

Ap 12<sup>th</sup> Grade Literature

## The Bronte Sisters

**This may seem as if it a lot of work, but this is an AP class. You have selected to take this class for extra points on GPA, College credit, or a foundation for college English/Humanities. Therefore, it will take extra work on your part to receive what you need to reach this goal.**

Write a research paper examining 3 themes of the novel in your Bronte Novel that you select. (DO NOT SUMMARIZE THE BOOK!!! I have read it. You are arguing and analyzing themes in the novel)

Due the first day of school – Late papers will not be accepted

You will also have a test on both Novels in the first 2 weeks of school

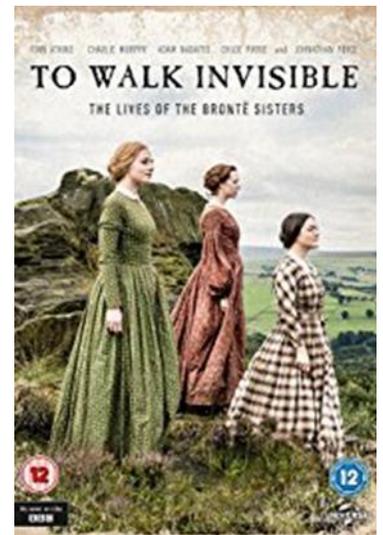
Must be printed and shared on google docs – type Way and you will find me

There are three movies that I would recommend one before you read and the other two after you read each novel.

- Before – To Walk Invisible – (This is their life story and what each struggled with. It also includes their sister Anne and brother)
- After *Wuthering Heights* – Movie starring Ralph Fiennes (There are lots of versions, but this covers the whole book and not half)
- After *Jane Eyre* -Movie starring Michael Fassbender (Several Versions)

Parameters:

- The paper must be between 1300 -1700 words
- Minimum Words is a minimum Grade
- MLA Format (Sample Essay Attached)
  - Double Spaced
  - Times New Roman
  - 12 font
  - Heading
  - Paper numbered
  - See Web Owl Purdue for specific formatting Questions
  - Must have minimum of 6 intext citations
  - Three intext citation must come from the book
  - Three intext citation must come from academic sources
    - Google Scholar brings up academic sources
    - You **MAY NOT USE** Wikipedia, SparkNotes, shmoop, gradesaver, litcharts, 123helpme, bookrags, cliffnotes or any source that has not been peer reviewed (This means blogs or any other random web pages)
    - Acceptable sources are magazine articles from “real” magazines, books, scholar articles
    - Use Citation machine to make your works cited page
- Must have a works Cited page
- Plagiarism is an automatic ZERO – must be 87% original
- HAVE A STRONG THESIS – 30 POINTS OF GRADE



- Use <http://f9.paperrater.com/> to check for grammar issues, plagiarism
  - Check undergraduate, essay, include plagiarism
- This essay will be for multiple grades (Subjective, Objective, Format, Thesis, and Paper rater Grade)
- You will also have a test on these novels within the first week of school
- You will have art projects that will occupy both pieces of Literature. Pick one it may be digital or tangible.
  - You must have a piece of art that illustrates both the differences in the male and female characters in the novel. Half of the devoted to the men and half devoted to the women
  - You must also construct piece of art that depicts a visual idea of Wuthering Heights (the place) or Thornfield Hall (half beginning of novel and another at the end)

### **Brief Family History**

In 1820 Patrick Brontë was appointed as incumbent of Haworth, and arrived in the township with his Cornish-born wife Maria, and their six children. Although Haworth remained the family's home for the rest of their lives, and the moorland setting had a profound influence on the writing of Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë, the family history began not in Yorkshire, but in Ireland, where Patrick, first of ten children, was born in County Down on March 17, 1777.

Driven by ambition, Patrick left his humble origins far behind and was accepted at St. John's College, Cambridge, where his original family name of Brunty was dropped in favour of the more impressive sounding 'Brontë'. The hard work and commitment which had won him a place at Cambridge carried him through several curacies, mainly in the north of England, until he arrived at Haworth. By this time Patrick Brontë was a published author of poetry and fiction, so that his children grew up accustomed to the sight of books carrying their name on the Parsonage shelves.

On September 15, 1821, Mrs Brontë died of cancer, and her unmarried sister Elizabeth Branwell came to take charge of the Parsonage, exchanging her comfortable Penzance home for the harsh climate of a bleak northern township. In 1824 the sisters first ventured into the world outside Haworth to attend the Clergy Daughters' School at Cowan Bridge near Kirkby Lonsdale. The experience, which provided Charlotte with a model for the infamous Lowood School in her novel Jane Eyre, ended in disaster when her eldest sister Maria was sent home in ill-health. Maria died at the Parsonage in May 1825, aged 11. Ten-year-old Elizabeth was returned home shortly after, only to die at Haworth on June 15.

For the next few years the surviving children remained at home, creating a rich imaginary world sparked by their father's gift to Branwell of a set of toy soldiers. Because of the important role education had played in his own life Patrick encouraged his children in their pursuit of knowledge. Any books that came

their way were eagerly devoured, and they produced their own tiny illustrated books, small enough for the toy soldiers, with minuscule handwriting to deter the prying eyes of Parsonage adults.

Their father's lack of a private income meant the sisters needed to acquire accomplishments that would enable them to earn a living as governesses: the only career option socially acceptable for young ladies with no fortune. To this end Charlotte was sent to Miss Wooler's school at Roe Head, Mirfield, in 1831. There she met her lifelong friends Ellen Nussey and Mary Taylor. She eventually returned to the school as a teacher, taking first Emily then Anne as pupils.

Branwell, the only boy of the family, when not receiving lessons from his father, was often left to his own devices. Eventually his brilliant conversation earned him what Elizabeth Gaskell considered 'the undesirable distinction of having his company recommended by the landlord of the Black Bull to any chance traveller who might happen to feel solitary or dull over his liquor.' Branwell took art lessons in Leeds, but a plan to apply to the Royal Academy of Arts in London never came off, and after a short stint as a professional portrait painter in Bradford Branwell was back in Haworth in debt.

In 1839, after one brief attempt as a teacher at Miss Patchett's School at Law Hill, Halifax, where she was reported to have told her pupils she much preferred the school dog to any of them, Emily was also back at Haworth. Although often unhappy, Anne seems to have been best able to cope with life as a governess. Her second post, as governess to the Robinsons at Thorp Green Hall, near York, lasted five years, and her success enabled her to secure the post of tutor to the family's only son for Branwell.

Branwell was proving a cause for concern; an earlier post as tutor, and a position as clerk-in-charge on the Leeds-Manchester railway had both ended ignominiously, and this new situation was to be no exception. Anne decided to leave her employment at Thorp Green and came back to Haworth in June 1845, followed shortly after by Branwell, dismissed in disgrace for 'proceedings bad beyond expression' - allegedly a love affair with his employer's wife.

In an attempt to escape the hated life of a governess the sisters planned to set up a school of their own at the Parsonage. In order to acquire the language skills to attract pupils and secure the school's success, Charlotte and Emily spent a year studying in Brussels, funded by their aunt. It was Aunt Branwell's death in 1842 which brought the sisters back to Haworth. Emily remained at the Parsonage as housekeeper while Charlotte returned to Brussels. Charlotte returned to Haworth permanently in 1844, suffering the pains of unrequited love for her teacher Monsieur Heger. A prospectus was circulated, but pupils could not be found.

The sisters had continued to write, and in 1846 Charlotte, Emily and Anne used part of their Aunt Branwell's legacy to finance the publication of their poems, concealing their true identities under the pseudonyms Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. Poems was published by Aylott and Jones, but despite some favourable reviews, only two copies were sold. Undeterred, the sisters absorbed themselves in their next literary venture, novel writing.

Charlotte's first attempt at writing a novel for publication, *The Professor*, was rejected by several publishing houses before it arrived at the offices of Smith, Elder & Co. Although the firm declined the

novel, their response was sufficiently encouraging for Charlotte to send them her next work, *Jane Eyre*, begun in a dreary Manchester lodging whilst nursing her father back to health after a cataract operation. If *Poems* ranks among the great failures in publishing history, then *Jane Eyre* must count as one of the great successes.

George Smith accepted the book without hesitation, and the novel appeared on October 19, 1847. *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* had already been accepted by the London publisher Thomas Cautley Newby, and appeared as a three-volume set in December 1847. Following the success of *Jane Eyre*, the publication of two further 'Bell' novels fuelled speculation about the gender and identity of the authors.

The publication of Anne's second novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* forced Charlotte and Anne to reveal their identities to George Smith, as the unscrupulous Newby tried to pass off the work of his author as being by the more successful Currer Bell. The two sisters travelled to London in July 1848 and confronted the astonished George Smith in his Cornhill office. Charlotte and Anne, staying quietly at the Chapter Coffee House, resisted Smith's attempts to show them off, but they did find themselves being escorted to the opera, the National Gallery and the Royal Academy of Arts.

Charlotte's pleasure in her new-found success turned out to be shortlived. Branwell, who had increasingly fallen back on alcohol and opium for solace, had been ailing all summer. Tuberculosis was gaining a rapid hold on his abused frame. He died suddenly on Sunday September 24, 1848, aged 31, with the whole family at his deathbed.

While Charlotte was still reeling from the shock of Branwell's death it became apparent that Emily and Anne were also ill. In fact Emily too was dying from tuberculosis, and never left the house again after Branwell's funeral. Refusing to admit she was ill, she dragged herself out of bed every morning and continued to carry out her share of the household chores. Her death came at the age of 30, three months after her brother's, on December 19, 1848. All Charlotte's concern was now directed towards her last surviving sister, who seemed unable to shake off her cold. A lung specialist called in to examine Anne shortly after Emily's death confirmed Charlotte's worst fear, that she was likely to lose this last, much-loved sister.

Anne submitted to all the futile treatments then available, but any benefit proved temporary. In January 1849 Charlotte wrote: 'Anne cannot study now, she can scarcely read; she occupies Emily's chair - she does not get well.' Anne was anxious to try a sea cure, and on May 24, accompanied by Charlotte and Ellen Nussey, she set out for Scarborough, a place she had loved from her summers there with the Robinson family. It was in Scarborough that Anne died, just four days later, on May 28, 1849, aged 29.

To spare her father the anguish of yet another family funeral, Charlotte took the decision to bury her sister in Scarborough, where she was laid to rest in the churchyard of St Mary's, high above the town. Stunned by the tragedies of the previous nine months, Charlotte wrote: 'A year ago - had a prophet warned me how I should stand in June 1849 - how stripped and bereaved I should have thought - this can never be endured'.

Charlotte turned to writing to sustain her through the dark days ahead. Her novel *Shirley*, begun before Branwell's death, was taken up once more. The novel was published in October 1849, and as winter approached, Charlotte fled Haworth to stay with George Smith and his mother in London. Her fame had provided her with a means of entering London's literary society, but by this time, Charlotte found that her sense of loss and the seclusion of her life at Haworth had left her unfitted to enjoy it. During her London visit Charlotte was introduced to her literary idol, the novelist W.M. Thackeray, but the experience proved more of an ordeal than a pleasure.

Over the next few years there were more visits to London, during one of which she sat for her portrait to the society artist George Richmond. As Charlotte's true identity gradually became known her fame brought her a great deal of attention, and in August 1850 she was invited to the summer residence of Sir James and Lady Kay-Shuttleworth above Lake Windermere, where she met the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell. Later in the year Smith, Elder & Co. gained permission from Newby to reprint *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*. Charlotte agreed to edit the work, correcting many errors which had appeared in the first edition, and also making changes of her own. She undertook the melancholy task of sorting through her dead sisters' papers to provide a selection of their poetry, and also wrote an emotional biographical notice of the two authors.

Charlotte's last novel *Villette* was published in 1853. At this time the atmosphere at the Parsonage was emotionally charged: Charlotte had rejected a marriage proposal from her father's curate, the Reverend Arthur Bell Nicholls, and Patrick was incensed by the mere thought of the poor Irishman pursuing his famous daughter. What Charlotte saw as her father's unjust treatment worked in Nicholls' favour, and the couple were eventually married in Haworth Church on June 29, 1854. Though Charlotte had entered the married state with misgivings she found unexpected happiness with Arthur.

The happiness did not last. Charlotte died on the morning of March 31, 1855, in the early stages of pregnancy, just three weeks before her thirty-ninth birthday. There were to be no direct descendants of the Brontës of Haworth. Patrick Brontë lived on at the Parsonage for a further six years, cared for by his son-in-law, and died there on June 7, 1861, at the age of 84.

In 1857, two years after Charlotte's death, her first novel, *The Professor*, was finally published. In the same year Elizabeth Gaskell's moving tribute to her friend, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, also appeared. This biography, along with Charlotte's *Biographical Notice of her sisters*, have become key sources for interpretations of the family, and have ensured that the story of the Brontës' lives continues to exert as much fascination as their fiction.

<https://www.bronte.org.uk/the-brontes-and-haworth/family-history>

## Gender roles in the 19th century

Article by: Kathryn Hughes

Theme: Gender and sexuality

Published: 15 May 2014

During the Victorian period men and women's roles became more sharply defined than at any time in history. In earlier centuries it had been usual for women to work alongside husbands and brothers in the family business. Living 'over the shop' made it easy for women to help out by serving customers or keeping accounts while also attending to their domestic duties. As the 19th century progressed men increasingly commuted to their place of work – the factory, shop or office. Wives, daughters and sisters were left at home all day to oversee the domestic duties that were increasingly carried out by servants. From the 1830s, women started to adopt the crinoline, a huge bell-shaped skirt that made it virtually impossible to clean a grate or sweep the stairs without tumbling over. The two sexes now inhabited what Victorians thought of as 'separate spheres', only coming together at breakfast and again at dinner.

The ideology of Separate Spheres rested on a definition of the 'natural' characteristics of women and men. Women were considered physically weaker yet morally superior to men, which meant that they were best suited to the domestic sphere. Not only was it their job to counterbalance the moral taint of the public sphere in which their husbands laboured all day, they were also preparing the next generation to carry on this way of life. The fact that women had such great influence at home was used as an argument against giving them the vote.

### **Educating women**

Women did, though, require a new kind of education to prepare them for this role of 'Angel in the House'. Rather than attracting a husband through their domestic abilities, middle-class girls were coached in what were known as 'accomplishments'. These would be learned either at boarding school or from a resident governess. In *Pride & Prejudice* the snobbish Caroline Bingley lists the skills required by any young lady who considers herself accomplished:

woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages...; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions...(ch. 8)

As Miss Bingley emphasizes, it was important for a well-educated girl to soften her erudition with a graceful and feminine manner. No-one wanted to be called a 'blue-stocking', the name given to women who had devoted themselves too enthusiastically to intellectual pursuits. Blue-stockings were considered unfeminine and off-putting in the way that they attempted to usurp men's 'natural' intellectual superiority. Some doctors reported that too much study actually had a damaging effect on

the ovaries, turning attractive young women into dried-up prunes. Later in the century, when Oxford and Cambridge opened their doors to women, many families refused to let their clever daughters attend for fear that they would make themselves unmarriageable.

### **Marriage and sexuality**

At the same time, a young girl was not expected to focus too obviously on finding a husband. Being 'forward' in the company of men suggested a worrying sexual appetite. Women were assumed to desire marriage because it allowed them to become mothers rather than to pursue sexual or emotional satisfaction. One doctor, William Acton, famously declared that 'The majority of women (happily for them) are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind'.

Girls usually married in their early to mid-20s. Typically, the groom would be five years older. Not only did this reinforce the 'natural' hierarchy between the sexes, but it also made sound financial sense. A young man needed to be able to show that he earned enough money to support a wife and any future children before the girl's father would give his permission. Some unfortunate couples were obliged to endure an engagement lasting decades before they could afford to marry.

If a young man was particularly pious he might manage to stay chaste until he married. Many respectable young men, however, resorted to using prostitutes. All the major cities had red light districts where it was easy to find a woman whom you could pay for sex. Out-of-towners could consult such volumes as Roger Funnyman's *the Swell's Night Guide through the Metropolis*. Unfortunately, syphilis and other sexual diseases were rife, and many young men unwittingly passed on the infection to their wives. For those unlucky enough to develop full-blown tertiary syphilis, the result was a painful and lingering death, usually in the mid-40s.

Young and not-so-young women had no choice but to stay chaste until marriage. They were not even allowed to speak to men unless there was a married woman present as a chaperone. Higher education or professional work was also out of the question. These emotional frustrations could lead to all sorts of covert rebellion. Young Florence Nightingale longed to be able to do something useful in the world but was expected to stay with her mother and sister, helping supervise the servants. She suffered from hysterical outbursts as a teenager and could not bear to eat with the rest of the family. Elizabeth Barrett, meanwhile, used illness as an excuse to retreat to a room at the top of her father's house and write poetry. In 1847 Charlotte Brontë put strong feelings about women's limited role into the mouth of her heroine Jane Eyre:

women are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. (ch. 12)

This passage was considered so shocking that conservative commentators such as Lady (Elizabeth) Eastlake in a famously scathing review of *Jane Eyre* likened its tone to Chartism, the popular labour movement that advocated universal suffrage.

In her review – which also covered William Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* – Lady Eastlake took a strong dislike to the sexual ambition of *Jane Eyre* and *Becky Sharp*, both of whom end up marrying into the households by which they are employed. The figure of the governess was unsettling, especially in literature, because it drew attention to the fact that not all Victorian women were as sexless as Dr Acton had suggested.

### **Prostitution**

The prostitute was the shadow that haunted the well-run middle-class home. She serviced the needs of the men of the house, not just before marriage but sometimes during it too. Just like the men she slept with, but unlike their wives, the prostitute was a worker in the economic market place, exchanging services for cash. Doctors such as Acton were extremely worried by the 'problem' the prostitute presented, in particular the way she spread sexual disease amongst the male population. For this reason Contagious Diseases Act were instituted from 1860 which allowed, in certain towns, for the forced medical examination of any woman who was suspected of being a sex worker. If she was found to be infected she was placed in a 'Lock Hospital' until she was cured. A reform movement led by Josephine Butler vigorously campaigned for a repeal of the acts, arguing that it was male clients, as much as the prostitutes, who were responsible for the 'problems' associated with prostitution.

Many charities were instituted to help reform prostitutes. Charles Dickens even collaborated with the philanthropist Angela Burdett-Coutts to set up a 'Magdalen House' which would prepare girls for a new life in Australia. Despite these efforts, prostitution continued to flourish for as long as there were bachelors who were prevented by economy from marrying until their late 20s, and working-class women who desperately needed to make money to raise their own children.

<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gender-roles-in-the-19th-century>

## Assignments

You must read the novels *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Bronte and *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte. Each book illustrates different aspects of Victorian society and the roles of the male/female sex. You will choose one book to write an essay over. The subject of this essay must be the themes found within the book. THIS IS NOT A SUMMARY!!!! I have read both books. They rank 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> on my list of favorites. You are analyzing the novels.

### THEMES IN WUTHERING HEIGHTS

The concept that almost every reader of *Wuthering Heights* focuses on is the passion-love of Catherine and Heathcliff, often to the exclusion of every other theme—this despite the fact that other kinds of love are presented and that Catherine dies half way through the novel. The loves of the second generation, the love of Frances and Hindley, and the "susceptible heart" of Lockwood receive scant attention from such readers. But is love the central issue in this novel? Is its motive force perhaps economic? The desire for wealth does motivate Catherine's marriage, which results in Heathcliff's flight and causes him to acquire *Wuthering Heights*, to appropriate *Thrushcross Grange*, and to dispossess *Hareton*. Is it possible that one of the other themes constitutes the center of the novel, or are the other themes secondary to the theme of love? Consider the following themes:

#### **Clash of elemental forces.**

The universe is made up of two opposite forces, storm and calm. *Wuthering Heights* and the *Earnshaws* express the storm; *Thrushcross Grange* and the *Lintons*, the calm. Catherine and Heathcliff are elemental creatures of the storm. This theme is discussed more fully in Later Critical response to *Wuthering Heights*

#### **The clash of economic interests and social classes.**

The novel is set at a time when capitalism and industrialization are changing not only the economy but also the traditional social structure and the relationship of the classes. The yeoman or respectable farming class (*Hareton*) was being destroyed by the economic alliance of the newly-wealthy capitalists (*Heathcliff*) and the traditional power-holding gentry (the *Lintons*). This theme is discussed more fully in *Wuthering Heights* as Socio-Economic Novel.

#### **Striving for transcendence [transcendence: passing beyond a human limit, existing above and independent of this world].**

It is not just love that Catherine and Heathcliff seek but a higher, spiritual existence which is permanent and unchanging, as Catherine makes clear when she compares her love for *Linton* to the seasons and her love for *Heathcliff* to the rocks. The dying Catherine looks forward to achieving this state through death. This theme is discussed more fully in *Religion, Metaphysics, and Mysticism*.

#### **The abusive patriarch and patriarchal family.**

The male heads of household abuse females and males who are weak or powerless. This can be seen in their use of various kinds of imprisonment or confinement, which takes social, emotional, financial, legal, and physical forms. Mr. *Earnshaw* expects Catherine to behave properly and hurtfully rejects her "bad-girl" behavior. *Edgar's* ultimatum that Catherine must make a final choice between him

or Heathcliff restricts Catherine's identity by forcing her to reject an essential part of her nature; with loving selfishness Edgar confines his daughter Cathy to the boundaries of Thrushcross Grange. A vindictive Hindley strips Heathcliff of his position in the family, thereby trapping him in a degraded laboring position. Heathcliff literally incarcerates Isabella (as her husband and legal overseer), and later he imprisons both Cathy and Nellie; also, Cathy is isolated from the rest of the household after her marriage to Linton by Heathcliff's contempt for and hatred of them.

### **Study of childhood and the family.**

The hostility toward and the abuse of children and family members at Wuthering Heights cut across the generations. The savagery of children finds full expression in Hindley's animosity toward Heathcliff and in Heathcliff's plans of vengeance. Wrapped in the self-centeredness of childhood, Heathcliff claims Hindley's horse and uses Mr. Earnshaw's partiality to his own advantage, making no return of affection. Mr. Earnshaw's disapproval of Catherine hardens her and, like many mistreated children, she becomes rebellious. Despite abuse, Catherine and Heathcliff show the strength of children to survive, and abuse at least partly forms the adult characters and behavior of Catherine and Heathcliff and forges an important bond between them.

### **The effects of intense suffering.**

In the passion-driven characters—Catherine, Heathcliff, and Hindley—pain leads them to turn on and to torment others. Inflicting pain provides them some relief; this behavior raises questions about whether they are cruel by nature or are formed by childhood abuse and to what extent they should be held responsible for or blamed for their cruelties. Is all their suffering inflicted by others or by outside forces, like the death of Hindley's wife, or is at least some of their torment self-inflicted, like Heathcliff's holding Catherine responsible for his suffering after her death? Suffering also sears the weak; Isabella and her son Linton become vindictive, and Edgar turns into a self-indulgent, melancholy recluse. The children of love, the degraded Hareton and the imprisoned Cathy, are able to overcome Heathcliff's abuse and to find love and a future with each other. Is John Hagan right that "Wuthering Heights is such a remarkable work partly because it persuades us forcibly to pity victims and victimizers alike"?

### **Self-imposed or self-generated confinement and escape.**

Both Catherine and Heathcliff find their bodies prisons which trap their spirits and prevent the fulfillment of their desires: Catherine yearns to be united with Heathcliff, with a lost childhood freedom, with Nature, and with a spiritual realm; Heathcliff wants possession of and union with Catherine. Confinement also defines the course of Catherine's life: in childhood, she alternates between the constraint of Wuthering Heights and the freedom of the moors; in puberty, she is restricted by her injury to a couch at Thrushcross Grange; finally womanhood and her choice of husband confine her to the gentility of Thrushcross Grange, from which she escapes into the freedom of death.

### **Displacement, dispossession, and exile.**

Heathcliff enters the novel possessed of nothing, is not even given a last or family name, and loses his privileged status after Mr. Earnshaw's death. Heathcliff displaces Hindley in the family structure. Catherine is thrown out of heaven, where she feels displaced, sees herself an exile at Thrushcross Grange at the end, and wanders the moors for twenty years as a ghost. Hareton is dispossessed of property, education, and social status. Isabella cannot return to her beloved

Thrushcross Grange and brother. Linton (Heathcliff's son) is displaced twice after his mother's death, being removed first to Thrushcross Grange and then to Wuthering Heights. Cathy is displaced from her home, Thrushcross Grange.

### **Communication and understanding.**

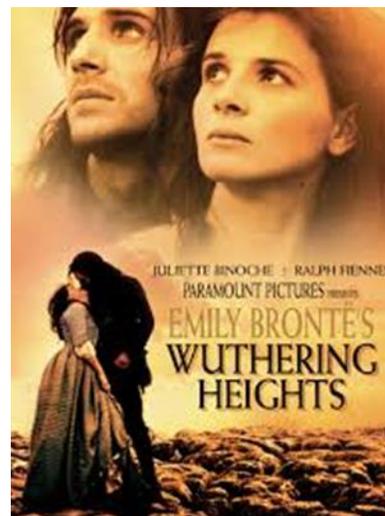
The narrative structure of the novel revolves around communication and understanding; Lockwood is unable to communicate with or understand the relationships at Wuthering Heights, and Nelly enlightens him by communicating the history of the Earnshaws and the Lintons. Trying to return to the Grange in a snowstorm, Lockwood cannot see the stone markers which outline the road. A superstitious Nellie refuses to let Catherine tell her dreams; repeatedly Nellie does not understand what Catherine is talking about or refuses to accept what Catherine is saying, notably after Catherine locks herself in her room. Isabella refuses to heed Catherine's warning and Nellie's advice about Heathcliff. And probably the most serious mis-communication of all is Heathcliff's hearing only that it would degrade Catherine to marry him.

### **The fall.**

Recently a number of critics have seen the story of a fall in this novel, though from what state the characters fall from or to is disputed. Does Catherine fall, in yielding to the comforts and security of Thrushcross Grange? Does Heathcliff fall in his "moral teething" of revenge and pursuit of property? Is Wuthering Heights or Thrushcross Grange the fallen world? Is the fall from heaven to hell or from hell to heaven? Does Catherine really lose the Devil/Heathcliff (this question arises from the assumption that Brontë is a Blakeian subversive and visionary)? The theme of a fall relies heavily on the references to heaven and hell that run through the novel, beginning with Lockwood's explicit reference to Wuthering Heights as a "misanthrope's heaven" and ending with the implied heaven of the ghosts of Heathcliff and Catherine roaming the moors together. Catherine dreams of being expelled from heaven and deliriously sees herself an exile cast out from the "heaven" of Wuthering Heights—a literal as well as a symbolic fall. Heathcliff, like Satan, is relentless in his destructive pursuit of revenge. Inevitably the ideas of expulsion from heaven, exile, and desire for revenge have been connected to Milton's *Paradise Lost* and parallels drawn between Milton's epic and Brontë's novel; Catherine's pain at her change from free child to imprisoned adult is compared to Satan's speech to Beelzebub, "how chang'd from an angel of light to exile in a fiery lake."

Additional themes:

- Love
- Revenge
- Society and Class
- Obsessive nature
- Supernatural
- Nature vs. Civilization
- Prejudice
- Belonging
- Violence
- Judgement vs. Pity
- Good vs. Evil



## Themes in Jane Eyre

### Journey

Several themes are present in "Jane Eyre". One of the most predominant is Jane's journey. Jane's journey is physical as well as mental. The journey is based around her desire to find a sense of belonging anywhere she really can. In chapter eight, Jane is quoted as saying to Helen Burns, "to gain some real affection from you, or Miss Temple, or any other whom I truly love, I would willingly submit to have the bone of my arm broken, or to let a bull toss me, or to stand behind a kicking horse, and let it dash its hoof at my chest".

### Religion

Another theme in Jane Eyre is religion. The three characters that embody religion in this book are Mr. Brocklehurst, Helen Burns, and St. John Rivers. As she encounters each of these characters, Jane finds flaws in all three methods, and rejects their perception of religion.

According to critics, Mr. Brocklehurst illustrates the dangers and hypocrisies that Charlotte Brontë perceived in the nineteenth-century Evangelical movement. Mr. Brocklehurst adopts the rhetoric of Evangelicalism when he claims to be purging his students of pride, but his method of subjecting them to various humiliations, like when he orders that the naturally curly hair of one of Jane's classmates be cut so as to lie straight, is entirely un-Christian. Of course, Brocklehurst's prescriptions are difficult to follow, and his hypocritical support of his own luxuriously wealthy family at the expense of the Lowood students shows Brontë's wariness of the Evangelical movement.

Helen Burns's meek and forbearing mode of Christianity, on the other hand, is too passive for Jane to adopt as her own, although she loves and admires Helen for it.

Many chapters later, St. John Rivers provides another model of Christian behavior. His is a Christianity of ambition, glory, and extreme self-importance. St. John urges Jane to sacrifice her emotional needs for the fulfillment of her moral duty, offering her a way of life that would require her to be disloyal to her own self. [1]

Even though Jane ends up rejecting all three methods of religion, she does not entirely give up on religion. In chapter 26, she prays to "God" for comfort when she learns of Rochester's existing wife, and in chapter 28, she believes that "God" will get her through the time when she has to beg for food.

### Social Class

Another major theme in Jane Eyre is social class. Throughout the novel, Jane is divided into two areas of social class. Jane often speaks out against the prejudice created by the division of class. For example, in Chapter 23 she says to Rochester, "Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong!—I have as much soul as you—and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave

me, as it is now for me to leave you.” However, it is also important to note that nowhere in Jane Eyre are society’s boundaries bent. Ultimately, Jane is only able to marry Rochester as his equal because she has magically come into her own inheritance from her uncle.

**Additional Themes**

- Isolation
- Roles of women (either Jane or the woman in the attic)
- Independence and autonomy
- Morality and Ethics
- Supernatural
- Education
- Appearances
- Transcendental power of love
- Spiritual authenticity
- Plus, more

