, Troy stifles his son's potential and prevents Cory from having a promising future. Troy's perception of what is right and what is wrong for Cory, based on Troy's refusal to perceive a historical change in the acceptance of blacks, tragically causes Cory to experience a disappointing fate similar to Troy's. Troy passes his personal history on to his family in other ways throughout the play with sayings that represent his philosophies of life like, "You gotta take the crooked with the straights." His children also inherit Troy's past by learning songs he sings like, "Hear It Ring! Hear It Ring!" a song Troy's own father taught him. Cory tells Rose in Act Two, scene five, "Papa was like a shadow that followed you everywhere." Troy's songs and sayings link his family to the difficult life in the south that his generation was free to run away from, though penniless and without roots in the north. Troy's purposefully and inadvertently passes on his life experience to his children and family, for better and for worse.

SCENE BY SCENE SUMMARY

Act One: Scene One

Summary

It is Friday, Troy and Bono's payday. Their responsibilities as garbage collectors are done for the day. Troy and Bono reach Troy's house for their weekly ritual of drinking, catching up on each other's lives and sharing stories. Their dialogue begins in the middle of a conversation as they reach the dirt front-yard of Troy's house where the entire play takes place.

Troy recounts a story about a co-worker named Brownie who lied to their boss, Mr. Rand about having a watermelon in his hands, and trying to hide the watermelon under his coat. Both Troy and Bono think that Brownie's embarrassment about the watermelon was stupid. Troy has asked Mr. Rand, their boss, why the black employees aren't allowed to drive the garbage trucks, but only to lift the garbage. Bono is eager to hear the latest news of Troy's conversations with Mr. Rand and the Commissioner of the union about his complaint. Troy says that Mr. Rand told him to take the complaint to the union the following Friday. Troy isn't afraid of getting fired.

Bono transitions from the topic of Troy's complaint at work to the subject of Alberta, a woman who hangs out at Taylor's, a bar Troy and Bono like to frequent. Bono does not ask Troy directly whether

or not he is having an affair with Alberta. Troy insists that he hasn't "eyed" women since he met his wife, Rose. Bono agrees. But Bono pushes the issue further by revealing to Troy that he has seen Troy walking around Alberta's house when Troy is supposedly at Taylor's. Troy gets mad at Bono for following him around. Bono asks Troy what he knows about Alberta. Troy tells Bono that Alberta is from Tallahassee, revealing that he knows something about her.

Rose comes out of the house. Rose and Troy tell Bono about the ways Rose has changed Troy for the better as a married man. Rose tells the men that Troy and Rose's son, Cory, has been recruited by a college football team and the college coach is coming to visit. Troy was a baseball player in the Negro Leagues but never got a chance to play in the Major Leagues because he got too old to play just as the Major Leagues began accepting black players. Troy does not want Cory to play ball, but to learn a trade. When Troy exclaims that it was unfair to prohibit anyone who was good enough to play in the Majors from playing and then takes a long drink, Rose reprimands him saying, "You gonna drink yourself to death." Her comment throws Troy into a long epic story about his struggle in July of 1943 with death. Troy turns the time when he was sick with pneumonia in Mercy Hospital into a fanciful story about his fight with a character named Death. Even as Rose provides the real story to Bono, Troy continues telling his tale.

Lyons, a son Troy had before he met Rose, shows up at the house as he has tended to do on many Fridays in the past because Lyons knows it is Troy's payday. Lyons is a jazz musician. He asks Troy if he can borrow ten dollars. Troy continues his saga about Death, changing the times and situations in which he met Death and the Devil. This includes the time a door-to-door salesman that Troy claims is the Devil sold him a layaway plan to buy furniture. Lyons thinks Troy's belief that he has seen the Devil is as ridiculous as Troy thinks it is for Lyons to pursue music. Troy puts down the way Lyons was raised and Lyons accuses Troy of knowing little about the way he was raised because Troy was in jail for most of Lyons' childhood. Lyons and Rose convince Troy to give Lyons the ten dollars. Lyons abruptly decides to leave after receiving the money. Bono decides to go home to Lucille and the pig feet she made for dinner. Troy embarrasses Rose by telling Bono how much he loves his wife and brags that on Monday morning when it is time for work, he'll still be making love to her. Analysis

The first scene of *Fences* is also the longest scene in the play, possibly because Wilson uses this first scene to foreshadow several important elements of the plot and introduce elements he will repeat or contrast later in the play, enabling him to create a sense that the characters and time have changed. Wilson forces the audience to immediately acclimate to the world of the play by gathering information from Troy and Bono's conversation. The exposition in this first dialogue informs that Troy and Bono are close friends who work together. Bono agrees with Troy's negative opinion of their co-worker, Brownie, and shows that he sticks up for Troy at work, a sign he is a loyal as well as attentive friend.

Act One Scene Two

Summary

Rose hangs laundry in the yard on Saturday morning. She sings a song asking Jesus to protect her like a fence. Troy and Rose talk about the numbers, or lottery game, that Rose and Lyons play. Troy tells Rose that everyone at work thinks he is going to get fired, but he does not think it will happen. Gabriel,

Troy's brother shows up at the house with a basket. He sings a song about selling plums but he does not have any plums in his basket to sell. Gabe explains to Troy that he moved over to Miss Pearl's because he didn't want to be in the way. Troy tells Gabe he is not mad at him for leaving their home. Gabe is brain-damaged from a war injury and sometimes thinks he is the angel Gabriel. Gabe often refers to St. Peter as if he knows him personally. Gabe tells Troy that he has seen St. Peter's book for Judgment Day and Troy's name appeared inside. Gabe saw Rose's name too, but not the way Troy's name appeared. Gabe leaves Troy after he thinks he sees hellhounds around Troy's feet. As Gabe leaves, he sings a song warning Troy to get ready for Judgment Day.

Rose and Troy argue over what to do to help Gabe now that he has moved to Miss Pearl's. Troy displays some guilt for managing the money Gabriel receives from the government. Rose believes Troy did the right thing in taking over Gabriel's money. Rose reminds Troy about the fence she's asked him to finish building. Troy tells Rose that he is going to Taylor's to listen to a baseball game and he'll work on the fence when he gets back.

Analysis

Unlike the exaggerated stories and hopes for institutionalized change at his workplace that defined Troy in Act One, scene one, the next side of Troy that Wilson introduces us to is critical of dreams and hopes. Troy criticizes Rose's enjoyment of playing numbers, a game like the lottery that Lyons also enjoys. Troy displays his sense of responsibility in his reaction to Rose's hobby, but simultaneously provides evidence of his selfish treatment of Rose. Rose had humored Troy when Troy went on for several minutes about his battle with the Devil in Act One, scene one, but Troy cannot give Rose an inch when she talks about numbers, an activity that she enjoys as much as Troy enjoys telling his stories. This argument between them about the numbers is an example of how Troy is insensitive to Rose's needs. She will later accuse Troy of "taking and not giving," which we witness here first hand. Troy is so concerned with his own survival in his stagnant, disappointing life that he fails to perceive the ways in which his loved ones have learned to cope. Playing numbers is an escape, a simple luxury and pleasure of Rose and Lyons that serves the same purpose to them as Troy's escape in his affair with Alberta.

It is therefore ironic that Troy complains about the cost of Rose playing numbers and the loss and risk involved when his gamble with Alberta eventually proves much more expensive. Lyons and Rose playing numbers represent their individual gamble in life to put their faith in unstable hopes. Rose invests her life in Troy who has lost a significant amount of potential than when they first met. Lyons gambles with a career in music, a difficult and extremely unconventional path for the time period. Rose's positive attitude towards playing the numbers connotes that she does not have regrets about her losing gamble with Troy, but keeps her hope alive in a better, more fulfilling and richer future. On the other hand, Troy prefers to see himself as practical and miserly. He is in denial about his extramarital affair and does not see the potential cost to his stability and family he is risking, to the point where he thinks a small wager placed by Rose or Lyons is foolish.

Gabriel contributes to the world of *Fences* by representing absurdity, and specifically absurdity in an African American life in America. A common theme in African American literature has been the concept

that to be African American in the United States is to live in a state of absurdity because the government that supposedly represents you (a citizen) has a history of denying you the rights it promises to insure. Gabriel exemplifies this duality. He fought in a war and lost a part of his brain while his brother was denied access to play with players of his level in the Major Leagues because of the color of his skin.

Gabe's character is a descendant of the wise fools in Shakespeare whose language sounds nonsensical at times, and at other times provide insight and wisdom. Gabe speaks in child-like phrases and song lyrics. He lives in a world that is half imaginary and half based on the reality before his eyes. He physicalizes a warning and a consciousness for Troy, which Troy does not heed. Gabe's recent move out of the Maxson house to an apartment in Miss Pearl's house affronts Troy's manhood because Gabe who cannot hold down a job or live in reality has managed to provide a home of his own for himself, a feat that Troy has failed to accomplish. Gabe's story about seeing Troy's name and Rose's name in different places in St. Peter's book signifies that Troy is a sinner and Rose is going to heaven. Gabe's song, "Better Get Ready For the Judgment," and his hallucination that hellhounds are in Troy's yard warn Troy to change his behavior unsuccessfully because Troy does not hear the message. Wilson's voice as a playwright however can be heard through Gabe's assessment of Troy's deeds.

Act One, Scene Three

Summary

Cory comes home from football practice on Saturday afternoon. Rose tells him that Troy was upset about Cory leaving the house without doing his chores or helping him with the fence. Cory tells Rose that every Saturday Troy says he needs his help with the fence but he never ends up working on it. Instead, he says he goes to the bar, Taylor's. Cory goes inside to eat lunch and do his chores. Troy comes home, supposedly from Taylor's, but can't remember the score of the game. He unsuccessfully flirts with Rose, and then yells at Cory to come outside and help him with the fence. Troy reprimands Cory for going to football practice instead of doing his chores.

Cory and Troy work on the fence. Cory asks Troy if they can buy a television. Troy would rather buy a new roof because it would insure their future security. Cory thinks it would be fun to watch the World Series on TV. It would cost two hundred dollars. Troy makes a deal with Cory that if Cory comes up with one hundred dollars, Troy will match him with the other half and they will buy the television together. Troy and Cory have a friendly argument about the status of black players in the Major Leagues. Troy will not admit that Hank Aaron is changing the game and that Roberto Clemente's coaches give him plenty of chances to bat. Troy finds weakly argued excuses to deny that baseball is treating black players fairly and changing for the better. Troy disappoints Cory by not agreeing to sign the permission papers for Cory to play college football. A coach is coming from North Carolina to recruit Cory, but even with the knowledge of how far the coach is traveling to see his son, Troy will not change his mind. Troy wants Cory to work at the A&P supermarket instead of going to football practice. Cory breaks the news to Troy that he has already given away his job at the A&P during the football season. Mr. Stawicki, Cory's boss, is keeping Cory's job for when the season ends. Cory begs Troy to change his mind, but Troy refuses and demands Cory get his job back. Cory asks Troy why he never liked Cory. Troy responds by explaining his belief that his role as a father is to provide shelter and food and the

gift of life to a son and nothing more. Troy demands that Cory speak to him respectfully with the word "sir," and gives Cory the third degree, making Cory treat him with a military-like respect. Rose asks Troy why he will not let Cory play football when Cory is trying to follow in his father's footsteps. Troy explains that when Cory was born, he decided he would not allow Cory to pursue sports in order to spare Cory from a fate like his own. Rose tries to get Troy to admit that he was too old to play for the Major Leagues and that times have changed since the years Troy was prohibited from the Major Leagues because of the color of his skin. Troy will not agree with Rose. He tells Rose that he is trying to give everything he has to his family and he can't change or give anything else but his hard work and responsibility. Troy feels that his financial support is more than enough.

Analysis

Troy and Cory's father-son relationship succumbs to its first major blow while working together on Rose's fence. The blow to their relationship is not yet a physical affront, but an irreconcilable difference. Cory has taken care of insuring his job at the A&P for after football season and gets good grades in school, but Troy does not acknowledge these responsible acts. Instead, Troy only sees the ways Cory does not live up to Troy's vision of how Cory should live his life. Troy's hypocrisy becomes evident to Cory over the course of his conversation with Troy as they build the fence.

The beginning of their talk displays a friendly competition aspect of their relationship. Troy and Cory argue about the purchasing of a television versus a new roof in good spirits. Troy is typically stubborn and takes the pragmatic view on the television issue, again emphasizing his inability to empathize with anyone else's lofty dreams but his own. However, in a moment of compassion, Troy relents and offers Cory a fair deal. In this moment, Troy is his most laudable. Cory's persistent, logical and persuasive argument for a television affects Troy. It is notable that Troy does not go head over heels and offer to buy Cory the television, but his proposal is fair and balanced. By offering to pay half if Cory can come up with half of the money, Troy emphasizes the kind of responsibility-instilling parenting he believes in that encourages Cory's work ethic, while supporting his son in realizing a dream. On the flip side, when their argument hits closer to home with the topic of sports, Troy transforms his fair and supportive outlook into an irrational, hurtful one.

Troy and Cory's conversation solidifies their positions as two men separated by a generation but sharing a common passion. Cory showed his persistence in proving to Troy that buying a television would be a good investment and goes on further to attempt to convince Troy that baseball, and thus, the world has changed since Troy was a ball player. With the television argument, Troy had substantial, though sometime weak arguments for Cory. He had a good point that their roof needs fixing, though he did not seem to think of the roof as a financial priority until Cory brought up the idea of buying a TV. In Troy's rebuttals against Cory about the change in Major League sports, however, his answers to Cory's points are irrational and lack substance, or even warp the truth for his own benefit. Troy claims Roberto Clemente sits on the bench too much but Cory challenges this by saying he has plenty of opportunities. Troy thinks Clemente and Aaron and other colored ballplayers are on the team as tokens, but are not actually played. Cory refutes this idea as well. When Cory brings up the amount of home runs Aaron hit this year, Troy deflates Aaron's success by insisting that hitting homeruns is merely Aaron's responsibility. Troy boasts about his ability to play baseball as well as the players Cory adores. Then, when Cory mentions Sandy Koufax's pitching, Troy's denial of Cory's proof that times have

changed reaches a pinnacle of poor reasoning. Troy simply negates Koufax's existence in his mind by saying, "I ain't thinking of no Sandy Koufax."

Act One, Scene Four

Summary

Mirroring the first scene in the play, Troy and Bono arrive at Troy's house to drink and talk after work on Friday, their payday, two weeks after Act One, scene one. Troy has won his case against the commissioner's office. He has been given a promotion that will make him the first black garbage truck driver in the city. Lyons shows up and asks if Troy wants to hear him play jazz that night. Troy calls jazz, "Chinese music" because it is foreign and unfamiliar to his ears and he does not understand it. Lyons and Bono tease Troy because he does not know how to drive and he cannot read. Lyons surprises Troy by paying him back the ten dollars he borrowed from Troy two Fridays ago.

Gabriel shows up at the house too and continues to talk about how he will be responsible for opening the gates to heaven on Judgment Day. Bono and Troy remember their dead fathers and their childhood experiences of becoming men when they left home in the south and moved north. Lyons benefits from the stories, learning details about his father's life that he has not heard before.

Cory comes home enraged after finding out that Troy went to the high school football coach, Coach Zellman and told him that Cory may not play on the team anymore. Cory displays his first aggressive verbal attack on Troy by saying that Troy is holding him back from his dreams because Troy is afraid that Cory will be better than Troy. Troy warns Cory that his insubordination is a strike against him and he better not "strike out."

Analysis

Wilson's choice to set the action on another Friday reestablishes the pattern of Troy and Bono's habitual behavior and offers a useful backdrop to compare how far the plot has progressed since the play started. The return of the setting to Troy and Bono's payday creates the feeling that their life has a continuous pattern, a homecoming, and a cycle. Bono and Troy's excitement exceeds the enthusiasm they shared in the first scene. Troy's promotion rouses a renewed energy from both of the men. The repetition of the setting emphasizes the uniqueness of the exciting news of Troy's promotion and his success in challenging the racist practices of his employers because it helps to illustrate the infrequency with which great, life-changing events occur in their lives. The thrill of Troy and Bono's news temporarily suspends the plot elements planted in the previous scenes. For an afternoon, things seem to be looking up for the Maxson family and for Troy. But because Wilson has already exposed elements that are bound to produce conflict such as Troy's affair with Alberta, Cory's wish to go to college and play football, and Gabe's warnings, we know the good times will not last for long.

The reveries Troy and Bono spin about their childhood experiences of their fathers also contribute to this suspension of the forward momentum of the tragic action. They increase the nuances of character by providing a revealing back story that informs our understanding of Troy and Bono's life compared to the lives of men a generation younger like Cory and Lyons. Lyons' appearance in the scene and his love of jazz reminds Troy of how different things were for Troy. Troy refers to Lyons' passion—jazz music—as "Chinese music" because jazz music is a modern phenomenon beyond his comprehension.

His use of the word, "Chinese" to describe jazz music is a derogatory remark that backfires on Troy because it says more about his own failure to appreciate an ingenious invention by people of his own culture (and his lack of appreciation for Chinese culture) than it insults Lyons. Similarly, Lyons and Bono expose other weaknesses of Troy when they tease him for being illiterate and unable to drive. Wilson makes an argument here that Troy's lack of education and lack of worldliness or cultural literacy contribute to his black and white decisions about others' lifestyles and therefore, act as additional components to the roots of Troy's conflict with other characters in the play.

Troy and Bono's memories provide Lyons with an unwritten history of his culture. Slavery displaced many African American families. Slave owners often forced African Americans to live far apart from parents, spouses, siblings, and young children by selling some family members to distant plantations. Troy and Bono's fathers were likely born into slavery or slave-like conditions. Their fathers' parents were almost definitely born into slavery and may not have had a nuclear family to model as an adult. The family units in Bono and Troy's lives were fractured by wandering parents who sought solace in escape from parental responsibilities, a lack of commitment, a zealous work ethic and/or violence.

Act Two, Scene One

Summary

Cory hits the baseball tied to the tree in the yard. When he sees Rose, he tells her that he isn't quitting the football team. Rose agrees to talk to Troy on Cory's behalf when Troy comes home from bailing Gabriel out of jail. Gabe was arrested for disturbing the piece. It cost Troy fifty dollars to bail out Gabriel. Troy and Bono believe that the police arrest Gabriel often because it is easy for them to take him and it makes them a quick fifty dollars. Bono and Troy work on the fence together. Bono complains that the wood is too hard and difficult to saw through. Bono asks Troy about his relationship with Alberta again. Bono says that he they have "done got tight," or closer to one another. Troy denies Bono's accusation. Cory joins them and cuts through the wood easily.

Cory and Troy do not understand why Rose wants a fence built. Bono does know why, and explains to Troy and Cory that Rose loves her family and wants to keep them safe and close to her love. Bono tells Troy and Cory that people build fences for two reasons: "Some people build fences to keep people out...and other people build fences to keep people in." Bono does not mention Troy's mistake of having an extramarital affair in front of Cory but shares his opinion on what Troy should do through his explanation of the fence. Bono implies that Troy should respect Rose's love and be loyal to her love instead of pushing her and Cory away from him.

When Cory goes into the house to look for a saw, Bono confronts Troy more explicitly about his affair. Troy finally admits to Bono that he is indeed having an affair with Alberta. Bono wants Troy to stop the affair before it is too late and Rose finds out. Bono bets Troy that if he finishes building the fence for Rose, Bono will buy his wife, Lucille the refrigerator he has promised her for a long time. Bono decides to go home and not help Troy with the fence anymore.

Rose asks Troy about what happened with Gabe at the station. Troy tells Rose about the fifty dollars and a hearing in three weeks to determine whether or not Gabe should be recommitted to an asylum. Troy explains to Rose that Gabe was arrested "for howling and carrying on" after he chased some kids away who were teasing him. Troy and Rose argue over whether or not Gabe needs more supervision.

Troy suddenly tells Rose that he is going to be a father to a child of another woman. Gabriel shows up at the house and interrupts their important conversation. Rose becomes upset and outraged. She cannot believe that she has been loyal to Troy for eighteen years and he has done this to her. Gabriel senses that Troy has done something wrong to Rose. Gabe compliments Troy on helping him earlier that day at the police station. Troy expresses to Rose that he spent time with Alberta to escape. Rose believes she has been a good wife and mother and so Troy should have stayed with her. Troy selfishly conveys to Rose that he used Alberta to get away from the pain of his stagnant career and life goals. Rose rebuts his excuse by asserting that she invested her whole life in Troy, even when she knew he wasn't going anywhere. Rose feels just as stuck as Troy but she hasn't hurt Troy the way is hurting her. Rose accuses Troy of being selfish and of taking and not giving. This makes Troy very upset and he grabs Rose's arm. Rose yells at Troy because he is hurting her arm. Cory hears the noise from inside the house. He comes outside and surprises Troy by grabbing him from behind. Cory punches Troy in the chest, knocking Troy to the ground. Both Troy and Cory are surprised at Cory's actions. Troy lunges at Cory but Rose holds him back. Troy collects himself and yells at Cory instead of hitting him. Troy tells Cory that he just committed strike number two, and leaves the yard.

Analysis

Bono clarifies the significance of the play's title as the action rises and nears the climax of the scene. In a profound moment of compassion, Bono spells out to Cory and Troy the reason Rose wants the fence built. His reason is a metaphor not a literal interpretation. Bono sees Rose's fence as a defining symbol of her qualities as a wife and mother, correctly fearing her family's relationships are falling apart. Bono observes that the fence is symbolic of both the negative and positive aspects of the Maxson family. His reference to the people who build fences to push people away from them is indirectly directed at Troy who, with his affair, will eventually hurt his wife and who is already in the midst of hurting his son Cory by preventing him from a hopeful future. We never learn the practical reason why Rose wants the fence built. Perhaps she wants Troy and Cory to bond while making a fence together. Perhaps she thinks it is a way to keep her eye on Troy. Wilson never allows us into that part of Rose's thinking, so the fence, like Bono's description, leaves the observer to interpret the meaning of the fence for themselves.

Act Two, Scene Two

Summary

Rose has not had a conversation with Troy for six months, though he is still living in their house. Rose speaks to Troy for the first time by asking him if he is planning on coming home after work the next day, Friday. Troy has been going to Alberta's house every Friday after work, even though he still says that he goes to Taylor's. Troy tells Rose that he plans on going to Taylor's. Rose asks that Troy come straight home. Troy explains that he wants to have some time to himself to relax and enjoy life. Fed up with Troy, Rose warns Troy that she does not have much more patience for his behavior. Troy discloses hurtful news to Rose that he is actually going over to the hospital to see Alberta who went into labor early.

Rose matches Troy's bad news. Gabriel has been taken away to the asylum because Troy signed papers granting permission for half of Gabe's money from the government to go to Troy and half to the hospital. Troy is confused and hurt. He had thought that the papers he signed were the release forms to allow Gabe out of jail. He had made a mistake in sending Gabe away because he could not read the papers that he signed. Troy denies having signed the papers, but Rose saw Troy's signature on the document. Rose is furious at Troy for not signing the papers so Cory could go to college to play football and then signing the papers for Gabe to be locked up in a mental hospital. Rose warns Troy that he will have to answer to his misdeed. The phone rings and Rose answers it. Rose learns from the hospital that Alberta had a healthy baby girl but Alberta died during childbirth. Troy confronts the imaginary character, Death, out loud again. He challenges Death to come and get him after he builds a fence. Troy dares Death to confront him "man to man," still confident that he would win.

Analysis

Troy arrives at his house like a stranger. The household that once revolved around Troy and his whims and fanciful stories and ideas no longer exists. It is a day before Troy's payday, the day Wilson previously emphasizes in order to display a change in character and time. Even though we have yet to see if Troy and Bono will come to the Maxson house to drink and talk like they always do on Fridays, it is clear from Rose's unemotional, hands-off behavior that Troy has lost so much respect and love in his family that it is unlikely that Bono and his relationship with Troy will survive. Even though Troy has brought the truth of his affair to light, he still lives in an escapist mode. Troy continues to see Alberta and escape reality with her despite the facts that his son and wife know about the relationship and he still lives with them. As Rose attempts to salvage what little spousal bond she has with Troy by insisting that he come home after work, Troy continues to tell her he wants to go to Taylor's instead and tries to leave Rose in the middle of their conversation. By this point it must be obvious to Rose and Cory where Troy goes when he says he is going to Taylor's. Incapable of shattering his illusion in his own mind, Troy proceeds by pretending life is the way it was when his affair was a secret and believes he can maintain both his family and extramarital life simultaneously without further loss.

Wilson dramatically creates a double-edged situation in which the audience may sympathize with and object to Troy's character. While Troy could control the mistake he made by having an affair, he could not help being misled about Gabe's future due to his poor education and illiteracy. During the climax of the play, Troy's illusionary world bursts when the phone call from the hospital discloses that Alberta died in childbirth, and Troy is now responsible for a healthy baby girl. Ironically, Troy's escape from responsibility produced a huge responsibility, his baby, Raynell. The peak of Troy's mistakes occur after Rose sticks up for herself and tells him the truth of her sacrifice and commitment to Troy even though she has been disappointed with their life. Troy takes out his anger on Rose because of his anger about Alberta's death and his frustration with himself for failing Gabe. He grabs her violently and will not let go when she pushes him down farther by accusing him of taking and not giving in their relationship. Cory attacks Troy to protect Rose, defying the obedience Troy has aggressively demanded of Cory which lays the groundwork for a culminating incident caused by Troy's mistakes.

Act Two, Scene Three

Summary

Troy brings home his motherless baby, Raynell. He sits on the porch singing a blues song about a man begging a train engineer to let him ride the train in hiding, for free. Rose decides that the baby is innocent and shouldn't be blamed for Troy's sins, saying, "you can't visit the sins of the father upon the child this child got a mother, but you're a womanless man." She takes in Troy's baby as her own child, but refuses to honor her partnership with Troy.

Analysis

Troy finally has no choice but to bear his burden in hand. He comes home to Rose with his baby, Raynell, not knowing if she will take him in as her husband again. Troy could be homeless, without a family except the baby, with nowhere to care for the baby or keep her from the elements if Rose rejects him once and for all. Instead of knocking on the front door to find out his standing with Rose, Troy cradles his baby on the front porch and sings. The baby is the only person left in Troy's world who will listen to Troy with an open mind. The porch used to be an arena for Troy's viewpoints and Troy's vision of the world. Now all Troy may have left in the world is his baby who does not know any better but to listen to him and depend on his love.

The lyrics of Troy's train song mimic his predicament with Rose and Raynell. He is homeless unless Rose takes pity on him and takes him in which, after his deceit of her trust, would also be an act of granting a free ride to a man who has more than spent his chances for forgiveness.

Moreover, Wilson's choice in writing Troy a song based on an experience with a train follows a literary tradition in African American literature and an oral tradition in African American spirituals of associating trains with moments of significant life changing experiences. Specifically, trains have come to represent a crossroads in a person's life in the African American tradition. Frequently, these references to trains also have a religious connotation. In African American spirituals, trains often meant a ride to heaven and a ticket away from the troubles of life on earth. Wilson acknowledges his antecedents in fiction and song with Troy's lyrical plea.

Rose also makes a religious reference with her justification for accepting Raynell as her own child. She attributes her reasoning to her understanding that Raynell is innocent even though she was born out of a sinful partnership. Rose rejects Troy as her partner because she takes seriously the Biblical commandment that decrees, "Thou Shalt Not Sin," but finds forgiveness for the child born to her sinful husband because of her belief that "when the sins of our fathers visit us/we don't have to play host/we can banish them with forgiveness/as God in his largeness and laws." To Rose, it is a godly act to bring Raynell into her home and a blessing to behold in the midst of her pain.

Act Two, Scene Four

Summary

Rose prepares for a church bake sale as Lyons arrives with twenty dollars to pay Troy back for a loan. Lyons and Cory chat. Cory has graduated from high school and Lyons missed the ceremony because he had a jazz gig. Cory is trying to find a job, indicating that Troy did not allow him to go to college to play

football. Lyons and Cory agree that jobs are few and far between these days. Lyons suggests to Cory that he ask Troy for help finding a job. Rose, Lyons, and Cory leave the yard as Troy heads in to the yard after a day's work. It is Troy's payday.

Rose is more independent. Troy heats up his own food for dinner and Rose feels she can come and go without reporting to Troy when she is coming back or what she is doing. Troy drinks without Bono and sings a blues song to himself about an old dog named Blue. Bono stops by the house. They are no longer close friends. Bono and Troy do not work on the same trash route anymore now that Troy has been promoted to drive a truck in Greentree, a white neighborhood. Troy and Bono catch up with each other. They talk about their hopes for an early retirement and their wives. Rose is more religious now and more dedicated to her church. Troy invites Bono to stay and drink like old times, but Bono plays dominoes every Friday with other men at a man named Skinner's house. Troy and Bono acknowledge how each man made good on his bet; Troy finished the fence for Rose and Bono bought Lucille the refrigerator. Troy and Bono half-heartedly agree to meet up someday at Bono's house. Bono goes to his domino game. Troy continues to drink and sing by himself.

Cory comes back and steps over Troy on the porch without saying excuse me. Troy picks a fight with Cory. Cory isn't afraid of Troy. Troy asserts his manhood and role as father by forcing the respect issue with Cory who disrespectfully refuses to say "excuse me" to his father. Troy insists that Cory leave the house and provide for himself since he does not respect him as the man of the house and the breadwinner who provides for Cory. Troy flaunts how long and how much he has provided for Cory, but Cory refuses to give Troy much credit for the material things Troy gave him because Troy gave so little loving care to Cory and made him fear his own father. Cory brings up Troy's recent failings with Rose and lets Troy know he disapproves. Troy again insists that Cory leave to be out on his own and goes as far to say, "You just another nigger on the street to me!" Outraged, Cory points out that the house and property from which Troy is throwing Cory out, should actually be owned by Gabriel whose government checks paid for most of the mortgage payments. Troy physically attacks Cory. Cory swings at Troy with a baseball bat but does not hit Troy because he would probably kill him. Troy taunts Cory and then gets the bat away from Cory in a struggle. Troy stands over Cory with the bat and kicks Cory out of the house with finality. Cory leaves, saying he'll be back for his things. Troy tells Cory that he will not let Cory inside, but that he will leave Cory's belongings on the other side of the fence. Cory leaves. Troy swings the baseball bat, taunting Death to try to face him. He has a renewed belief in his strength because he defeated Cory. Troy is ready for death but he will fight a hard fight when death comes.

Analysis

Wilson manipulates the sense of time by breaking the established expectations of Bono and Troy's relationship. The details of the change inform the audience of how long it has been since their friendship was the fun-loving companionship of the opening scene. Several things are different now. Bono, who used to adore Troy and play the follower to Troy's lead in the friendship, now has a social life independent of Troy. Bono has a new group of friends who celebrate payday without Troy. Troy and Bono no longer work on the same trash route. Troy's promotion has landed him a job driving a truck in Greentree, a white neighborhood. Souring the sweetness of the promotion, Troy's new job is lonely because he has no one to talk to during the day.

In fact, loneliness defines every aspect of Troy's life. He is alone at work, on payday afternoons and weekends, as well as with his family and in his love life. Troy's actions have come back to haunt him.

His conversation with Bono attempts to catch-up and heal an irreparable friendship. After a few months, Bono and Troy seem like strangers to each other, grasping onto aspects of each other that they used to know well. The scene between them creates sympathy for Troy and for Bono. There is an unspoken understanding between them. They both know that if Troy had heeded Bono's advice to stop his affair, life would be better for Troy now.

The falling action of *Fences* reaches a pitch when Troy challenges his son Cory by demanding fatherly respect from a son who no longer respects his father. The physical blockade Troy forces on Cory is an immature maneuver, typical of a child who did not get their way. Troy's immature behavior heightens the degree of foolishness he exhibits and emphasizes Cory's entry into manhood. When Cory stands up to Troy by scolding him like a child with the disgust of his opinions on Troy's failings, Cory, like Troy before him, becomes a man by challenging his father. Cory and Troy engage in physical violence just as Troy did with his own father when he came of age. And Cory, just like Troy must now leave the home he shares with his father to lead his own, independent life.

It is ironic, yet understandable that Cory and Troy fail to see eye-to-eye. It is ironic because both of them leave home under similar circumstances: they share disgust for their respective fathers and the experience of a father who selfishly took away something from each of them that they treasured. Cory lost his college football opportunities, trust in his father and home, Troy lost his girlfriend in a traumatic beating and rape by his father, his trust in his father and his home. Yet, tragically, what they share also pulls them apart and Troy and Cory are conflicted and enraged at each other. Troy finds himself unable to cope with the truth in a life or death situation. Therefore, Cory, a vigilant speaker of the truth, must disappear from Troy's world in order for Troy to maintain the illusion he now clings to in order to salvage what little is left of his once fearless life.

Act Two, Scene Five

Summary

Seven year-old Raynell plays in the dirt of her newly planted garden, poking the ground with impatience. She has recently planted seeds but they have yet to grow. Rose asks Raynell to change her shoes to prepare for Troy's funeral. Troy has died from a heart attack when he was swinging a bat at the baseball that hangs from a tree in their yard. Cory returns home from the Marines in his uniform. Lyons also comes home to go to the funeral. His girlfriend, Bonnie, broke-up with him and he has been forced to do time at the workhouse because he was caught illegally cashing other people's checks. Cory is engaged to be married to a woman he seems to care about a lot. Lyons and Cory reminisce about Troy's saying, "You gotta take the crooked with the straights."

Cory refuses to attend the funeral because he wants to rebel against Troy. Rose teaches Cory that not attending Troy's funeral does not make Cory a man. Cory attempts to explain why he has mixed feelings for Troy. Cory says to Rose, "Papa was like a shadow that followed you everywhere." Cory and Raynell compare their memories of Troy as a father. Raynell and Cory sing Troy's blues song about the old dog named Blue which Troy's father taught him originally.

Gabriel shows up, having been released or having escaped from the mental hospital. He has his trumpet in hand. Gabriel announces that it is time to tell St. Peter to open the gates of heaven for Troy. Gabe blows his trumpet but no sound comes out. He tries and tries but the trumpet will not play.

Disappointed and hurt, Gabriel has a painful realization in his mind. He walks around, turning his frustration into an improvised dance, reminiscent of an African dance. Gabriel's dance climaxes as he makes a cry to the heavens, which, in response, open wide, perhaps in the form of a bright light shining on stage. Gabriel is successful. He says, "That's the way that goes." The play ends.

Analysis

Troy has died in between the action of the last two scenes of the play, so the final scene presents the lasting effects of Troy's life on his loved ones. Though Troy's relationships with Bono, Rose, and Cory were ruined and broken in life, they gather together in his honor. The most significant representation of Troy's legacy is the conversation between Cory and Raynell. Raynell experienced Troy's parenting after he and Rose stopped loving each other and after Cory left home. Cory experienced Troy at his worst as a parent and husband. Lyons had very little chance to know Troy as a father at all. Bono and Rose knew Troy in his prime as a ballplayer and witnessed his demise. Cory refuses to go to Troy's funeral even though he made the journey to visit home for the first time in almost eight years. Cory's last memories of the Maxson household were bitter and oppressive.

Now, however, Cory meets Raynell, who bears witness to a changed world at the house and represents the changing world of the United States as it evolves into the passionate and liberating decade of the sixties. Raynell hold no grudge against Troy. Her comments about their father are mundane. She, like Lyons, Bono and Troy will grow up without one parent, but she will never experience the hurtful coming of age struggle Cory and the older men experienced. Raynell changes the pattern of violence between father and son in the Maxson family. When Cory and Raynell sing Troy's father's song about the dog named Blue together, Cory forgives Troy because he witnesses the love and the lessons that Troy passed on to his children. Cory experiences the song as evidence that Troy's deeds were derived from what Troy knew in life. Troy did what he could with what he had and did his best to give what little he had to his family. Cory was hindered by Troy's mistakes, but will become a better person than his father because of what he learned as a result of Troy's struggle with himself.

Symbols

Trains

Troy brings his illegitimate baby, Raynell home for the first time at the beginning of the Act Two, Scene Three of *Fences*. Troy sits with his motherless baby on a porch where he once reigned, but now is an unwanted presence. Then, Troy sings the song, "Please Mr. Engineer, let a man ride the line," which echoes the pleas of a man begging a train engineer to let him ride, in hiding, for free. Especially during the Harlem Renaissance (the flourishing of African American artists, writers, poets, etc. in the first half of the Twentieth Century) and during slavery times, respectively, trains were common literary devices in African American literature and music. A character that rides a train or talks of trains, or even goes to a train station came to represent change. Trains represent the coming or arrival of a major change in a character's life. In *Fences*, Troy identifies with the blues song about riding the train. By singing this particular song, Troy acknowledges that his actions caused the upheaval in the lives of his loved ones. Troy sings, "Please Mr. Engineer let a man ride the line," but in other words he is crying out to his wife, Rose to let him back into her home. Like the voice in the song, Troy is homeless and has nothing to offer the one he needs something from in order to keep going. Especially with a baby in hand, Troy has

no future without his wife. In order to come back into her life, Troy knows he is asking Rose to give him a free ride of forgiveness. If she does take him back, Troy knows life with her will never return to the life they once had together because he lost her trust and respect when he committed adultery. The train song also connotes the time Troy and many other men of his generation spent wandering North during the Great Migration. He sings, "I ain't got no ticket, please let me ride the blinds," which represents the poverty the released slaves and the failed sharecroppers experienced in Troy's father's generation. Troy sings the song to his newborn daughter, passing on a song that tells an important story of her past and links that past to the present. Troy's song exemplifies the tradition in African American history to make something from nothing-like the song. Troy hopes his love for his daughter and her innocence will change Rose's heart and allow Troy another chance at fatherhood and marriage.

Fences

August Wilson did not name his play, *Fences*, simply because the dramatic action depends strongly on the building of a fence in the Maxson's backyard. Rather, the characters lives change around the fence-building project which serves as both a literal and a figurative device, representing the relationships that bond and break in the arena of the backyard. The fact that Rose wants the fence built adds meaning to her character because she sees the fence as something positive and necessary. Bono observes that Rose wants the fence built to hold in her loved ones. To Rose, a fence is a symbol of her love and her desire for a fence indicates that Rose represents love and nurturing. Troy and Cory on the other hand think the fence is a drag and reluctantly work on finishing Rose's project. Bono also observes that to some people, fences keep people out and push people away. Bono indicates that Troy pushes Rose away from him by cheating on her. Troy's lack of commitment to finishing the fence parallels his lack of commitment in his marriage. The fence appears finished only in the final scene of the play, when Troy dies and the family reunites. The wholeness of the fence comes to mean the strength of the Maxson family and ironically the strength of the man who tore them apart, who also brings them together one more time, in death.

The Devil

Troy casts the Devil as the main character of his exaggerated stories that entertain, bewilder and frustrate his family and friends. Eventually, Troy's association of the Devil as a harbinger of death comes to represent his struggle to survive the trials of his life. Many scenes in the play end with Troy speaking a soliloquy to Death and the Devil. In Act One, Scene One, Troy spins a long yarn, or tale about his fight for several days with the Devil. The story of the Devil endears Troy to audiences early on by revealing his capability to imagine and believe in the absurd. In another story, Troy turns a white salesman into a Devil. Troy calls a man the Devil who tried to sell Troy furniture in exchange for monthly payments by mail. Again, providing the pragmatic version of the story, Rose explains why Troy invents stories about the Devil. "Anything you don't understand; you call the Devil." Troy observes door-to-door salesmen and the process of layaway for the first time and in his ignorance, turns a modern occurrence into a mythical story.

Troy also describes the Devil's appearance as a man in a white hood. Wilson conjures the image of KKK members in KKK regalia with this description. Troy imagines the Devil, not just as an airy spirit from hell but also as a living human being. To Troy, the Devil sometimes symbolizes the aggression and

cowardice of bigotry. Troy's stories about the Devil show that Troy sees himself as a man winning a fight against injustice and hatred. Troy's courage in overcoming racism is also suggested by Troy's complaint against the Sanitation Department that eventually hires Troy as the first black man to drive a trash truck. However, as the play progresses and Troy loses the love of his family and inadvertently betrays his brother, Gabriel, the less we believe in Troy's ability to win in his struggle to overcome the bad luck of his fate and the demons he carries within that become even greater forces than the racism that curtailed his dreams.

Motifs

Death and Baseball

In Act one, scene one, Troy Maxson declares, "Death ain't nothing but a fastball on the outside corner." With this line, the former Negro League slugger merges his past experience as a ballplayer with his philosophy. Troy, Bono, and Rose argue about the quality of the Major League black ballplayer compared to Troy when he was in his prime. A fastball on the outside corner was homerun material for Troy. Though Troy feels beleaguered from work and deeply troubled by coming along too early to play in the Major Leagues because they were still segregated when he was in top form, Troy believes he is unconquerable and almost immortal when it comes to issues of life and death. Troy knows he overcame pneumonia ten years ago, survived an abusive father and treacherous conditions in his adaptation to surviving in an urban environment when he walked north to live in Pittsburgh, and jail. Baseball is what Troy is most proud of and knows he conquered on his own. In this first scene of the play, Troy is afraid of nothing, values his life, and feels in control. Troy's attitude toward death is proud and nonchalant. Troy says, "Ain't nothing wrong with talking about death. That's part of life. Everybody gonna die. You gonna die, I'm gonna die. Bono's gonna die. Hell, we all gonna die." He has not recently experienced a personal loss so great that it humbles and weakens his spirit. In the same scene, Troy compares Death to an army that marched towards him in July, 1941, when he had pneumonia. He describes Death as an army, an icy touch on the shoulder, a grinning face. Troy claims he spoke to Death. Troy thinks he constantly has to be on guard against Death's army. He claims he saw Death standing with a sickle in his hand, spoke to Death and wrestled Death for three days and three nights. After the wrestling match, Troy saw Death put on a white robe with a hood on it and leave to look for his sickle.

Troy admits, "Death ain't nothing to play with. And I know he's gonna get me," but he refuses to succumb to Death easily. Troy follows the Bible quotation, "Be ever vigilant," in his attitude towards Death. In his perception of Death, Troy mutates the form of Death many times, from fastball, to a sickle-carrying, devil-like figure and finally composting the devil into a Ku Klux Klan member in his white hood ceremony regalia. His image of Death being composed of a marching army or leading an army transforms into this KKK leader image that has camp followers.

As the play progresses, Troy repeatedly merges his baseball metaphors with his Death rhetoric. In the last lines of numerous scenes Troy speaks to Death out-loud, taunting Death to try to come after him and/or warns Cory that his behavior is causing him to strike out. Cory makes three mistakes in Troy's eyes and when he strikes out, Troy kicks him out of the house. Troy's death and baseball metaphors are inextricably linked. Admitting that he was too old to play baseball when the Major Leagues integrated would kill Troy's belief that he was directly cheated out of a special life that he deserved

and earned. To Troy, it is enough of an injury that the Major Leagues were segregated during his prime. He sees baseball as the best time of his life, but also the death of his dreams and hopes. When Cory was born, Troy promised he would not allow his son to experience the same disappointment he was subjected to in baseball. So, Troy equates Cory's pursuit of a dream as strong as his father's as mistakes worthy of warning and punishment or "strikes" that Troy believes will prevent Cory from reaching the same fate as Troy did.

Seeds and Growth

Characters in *Fences* literally and figuratively employ the motif of seeds, flowers, plants, and related actions like growing, taking root, planting, and gestation—in both their language and actions. Like August Wilson's mother whose name is Daisy, Rose has the name of a flower. Rose is a typical African American 1950's housewife and, as the caretaker of the family and home, she represents loving care and nurturing, attributes also frequently used to grow plants. Like the characteristics of the flower after which she is named, Rose is a beautiful soul who protects her family and protects herself when Troy hurts her. In Act Two, scene, five, Rose demonstrates to Raynell that seeds take time to grow. Rose says, "You just have to give it a chance. It'll grow." She exemplifies patience and generosity in her relationships with everyone in the play. For instance, when she sides with Cory on his decision to play football, her compassion and concern for Gabriel when he is arrested and her acceptance of Raynell as her own child when Alberta dies. When Troy complains in Act Two, scene one that he needs to escape to Alberta's bed because he feels as if he has been in the same place for sixteen years, Rose replies, "I been standing with you! I been right here with you, Troy." Rose is sedentary, like the flower, growing upward in the same spot. She relates her decision to live life invested in her husband's life even though she knows he will never be as successful as they once hoped. In Act Two, scene one Rose's description of her life is a metaphor of planting. She says, "I took all my feelings, my wants and needs, my dreams...and I buried them inside you. I planted a seed and watched and prayed over it. I planted myself inside you and waited to bloom. And it didn't take me no eighteen years to find out the soil was hard and rocky and it wasn't never gonna bloom. But I held on to you, Troy." Rose lessens the rocky and hard nature of Troy with her love and compassion, providing shelter to her children from their father's destructive behavior and legacy. She has raised Cory lovingly and teaches Raynell about loving, a hopeful future and forgiveness.

Blues

August Wilson says he uses the language and attitude of blues songs to inspire his plays and play characters. The blues is a melancholy song created by black people in the United States that tends to repeat a twelve bar phrase of music and a 3-line stanza that repeats the first line in the second line. A blues song usually contains several blue, or minor, notes in the melody and harmony.

Fences is structured somewhat like a blues song. The play all takes place in one place like a key of music and the characters each have their own rhythm and melody that Wilson riffs off of around the common locale. Characters repeat phrases, or pass phrases around, like a blues band with a line of melody. Similar to the role of repeated lyrics and melody of a blues song, Wilson's characters display changes in their life and a changed attitude toward life by repeating scenarios in which they act. For instance, Friday, Troy's payday, is the setting of three scenes. By mirroring the situation in which events in the play take place, we can observe the change that occurs from one instance to the next. For instance, in

Act One, Scene one, Troy and Bono come home after payday as best friends worried about Troy's future. In Act One, Scene Four, Troy and Bono celebrate after payday because Troy won his discrimination case, but Bono is more concerned that Troy will ruin his life with his extramarital affair. Troy comes home after payday in Act Two, Scene Four, estranged from Bono and his family. He drinks and sings to comfort himself. By now, the good days of the play's first scene seem far-gone. This is a way playwrights manipulate the sense of time in a play, but for Wilson in particular, the repeated events and language of the play are in keeping what he calls a "blues aesthetic."

Key Summaries

Title: Fences

Author: August Wilson

Type of Work: Play

Genre: Comedy, Drama

Language: English, with African American dialects

Time and Place Written Developed from 1983–1987; United States

Date of First Publication: June, 1986

Narrator: The play does not have a narrator but the stage directions do lend an omniscient voice at times

Tone: Loosely autobiographical; emphasizes links between the aftermaths of slavery as well as legalized discrimination and African American lives during the 1950's Settings (Times): 1957, later, 1965

Setting (Place): The dirt-yard and porch of the Maxson family's house in Pittsburgh, PA

Protagonists: Troy Maxson and Cory Maxson

Major Conflict: Troy and Cory's opposing views on how Cory should spend his future deteriorates after Troy prohibits Cory from playing football and going to college. Their relationship disintegrates further when Troy reveals he has been cheating on Cory's mother with another woman and gotten her pregnant and signed papers permitting Cory's Uncle Gabe to be committed to a mental hospital while Troy lives in a house paid for by Gabe's money.

Rising Actions: Troy reveals his affair with Alberta to his wife, Rose; Rose reprimands Troy; Troy viciously grabs Rose's arm and will not let go; Cory surprises Troy, attacking him from behind; Cory and Troy fight; Troy wins the fight and warns Cory that he has one more strike to spend Climax: Rose tells Troy that Alberta died having his baby.

Falling Action

In Act Two, scene four: Troy picks a fight with Cory; Cory displays his disgust for Troy's betraying behavior towards Rose, Gabe, and Cory; Troy and Cory fight with a baseball bat; Troy wins and kicks Cory out of their house

Themes: Coming of age within the cycle of damaged black manhood; interpreting and inheriting history; the choice between pragmatism and illusions as survival mechanisms *Motifs:* Death and baseball; seeds and growth; blues

Symbols: Trains; fences; the devil

Foreshadowing

In Act One, scene one, Troy says without humility, "Death aren't nothing," but he eventually dies before the play ends. In Act One, scene two, Gabriel talks in songs and strange stories about his friendship with St. Peter. But sometimes his words appear to foreshadow Troy's demise. Gabe sings to Troy, "Better get ready for the judgment." In Act One, scene one, Bono inquires about Troy's relationship with a woman names Alberta. Troy denies his affair with Alberta, but Bono says he has seen Troy buying her drinks and walking near her house when he says he's at the bar, Taylor's. Bono's questioning foreshadows Troy's inevitable inability to hide his secret.

WUTHERING HEIGHTS - AN INTRODUCTION

Background of Author - Emily Brontë

Emily Brontë, in full Emily Jane Brontë, pseudonym Ellis Bell, (born July 30, 1818, Thornton, Yorkshire, England—died December 19, 1848, Haworth, Yorkshire), English novelist and poet who produced but one novel, *Wuthering Heights* (1847), a highly imaginative work of passion and hate set on the Yorkshire moors. Emily was perhaps the greatest of the three Brontë sisters, but the record of her life is extremely meagre, for she was silent and reserved and left no correspondence of interest, and her single novel darkens rather than solves the mystery of her spiritual existence.

Life

Emily's father, Patrick Brontë (1777–1861), an Irishman, held a number of curacies: Hartshead-cum-Clifton, Yorkshire, was the birthplace of his elder daughters, Maria and Elizabeth (who died young), and nearby Thornton that of Emily and her siblings Charlotte, Patrick Branwell, and Anne. In 1820 their father became rector of Haworth, remaining there for the rest of his life.

After the death of their mother in 1821, the children were left very much to themselves in the bleak moorland rectory. The children were educated, during their early life, at home, except for a single year that Charlotte and Emily spent at the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge in Lancashire. In 1835, when Charlotte secured a teaching position at Miss Wooler's school at Roe Head, Emily accompanied her as a pupil but suffered from homesickness and remained only three months. In 1838 Emily spent six exhausting months as a teacher in Miss Patchett's school at Law Hill, near Halifax, and then resigned.

To keep the family together at home, Charlotte planned to keep a school for girls at Haworth. In February 1842 she and Emily went to Brussels to learn foreign languages and school management at the Pension Héger. Although Emily pined for home and for the wild moorlands, it seems that in Brussels she was better appreciated than Charlotte. Her passionate nature was more easily understood than Charlotte's decorous temperament. In October, however, when her aunt died, Emily returned permanently to Haworth.

In 1845 Charlotte came across some poems by Emily, and this led to the discovery that all three sisters—Charlotte, Emily, and Anne—had written verse. A year later they published jointly a volume of verse, *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell*, the initials of these pseudonyms being those of the sisters; it contained 21 of Emily's poems, and a consensus of later criticism has accepted the fact that Emily's verse alone reveals true poetic genius. The venture cost the sisters about £50 in all, and only two copies were sold.

By midsummer of 1847 Emily's *Wuthering Heights* and Anne's *Agnes Grey* had been accepted for joint publication by J. Cautley Newby of London, but publication of the three volumes was delayed until the appearance of their sister Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*, which was immediately and hugely successful.

Wuthering Heights, when published in December 1847, did not fare well; critics were hostile, calling it too savage, too animal-like, and clumsy in construction. Only later did it come to be considered one of the finest novels in the English language.

Soon after the publication of her novel, Emily's health began to fail rapidly. She had been ill for some time, but now her breathing became difficult, and she suffered great pain. She died of tuberculosis in December 1848.

Emily Brontë and Wuthering Heights

Emily Brontë's work on Wuthering Heights cannot be dated, and she may well have spent a long time on this intense, solidly imagined novel. It is distinguished from other novels of the period by its dramatic and poetic presentation, its abstention from all comment by the author, and its unusual structure. It recounts in the retrospective narrative of an onlooker, which in turn includes shorter narratives, the impact of the waif Heathcliff on the two families of Earnshaw and Linton in a remote Yorkshire district at the end of the 18th century. Embittered by abuse and by the marriage of Cathy Earnshaw—who shares his stormy nature and whom he loves—to the gentle and prosperous Edgar Linton, Heathcliff plans a revenge on both families, extending into the second generation. Cathy's death in childbirth fails to set him free from his love-hate relationship with her, and the obsessive haunting persists until his death; the marriage of the surviving heirs of Earnshaw and Linton restores peace.

Sharing her sisters' dry humour and Charlotte's violent imagination, Emily diverges from them in making no use of the events of her own life and showing no preoccupation with a spinster's state or a governess's position. Working, like them, within a confined scene and with a small group of characters, she constructs an action, based on profound and primitive energies of love and hate, which proceeds logically and economically, making no use of such coincidences as Charlotte relies on, requiring no rich romantic similes or rhetorical patterns, and confining the superb dialogue to what is immediately relevant to the subject. The sombre power of the book and the elements of brutality in the characters affronted some 19th-century opinion. Its supposed masculine quality was adduced to support the claim, based on the memories of her brother Branwell's friends long after his death, that he was author or part author of it. While it is not possible to clear up all the minor puzzles, neither the external nor the internal evidence offered is substantial enough to weigh against Charlotte's plain statement that Emily was the author.

Plot Overview - Summary

In the late winter months of 1801, a man named Lockwood rents a manor house called Thrushcross Grange in the isolated moor country of England. Here, he meets his dour landlord, Heathcliff, a wealthy man who lives in the ancient manor of Wuthering Heights, four miles away from the Grange. In this wild, stormy countryside, Lockwood asks his housekeeper, Nelly Dean, to tell him the story of Heathcliff and the strange denizens of Wuthering Heights. Nelly consents, and Lockwood writes down his recollections of her tale in his diary; these written recollections form the main part of Wuthering Heights.

Nelly remembers her childhood. As a young girl, she works as a servant at Wuthering Heights for the owner of the manor, Mr. Earnshaw, and his family. One day, Mr. Earnshaw goes to Liverpool and returns home with an orphan boy whom he will raise with his own children. At first, the Earnshaw children—a boy named Hindley and his younger sister Catherine—detest the dark-skinned Heathcliff. But Catherine quickly comes to love him, and the two soon grow inseparable, spending their days playing on the moors. After his wife's death, Mr. Earnshaw grows to prefer Heathcliff to his own son,

and when Hindley continues his cruelty to Heathcliff, Mr. Earnshaw sends Hindley away to college, keeping Heathcliff nearby.

Three years later, Mr. Earnshaw dies, and Hindley inherits Wuthering Heights. He returns with a wife, Frances, and immediately seeks revenge on Heathcliff. Once an orphan, later a pampered and favored son, Heathcliff now finds himself treated as a common laborer, forced to work in the fields. Heathcliff continues his close relationship with Catherine, however. One night they wander to Thrushcross Grange, hoping to tease Edgar and Isabella Linton, the cowardly, snobbish children who live there. Catherine is bitten by a dog and is forced to stay at the Grange to recuperate for five weeks, during which time Mrs. Linton works to make her a proper young lady. By the time Catherine returns, she has become infatuated with Edgar, and her relationship with Heathcliff grows more complicated.

When Frances dies after giving birth to a baby boy named Hareton, Hindley descends into the depths of alcoholism, and behaves even more cruelly and abusively toward Heathcliff. Eventually, Catherine's desire for social advancement prompts her to become engaged to Edgar Linton, despite her overpowering love for Heathcliff. Heathcliff runs away from Wuthering Heights, staying away for three years, and returning shortly after Catherine and Edgar's marriage.

When Heathcliff returns, he immediately sets about seeking revenge on all who have wronged him. Having come into a vast and mysterious wealth, he deviously lends money to the drunken Hindley, knowing that Hindley will increase his debts and fall into deeper despondency. When Hindley dies, Heathcliff inherits the manor. He also places himself in line to inherit Thrushcross Grange by marrying Isabella Linton, whom he treats very cruelly. Catherine becomes ill, gives birth to a daughter, and dies. Heathcliff begs her spirit to remain on Earth—she may take whatever form she will, she may haunt him, drive him mad—just as long as she does not leave him alone. Shortly thereafter, Isabella flees to London and gives birth to Heathcliff's son, named Linton after her family. She keeps the boy with her there.

Thirteen years pass, during which Nelly Dean serves as Catherine's daughter's nursemaid at Thrushcross Grange. Young Catherine is beautiful and headstrong like her mother, but her temperament is modified by her father's gentler influence. Young Catherine grows up at the Grange with no knowledge of Wuthering Heights; one day, however, wandering through the moors, she discovers the manor, meets Hareton, and plays together with him. Soon afterwards, Isabella dies, and Linton comes to live with Heathcliff. Heathcliff treats his sickly, whining son even more cruelly than he treated the boy's mother.

Three years later, Catherine meets Heathcliff on the moors, and makes a visit to Wuthering Heights to meet Linton. She and Linton begin a secret romance conducted entirely through letters. When Nelly destroys Catherine's collection of letters, the girl begins sneaking out at night to spend time with her frail young lover, who asks her to come back and nurse him back to health. However, it quickly becomes apparent that Linton is pursuing Catherine only because Heathcliff is forcing him to; Heathcliff hopes that if Catherine marries Linton, his legal claim upon Thrushcross Grange—and his revenge upon Edgar Linton—will be complete. One day, as Edgar Linton grows ill and nears death, Heathcliff lures Nelly and Catherine back to Wuthering Heights, and holds them prisoner until Catherine marries Linton. Soon after the marriage, Edgar dies, and his death is quickly followed by the death of the sickly Linton. Heathcliff now controls both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. He forces Catherine to live at Wuthering Heights and act as a common servant, while he rents Thrushcross Grange to Lockwood.

Nelly's story ends as she reaches the present. Lockwood, appalled, ends his tenancy at Thrushcross Grange and returns to London. However, six months later, he pays a visit to Nelly, and learns of further developments in the story. Although Catherine originally mocked Hareton's ignorance and illiteracy (in an act of retribution, Heathcliff ended Hareton's education after Hindley died), Catherine grows to love Hareton as they live together at Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff becomes more and more obsessed with the memory of the elder Catherine, to the extent that he begins speaking to her ghost. Everything he sees reminds him of her. Shortly after a night spent walking on the moors, Heathcliff dies. Hareton and young Catherine inherit Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, and they plan to be married on the next New Year's Day. After hearing the end of the story, Lockwood goes to visit the graves of Catherine and Heathcliff.

Chronology

The story of Wuthering Heights is told through flashbacks recorded in diary entries, and events are often presented out of chronological order—Lockwood's narrative takes place after Nelly's narrative, for instance, but is interspersed with Nelly's story in his journal. Nevertheless, the novel contains enough clues to enable an approximate reconstruction of its chronology, which was elaborately designed by Emily Brontë. For instance, Lockwood's diary entries are recorded in the late months of 1801 and in September 1802; in 1801, Nelly tells Lockwood that she has lived at Thrushcross Grange for eighteen years, since Catherine's marriage to Edgar, which must then have occurred in 1783. We know that Catherine was engaged to Edgar for three years, and that Nelly was twenty-two when they were engaged, so the engagement must have taken place in 1780, and Nelly must have been born in 1758. Since Nelly is a few years older than Catherine, and since Lockwood comments that Heathcliff is about forty years old in 1801, it stands to reason that Heathcliff and Catherine were born around 1761, three years after Nelly. There are several other clues like this in the novel (such as Hareton's birth, which occurs in June, 1778). The following chronology is based on those clues, and should closely approximate the timing of the novel's important events. A “~” before a date indicates that it cannot be precisely determined from the evidence in the novel, but only closely estimated.

1500: The stone above the front door of Wuthering Heights, bearing the name of Hareton Earnshaw, is inscribed, possibly to mark the completion of the house.

1758: Nelly is born.

1761: Heathcliff and Catherine are born.

1767: Mr. Earnshaw brings Heathcliff to live at Wuthering Heights.

1774: Mr. Earnshaw sends Hindley away to college.

1777: Mr. Earnshaw dies; Hindley and Frances take possession of Wuthering Heights; Catherine first visits Thrushcross Grange around Christmastime.

1778: Hareton is born in June; Frances dies; Hindley begins his slide into alcoholism.

1780: Catherine becomes engaged to Edgar Linton; Heathcliff leaves Wuthering Heights.

1783: Catherine and Edgar are married; Heathcliff arrives at Thrushcross Grange in September.

1784: Heathcliff and Isabella elope in the early part of the year; Catherine becomes ill with brain fever; young Catherine is born late in the year; Catherine dies.

1785: Early in the year, Isabella flees Wuthering Heights and settles in London; Linton is born.

1785: Hindley dies; Heathcliff inherits Wuthering Heights.

1797: Young Catherine meets Hareton and visits Wuthering Heights for the first time; Linton comes from London after Isabella dies (in late 1797 or early 1798).

1800: Young Catherine stages her romance with Linton in the winter.

1801: Early in the year, young Catherine is imprisoned by Heathcliff and forced to marry Linton; Edgar Linton dies; Linton dies; Heathcliff assumes control of Thrushcross Grange. Late in the year, Lockwood

rents the Grange from Heathcliff and begins his tenancy. In a winter storm, Lockwood takes ill and begins conversing with Nelly Dean.

1801–1802: During the winter, Nelly narrates her story for Lockwood.

1802: In spring, Lockwood returns to London; Catherine and Hareton fall in love; Heathcliff dies; Lockwood returns in September and hears the end of the story from Nelly.

1803: On New Year's Day, young Catherine and Hareton plan to be married.

CHARACTERS

Heathcliff

An orphan brought to live at Wuthering Heights by Mr. Earnshaw, Heathcliff falls into an intense, unbreakable love with Mr. Earnshaw's daughter Catherine. After Mr. Earnshaw dies, his resentful son Hindley abuses Heathcliff and treats him as a servant. Because of her desire for social prominence, Catherine marries Edgar Linton instead of Heathcliff. Heathcliff's humiliation and misery prompt him to spend most of the rest of his life seeking revenge on Hindley, his beloved Catherine, and their respective children (Hareton and young Catherine). A powerful, fierce, and often cruel man, Heathcliff acquires a fortune and uses his extraordinary powers of will to acquire both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, the estate of Edgar Linton.

Catherine

The daughter of Mr. Earnshaw and his wife, Catherine falls powerfully in love with Heathcliff, the orphan Mr. Earnshaw brings home from Liverpool. Catherine loves Heathcliff so intensely that she claims they are the same person. However, her desire for social advancement motivates her to marry Edgar Linton instead. Catherine is free-spirited, beautiful, spoiled, and often arrogant. She is given to fits of temper, and she is torn between her wild passion for Heathcliff and her social ambition. She brings misery to both of the men who love her.

Edgar Linton

Well-bred but rather spoiled as a boy, Edgar Linton grows into a tender, constant, but cowardly man. He is almost the ideal gentleman: Catherine accurately describes him as "handsome," "pleasant to be with," "cheerful," and "rich." However, this full assortment of gentlemanly characteristics, along with his civilized virtues, proves useless in Edgar's clashes with his foil, Heathcliff, who gains power over his wife, sister, and daughter.

Nelly Dean

Nelly Dean (known formally as Ellen Dean) serves as the chief narrator of Wuthering Heights. A sensible, intelligent, and compassionate woman, she grew up essentially alongside Hindley and Catherine Earnshaw and is deeply involved in the story she tells. She has strong feelings for the characters in her story, and these feelings complicate her narration.

Lockwood

Lockwood's narration forms a frame around Nelly's; he serves as an intermediary between Nelly and the reader. A somewhat vain and presumptuous gentleman, he deals very clumsily with the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights. Lockwood comes from a more domesticated region of England, and he finds himself at a loss when he witnesses the strange household's disregard for the social conventions that

have always structured his world. As a narrator, his vanity and unfamiliarity with the story occasionally lead him to misunderstand events.

Young Catherine

For clarity's sake, this SparkNote refers to the daughter of Edgar Linton and the first Catherine as "young Catherine." The first Catherine begins her life as Catherine Earnshaw and ends it as Catherine Linton; her daughter begins as Catherine Linton and, assuming that she marries Hareton after the end of the story, goes on to become Catherine Earnshaw. The mother and the daughter share not only a name, but also a tendency toward headstrong behavior, impetuosity, and occasional arrogance. However, Edgar's influence seems to have tempered young Catherine's character, and she is a gentler and more compassionate creature than her mother.

Hareton Earnshaw

The son of Hindley and Frances Earnshaw, Hareton is Catherine's nephew. After Hindley's death, Heathcliff assumes custody of Hareton, and raises him as an uneducated field worker, just as Hindley had done to Heathcliff himself. Thus Heathcliff uses Hareton to seek revenge on Hindley. Illiterate and quick-tempered, Hareton is easily humiliated, but shows a good heart and a deep desire to improve himself. At the end of the novel, he marries young Catherine.

Linton Heathcliff

Heathcliff's son by Isabella. Weak, sniveling, demanding, and constantly ill, Linton is raised in London by his mother and does not meet his father until he is thirteen years old, when he goes to live with him after his mother's death. Heathcliff despises Linton, treats him contemptuously, and, by forcing him to marry the young Catherine, uses him to cement his control over Thrushcross Grange after Edgar Linton's death. Linton himself dies not long after this marriage.

Hindley Earnshaw

Catherine's brother, and Mr. Earnshaw's son. Hindley resents it when Heathcliff is brought to live at Wuthering Heights. After his father dies and he inherits the estate, Hindley begins to abuse the young Heathcliff, terminating his education and forcing him to work in the fields. When Hindley's wife Frances dies shortly after giving birth to their son Hareton, he lapses into alcoholism and dissipation.

Isabella Linton

Edgar Linton's sister, who falls in love with Heathcliff and marries him. She sees Heathcliff as a romantic figure, like a character in a novel. Ultimately, she ruins her life by falling in love with him. He never returns her feelings and treats her as a mere tool in his quest for revenge on the Linton family.

Mr. Earnshaw

Catherine and Hindley's father. Mr. Earnshaw adopts Heathcliff and brings him to live at Wuthering Heights. Mr. Earnshaw prefers Heathcliff to Hindley but nevertheless bequeaths Wuthering Heights to Hindley when he dies.

Mrs. Earnshaw

Catherine and Hindley's mother, who neither likes nor trusts the orphan Heathcliff when he is brought to live at her house. She dies shortly after Heathcliff's arrival at Wuthering Heights.

Joseph

A long-winded, fanatically religious, elderly servant at Wuthering Heights. Joseph is strange, stubborn, and unkind, and he speaks with a thick Yorkshire accent.

Frances Earnshaw

Hindley's simpering, silly wife, who treats Heathcliff cruelly. She dies shortly after giving birth to Hareton.

Mr. Linton

Edgar and Isabella's father and the proprietor of Thrushcross Grange when Heathcliff and Catherine are children. An established member of the gentry, he raises his son and daughter to be well-mannered young people.

Mrs. Linton

Mr. Linton's somewhat snobbish wife, who does not like Heathcliff to be allowed near her children, Edgar and Isabella. She teaches Catherine to act like a gentle-woman, thereby instilling her with social ambitions.

Zillah

The housekeeper at Wuthering Heights during the latter stages of the narrative.

Mr. Green

Edgar Linton's lawyer, who arrives too late to hear Edgar's final instruction to change his will, which would have prevented Heathcliff from obtaining control over Thrushcross Grange.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Heathcliff

Wuthering Heights centers on the story of Heathcliff. The first paragraph of the novel provides a vivid physical picture of him, as Lockwood describes how his "black eyes" withdraw suspiciously under his brows at Lockwood's approach. Nelly's story begins with his introduction into the Earnshaw family, his vengeful machinations drive the entire plot, and his death ends the book. The desire to understand him and his motivations has kept countless readers engaged in the novel.

Heathcliff, however, defies being understood, and it is difficult for readers to resist seeing what they want or expect to see in him. The novel teases the reader with the possibility that Heathcliff is something other than what he seems—that his cruelty is merely an expression of his frustrated love for Catherine, or that his sinister behaviors serve to conceal the heart of a romantic hero. We expect Heathcliff's character to contain such a hidden virtue because he resembles a hero in a romance novel. Traditionally, romance novel heroes appear dangerous, brooding, and cold at first, only later to emerge as fiercely devoted and loving. One hundred years before Emily Brontë wrote Wuthering Heights, the notion that "a reformed rake makes the best husband" was already a cliché of romantic literature, and romance novels center around the same cliché to this day.

However, Heathcliff does not reform, and his malevolence proves so great and long-lasting that it cannot be adequately explained even as a desire for revenge against Hindley, Catherine, Edgar, etc. As he himself points out, his abuse of Isabella is purely sadistic, as he amuses himself by seeing how much abuse she can take and still come cringing back for more. Critic Joyce Carol Oates argues that Emily Brontë does the same thing to the reader that Heathcliff does to Isabella, testing to see how many

times the reader can be shocked by Heathcliff's gratuitous violence and still, masochistically, insist on seeing him as a romantic hero.

It is significant that Heathcliff begins his life as a homeless orphan on the streets of Liverpool. When Brontë composed her book, in the 1840s, the English economy was severely depressed, and the conditions of the factory workers in industrial areas like Liverpool were so appalling that the upper and middle classes feared violent revolt. Thus, many of the more affluent members of society beheld these workers with a mixture of sympathy and fear. In literature, the smoky, threatening, miserable factory-towns were often represented in religious terms, and compared to hell. The poet William Blake, writing near the turn of the nineteenth century, speaks of England's "dark Satanic Mills." Heathcliff, of course, is frequently compared to a demon by the other characters in the book.

Considering this historical context, Heathcliff seems to embody the anxieties that the book's upper- and middle-class audience had about the working classes. The reader may easily sympathize with him when he is powerless, as a child tyrannized by Hindley Earnshaw, but he becomes a villain when he acquires power and returns to Wuthering Heights with money and the trappings of a gentleman. This corresponds with the ambivalence the upper classes felt toward the lower classes—the upper classes had charitable impulses toward lower-class citizens when they were miserable, but feared the prospect of the lower classes trying to escape their miserable circumstances by acquiring political, social, cultural, or economic power.

Catherine

The location of Catherine's coffin symbolizes the conflict that tears apart her short life. She is not buried in the chapel with the Lintons. Nor is her coffin placed among the tombs of the Earnshaws. Instead, as Nelly describes in Chapter XVI, Catherine is buried "in a corner of the kirkyard, where the wall is so low that heath and bilberry plants have climbed over it from the moor." Moreover, she is buried with Edgar on one side and Heathcliff on the other, suggesting her conflicted loyalties. Her actions are driven in part by her social ambitions, which initially are awakened during her first stay at the Lintons', and which eventually compel her to marry Edgar. However, she is also motivated by impulses that prompt her to violate social conventions—to love Heathcliff, throw temper tantrums, and run around on the moor.

Isabella Linton

Catherine's sister-in-law and Heathcliff's wife, who was born in the same year that Catherine was—serves as Catherine's foil. The two women's parallel positions allow us to see their differences with greater clarity. Catherine represents wild nature, in both her high, lively spirits and her occasional cruelty, whereas Isabella represents culture and civilization, both in her refinement and in her weakness.

Edgar

Just as Isabella Linton serves as Catherine's foil, Edgar Linton serves as Heathcliff's. Edgar is born and raised a gentleman. He is graceful, well-mannered, and instilled with civilized virtues. These qualities cause Catherine to choose Edgar over Heathcliff and thus to initiate the contention between the men. Nevertheless, Edgar's gentlemanly qualities ultimately prove useless in his ensuing rivalry with Heathcliff. Edgar is particularly humiliated by his confrontation with Heathcliff in Chapter XI, in which he openly shows his fear of fighting Heathcliff. Catherine, having witnessed the scene, taunts him, saying, "Heathcliff would as soon lift a finger at you as the king would march his army against a colony

of mice.” As the reader can see from the earliest descriptions of Edgar as a spoiled child, his refinement is tied to his helplessness and impotence.

Charlotte Brontë, in her preface to the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights*, refers to Edgar as “an example of constancy and tenderness,” and goes on to suggest that her sister Emily was using Edgar to point out that such characteristics constitute true virtues in all human beings, and not just in women, as society tended to believe. However, Charlotte’s reading seems influenced by her own feminist agenda. Edgar’s inability to counter Heathcliff’s vengeance, and his naïve belief on his deathbed in his daughter’s safety and happiness, make him a weak, if sympathetic, character.

THEMES

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

The Destructiveness of a Love That Never Changes

Catherine and Heathcliff’s passion for one another seems to be the center of *Wuthering Heights*, given that it is stronger and more lasting than any other emotion displayed in the novel, and that it is the source of most of the major conflicts that structure the novel’s plot. As she tells Catherine and Heathcliff’s story, Nelly criticizes both of them harshly, condemning their passion as immoral, but this passion is obviously one of the most compelling and memorable aspects of the book. It is not easy to decide whether Brontë intends the reader to condemn these lovers as blameworthy or to idealize them as romantic heroes whose love transcends social norms and conventional morality. The book is actually structured around two parallel love stories, the first half of the novel centering on the love between Catherine and Heathcliff, while the less dramatic second half features the developing love between young Catherine and Hareton. In contrast to the first, the latter tale ends happily, restoring peace and order to *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange. The differences between the two love stories contribute to the reader’s understanding of why each ends the way it does.

The most important feature of young Catherine and Hareton’s love story is that it involves growth and change. Early in the novel Hareton seems irredeemably brutal, savage, and illiterate, but over time he becomes a loyal friend to young Catherine and learns to read. When young Catherine first meets Hareton he seems completely alien to her world, yet her attitude also evolves from contempt to love. Catherine and Heathcliff’s love, on the other hand, is rooted in their childhood and is marked by the refusal to change. In choosing to marry Edgar, Catherine seeks a more genteel life, but she refuses to adapt to her role as wife, either by sacrificing Heathcliff or embracing Edgar. In Chapter XII she suggests to Nelly that the years since she was twelve years old and her father died have been like a blank to her, and she longs to return to the moors of her childhood. Heathcliff, for his part, possesses a seemingly superhuman ability to maintain the same attitude and to nurse the same grudges over many years.

Moreover, Catherine and Heathcliff’s love is based on their shared perception that they are identical. Catherine declares, famously, “I am Heathcliff,” while Heathcliff, upon Catherine’s death, wails that he cannot live without his “soul,” meaning Catherine. Their love denies difference, and is strangely asexual. The two do not kiss in dark corners or arrange secret trysts, as adulterers do. Given that Catherine and Heathcliff’s love is based upon their refusal to change over time or embrace difference in others, it is fitting that the disastrous problems of their generation are overcome not by some climactic reversal, but simply by the inexorable passage of time, and the rise of a new and distinct generation. Ultimately, *Wuthering Heights* presents a vision of life as a process of change, and celebrates this process over and against the romantic intensity of its principal characters.

The Precariousness of Social Class

As members of the gentry, the Earnshaws and the Lintons occupy a somewhat precarious place within the hierarchy of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century British society. At the top of British society was the royalty, followed by the aristocracy, then by the gentry, and then by the lower classes, who made up the vast majority of the population. Although the gentry, or upper middle class, possessed servants and often large estates, they held a nonetheless fragile social position. The social status of aristocrats was a formal and settled matter, because aristocrats had official titles. Members of the gentry, however, held no titles, and their status was thus subject to change. A man might see himself as a gentleman but find, to his embarrassment, that his neighbors did not share this view. A discussion of whether or not a man was really a gentleman would consider such questions as how much land he owned, how many tenants and servants he had, how he spoke, whether he kept horses and a carriage, and whether his money came from land or “trade”—gentlemen scorned banking and commercial activities.

Considerations of class status often crucially inform the characters’ motivations in *Wuthering Heights*. Catherine’s decision to marry Edgar so that she will be “the greatest woman of the neighborhood” is only the most obvious example. The Lintons are relatively firm in their gentry status but nonetheless take great pains to prove this status through their behaviors. The Earnshaws, on the other hand, rest on much shakier ground socially. They do not have a carriage, they have less land, and their house, as Lockwood remarks with great puzzlement, resembles that of a “homely, northern farmer” and not that of a gentleman. The shifting nature of social status is demonstrated most strikingly in Heathcliff’s trajectory from homeless waif to young gentleman-by-adoption to common laborer to gentleman again (although the status-conscious Lockwood remarks that Heathcliff is only a gentleman in “dress and manners”).

Motifs

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, and literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text’s major themes.

Doubles

Brontë organizes her novel by arranging its elements—characters, places, and themes—into pairs. Catherine and Heathcliff are closely matched in many ways, and see themselves as identical. Catherine’s character is divided into two warring sides: the side that wants Edgar and the side that wants Heathcliff. Catherine and young Catherine are both remarkably similar and strikingly different. The two houses, *Wuthering Heights* and *Thrushcross Grange*, represent opposing worlds and values. The novel has not one but two distinctly different narrators, Nelly and Mr. Lockwood. The relation between such paired elements is usually quite complicated, with the members of each pair being neither exactly alike nor diametrically opposed. For instance, the Lintons and the Earnshaws may at first seem to represent opposing sets of values, but, by the end of the novel, so many intermarriages have taken place that one can no longer distinguish between the two families.

Repetition

Repetition is another tactic Brontë employs in organizing *Wuthering Heights*. It seems that nothing ever ends in the world of this novel. Instead, time seems to run in cycles, and the horrors of the past repeat themselves in the present. The way that the names of the characters are recycled, so that the names of the characters of the younger generation seem only to be rescrablings of the names of their parents, leads the reader to consider how plot elements also repeat themselves. For instance,

Heathcliff's degradation of Hareton repeats Hindley's degradation of Heathcliff. Also, the young Catherine's mockery of Joseph's earnest evangelical zealotry repeats her mother's. Even Heathcliff's second try at opening Catherine's grave repeats his first.

The Conflict between Nature and Culture

In *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë constantly plays nature and culture against each other. Nature is represented by the Earnshaw family, and by Catherine and Heathcliff in particular. These characters are governed by their passions, not by reflection or ideals of civility. Correspondingly, the house where they live—*Wuthering Heights*—comes to symbolize a similar wildness. On the other hand, *Thrushcross Grange* and the Linton family represent culture, refinement, convention, and cultivation. When, in Chapter VI, Catherine is bitten by the Lintons' dog and brought into *Thrushcross Grange*, the two sides are brought onto the collision course that structures the majority of the novel's plot. At the time of that first meeting between the Linton and Earnshaw households, chaos has already begun to erupt at *Wuthering Heights*, where Hindley's cruelty and injustice reign, whereas all seems to be fine and peaceful at *Thrushcross Grange*. However, the influence of *Wuthering Heights* soon proves overpowering, and the inhabitants of *Thrushcross Grange* are drawn into Catherine, Hindley, and Heathcliff's drama. Thus the reader almost may interpret *Wuthering Heights*'s impact on the Linton family as an allegory for the corruption of culture by nature, creating a curious reversal of the more traditional story of the corruption of nature by culture. However, Brontë tells her story in such a way as to prevent our interest and sympathy from straying too far from the wilder characters, and often portrays the more civilized characters as despicably weak and silly. This method of characterization prevents the novel from flattening out into a simple privileging of culture over nature, or vice versa. Thus in the end the reader must acknowledge that the novel is no mere allegory.

CHAPTER BY CHAPTER SUMMARY

Chapter One

Summary

But Mr. Heathcliff forms a singular contrast to his abode and style of living. He is a dark-skinned gypsy in aspect, in dress and manners a gentleman. .

Writing in his diary in 1801, Lockwood describes his first days as a tenant at *Thrushcross Grange*, an isolated manor in thinly populated Yorkshire. Shortly after arriving at the *Grange*, he pays a visit to his landlord, Mr. Heathcliff, a surly, dark man living in a manor called *Wuthering Heights*—"wuthering" being a local adjective used to describe the fierce and wild winds that blow during storms on the moors. During the visit, Heathcliff seems not to trust Lockwood, and leaves him alone in a room with a group of snarling dogs. Lockwood is saved from the hounds by a ruddy-cheeked housekeeper. When Heathcliff returns, Lockwood is angry, but eventually warms toward his taciturn host, and—though he hardly feels that he has been welcomed at *Wuthering Heights*—he volunteers to visit again the next day.

Chapter Two

Summary

On a chilly afternoon not long after his first visit, Lockwood plans to lounge before the fire in his study, but he finds a servant dustily sweeping out the fireplace there, so instead he makes the four-mile walk to *Wuthering Heights*, arriving just as a light snow begins to fall. He knocks, but no one lets him in, and Joseph, an old servant who speaks with a thick Yorkshire accent, calls out from the barn that Heathcliff is not in the house. Eventually a rough-looking young man comes to let him in, and Lockwood goes into a sitting room where he finds a beautiful girl seated beside a fire. Lockwood assumes she is Heathcliff's wife. He tries to make conversation, but she responds rudely. When Heathcliff arrives, he corrects

Lockwood: the young woman is his daughter-in-law. Lockwood then assumes that the young man who let him in must be Heathcliff's son. Heathcliff corrects him again. The young man, Hareton Earnshaw, is not his son, and the girl is the widow of Heathcliff's dead son.

The snowfall becomes a blizzard, and when Lockwood is ready to leave, he is forced to ask for a guide back to Thrushcross Grange. No one will help him. He takes a lantern and says that he will find his own way, promising to return with the lantern in the morning. Joseph, seeing him make his way through the snow, assumes that he is stealing the lantern, and looses the dogs on him. Pinned down by the dogs, Lockwood grows furious, and begins cursing the inhabitants of the house. His anger brings on a nosebleed, and he is forced to stay at Wuthering Heights. The housekeeper, Zillah, leads him to bed.

Chapter Three

Summary

Catherine Earnshaw . . . Catherine Heathcliff . . . Catherine Linton. . . . a glare of white letters started from the dark, as vivid as spectres—the air swarmed with Catherines. . . .

Zillah leads Lockwood to an out-of-the-way room from which Heathcliff has forbidden all visitors. He notices that someone has scratched words into the paint on the ledge by the bed. Three names are inscribed there repeatedly: Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Linton, and Catherine Heathcliff. He also finds a diary written approximately twenty-five years earlier. Apparently the diary belonged to Catherine Earnshaw, and Lockwood reads an entry that describes a day at Wuthering Heights shortly after her father died, during which her cruel older brother Hindley forces her and Heathcliff to endure Joseph's tedious sermons. Catherine and Heathcliff seem to have been very close, and Hindley seems to have hated Heathcliff. The diary even describes Hindley telling his wife, Frances, to pull the boy's hair.

Lockwood falls asleep and enters into a pair of nightmares. He awakes from the second when the cone from a fir branch begins tapping on his window. Still half asleep, he attempts to break off the branch by forcing his hand through the window glass. But instead of a branch, he finds a ghostly hand, which seizes his own, and a voice, sobbing the name Catherine Linton, demands to be let in. To free himself, Lockwood rubs the ghost's wrist on the broken glass until blood covers the bed sheets. The ghost releases him, and Lockwood tries to cover the hole in the window with a pile of books. But the books begin to fall, and he cries out in terror. Heathcliff rushes into the room, and Lockwood cries out that the room is haunted. Heathcliff curses him, but, as Lockwood flees from the room, Heathcliff cries out to Catherine, begging her to return. There are no signs that the ghost was ever at the window. In the morning, Heathcliff treats his daughter-in-law cruelly. He later escorts Lockwood home, where the servants, who believed their master dead in the storm, receive him with joy. Lockwood, however, retreats into his study to escape human company.

Chapter Four

Summary

Having rejected human contact, the day before, Lockwood now becomes lonely. When his housekeeper, Nelly Dean, brings him his supper, he bids her sit and tell him the history of the people at Wuthering Heights. She attempts to clarify the family relationships, explaining that the young Catherine whom Lockwood met at Wuthering Heights is the daughter of the Catherine who was Nelly's first mistress at Wuthering Heights, and that Hareton Earnshaw is young Catherine's cousin, the nephew of the first Catherine. The first Catherine was the daughter of Mr. Earnshaw, the late proprietor of Wuthering Heights. Now young Catherine is the last of the Lintons, and Hareton is the

last of the Earnshaws. Nelly says that she grew up as a servant at Wuthering Heights, alongside Catherine and her brother Hindley, Mr. Earnshaw's children.

Nelly continues by telling the story of her early years at Wuthering Heights. When Catherine and Hindley are young children, Mr. Earnshaw takes a trip to Liverpool and returns home with a scraggly orphan whom the Earnshaws christen "Heathcliff." Mr. Earnshaw announces that Heathcliff will be raised as a member of the family. Both Catherine and Hindley resent Heathcliff at first, but Catherine quickly grows to love him. Catherine and Heathcliff become inseparable, and Hindley, who continues to treat Heathcliff cruelly, falls into disfavor with his family. Mrs. Earnshaw continues to distrust Heathcliff, but Mr. Earnshaw comes to love the boy more than his own son. When Mrs. Earnshaw dies only two years after Heathcliff's arrival at Wuthering Heights, Hindley is essentially left without an ally.

Chapter Five Summary

Time passes, and Mr. Earnshaw grows frail and weak. Disgusted by the conflict between Heathcliff and Hindley, he sends Hindley away to college. Joseph's fanatical religious beliefs appeal to Mr. Earnshaw as he nears the end of his life, and the old servant exerts more and more sway over his master. Soon, however, Mr. Earnshaw dies, and it is now Catherine and Heathcliff who turn to religion for comfort. They discuss the idea of heaven while awaiting the return of Hindley, who will now be master of Wuthering Heights.

Analysis of Chapters One - Five

The strange, deliberately confusing opening chapters of *Wuthering Heights* serve as Brontë's introduction to the world of the novel and to the complex relationships among the characters, as well as to the peculiar style of narration through which the story will be told. One of the most important aspects of the novel is its second- and third-hand manner of narration. Nothing is ever related simply from the perspective of a single participant. Instead, the story is told through entries in Lockwood's diary, but Lockwood does not participate in the events he records. The vast majority of the novel represents Lockwood's written recollections of what he has learned from the testaments of others, whether he is transcribing what he recalls of Catherine's diary entry or recording his conversations with Nelly Dean. Because of the distance that this imposes between the reader and the story itself, it is extremely important to remember that nothing in the book is written from the perspective of an unbiased narrator, and it is often necessary to read between the lines in order to understand events. The reader can immediately question Lockwood's reliability as a conveyer of facts. A vain and somewhat shallow man, he frequently makes amusing mistakes—he assumes, for instance, that Heathcliff is a gentleman with a house full of servants, even though it is apparent to the reader that Heathcliff is a rough and cruel man with a house full of dogs. Nelly Dean is more knowledgeable about events, as she has participated in many of them first hand, yet while this makes her more trustworthy in some ways, it also makes her more biased in others. She frequently glosses over her own role in the story's developments, particularly when she has behaved badly. Later in the novel, she describes how she took the young Linton to live with his cruel father after the death of his mother. She lies to the boy on the journey, telling him that his father is a kind man, and, after his horrible meeting with Heathcliff, she tries to sneak out when he is not paying attention. He notices her and begs her not to leave him with Heathcliff. She ignores his entreaties, however, and tells Lockwood that she simply had "no excuse for lingering longer." Nelly is generally a dependable source of information, but moments such as this one—and there are many—remind the reader that the story is told by a fallible human being.

Apart from establishing the manner and quality of narration, the most important function of these early chapters is to pique the reader's curiosity about the strange histories of the denizens of Wuthering Heights. The family relationships, including multiple Earnshaws, Catherines, Lintons, and Heathcliffs, seem at this point in the novel to intertwine with baffling complexity, and the characters, because Lockwood first encounters them late in their story, seem full of mysterious passions and ancient, hidden resentments. Even the setting of this history seems to possess its own secrets. Wild and desolate, full of eerie winds and forgotten corners, the land has borne witness to its residents' nighttime walks, forbidden meetings, and graveyard visits. Indeed, the mysteries of the land cannot be separated from the mysteries of the characters, and the physical landscape of the novel is often used to reflect the mental and emotional landscapes of those who live there.

While the odd characters and wild setting contribute to a certain sense of mystery, this sense is most definitively established by the appearance of Catherine Earnshaw's ghost. Yet while Lockwood's account of the event greatly influences the feel of the novel, and while his subsequent account of it to Heathcliff provokes a reaction that may offer us clues as to his relationship with the late Catherine, the reader may still conclude that the ghost is a figment of Lockwood's imagination. Because Lockwood has proven himself flighty and emotional, and he is still half asleep when he encounters the ghost, one could infer that he never actually sees a ghost, but simply has an intense vision in the midst of his dream. It seems likely, however, that Emily Brontë would have intended the ghost to seem real to her readers: such a supernatural phenomenon would certainly be in keeping with the Gothic tone pervading the rest of the novel. Moreover, Heathcliff refers to Catherine's ghost several times during the course of the novel. Clearly he concurs with Lockwood in believing that she haunts Wuthering Heights. Thus the ghost, whether objectively "real" or not, attests to the way the characters remain haunted by a troubling and turbulent past.

Chapter VI

Summary

Hindley and his new wife, a simpering, silly woman named Frances, return to Wuthering Heights in time for Mr. Earnshaw's funeral. Hindley immediately begins to take his revenge on Heathcliff, declaring that Heathcliff no longer will be allowed an education and instead will spend his days working in the fields like a common laborer. But, for the most part, Catherine and Heathcliff are able to escape Hindley's notice, and when Heathcliff is free from his responsibilities they go off onto the moors together to play.

One evening, when Heathcliff and Catherine disappear, Hindley orders that the doors be bolted and that the children not be allowed into the house. Despite his charge, Nelly waits for them, and receives a shock when Heathcliff returns alone. He tells her that he and Catherine made the trip to Thrushcross Grange to spy on and tease Edgar and Isabella Linton, Mr. Linton's children. Before they could succeed in their mission, Skulker, the Lintons' guard dog, took them by surprise and chased them, biting Catherine's ankle. Unable to return home, Catherine was taken inside Thrushcross Grange by a servant. However, the Lintons, repelled by Heathcliff's rough appearance, forbade her playmate to stay with her. The following day, Mr. Linton pays a visit to Wuthering Heights to explain matters to Hindley and upbraids the young man for his mismanagement of Catherine. After Mr. Linton leaves, the humiliated Hindley furiously tells Heathcliff that he may have no further contact with Catherine.

Chapter Seven

Summary

Catherine spends five weeks recuperating at the Grange. Mrs. Linton determines to transform the girl into a young lady and spends her time educating Catherine in manners and social graces. Catherine returns to Wuthering Heights at Christmastime, wearing a lovely dress. Hindley says that Heathcliff may greet Catherine “like the other servants,” and, when he does so, she says he is dirty in comparison with the Linton children, to whom she has grown accustomed. Heathcliff’s feelings are wounded, and he storms out of the room, declaring that he will be as dirty as he likes. The Linton children come for dinner at Wuthering Heights the next day. Nelly helps Heathcliff to wash himself and put on suitable clothes after the boy declares his intention to be “good,” but Mrs. Linton has allowed Edgar and Isabella to attend under the condition that Heathcliff be kept away from them. Accordingly, Hindley orders that Heathcliff be locked in the attic until the end of dinner. Before the boy can be locked away, however, Edgar makes a comment about Heathcliff’s hair, and Heathcliff angrily flings hot applesauce in his face. Catherine clearly appears unhappy with Hindley’s treatment of Heathcliff, and after dinner she goes up to see him. Nelly frees the boy and gives him some supper in the kitchen. Heathcliff confides to Nelly that he intends to seek revenge on Hindley.

At this point, Nelly interrupts her narrative and rises to go, remarking that the night is growing late. Lockwood says that he intends to sleep late the next day and wishes to hear the rest of her story now. He urges her to continue in minute detail.

Chapter Eight

Summary

Nelly skips ahead a bit in her story, to the summer of 1778, several months after the Lintons’ visit and twenty-three years before Lockwood’s arrival at the Grange. Frances gives birth to a baby boy, Hareton, but she dies not long afterwards, the strain of childbirth having aggravated her chronic consumption. Hindley assigns Nelly the task of raising the baby, as he takes no interest in the child. Miserable at Frances’s death, Hindley begins to drink excessively and behaves abusively toward his servants—especially toward Heathcliff, who takes great pleasure in Hindley’s steady decline. Catherine continues to spend time with Edgar Linton, and she behaves like a proper lady while with him. However, when she is with Heathcliff, she acts as she always has. One afternoon, when Hindley is out of the house, Heathcliff declares that he will stay home from the fields and spend the day with Catherine. She tells him ruefully that Edgar and Isabella are planning to visit. When Heathcliff confronts her about the amount of time she spends with Edgar, she retorts that Heathcliff is ignorant and dull. At that moment, Edgar enters—without Isabella—and Heathcliff storms away.

Catherine asks Nelly to leave the room, but Nelly refuses, having been instructed by Hindley to act as Catherine’s chaperone in Edgar’s presence. Catherine pinches her and then slaps her, and when Hareton begins to cry, she shakes him. Edgar, appalled at Catherine’s behavior, attempts to restore order, and Catherine boxes his ears. Edgar is unable to cope with Catherine’s unladylike temper and hurries out of the house. On his way out, however, he catches a last glimpse of Catherine through the window; lured by her beauty, he comes back inside. Nelly now leaves them alone and interrupts them only to tell them that Hindley has arrived home, drunk and in a foul temper. When she next enters the room, she can tell that Catherine and Edgar have confessed their love for one another. Edgar hurries home to avoid Hindley, and Catherine goes to her chamber. Nelly goes to hide little Hareton and takes the shot out of Hindley’s gun, which he is fond of playing with in his drunken rages.

Chapter Nine

Summary

Nelly is in the midst of hiding Hareton from Hindley when Hindley bolts in and seizes the boy. Stumbling drunkenly, he accidentally drops Hareton over the banister. Heathcliff is there to catch him at the bottom of the stairs.

Later that evening, Catherine seeks out Nelly in the kitchen and confides to her that Edgar has asked her to marry him, and that she has accepted. Unnoticed by the two women, Heathcliff listens to their conversation. Heathcliff hears Catherine tell Nelly that she cannot marry him because Hindley has cast him down so low; to marry him now would be to degrade herself. Heathcliff withdraws in a rage of shame, humiliation, and despair, and thus is not present to hear Catherine say that she loves him more deeply than anything else in the world. She says that she and Heathcliff are such kindred spirits that they are essentially the same person. Nonetheless, she insists, she must marry Edgar Linton instead.

That night, Heathcliff runs away from Wuthering Heights. Catherine spends the night outdoors in the rain, sobbing and searching for Heathcliff. She catches a fever, and soon she nears death. The Lintons take her to Thrushcross Grange to recuperate, and Catherine recovers. However, both Mr. and Mrs. Linton become infected and soon die. Three years later, Catherine and Edgar marry. Nelly transfers to Thrushcross Grange to serve Catherine, leaving Hareton in the care of his drunken father and Joseph, the only servant now remaining at Wuthering Heights.

Noticing the clock, Nelly again interrupts her narrative, saying that it is half past one, and that she must get some sleep. Lockwood notes in his diary—the same book in which he has set down Nelly's story— that he, too, will go to bed now.

Analysis of Chapters Six – Nine

In this section, Nelly brings to conclusion the story of Heathcliff and Catherine's childhood, with Heathcliff leaving Wuthering Heights the night Catherine decides to marry Edgar Linton. In the climactic scene in which Catherine discusses with Nelly her decision to marry Edgar, Catherine describes the conflict between her love for Heathcliff and her love for Edgar. She says that she loves Edgar because he is handsome, rich, and graceful, and because he would make her the greatest lady in the region. However, she also states that she loves Heathcliff as though they shared the same soul, and that she knows in her heart that she has no business marrying Edgar. Nevertheless, her desire for a genteel and socially prominent lifestyle guides her decision-making: she would marry Heathcliff, if Hindley had not cast him down so low.

Heathcliff's emotional turmoil is due in part to his ambiguous class status. He begins life as a lower-class orphan, but is raised to the status of a gentleman's son when Mr. Earnshaw adopts him. He suffers another reversal in status when Hindley forces him to work as a servant in the very same household where he once enjoyed a life of luxury. The other characters, including the Lintons and, to an extent, Catherine—all upper-class themselves—prove complicit in this obliteration of Heathcliff's hopes. Inevitably, the unbridgeable gap in Catherine's and Heathcliff's social positions renders their fervent romance unrealizable on any practical level.

Nevertheless, the passion between the two lovers remains rooted in their hearts, impervious to external contingencies. The text consistently treats the love between Catherine and Heathcliff as an incontestable fact of nature. Nothing can alter or lessen it, and the lovers know this. Heathcliff and Catherine know that no matter how they hurt each other, they can be sure of never losing their shared passion and ultimate mutual loyalty. Catherine can decide to marry Edgar, certain that this outward

act will have no effect on her and Heathcliff's inner feelings for one another. Similarly, it is in the knowledge of their passion's durability that Heathcliff later undertakes his cruel revenge.

Chapter Ten

Summary

Lockwood becomes sick after his traumatic experience at Wuthering Heights, and—as he writes in his diary—spends four weeks in misery. Heathcliff pays him a visit, and afterward Lockwood summons Nelly Dean and demands to know the rest of her story. How did Heathcliff, the oppressed and reviled outcast, make his fortune and acquire both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange? Nelly says that she does not know how Heathcliff spent the three years that he was away and that it was at this time that he apparently acquired his wealth. But she agrees to continue with her tale.

About six months after Catherine's marriage to Edgar Linton, Heathcliff returns home, surprising Nelly at Thrushcross Grange. When he comes indoors, Catherine becomes almost giddy with happiness at the sight of him, and their obvious affection for one another makes Edgar uncomfortable and jealous. Heathcliff has grown into a polished, gentlemanly, and physically impressive man, though some hint of savagery remains in his eyes. He announces that Hindley has invited him to stay at Wuthering Heights. This surprises both Catherine and Nelly, but Heathcliff tells Catherine that when he sought Nelly at Wuthering Heights earlier that day, he came across Hindley in a card game with his rough friends. Heathcliff joined them in the gambling, and, because his reckless bids seemed to bespeak a great wealth, Hindley excitedly invited him to return.

Catherine and Isabella begin to visit Wuthering Heights quite often, and Heathcliff returns the favor by calling at the Grange. Isabella begins to fall in love with Heathcliff, who, despite his obvious love for Catherine, does nothing to discourage her sister-in-law's affections. Nelly suspects that he harbors wicked and vengeful motives, and vows to watch him closely.

Chapter Eleven

Summary

Nelly travels to Wuthering Heights to talk with Hindley, but instead she finds Hareton, who throws stones at her and curses. Nelly learns from Hareton that Heathcliff has taught the boy to swear at his father, Hindley, and has forbidden the curate, who offered to educate Hareton, to set foot on the property. Heathcliff appears, and Nelly flees.

The next day, at the Grange, Nelly observes Heathcliff embracing Isabella. In the kitchen, Catherine demands that Heathcliff tell her his true feelings about Isabella. She offers to convince Edgar to permit the marriage if Heathcliff truly loves the woman. Heathcliff scorns this idea, however, declaring that Catherine has wronged him by marrying Edgar, and that he intends to exact revenge. Nelly informs Edgar of the encounter occurring between Catherine and Heathcliff in the kitchen, and Edgar storms in and orders Heathcliff off of his property. When Heathcliff refuses to leave, Edgar summons his servants for help. However, Catherine locks herself and the two men inside the kitchen and throws the key into the fire, forcing Edgar to confront Heathcliff without the help of additional men. Overcome with fear and shame, Edgar hides his face. Still, Catherine's taunts goad Edgar into striking Heathcliff a blow to the throat, after which Edgar exits through the garden. In terror of the larger and stronger Heathcliff, Edgar hurries to find help, and Heathcliff, deciding that he cannot fight three armed servants, departs.

In a rage, Edgar declares that Catherine must choose between Heathcliff and himself. Catherine refuses to speak to him, locking herself in a room and refusing to eat. Two days pass in this way, and Edgar warns Isabella that if she pursues Heathcliff, he will cast her out of the Linton family.

Chapter Twelve

Summary

At last, Catherine permits the servants to bring her food. Hysterical, she believes that she is dying, and cannot understand why Edgar has not come to her. She rants about her childhood with Heathcliff on the moors, and speaks obsessively about death. Nelly, worried that her mistress will catch a chill, refuses to open the window. Catherine manages to stumble to the window and force it open; from the window, she believes she can see Wuthering Heights. Catherine says that even though she will die, her spirit will never be at rest until she can be with Heathcliff. Edgar arrives and is shocked to find Catherine in such a weak condition. Nelly goes to fetch a doctor. The doctor professes himself cautiously optimistic for a successful recovery.

That very night, Isabella and Heathcliff elope. Furious, Edgar declares that Isabella is now his sister only in name. Yet he does not disown her, saying instead that she has disowned him.

Chapter Thirteen

Summary

Edgar and Nelly spend two months nursing Catherine through her illness, and, though she never entirely recovers, she learns that she has become pregnant. Six weeks after Isabella and Heathcliff's marriage, Isabella sends a letter to Edgar begging his forgiveness. When Edgar ignores her pleas, she sends a letter to Nelly, describing her horrible experiences at Wuthering Heights. In her letter, she explains that Hindley, Joseph, and Hareton have all treated her cruelly, and that Heathcliff declares that since he cannot punish Edgar for causing Catherine's illness, he will punish Isabella in his place. Isabella also tells Nelly that Hindley has developed a mad obsession with Heathcliff, who has assumed the position of power at Wuthering Heights. Hindley hopes that somehow he will be able to obtain Heathcliff's vast fortune for himself, and he has shown Isabella the weapon with which he hopes to kill Heathcliff—a pistol with a knife attached to its barrel. Isabella says that she has made a terrible mistake, and she begs Nelly to visit her at Wuthering Heights, where she and Heathcliff are now living.

Chapter Fourteen

Summary

Nelly grants Isabella's request and goes to the manor, but Edgar continues to spurn his sister's appeals for forgiveness. When Nelly arrives, Heathcliff presses her for news of Catherine and asks if he may come see her. Nelly refuses to allow him to come to the Grange, however, and, enraged, Heathcliff threatens that he will hold Nelly a prisoner at Wuthering Heights and go alone. Terrified by that possibility, Nelly agrees to carry a letter from Heathcliff to Catherine.

Analysis of Chapters Ten – Fourteen

Heathcliff, who seemed an almost superhuman figure even at his most oppressed, emerges in these chapters as a demonically charismatic, powerful, and villainous man, capable of extreme cruelties. Tortured by the depth of his love for Catherine, by his sense that she has betrayed him, and by his hatred of Hindley and the Linton family for making him seem unworthy of her, Heathcliff dedicates himself to an elaborate plan for revenge. The execution of this plan occupies much of the rest of the novel.

Though Heathcliff's first reunion with Catherine seems joyful, Nelly is right to fear his return, for he quickly exhibits his ardent malice, first through his treatment of the pathetic wretch Hindley, and then through his merciless abuse of the innocent Isabella. But though his destructive cruelty makes him the villain of the book, Heathcliff never loses his status as a sympathetic character. Although one can hardly condone his actions, it is difficult not to commiserate with him.

This ambiguity in Heathcliff's character has sparked much discussion among critics, who debate whether his role in the novel is that of hero or villain. In some sense, he fulfills both roles. He certainly behaves cruelly and harmfully toward many of the other characters; yet, because he does so out of the pain of his love for Catherine, the reader remains just as attuned to Heathcliff's own misery as to the misery he causes in others. The love between Catherine and Heathcliff constitutes the center of *Wuthering Heights* both thematically and emotionally, and, if one is to respond at all to the novel, it is difficult to resist sympathizing with that love. Correspondingly, as a participant in this love story, Heathcliff never becomes an entirely inhuman or incomprehensible character to the reader, no matter how sadistically he behaves.

Many scholars believe that Brontë intended her novel to be a moralizing, cautionary tale about the dangers of loving too deeply. If this is true, then one might argue that the book, in creating such charismatic main characters as Heathcliff and Catherine, defeats its own purpose. For instance, Isabella, though innocent and morally pure, never exerts the same power over the reader's imagination as Heathcliff and Catherine. As a result, it becomes unnervingly easy to overlook Isabella's suffering, even though her suffering would otherwise function as one of the novel's strongest pieces of evidence in its condemnation of obsessive passions. Similarly, Heathcliff suffers the ill treatment of characters who seem his intellectual and spiritual inferiors; thus when he seeks revenge on a brute such as Hindley, the reader secretly wishes him success. As a result, once again, Brontë's strong characterization of Heathcliff undermines any possible intent she might have had to warn her readers about the perils of an overly intense love.

In addition to exploring the character of Heathcliff as a grown man, this section casts some light on the character of Nelly Dean as a narrator. Her narrative has always shown certain biases, and throughout the book she harshly criticizes Catherine's behavior, calling her spoiled, proud, arrogant, thoughtless, selfish, naïve, and cruel. It is true that Catherine can be each of those things, but it also seems clear that Nelly is jealous of Catherine's beauty, wealth, and social station. It is important to remember that Nelly is not much older than Catherine and grew up serving her.

Some readers have speculated that Nelly's jealousy may also arise from a passion for Edgar Linton—whom she praises extravagantly throughout the novel—or even for Heathcliff, whom she often heatedly denounces. This section of the book offers some evidence for the latter view. For instance, when Catherine teasingly tells Heathcliff in Chapter X that Isabella has fallen in love with him, she does so by saying, "Heathcliff, I'm proud to show you, at last, somebody that dotes on you more than myself. I expect you to feel flattered." She then says, "Nay, it's not Nelly; don't look at her!" This comment suggests that Heathcliff looks at Nelly after Catherine's first statement. Perhaps in the past he has suspected Nelly of having feelings for him. Certainly, a reader might interpret Catherine's words in a different manner. Nevertheless, Catherine's comments substantiate the idea that Nelly's feelings for the other characters in the novel are deeper and more complicated than she reveals to Lockwood.

Chapter Fifteen

Summary

Four days after visiting *Wuthering Heights*, Nelly waits for Edgar to leave for church, and then takes the opportunity to give Heathcliff's letter to the ailing Catherine. Catherine has become so weak that she cannot even hold the letter, but nearly as soon as Nelly tells her that it is from Heathcliff, Heathcliff himself enters the room. Heathcliff and Catherine enter into a dramatic, highly charged conversation during which Catherine claims that both Heathcliff and Edgar have broken her heart. She says that she cannot bear dying while Heathcliff remains alive, and that she never wants to be apart from him. She begs his forgiveness. He says that he can forgive her for the pain she has caused him, but that he can

never forgive her for the pain that she has caused herself—he adds that she has killed herself through her behavior, and that he could never forgive her murderer.

The church service over, Edgar reaches the house, but Catherine pleads with Heathcliff not to leave. He promises to stay by her side. As Edgar hurries toward Catherine's room, Nelly screams, and Catherine collapses. Heathcliff catches her, and forces her into Edgar's arms as he enters the room, demanding that Edgar see to Catherine's needs before acting on his anger. Nelly hurries Heathcliff out of the room, promising to send him word about Catherine's condition in the morning. Heathcliff swears that he will stay in the garden, wanting to be near her.

Chapter Sixteen

Summary

At midnight, Catherine gives birth to young Catherine two months prematurely. She dies within two hours of giving birth. Nelly solemnly declares that her soul has gone home to God. When Nelly goes to tell Heathcliff what has happened, he seems to know already. He curses Catherine for the pain she has caused him, and pleads with her spirit to haunt him for the rest of his life. She may take any form, he says, and even drive him mad—as long as she stays with him. Edgar keeps a vigil over Catherine's body. At night, Heathcliff lurks in the garden outside. At one point, Edgar leaves, and Nelly permits Heathcliff a moment alone with the body. Afterwards, Nelly finds that he has opened the locket around her neck and replaced a lock of Edgar's hair with a lock of his own. Nelly twines Edgar's lock around Heathcliff's, and leaves them both in the locket.

Hindley is invited to Catherine's funeral but does not come, while Isabella is not invited at all. To the surprise of the villagers, Catherine is not buried in the Linton tomb, nor by the graves of her relatives. Instead, Edgar orders that she be buried in a corner of the churchyard overlooking the moors that she so loved. Nelly tells Lockwood that now, years later, Edgar lies buried beside her.

Chapter Seventeen

Summary

Not long after the funeral, Isabella arrives at Thrushcross Grange, out of breath and laughing hysterically. She has come at a time when she knows Edgar will be asleep, to ask Nelly for help. Isabella reports that the conflict between Hindley and Heathcliff has become violent. Hindley, she says, tried to stay sober for Catherine's funeral, but could not bear to go. Instead, he began drinking heavily that morning. While Heathcliff kept a vigil over Catherine's grave, Hindley locked him out of the house and told Isabella that he planned to shoot him. Isabella warned Heathcliff about Hindley's plan, and when Hindley aimed his knife-gun out the window at Heathcliff, the latter grabbed it and fired it back at its owner's wrist, wounding Hindley. Heathcliff forced his way in the window, then beat Hindley severely. The next morning, Isabella reminded Hindley what Heathcliff had done to him the previous night. Hindley grew enraged, and the men began fighting again. Isabella fled to Thrushcross Grange, seeking a permanent refuge from Wuthering Heights.

Soon after her visit to Nelly, Isabella leaves for London, where she gives birth to Heathcliff's son, Linton. Isabella corresponds with Nelly throughout the following twelve years. Heathcliff learns of his wife's whereabouts, and of his son's existence, but he doesn't pursue either of them. Isabella dies when Linton is twelve years old.

Six months after Catherine's death, Hindley dies. Nelly returns to Wuthering Heights to see to the funeral arrangements, and to bring young Hareton back to Thrushcross Grange. She is shocked to learn that Hindley died deeply in debt, and that Heathcliff, who had lent Hindley large amounts of money to supply his gambling addiction, now owns Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff does not allow Hareton to

return to Thrushcross Grange with Nelly, saying that he plans to raise him on his own. He also intimates that he plans to recover his son Linton at some point in the future. And so, Nelly tells Lockwood, Hareton, who should have lived as the finest gentleman in the area, is reduced to working for his keep at Wuthering Heights. A common, uneducated servant, he remains friendless and without hope.

Chapter Eighteen

Summary

Young Catherine grows up at Thrushcross Grange, and by the time she is thirteen she is a beautiful, intelligent girl, but often strong-willed and temperamental. Her father, mindful of the tormented history of the neighboring manor, does not allow young Catherine off the grounds of Thrushcross Grange, and she grows up without any knowledge of Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff, or Hareton. She longs to visit the fairy caves at Penistone Crag, but Edgar refuses her request. He receives word one day, however, that Isabella is dying, and he hurries to London to take charge of young Linton. While he is gone, Catherine is left in Nelly's care, and she is able to escape the confines of the Grange.

She travels toward Penistone Crag but stops at Wuthering Heights, where she meets Hareton and takes an instant liking to him. She and Hareton spend a delightful day playing near the crags. Nelly arrives in pursuit of her charge, and tries to hurry her back to Thrushcross Grange. But Catherine refuses to go. Nelly tells Catherine that Hareton is not the son of the master of Wuthering Heights—a fact that makes the girl contemptuous of him—but she also reveals that he is Catherine's cousin. Catherine tries to deny this possibility, saying that her cousin is in London, that her father has gone to retrieve him there. Nelly, however, explains that a person can have more than one cousin. At last, Nelly prevails upon her to leave, and Catherine agrees not to mention the incident to her father, who might well terminate Nelly's employment in rage if he knew she had let Catherine learn of Wuthering Heights.

Chapter Nineteen

Summary

Edgar brings young Linton to the Grange, and Catherine is disappointed to find her cousin a pale, weak, whiny young man. Not long after he arrives, Joseph appears, saying that Heathcliff is determined to take possession of his son. Edgar promises that he will bring Linton to Wuthering Heights the following day.

Chapter Twenty

Summary

Nelly receives orders to escort the boy to the Heights in the morning. On the way, she tries to comfort Linton by telling him reassuring lies about his father. When they arrive, however, Heathcliff does not even pretend to love his son—he calls Linton's mother a slut, and he says that Linton is his property. Linton pleads with Nelly not to leave him with such a monster, but Nelly mounts her horse and rides away hurriedly.

Analysis of Chapters Fifteen – Twenty

Wuthering Heights is, in many ways, a novel of juxtaposed pairs: Catherine's two great loves for Heathcliff and Edgar; the two ancient manors of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange; the two families, the Earnshaws and the Lintons; Heathcliff's conflicting passions of love and hate. Additionally, the structure of the novel divides the story into two contrasting halves. The first deals with the generation of characters represented by Catherine, Heathcliff, Hindley, Isabella, and Edgar, and the second deals with their children—young Catherine, Linton, and Hareton. Many of the same themes and ideas occur in the second half of the novel as in the first half, but they develop quite differently.

While the first half ends on a note of doom and despair with Catherine's death and Heathcliff's gradual descent into evil, the novel as a whole ends on a note of hope, peace, and joy, with young Catherine's proposed marriage to Hareton Earnshaw.

In the first of the chapters in this section, we witness the event that marks the dividing line between the two halves of the novel: Catherine's death. The episodes surrounding her passing—her dramatic illness, her confrontation with Heathcliff, Heathcliff's conflict with Edgar, and Heathcliff's curse upon her soul to walk the earth after her death (contrasting immediately with Nelly's gentle claim that she at last rests in heaven) rank among the most intense scenes in the book. In fact, many readers view the second half of the novel, in which Catherine figures only as a memory, as a sort of anticlimax. While the latter chapters may never reach the emotional heights of the earlier ones, however, they remain crucial to the thematic development of the novel, as well as to its structural symmetry.

Young Catherine grows up sheltered at Thrushcross Grange, learning only in piecemeal fashion about the existence of Heathcliff and his reign at Wuthering Heights. Unbeknownst to her, Heathcliff's legal claim on the Grange (through his marriage to Isabella) may jeopardize her own eventual claim on it. Edgar Linton, however, painfully aware of this threat, searches for a way to prevent Heathcliff from taking the property. These events underscore the symbolic importance of the two houses. Wuthering Heights represents wildness, ungoverned passion, extremity, and doom. The fiery behavior of the characters associated with this house—Hindley, Catherine, and Heathcliff—underscores such connotations. By contrast, Thrushcross Grange represents restraint, social grace, civility, gentility, and aristocracy—qualities emphasized by the more mannered behavior of the Lintons who live there. The names of the two houses also bear out the contrast. While the adjective "wuthering" refers to violent storms, the thrush is a bird known for its melodious song, as well as being a symbol of Christian piety. In addition, whereas "Heights" evoke raw and imposing cliffs, "Grange" refers to a domestic site, a farm—especially that of a gentleman farmer. The concepts juxtaposed in the contrast of the two estates come into further conflict in Catherine's inability to choose between Edgar and Heathcliff. While she is attracted to Edgar's social grace, her feelings for Heathcliff reach heights of wild passion. As the second generation of main characters matures, its members emerge as combinations of their parents' characteristics, blending together qualities that had been opposed in the older generation. Thus young Catherine is impetuous and headstrong like her mother, but tempered by the gentling influence of her father. Linton, on the other hand, represents the worst of both of his parents, behaving in an imperious and demanding manner like Heathcliff, but also remaining fragile and simpering like Isabella. Hareton appears as a second Heathcliff, rough and unpolished, but possessed of a strength of character that refuses to be suppressed, despite Heathcliff's attempts to stunt his development.

Chapter Twenty-One

Summary

Young Catherine despairs over her cousin's sudden departure from Thrushcross Grange. Nelly tries to keep up with the news of young Linton, quizzing the housekeeper at Wuthering Heights whenever she meets her in the nearby town of Gimmerton. She learns that Heathcliff loathes his sniveling son and cannot bear to be alone with him. She also learns that Linton continues to be frail and sickly.

One day, when young Catherine is sixteen, she and Nelly are out bird-hunting on the moors. Nelly loses sight of Catherine for a moment, then finds her conversing with Heathcliff and Hareton. Catherine says that she thinks she has met Hareton before and asks if Heathcliff is his father. Heathcliff says no, but that he does have a son back at the house. He invites Catherine and Nelly to pay a visit to Wuthering Heights to see the boy. Nelly, always suspicious of Heathcliff, disapproves of the idea, but Catherine, not realizing that this son is her cousin Linton, is curious to meet the boy, and Nelly cannot keep her

from going. At Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff tells Nelly that he hopes Catherine and his son will be married someday. For their part, the cousins do not recognize one another—they have changed much in three years—and because Linton is too sickly and self-pitying to show Catherine around the farm, she leaves with Hareton instead, all the while mocking the latter's illiteracy and lack of education. Heathcliff forces Linton to go after them.

At Thrushcross Grange the next day, Catherine tells her father about her visit and demands to know why he has kept her relatives secret. Edgar tries to explain, and eventually Catherine comes to understand his disdain for Heathcliff. But although Edgar gently implores her not to have any contact with Linton, Catherine cannot resist exchanging letters with the boy covertly. Nelly discovers the correspondence, and, much to Catherine's dismay, destroys Linton's letters to her. She then sends a note to Wuthering Heights requesting that Linton desist in his part of the correspondence. However, she does not alert Edgar to the young people's relationship.

Chapter Twenty-two

Summary

Edgar's health begins to fail, and, as a result, he spends less time with Catherine. Nelly attempts in vain to fill the companionship role formerly played by the girl's father. One winter day, during a walk in the garden, Catherine climbs the wall and stretches for some fruit on a tree. In the process, her hat falls off her head and down to the other side of the wall. Nelly allows Catherine to climb down the wall to retrieve it, but, once on the other side, Catherine is unable to get back over the wall by herself. Nelly looks for the key to the gate, and suddenly Heathcliff appears, telling Catherine that it was cruel of her to break off her correspondence with Linton. He accuses her of toying with his son's affections, and he urges her to visit Linton while he is away the following week. He claims that Linton may be dying of a broken heart. Catherine believes him and convinces Nelly to take her to Wuthering Heights the next morning. Nelly assents in the hope that the sight of Linton will expose Heathcliff's lie.

Summary: Chapter XXIII

The following morning, Catherine and Nelly ride in the rain to Wuthering Heights, where they find Linton engaged in his customary whining. He speaks to Catherine about the possibility of marriage. Annoyed, Catherine shoves his chair in a fit of temper. Linton begins to cough and says that Catherine has assaulted him and has injured his already fragile health. He fills Catherine with guilt and requests that she nurse him back to health herself. After Nelly and Catherine ride home, Nelly discovers that she has caught a cold from traveling in the rain. Catherine nurses both her father and Nelly during the day, but, by night, she begins traveling in secret to be with Linton.

Summary: Chapter XXIV

After Nelly recuperates, she notices Catherine's suspicious behavior and quickly discovers where she has been spending her evenings. Catherine tells Nelly the story of her visits to Wuthering Heights, including one incident in which Hareton proves to her that he can read a name inscribed above the manor's entrance: it is his own name, carved by a distant ancestor who shared it. But Catherine asks if he can read the date—1500—and he must confess that he cannot. Catherine calls him a dunce. Enraged, Hareton interrupts her visit with Linton, bullying the weak young man and forcing him to go upstairs. In a later moment of contrition, he attempts to apologize for his behavior, but Catherine angrily ignores him and goes home. When she returns to Wuthering Heights a few days later, Linton blames her for his humiliation. She leaves, but she returns two days later to tell him that she will never visit him again. Distressed, Linton asks for her forgiveness. After she has heard Catherine's story, Nelly

reveals the girl's secret to Edgar. Edgar immediately forbids her from visiting Linton again, but he agrees to invite Linton to come to Thrushcross Grange.

Summary: Chapter XXV

At this point, Nelly interrupts her story to explain to Lockwood its chronology: the events that she has just described happened the previous winter, only a little over a year ago. Nelly says that the previous year, it never crossed her mind that she would entertain a stranger by telling him the story. But she wonders how long he will remain a stranger, speculating that he might fall in love with the beautiful young Catherine. Lockwood confesses that he might, but says that he doubts his love would ever be requited. Besides, he says, these moors are not his home; he must return soon to the outside world. Still, he remains enraptured by the story, and he urges Nelly to continue. She obliges.

Young Catherine agrees to abide by her father's wishes and stops sneaking out to visit Linton. But Linton never visits the Grange, either—he is very frail, as Nelly reminds Edgar. Edgar worries over his daughter's happiness, and over the future of his estate. He says that if marrying Linton would make Catherine happy, he would allow it, despite the fact that it would ensure that Heathcliff would inherit Thrushcross Grange. Edgar's health continues to fail, as does Linton's. Eventually, Edgar agrees to allow Catherine to meet Linton, not at Wuthering Heights, but on the moors, not realizing that the young man is as close to death as he is himself.

Summary: Chapter XXVI

When Catherine and Nelly ride to their meeting with Linton, they do not find him in the agreed-upon spot—he has not ventured far from Wuthering Heights. He appears frail and weak, but he insists that his health is improving. The youth seems nervous and looks fearfully over his shoulder at the house. At the end of their visit, Catherine agrees to meet Linton again on the following Thursday. On the way home, Catherine and Nelly worry over Linton's health, but they decide to wait until their next meeting before coming to any conclusions.

Analysis: Chapters XXI–XXVI

As Nelly tells Lockwood, her story has now nearly caught up with the present. Hareton was born in the summer of 1778; the first Catherine married Edgar in 1783 (a fact that can be extrapolated from Nelly's claim in 1801 to have been living at Thrushcross Grange for about eighteen years); and young Catherine was born in 1784, first met her cousins in 1797, and carried on her romance with Linton in the winter of 1800–1801, just over a year ago (see "Chronology"). The realization that Nelly has been narrating recent events should come as something of a surprise to the reader, to whom these events have seemed strange and distant. Now, both the reader and Lockwood realize that the story he has been hearing is not remote history, but bears on the present. Indeed, the events that Lockwood has just heard recounted may partially explain the interactions of the characters at Wuthering Heights when he first visited.

Apart from supplying important chronological information, these chapters largely help to further the generational drama, illustrating the similarities and differences between the first and second generations of main characters. Young Catherine's taunting of Hareton for his ignorance directly parallels the first Catherine's taunting of Heathcliff, just as Heathcliff's oppression of Hareton parallels Hindley's oppression of Heathcliff. In addition, these chapters demonstrate that Heathcliff accomplishes his revenge methodically, punishing his dead contemporaries by manipulating and bullying their children. By this point in the novel, revenge has supplanted love as the main force bearing upon Heathcliff's behavior. His acts take on a sense of urgency as he hurries to have young Catherine

married to Linton before the boy dies. This plot evidences the way that Heathcliff makes a pawn of everyone—even his own son. Indeed, Heathcliff may despise Linton more than any other character in the novel. Worried that Linton will not outlive Edgar, Heathcliff hastens to secure his claim on Thrushcross Grange by uniting his son with Edgar's daughter.

Summary: Chapter XXVII

During the next week, Edgar's health grows consistently worse. Worried for her father, young Catherine only reluctantly rides to her meeting with Linton on the moors. Nelly comes with her. The cousins talk, and Linton seems even more nervous than usual. He reveals that his father is forcing him to court Catherine, and that he is terrified of what Heathcliff will do if Catherine rejects him. Heathcliff arrives on the scene and questions Nelly about Edgar's health. He says that he worries that Linton will die before Edgar. Heathcliff asks Catherine and Nelly to walk back to Wuthering Heights, and, though Catherine reminds him that she is forbidden to do so by her father, she agrees because she is afraid of Heathcliff. Heathcliff seems full of rage toward Linton, who is practically weeping with terror. Once he has Nelly and Catherine inside Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff locks them inside the house and refuses to allow them to leave until Catherine has married Linton. He allows Catherine to leave the bedroom in which they are locked, but he keeps Nelly imprisoned there for five days. During this time, the only soul Nelly sees is Hareton, who is ordered to guard and attend her.

Summary: Chapter XXVIII

At last, the housekeeper, Zillah, frees Nelly from her imprisonment, telling her that the villagers in Gimmerton have spread the news that both Nelly and Catherine have been lost in Blackhorse Marsh. Nelly searches through the house until she finds Linton, who tells her that Catherine is locked away in another room. The two are now husband and wife. Linton gloats over this development, claiming that all of Catherine's possessions are now his, as Edgar is dying quickly. Fearing discovery by Heathcliff, Nelly hurries back to Thrushcross Grange. Here, she tells the dying Edgar that Catherine is safe and will soon be home. She sends a group of men to Wuthering Heights to retrieve Catherine, but they fail in their task. Edgar plans to change his will, placing Catherine's inheritance in the hands of trustees and thus keeping it from Heathcliff. He summons Mr. Green, his lawyer, to the Grange. Nelly hears someone arriving and believes it to be Mr. Green, but it is Catherine. Thus Edgar sees his daughter once more before he dies, believing that his daughter is happily married to Linton, and knowing nothing about her desperate circumstances. Shortly after Edgar's death, Mr. Green arrives, and dismisses all of the servants except Nelly. He tries to have Edgar buried in the chapel, but Nelly insists that he obey Edgar's will, which states that he wishes to be buried in the churchyard next to his wife.

Summary: Chapter XXIX

Heathcliff appears at Thrushcross Grange shortly after the funeral in order to take young Catherine to her new home. He tells her that he has punished Linton for having helped her escape, and says that she will have to work for her keep at Wuthering Heights. Catherine angrily retorts that she and Linton are in fact in love, despite Linton's bad-temperedness, while Heathcliff has no one to love him. Thus no matter how miserable Heathcliff makes the young couple, Catherine says, they shall have the revenge of knowing that his cruelty arises from his greater misery.

As Catherine is packing her things, Nelly asks Heathcliff for Zillah's position at Wuthering Heights, desperate to remain with Catherine. But Heathcliff interrupts Nelly to tell her his astonishing deed of the day before. While the sexton was digging Edgar's grave, Heathcliff had him remove the earth from his beloved Catherine's, and he opened her coffin to gaze upon her face, which he says is still recognizable. Heathcliff asserts that Catherine will not crumble to dust until he joins her in the ground,

at which point they will share the transformation together. He says that he forced the sexton to remove one whole side of her coffin—the side not facing Edgar—and that when he dies, he will require in his will that the corresponding side of his coffin be removed, so that he and Catherine might mingle in the earth. Nelly chastises him for disturbing the dead, and Heathcliff tells her that Catherine’s ghost has tormented him every night for the last eighteen years. He explains that he has felt her presence without being able to reach her. As they leave, Catherine asks Nelly to visit her soon, but Heathcliff tells Nelly that she must never call at Wuthering Heights, noting that if he wishes to see her he will come to Thrushcross Grange.

Summary: Chapter XXX

Nelly has not seen Catherine since she left, and her only source of information about her is Zillah. Zillah says that Heathcliff refused to allow anyone at Wuthering Heights to be kind or helpful to Catherine after her arrival, and that Catherine tended to Linton by herself until the day he died. Since Linton’s death, Catherine has remained aloof from Zillah and from Hareton, with whom she has been in constant conflict. Desperate to help her, Nelly tells Lockwood that she has taken a cottage herself and wants to bring Catherine to live with her, but she knows that Heathcliff will not allow it. The only thing that could save Catherine would be another marriage, says Nelly, but she does not have the power to bring about such a thing.

Writing in his diary—where all of Nelly’s story has been recorded—Lockwood says that this is the end of Nelly’s story, and that he is finally recovering from his illness. He writes that he plans to ride out to Wuthering Heights and to inform Heathcliff that he will spend the next six months in London, and that Heathcliff may look for another tenant for the Grange. He emphatically states that he has no desire to spend another winter in this strange company.

Analysis: Chapters XXVII–XXX

As Edgar Linton grows weak and dies, Heathcliff’s cruelty rages unchecked. Without fear of repercussion, he abuses the other characters mercilessly, kidnapping Nelly and young Catherine. With no one left who is strong enough to counter Heathcliff, the course of events in these chapters seems inevitable. Heathcliff easily succeeds in marrying his son to young Catherine, and in inheriting Thrushcross Grange. However, a new force begins to rise up against the tyrant. Catherine shows a defiant spirit, and she triumphantly declares that the love between her and Linton will save them from misery and make them superior to Heathcliff. This foreshadows her eventual strong-willed rebellion against Heathcliff—and her redemption of her oppressed predecessors through her love for her other cousin, Hareton Earnshaw.

The young Catherine’s manifestation of her mother’s boldness, as well as Heathcliff’s progressing revenge, bring to mind the older Catherine and the defiant marriage to Edgar with which she first sparked Heathcliff’s wrath. Indeed, perhaps because of young Catherine’s behavior, Heathcliff himself seems to become increasingly preoccupied with thoughts of the late Catherine. The horrifying spectacle of Heathcliff uncovering her grave and gazing upon her corpse’s face, as well as his intense concern about the fate of Catherine’s body, testifies to the extreme depth of his obsession. In a sense, Heathcliff’s interest in the decomposition of his beloved is quite in keeping with the nature of their relationship. The text consistently describes their love not only in spiritual terms, but in material ones. Thus Catherine declares in Chapter IX, “Whatever souls are made of, his and mine are the same.” Moreover, the relationship between Heathcliff and Catherine has come to be associated with the soil where it has been conducted; its fate becomes intertwined with that of the earth, as the narrative

repeatedly links both Heathcliff and Catherine to the severe and wild moors, which frequently symbolize the unruly nature of their love.

These chapters give us insight not only into the story's main characters and their relationships, but also into the story's narrator, Nelly Dean. First, Nelly chooses to lie to Edgar about his daughter's condition as Edgar lingers near death, a well-meaning untruth that resembles her earlier lie to Linton, which she told en route to deliver him to Heathcliff. Just as she declared to Linton that his father was kind and generous, she now tells Edgar that his daughter is happily married. Nelly thus shows herself willing to lie and distort the truth in order to spare feelings and ease social situations. Nelly again displays a certain manipulative quality in a statement she makes outside the story, to Lockwood. She tells him that the young Catherine's last hope for salvation would be a second marriage, but that she, Nelly, is powerless to bring about such a union. This remark seems intended to express more than idle wishfulness. As the reader may recall, Nelly insinuates in Chapter XXV that Lockwood might fall in love with Catherine himself. At the time, the comment seemed nothing more than speculation. Yet now the reader can see that Nelly may be pursuing a plot to rescue her former mistress.

Indeed, Nelly's willingness to narrate the story to Lockwood in the first place may stem from this notion of saving Catherine. Nelly paints a far more flattering picture of young Catherine than she does of the girl's mother, even when they exhibit similar traits. Nelly frequently emphasizes young Catherine's beauty, and she may subtly frame her story in a certain way so as to pique Lockwood's interest in the girl. Of course, this is merely one possible interpretation of the text, but again, it is extremely important to consider the motivations and biases of the character who narrates the story. One of the most impressive aspects of Emily Brontë's achievement in *Wuthering Heights* is her ability to include such finely drawn, subtle psychological portraits as that of Nelly Dean—many of whose most fascinating human qualities emerge only when one reads between the lines of her narration.

Summary: Chapter XXXI

Lockwood, true to his word, travels to *Wuthering Heights* to end his tenancy at the Grange. He brings young Catherine a note from Nelly. Hareton first appropriates the note, but when Catherine cries, he gives it back to her. He has been struggling to learn to read and to acquire an education. Meanwhile, Catherine has been starving for books, as Heathcliff confiscated her collection. Catherine mocks Hareton's struggles to learn, angering him, but she admits that she does not want to hinder his education. Still, Hareton feels humiliated, and he throws his books into the fire.

Heathcliff returns, and on entering the house, he notes that Hareton has begun increasingly to resemble his aunt Catherine—so much so that he can hardly bear to see him. Lockwood passes a cheerless meal with Heathcliff and Hareton, and then departs the manor. As he leaves, he considers what a bleak place it is, full of dreary people. He muses further that it would have been like a fairy tale for young Catherine had she fallen in love with him and left *Wuthering Heights* for a more pleasant environment.

Summary: Chapter XXXII

About six months later—Lockwood remained at the Grange until late winter, 1802, and it is now September, 1802—Lockwood writes in his diary that he has traveled again to the vicinity of the moors. There, he tries to pay a visit to Nelly at Thrushcross Grange, but discovers that she has moved back to *Wuthering Heights*. He rides to the manor, where he talks to Nelly and hears the news of the intervening months. Zillah has departed *Wuthering Heights*, and Heathcliff has given the position to Nelly. Catherine has admitted to Nelly that she feels guilty for having mocked Hareton's attempt to

learn to read. One day, Hareton accidentally shoots himself, and is forced to remain indoors to recuperate. At first, he and Catherine quarrel, but they finally make up and agree to get along. To show her good will, Catherine gives Hareton a book, promising to teach him to read and never to mock him again. Nelly says that the two young people have gradually grown to love and trust each other, and that the day they are married will be her proudest day.

Summary: Chapter XXXIII

At breakfast the morning after Catherine gives Hareton the book, she and Heathcliff become embroiled in an argument over her inheritance and her relationship with Hareton. Heathcliff seizes her and nearly strikes her, but, looking into her face, he suddenly lets her go—apparently having seen something in her eyes that reminds him of her mother. Nelly speculates to Lockwood that so many reminders of the dead Catherine seem to have changed Heathcliff. In fact, he has confided to Nelly that he no longer has the desire to carry out his revenge on young Catherine and Hareton.

Summary: Chapter XXXIV

As time passes, Heathcliff becomes more and more solitary and begins to eat less and less, eventually taking only one meal a day. A few days after the incident at breakfast, he spends the entire night out walking, and he returns in a strange, wildly ebullient mood. He tells Nelly that last night he stood on the threshold of hell but now has reached sight of heaven. He refuses all food. He also insists that he be left alone—he wants to have Wuthering Heights to himself, he says. He seems to see an apparition before him, and to communicate with it, though Nelly can see nothing. Heathcliff's behavior becomes increasingly strange; he begins to murmur Catherine's name, and insists that Nelly remember his burial wishes. Soon, Nelly finds him dead. She tells Lockwood that he has since been buried, and that young Catherine and Hareton shall soon marry. They will wed on New Year's Day and move to Thrushcross Grange.

The young lovers now return to the house from outside, and Lockwood feels an overpowering desire to leave. He hurriedly exits through the kitchen, tossing a gold sovereign to Joseph on his way out. He finds his way through the wild moors to the churchyard, where he discovers the graves of Edgar, Catherine, and Heathcliff. Although the villagers claim that they have seen Heathcliff's ghost wandering about in the company of a second spirit, Lockwood wonders how anyone could imagine unquiet slumbers for the persons that lie in such quiet earth.

Analysis: Chapters XXXI–XXXIV

Unlike most Gothic romances, *Wuthering Heights* does not build to an intense, violent climax before its ending; rather, its tension quietly unravels as the inner conflict within Heathcliff gradually dissipates, his love for Catherine eroding his lust for revenge. Although the novel's happy ending is not possible until Heathcliff's death, his influence has become an ever less menacing one in the preceding days, and thus his demise does not constitute a dramatic reversal of the book's trends. As time passes, Heathcliff becomes increasingly obsessed with his dead love, and he finds reminders of her everywhere. He begins conversing with her ghost, and, after his climactic night on the moors—a night that we do not see or hear anything about, because Nelly was not there—a strange cheer comes over him, a happy premonition of his own impending death. Because he rejects all religious notions of the afterlife, Heathcliff does not fear death. Although the text frequently likens him to the Devil, he does not believe in hell, and his forced religious education as a child has caused him to deny the existence of heaven. His lack of religious belief leads him to refuse to allow Nelly to Christianize his death by calling for a priest. Rather, for Heathcliff, the end of life can mean only one thing: the beginning of his reunion with Catherine.

As Heathcliff anticipates a union in the afterlife, young Catherine and Hareton look forward to a shared life. Their love for one another seems not only to secure happiness for the future, but to redeem the miseries of the past. When young Catherine regrets aloud her mockeries of Hareton, she redeems not only her own past sins, but those of her mother, who behaved similarly toward Heathcliff—though without remorse. For his part, Hareton represents a final renewal for the manor of Wuthering Heights. He stands poised to inherit the estate, where his name is carved over the entrance, inscribed there by an earlier Hareton over three centuries before. Hareton's appropriation of the manor will signify the end of one cycle and the beginning of another, his very name marking the entry into a new era for Wuthering Heights. Finally, Catherine and Hareton together, as a unit, represent a resolution of past troubles. Together, they seem to manifest all of the best qualities of their parents and merge the various conflicting aspects of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange into a stronger whole. In essence, they embody the strength and passion of Wuthering Heights without its doomed intensity, and the civility and kindness of Thrushcross Grange without its cowardly snobbishness. Joined through their loving bond, the two estates will constitute a haven of warmth, hope, and joy.

Key Summaries

Title: Wuthering Heights

Author: Emily Brontë

Type of Work: Novel

Genre: Gothic novel (designed to both horrify and fascinate readers with scenes of passion and cruelty; supernatural elements; and a dark, foreboding atmosphere); also realist fiction (incorporates vivid circumstantial detail into a consistently and minutely thought-out plot, dealing mostly with the relationships of the characters to one another)

Language: English (including bits of Yorkshire dialect)

Time and Place Written: In 1846–1847, Emily Brontë wrote Wuthering Heights in the parsonage of the isolated village of Haworth, in Yorkshire.

Date of First Publication: 1847

Narrator: Lockwood, a newcomer to the locale of Wuthering Heights, narrates the entire novel as an entry in his diary. The story that Lockwood records is told to him by Nelly, a servant, and Lockwood writes most of the narrative in her voice, describing how she told it to him. Some parts of Nelly's story are narrated by other characters, such as when Nelly receives a letter from Isabella and recites its contents verbatim.

Point of View: Most of the events of the novel are narrated in Nelly's voice, from Nelly's point of view, focusing only on what Nelly can see and hear, or what she can find out about indirectly. Nelly frequently comments on what the other characters think and feel, and on what their motivations are, but these comments are all based on her own interpretations of the other characters—she is not an omniscient narrator.

Tone: It is not easy to infer the author's attitude toward the events of the novel. The melodramatic quality of the first half of the novel suggests that Brontë views Catherine and Heathcliff's doomed love as a tragedy of lost potential and wasted passion. However, the outcome of the second half of the novel suggests that Brontë is more interested in celebrating the renewal and rebirth brought about by the passage of time, and the rise of a new generation, than she is in mourning Heathcliff and Catherine.

Tense: Both Lockwood's and Nelly's narrations are in the past tense.

Setting (Time): The action of Nelly's story begins in the 1770s; Lockwood leaves Yorkshire in 1802. Setting (Place): All the action of Wuthering Heights takes place in or around two neighboring houses on the Yorkshire moors—Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. Protagonists: Heathcliff, Catherine.

Major Conflicts: Heathcliff's great natural abilities, strength of character, and love for Catherine Earnshaw all enable him to raise himself from humble beginnings to the status of a wealthy gentleman, but his need to revenge himself for Hindley's abuse and Catherine's betrayal leads him into a twisted life of cruelty and hatred; Catherine is torn between her love for Heathcliff and her desire to be a gentlewoman, and her decision to marry the genteel Edgar Linton drags almost all of the novel's characters into conflict with Heathcliff.

Rising Action: Heathcliff's arrival at Wuthering Heights, Hindley's abusive treatment of Heathcliff, and Catherine's first visit to Thrushcross Grange set the major conflicts in motion; once Heathcliff hears Catherine say it would "degrade" her to marry him, the conversation between Nelly and Catherine, which he secretly overhears, drives him to run away and pursue his vengeance.

Climax: Catherine's death is the culmination of the conflict between herself and Heathcliff and removes any possibility that their conflict could be resolved positively; after Catherine's death, Heathcliff merely extends and deepens his drives toward revenge and cruelty.

Falling Action: Heathcliff destroys Isabella and drives her away, takes possession of young Linton, forces Catherine and Linton to marry, inherits Thrushcross Grange, then loses interest in the whole project and dies; Hareton and young Catherine are to be engaged to be married, promising an end to the cycle of revenge.

Themes: The destructiveness of a love that never changes; the precariousness of social class.

Motifs: Doubles, repetition, the conflict between nature and culture.

Symbols: The moors, ghosts.

Foreshadowing: Lockwood's initial visit to Wuthering Heights, in which the mysterious relationships and lurking resentments between the characters create an air of mystery; Lockwood's ghostly nightmares, during the night he spends in Catherine's old bed, prefigure many of the events of the rest of the novel.