

(WUTHERING HEIGHTS)

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CHARACTER SKETCH OF CATHERINE EARNSHAW

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Catherine Earnshaw is a distinctive character in the novel, 'Wuthering Heights' of Emily Bronte. She is more naughty in her childhood than children usually are. Her father does not approve of her ways, and therefore, he is displeased with her. He wants to be a gentle and obedient child behaving as her father desires. But since she does not behave as per his wish, he does not like her. She is wilful and capricious from her very childhood. After her father's death, she becomes a neglected child. Her brother Hindley is selfish and self-absorbed and has little family sense.

Heathcliff is Catherine's constant companion in that state. In his company, she roams over the moors for hours together. There is some affinity of nature between Catherine and Heathcliff. Both are primitive in certain respects and both are creatures of stormy, uncontrollable passions. Love and hatred exist in both with an intensity which is not commonly to be found. Seized with jealousy and hatred Heathcliff ceases to be a civilized man and behaves like a wild beast. Under a bit of temper, Catherine is hardly better than a mad woman. As is the case with primitive persons, she has little control over passions. Owing to this affinity of nature, Catherine regards herself as inseparably united to Heathcliff.

Catherine's marriage with Edgar Linton is more a marriage of convenience than of love. She does not marry Heathcliff in spite of the fact that she loves him deeply because he lacks culture and education and is penniless. He is virtually one of her brothers, and she could marry a domestic servant or a beggar. So, it is for social status and comforts of life that she marries Linton, she is conscious of his drawbacks. He lacks the manly spirit of Heathcliff and is a bit too tearful. She does not like Edgar's passivity and excessive love of comfort. Still she marries him because she wants to settle in life. But she has not forgotten Heathcliff, and has not ceased to love him. She is beside herself with joy when Heathcliff returns to the Heights and comes to see her. She encourages him to repeat his visits. She gives up food and drink and behaving like a "mad woman" shuts herself up in her room."

Catherine is a woman of extreme strong emotion. The intensity of her love for Heathcliff is unique, and equally unique is Heathcliff's love for her. Besides she has a violent temper. She is self-willed and wants always to have her own way. If her wish is checked, she passes into a bit of uncontrollable anger. It is her primitive nature that bears affinity to the primitive nature of Heathcliff. Her doubtful nature is reflected in her seemingly incredible actions.

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