

WORLDVIEW GUIDE

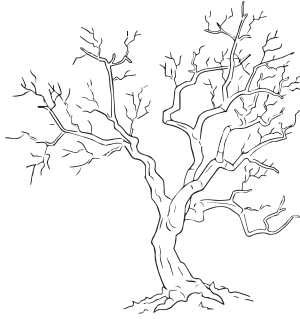
WUTHERING HEIGHTS



Marcus Schwager

canonpress
Moscow, Idaho





CONTENTS

Introduction	I
The World Around	3
About the Author	5
What Other Notables Said	9
Setting, Characters, and Plot Summary	13
Worldview Analysis	21
Quotables	33
21 Significant Questions and Answers	35
Further Discussion and Review	45
Taking the Classics Quiz	49



INTRODUCTION

Silent is the house: all are laid asleep:
One alone looks out o'er the snow-wreaths deep,
Watching every cloud, dreading every breeze
That whirls the wildering drift, and bends the
groaning trees.¹

Mysterious curses pass through a secluded family in Yorkshire's chilly, windswept moors. Hidden torment and misguided passions spell eventual doom for two prominent households. The haunted, tangled tale of *Wuthering Heights* continues to captivate readers by the hundreds, thousands, and millions—a tale reflecting family misfortune its author knew all too well.

1. From "The Visionary" by Emily Brontë. Poetic lines opening this and coming sections are taken from the following: *The Works of Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë in the Twelve Volumes: Poems of Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell with Cottage Poems by Patrick Brontë, Vol III* (London: J. M. Dent and Co., 1893).



WORLDVIEW ANALYSIS

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou were left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.

There is no room for Death,
Nor atom that his might could render void:
Thou—Thou art Being and Breath,
And what Thou art may never be destroyed.¹²

Shady Sympathies

The intellectual core of *Wuthering Heights* is readily understood through the character Heathcliff. Heathcliff is a

12. From Emily Brontë's last poem, see *The Sisters Brontë* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2015), 170. As Brontë approaches death, the mighty powers she seemed to grant Catherine and Heathcliff's soul(s) are rendered instead to God.

monster, a bestial predator: “It’s odd what a savage feeling I have to anything that seems afraid of me!” (272). He savors others’ suffering: “Had I been born where laws are less strict, and tastes less dainty, I should treat myself to a slow vivisection of [Cathy and Linton] as an evening’s amusement” (272). Yet Heathcliff also possesses a powerful bond of devotion to the woman he longs for, Catherine Earnshaw. When she dies, he exclaims, “Oh, God! it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!” (169). How can the same character show such cruelty and such devotion; what is the reader to make of Heathcliff’s character?

Brontë forged his nature under the auspices of her immediate literary predecessors hailing from what we now term the Romantic genre and its darker subgenre, Gothic. Thus, Heathcliff displays an uncertain pedigree, supernatural connections, violent eruptions, and thirst for vengeance, such as one finds in Mary Shelley’s “creature” in *Frankenstein*. Heathcliff also features the brooding, tortured, cunning, immoral, and domineering anti-heroic qualities which make up a Byronic hero, such as Manfred,¹³ forged in the furnace of a passionate moral tension. Thus, although *Wuthering Heights* features fewer supernatural elements and slightly less dramatic immorality than some of its Gothic predecessors and heirs, it does

13. The main character in Byron’s 1817 work *Manfred: A Dramatic Poem*.