

Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights

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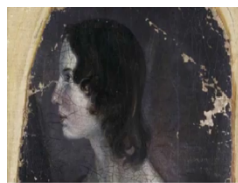
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

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Lecture 21

Introduction to Emily Brontë and Wuthering Heights

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Week 5: Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights

Lecture 5A: Introduction to Emily Brontë and Wuthering Heights



Hello, and welcome to week 5's lectures on Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights. In today's session, I am going to introduce the author Emily Brontë, and her very powerful work of Wuthering Heights.

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Emily Brontë



- “Best-known for her novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847),
- Emily Brontë also wrote over 200 poems
- her sister *Charlotte Brontë* thought had ‘a peculiar music – wild, melancholy, and elevating.’”
- Source: <https://www.bl.uk/people/emily-bronte>



Emily Brontë was best-known for her novel *Wuthering Heights*, which was published in 1847. The year of publication tells you that the novel is a 19th century novel. You can also classify it as a Victorian novel. Emily Brontë also wrote over 200 poems, so she has spent, she had been very prolific in producing poetry and her sister Charlotte Brontë who is also a novelist of the 19th century thought that these poems had “a peculiar music - wild, melancholy and elevating.”

The descriptive terms associated with Emily Brontë’s poetry are interesting because of the tone that they convey to us. Peculiarity is interesting it means, unique, strange, but I am more interested in the word wild. Wild is significant, and so is the word elevating associated with Emily Brontë’s poetry.

If you remember the previous lectures on Gothic fiction and their tropes. We are reminded of the notion of sublime. Sublimity is associated with something wild perhaps a very strange and awe inspiring feature of nature. So, when a human being looks at some wild element there is an elevation of the soul. Melancholy is also interesting, because if you remember that picturesque aspects of castles and destroyed structures also create a pleasing melancholia in the viewer. So these terms are connected to the idea of the Gothic.

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The Brontes



- “Charlotte was born on 21 April 1816, Emily on 30 July 1818 and Anne on 17 January 1820 all in Thornton, Yorkshire.
- They had two sisters, both of whom died in childhood and a brother, Branwell.
- Their father, Patrick, was an Anglican clergyman who was appointed as the rector of the village of Haworth, on the Yorkshire moors. After the death of their mother in 1821, their Aunt Elizabeth came to look after the family.”
- Text and Image Source:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/bronte_sisters.shtml



Now, let us look at the Brontë’s and their timelines. Charlotte Brontë was born on 21st April 1816, Emily Brontë on 30th July 1818, and Anne on 17 January 1820, all in Thornton, Yorkshire. So they belonged to the Yorkshire region, and that is important because in Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights*, the moors of Yorkshire are depicted in all their raw energy in that novel.

They had two sisters, both of whom died in childhood and a brother Branwell. The father, Patrick, was an Anglican clergyman who was appointed as the rector of the village of Haworth, on the Yorkshire moors. After the death of their mother in 1821, their aunt Elizabeth came to look after the family.

So the important detail here on the slide is that death is pretty common in the family. Siblings die young. And the other important detail is that the mother also dies very early. In fact, she died when Emily Brontë was just 3 years old, so the absence of the mother is also an interesting phenomenon, which had a huge impact on all the sisters’ writing, especially in the writing of Emily Brontë.

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Emily Brontë



- "Emily was the fifth of the six children of Patrick Brontë, Irish-born perpetual curate of the remote Yorkshire moorland parish of Haworth.
- After the death of their mother Maria when Emily was three,
- the children were given an inspiring and wide-ranging liberal and academic education by their father and thoroughly instructed in domestic 'order, method and neatness' by their aunt, Elizabeth Branwell."
- Source: <https://www.bl.uk/people/emily-bronte>
- Image source: <https://www.historyextra.com/period/victorian/the-brontes-at-war-how-charlotte-and-branwell-brought-waterloo-into-their-drawing-room/>



Emily was the fifth of the six children of Patrick Brontë, who was the perpetual curate of the remote Yorkshire moorland parish of Haworth, and they were of Irish origin. The family was of Irish origin because as you can see, Patrick Brontë was Irish-born. After the death their mother Maria, when Emily was three the children were given an inspiring and wide-ranging liberal and academic education by their father and thoroughly instructed in domestic order, method and neatness by their aunt Elizabeth Branwell.

So the points that I want you to take away from these details on the slide here are: firstly, the absence of the mother, which we also discussed previously and the impact it would have had on the psyche of the children. Secondly, they had a very influential education, an education which was liberal in tone. And thirdly, they knew all about domesticity with the help of their aunt Elizabeth Branwell.

So look at the words order, method and neatness. So they were thoroughly taught in what was the ideal decorum when it came to domestic matters and the sisters' fiction reflected their knowledge of domesticity.

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Emily Bronte

- "For amusement the siblings invented imaginary worlds, drawing maps and writing stories and magazines – all in tiny micro-script, as if written by their miniature toy soldiers."
- Charlotte and Branwell created the kingdom of Angria; always stubbornly independent, Emily created the breakaway island of Gondal with her younger sister Anne."
- Source: <https://www.bl.uk/people/emily-bronte>
- Image source: <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/understanding-emily-bront%C3%AB-stronger-than-a-man-simpler-than-a-child-1.3570351>



For amusement the siblings invented imaginary worlds, drawing maps and writing stories and magazines, all in tiny micro-script, as if written by their miniature toy soldiers. Charlotte and Branwell created the kingdom of Angria; always stubbornly independent, Emily created the breakaway island of Gondal with her youngest sister Anne.

They had very, very wild imagination, all the sisters and Branwell as well and that is evident in the creation of fantasy universes. For example, the kingdom of Angria, the kingdom of, the island of Gondal. So they created worlds, they wrote about that worlds in tiny script. They made books out of their imagination, tiny books and they kind of invented wars and created heroes.

And you can see how, how much they kind of let loose their creativity and imagination through these kinds of creative productions. And these creative productions are a full runner with the kind of fictions that these sisters wrote. So their imaginative capabilities are evidenced through this kind of creative writing projects.

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Emily Bronte



- “Surviving poems about this fantasy world show the influence of Wordsworth, Walter Scott and Byron. By then Emily was the tallest of the sisters, slim and graceful with – in the words of family friend Ellen Nussey – ‘kindling liquid eyes’.

- Source: <https://www.bl.uk/people/emily-bronte>



“Surviving poems about this fantasy world show the influence of Wordsworth, Walter Scott and Byron. By then Emily was the tallest of the sisters, slim and graceful with – in the words of family friend, Ellen Nussey – kindly, liquid eyes.”

Two points that we need to note from this comment, set of comments. Firstly, the fantasy world shows us that these sisters, these siblings were very, very well read. Remember the liberal education offered by Patrick Brontë, the father. So they knew about Wordsworth, Walter Scott and Byron and their writings.

Secondly, we see the character of Emily coming through in the description of the family friend Ellen Nussey. Look at the emphasis on her eyes, kindly liquid eyes. Very, very sympathetic personality reflected through the eyes of Emily Brontë.

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Emily Brontë

- “She was, however, very reserved, and it soon emerged
- that she was unsuited to life away from Haworth. ‘Stronger than a man’,
- Charlotte wrote, ‘simpler than a child, her nature stood alone.’”

• Source: <https://www.bl.uk/people/emily-brontë>

• Image source: <https://www.gettyimages.in/photos/emily-brontë?mediatype=photography&phrase=emily%20brontë&sort=mostpopular>



Emily Brontë had a very sensitive personality. She was, very reserved, and it soon emerged that she was unsuited to life away from Haworth. She could not live happily when she was taken out of the Yorkshire moors. So that seems to be the impression created by such comments about Emily Brontë. If she went away to do a bit of governess jobs, she found that she fell ill. So it clearly emerged that she was really passionate about the natural scenery, the region of Yorkshire around Haworth.

“Stronger than a man,” Charlotte wrote, “simpler than a child, her nature stood alone. “Charlotte’s comments about Emily Brontë are very significant, because you can see how Charlotte constructs a personality of Emily Brontë, which makes Emily out as if she is an element of nature.

So you also kind of sense contradictory impulses that seemed to emerge in association with Emily Brontë. She is very powerful according to Charlotte, more powerful than a man, yet she is also very innocent as a child.

And again, the idea of her nature being unique and this comment takes us back to Charlotte Brontë’s comments about Emily Brontë’s poetry, unique poems, strange poems. So she is unique in that regard, because she is a bundle of contradictions yet she is also a part of nature in some respects, because the innocence and the innocence, the love for Haworth, she fall sick, if she is taken away from it, be it for schooling, be it for a governess position, she has to

be in Haworth to remain a happy and sane and comfortable. So a distinct personality of Emily Brontë emerges from this set of description by Charlotte Brontë.

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Emily Brontë

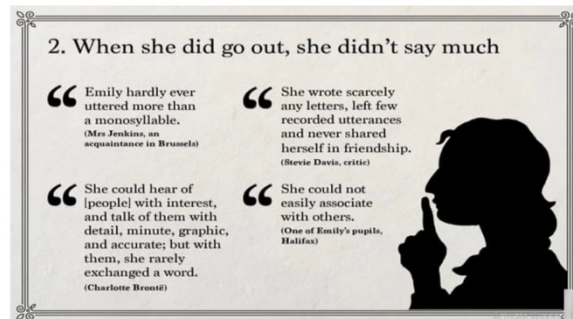


Image source: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/gallery/2018/jul/30/emily-brontes-wuthering-heights-in-charts#img-2>



These are some of the comments about Emily Brontë by people who knew her, by people who knew Emily Brontë at that time. So she rarely spoke that seems to be the general impression that these comments offer us.

“Emily hardly ever uttered more than a monosyllable,” says Mrs. Jenkins, an acquaintance in Brussels. So, it is very clear that she is not very talkative and she kind of is, she seems to be a person who is more interested in listening rather than talking.

Charlotte Brontë says, “she could hear of people with interest, and talk of them with detail, minute, graphic and accurate but with them she rarely exchanged, a word.”

It is very perceptive comment about Emily Brontë by Charlotte Brontë. Her sister is interested in people and could talk about them in great detail, minute detail, give very, very vivid descriptions and be very accurate as well, but she did not communicate with them, which kind of tells us that she stuck to her own group, her own family. So again, the idea that she is not a very outgoing of person that she is more of an interior character is given to us through these comments.

“She wrote scarcely any letters, left few recorded utterances and never shared herself in friendship.” This is according to the critic Stevie Davis.

So again, she is not very communicative with the society, with the rest of the world around her. So this inability to participate in the world outside is very interesting, and that tells us a

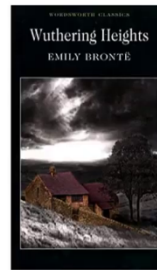
lot about the woman who created *Wuthering Heights*, a novel which is almost claustrophobic and, which is also heavily Gothic in its overtones.

And one of Emily's pupils, remember she was also a teacher. The pupil says, "she could not easily associate with others." Again, not a very sociable character Emily Brontë is.

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Wuthering Heights

- "Emily's work first appeared in print when,
- on Charlotte's urging, a collection of the three sisters'
- poems was privately published in 1846 under the names
- of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell; outstanding among them is Emily's 'No coward soul is mine'."
- Source: <https://www.bl.uk/people/emily-bronte>
- Image source: https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/6185.Wuthering_Heights



Emily's work first appeared in print when, on Charlotte Brontë's urging, a collection of three sisters' poems was privately published in 1846 under the names of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell; outstanding among them is Emily's "No coward soul is mine."

A couple of interesting aspects are to be noted from this comment. Firstly, Emily has had to be urged on by Charlotte. So you can once again see the reserved nature of Emily who is not very interested in entering the public sphere with her creativity. So it is a joint publication as well, the 3 sisters and publish together their poetic output.

And the second interesting phenomenon here is the reference to the pseudonyms, Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. Currer Bell is the pseudonym of Charlotte Brontë; Ellis Bell, that of Emily Brontë; and Acton Bell belongs to Anne Brontë. So women did not use their own names when they wrote, it was still not very respectable for women to publish, be part of the public sphere. Women were supposed to belong to the private world, they are supposed to manage their domestic hearth, spectacularly and not infringe on the public realm, which belongs to the man.

The rhetoric of Emily's poem is also very interesting, no coward soul is mine. Again, the fierce spirit, the indomitable spirit of the speaker also comes through in that poem.

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Wuthering Heights



- “Wuthering Heights, which was published in 1847, is reminiscent of Gondal in its moorland setting and passionate war between two families. One review dismissed it as ‘coarse and loathsome.’”

- Source: <https://www.bl.uk/people/emily-bronte>

- Image source: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jul/21/emily-bronte-strange-cult-wuthering-heights-romantic-novel>



Now, let us come to the novel Wuthering Heights. This massive book, in terms of the power it contains of the central characters. It is a landmark novel in the world of English literature, it is very, very powerful. It is a gripping read, it is full of raw emotions and the Gothic nature of the book never fails to fascinate the readers.

“Wuthering Heights was published in 1847. It is reminiscent of Gondal in its moorland setting and passionate war between two families. One review dismissed it as ‘coarse and loathsome’.”

The immediate perspective that one takes away from this novel is it is a powerful setting. It is very visceral description of the moorland and there is a connection between the moors depicted here in this fiction and the world of Gondal created by Emily Brontë and her sister Anne Bronte. And this is also a novel about two warring families.

One family belongs to Thruscross Grange, the other belongs to Wuthering Heights. So this is a book about two families who are at war with each other. And when it was first published, reviewers were not very sympathetic towards the book and one called it is very coarse, vulgar, not belonging to polite society and an aberrant book. It is a hateful book. So you can see the kind of emotions that this book provoked on the part of people.

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Emily Bronte



- "Emily began another novel, but it was destroyed by Charlotte after Emily's death, aged 30, from tuberculosis in December 1848."

- Source: <https://www.bl.uk/people/emily-bronte>



"Emily Brontë began another novel, but it was destroyed with Charlotte after Emily's death, aged 30, from tuberculosis in December, 1848."

So you can see Emily dies a year after getting *Wuthering Heights*'s published, which was in 1847, a short life, but a powerful one. And the other interesting element from this comment is that Charlotte destroys another work, which was started by Emily. There is a desire on the part of Charlotte Brontë to protect the memory and reputation of Emily Brontë.

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Wuthering Heights

- “*Wuthering Heights* was only rescued from obscurity in the 1880s, championed by Algernon Swinburne, Matthew Arnold, and G K Chesterton, who described it as ‘written by an eagle!’”

- Source: <https://www.bl.uk/people/emily-bronte>

- Image source: <https://www.amazon.in/Wuthering-Heights-French-Emily-Bronte-ebook/dp/B0773G3QXL>



“*Wuthering Heights* was only rescued from obscurity in the 1880s, and it was championed. The work was celebrated by Swinburne, Algernon Swinburne, Mathew Arnold and G K Chesterton, who described it as written by an eagle.”

Fantastic observation by G K Chesterton when he calls this work as written by an eagle, we are reminded of an Eagle’s point of view. We are also reminded of the pace, the speed of an eagle and the very pointedness of its flight. So, it is a raw novel, it is a sharp novel and it reveals the wild emotions of human beings caught at their most passionate.

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Wuthering Heights



- “**Wuthering Heights**, published in 1847 under the pseudonym Ellis Bell.
- This intense, solidly imagined novel is distinguished from other novels of the period by its dramatic and poetic presentation, its abstention from authorial intrusion, and its unusual structure.”
- Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Wuthering-Heights>



So *Wuthering Heights*, as we know published in 1847, under the pseudonym of Ellis Bell was intense, it was a very, very intense novel, and very solidly imagined novel. The imagination is visceral and the plot is tight. There are no loopholes in the way this fictional universe is set up on the part of the writer and it is distinguished from other novels of the period by its dramatic and poetic presentation.

Its abstention from authorial intrusion, and its unusual structure. So it is a distinct voice on the part of Emily Brontë. You can compare Emily Brontë’s works with say, Jane Austen. You can see how unusual *Wuthering Heights* is. There is no authorial intrusion, and its extremely poetic and dramatic in its nature.

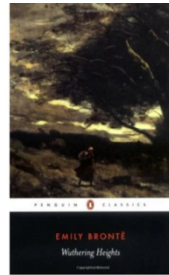
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Wuthering Heights

- The story is recounted by Lockwood, a disinterested party, whose narrative serves as the frame for a series of retrospective shorter narratives by Ellen Dean, a housekeeper.

• Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Wuthering-Heights>

• Image source: <https://modernmrsdarcy.com/books/wuthering-heights/>



Now let us look at the plot of Wuthering Heights briefly. The story is told by one, Mr. Lockwood, he is one of the narrator's. So he is a disinterested party. He does not belong to the two families that I mentioned, a little while ago. He is not part of the two houses. He is a disinterested party and his narrative, his recounting of the novel and the world around him, serves as the frame for a series of retrospective shorter narratives by Ellen Dean, a housekeeper. Ellen Dean is the housekeeper at Wuthering Heights and she also narrates the story in parts.

So we have two narrators Lockwood and Ellen Dean. One is a disinterested party and the other is a housekeeper to one of the families.

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Wuthering Heights-Plot



- “All concern the impact of the foundling [Heathcliff](#) on the two families of Earnshaw and Linton in a remote Yorkshire district at the end of the 18th century.”

• Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Wuthering-Heights>



“All concern the impact of the foundling Heathcliff on the two families of Earnshaw and Linton in a remote Yorkshire district at the end of the 18th century.”

So the entire story is about the impact of this foundling. Somebody who is found, a child who is found is called a foundling, is an orphan and he is brought into the world of this Yorkshire district, he is brought to Wuthering Heights by Mr. Earnshaw. And the entire novel seems to be structured around this character, Heathcliff and the havoc he causes on these two families of Earnshaw and Linton.

Linton belongs to Thrushcross Grange and the Earnshaws belong to Wuthering Heights. And this novel is set in a remote Yorkshire district and we all know that the Brontë's belong to Yorkshire as well. They belong to Haworth, which is in Yorkshire and it is a place overrun by the moors, and Emily is passionate, Emily Brontë is passionate about the moors.

So you can see, how Emily drew upon her personal experiences of the region to write this novel. And the timeline of this fiction, Wuthering Heights is late 18th century.

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Wuthering Heights-Plot



- “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.”

- Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Wuthering-Heights> ...



“Embittered by abuse and 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.”

So this is the problem. The problem is that Cathy Earnshaw daughter of Mr. Earnshaw, of Wuthering Heights marries the gentle and prosperous Edgar Linton, and she kind of rejects Heathcliff. Heathcliff is in love with Catherine Earnshaw. He sees that she shares his own stormy nature and because of this marriage, Heathcliff leaves the place and when he comes back, he takes revenge on both families, the Earnshaws and the Lintons. And the revenge carries into the next generation as well.

So this is the powerful plot of Wuthering Heights.

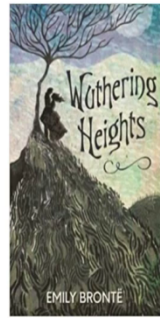
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Wuthering Heights-Plot

- "Cathy's death in childbirth fails to set him free from his [obsession](#) with her, which persists until his death. The marriage of the surviving heirs of Earnshaw and Linton restores peace."

• Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Wuthering-Heights>

• Image source: <https://www.google.com/img/?as=1&url=https://www.amazon.in/Wuthering-Heights-Emily-Bronte/dp/9278193387635&pg=40Vwaw3t43b-ivNPGu0spurt&ust=1590483101438000&source=images&oc=vs&ved=0CAGQImafwTCjy0P9Qu&CFQAAAAAAAAAABg>



Cathy's death in childbirth fails to set him free from his obsession with her, which persists until his death. The marriage of the surviving heirs of Earnshaw and Linton restores peace.

So you can see the obsessive nature of Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights. He is unable to let go of Catherine even after she is dead. He tries to dig her from the grave, he tries to lay next to her in the grave and he is able to quit of Catherine only with his death. And the marriage of the heirs of the two families Earnshaw and Linton brings peace to the world of Wuthering Heights.

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Wuthering Heights



- “Blending realism, romance and the Gothic, some reviewers thought it immoral and abhorrent; others praised its originality and ‘rugged power’. The house at the Heights is situated in bleak moorland, and the wild setting is a powerful presence as the story unfolds.”

• Source: <https://www.bl.uk/works/wuthering-heights>



“Blending realism, romance and the Gothic, some reviewers thought it immoral and abhorrent’; others praised its originality and rugged power.”

So the first point here is very important because it captures the dimensions of the novel. On the one hand, we have realism, on the other romance, and both are kind of imbued with the Gothic. And because of this kind of structure it was both original as well as rugged, it was raw, it was not perfect, it was not neat, it was not like a nice little laid out garden. It was like the wild mountains. Some reviewers thought it was an immoral novel and completely abhorrent.

“The house of the Heights is situated in bleak moorland, and the wild setting is a powerful presence as the story unfolds.”

So the moors of this novel is very significant, it is as if almost the moor becomes a character in the novel and the wild setting is a constant presence in, as the story unfolds.

You can see comparisons being made between the wild setting and Heathcliff, the wild setting and Cathy they all seem to kind of belong together Cathy, Heathcliff and the moors. So we need to constantly remember this powerful presence when we read and analyze this novel.

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Wuthering Heights

- "This text has multiple narrative viewpoints.
- The main perspectives come from Lockwood, a southerner who finds Yorkshire an alien place;
- and a servant, Nelly Dean, who moves between the Heights and Brontë's contrasting location of Thrushcross Grange. Heathcliff is a dark, enigmatic, brooding 'Byronic hero', a character type familiar to contemporary readers."
- Source: <https://www.bl.uk/works/wuthering-heights>
- Image source: <https://medium.com/@KevinRedmayne/wuthering-heights-b5ac68425340>



As I pointed out, the text has multiple narrative viewpoints. The major perspectives come from Lockwood, who is a southerner, but, and finds Yorkshire as an alien place; he is a visitor, he is a guest to this world, and it is through his alien eyes that we have the novel being narrated. But there is also a minor narrative offered by the servant figure, Nelly Dean, who moves between the Heights and Brontë's contrasting location of Thrushcross Grange. And most importantly, we have Heathcliff who was a dark, enigmatic, brooding Byronic hero, a character type familiar to contemporary readers.

So it is this hero, which is going to be a major feature of analysis in our lectures. This hero is interesting because he is Gothic in nature as well. He is a brooding figure he is almost as if he is an element of nature, he is mysterious, he is dark, he has his wild moods. So this is one of the fantastic persona, Heathcliff's one of those fantastic personas of literature one who constantly fascinates the readers.

Thank you for watching. I will continue in the next session.