

**TED ANKARA COLLEGE FOUNDATION PRIVATE  
HIGH SCHOOL**

**Extended Essay  
Research Question:**

To what extent were the problems of the characters Jane in *Jane Eyre* and Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* reflected on the later phases of their life?

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## **Abstract:**

This extended essay aims to analyse how the childhood experiences affected the main characters' lives in "Jane Eyre" by Charlotte Bronte and "Wuthering Heights" by Emily Bronte. In both novel, Jane and Heathcliff go through a difficult, lonely childhood and these memories affect their life in every way. The novels also deal with love, passion which develop one character and destroy the other one. First, their childhood is described and then the impacts on their life are analysed deeply.

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## Introduction:

The experiences that we have in our childhood is very important because those are the ones that form our character and change the way we live our lives. In both novels, the main characters Jane and Heathcliff suffer throughout their childhood and have to endure different kinds of mistreatments in the hands of cruel people who are responsible for raising them. Therefore they search for true love and they try to get acceptance. One character Jane is treated unfairly by her aunt and the other one, Heathcliff, has to bear Hindley's hatred as a result of his jealousy. Both characters don't have the chance to change much about their lives foremost. Then they are both given the opportunity to control their lives. Heathcliff becomes wealthy and Jane when she's able to graduate from the charity school and starts earning her living. However, these turning points should be used in the right way, when Heathcliff fails to do so. On the other hand, Jane manages to become an ideal character with her virtue and integrity. She is a developing character and tries to find the balance. Although she wants to belong somewhere, she never sacrifices her dignity. She keeps her trust in God. Whereas Heathcliff, the central character of *Wuthering Heights* is a mysterious one unlike Jane. There are so many similarities between his and Jane's childhood days. Heathcliff is also treated badly and he is also an unwanted child. His ill treatment is the trigger to the unfortunate events which go on until the end of the novel. He is not happy with his physical appearance and tries to change it whereas Jane becomes content with her physical appearance and even finds herself beautiful when she finds that balance is what she has been searching for all through her life.

So both characters go through a lot of suffering all through their childhood but one can make use of it by becoming a whole character. On the other hand, the other character

gets his revenge in the end but we have no clues that he is fulfilled. His ending is madness, but Jane manages to become satisfied with what she has got.

The aim of this study, will be the analysis of two characters Jane and Heathcliff taking their childhoods as the basis and sort out the pros and cons of the suffering of their childhoods.

## Jane Eyre

Jane Eyre is described as a plain featured young girl, honest and always maintains her principles of justice. Whether Jane is a feminist or not, she absolutely believes in the power of women. When she is ten, she sends to Lowood School described as a miserable place, but Jane comes out a governess and provides her independence. Her parents die after her birth, and she's adopted by Uncle Reed. Before he dies, he asks her wife, Mrs. Reed, to take care of Jane Eyre. Mrs. Reed takes care of Jane Eyre but she treats her as a servant. Jane often gets locked in the red room of hours, where her uncle died and she imagines that his ghost haunts the room. This red room is a gothic imagery in the novel; the colour of red symbolizes blood. One day, Jane wants to read a book and hides herself behind the curtains because the books are forbidden for Jane. One of her step sibling finds out what Jane does and pushes her back, hits with the book. Jane responds to this humiliating act and tries to slap her sibling. In here, it can be seen that Jane refuses the oppression of her cruel aunt and the horrible behaviours of her siblings. Her aunt sends Jane to Lowood School and says that she will have a unhappy life if she continues to be a bad, naughty girl. At first, Jane refuses to go to Lowood School but later, it can be seen that she grows up to a strong, self confident woman. She makes her first friend in Lowood, Helen Burns; calm and intelligent girl. She affects Jane deeply especially with her devout religious faith. With Helen, Jane questions the god and religion. Helen dies from tuberculosis. Jane learns the skills needed for supporting herself. So, Helen is an important character that affected the development of Jane in childhood.

Being an orphan and growing up in Lowood are difficult but also formative for Jane. She grows up to a strong, self-confident woman. Because she is frequently humiliated by teachers, and treated with cruelty by other students. She loses her friendship with Helen because of her death and Jane struggles to stay against the difficulties.

Jane figures out the only way to get out from Lowood is to advertise and she starts to work in the Thornfield Hall as a governess. She takes the position of teaching a French girl, Adele Varens and she is also the daughter of Edward Rochester, the owner of the manor. Adele is fond of fancy clothes and she takes attention with her inappropriate dances and songs. But Jane loves this lonely girl, grown up without mother and tries to help her.

While Jane continues her courses with Adele, she sometimes hears screams in nights and one day, she rescues Mr. Rochester from burning. She also hears wild, demonic laughs and someone attacks Richard Mason, a guest in the Thornfield Hall, and he says *"She sucked by blood, she said she'd drain my heart."* (Bronte, 178) These gothic imageries prove that this novel is not a typical love story and also deals with mysterious events that create a sense of horror. It shows the Jane's forbidden emotions, desires and ideas. Because Jane grows up without parents, friends and she never feels jealousy which is harmful but sometimes the driving force in humans life. She is always sensible, lack of passion because she thinks the emotions can be misleading and make her fragile.

Jane loves paintings and her drawings reveal the Jane's emotional state. At first, this paintings are dark and includes birds. This darkness shows what she feels inside.

She becomes friend with Mr. Rochester, the owner of the manor who is rude, abrupt, older than Jane and someone who likes to order people. Despite his harsh attitudes, he strongly connects with Jane unconsciously who understand himself. They share similar ideas, spirits and Mr. Rochester is especially affected with Jane's honesty, plain-features and pureness. When they are wandering around the garden, Mr. Rochester talks about his past

and the women that he loved once. But it can be seen, Mr.Rochester never be happy with them and always suffer from his past. Jane can not understand why he is so suffering and hiding his past memories although she can sense that Rochester has a dark past .

In a very short time, they become very good friends and Jane begins to fall in love for Mr.Rochester. Jane feels herself independent, strong in Thornfield Hall where no one humiliates or insult about her social class, thoughts, physical apperance. As Jane describes; she feels "human".

*So happy, so gratified did I become with this new interest added to life, that I ceased to pine after kindred; my thin crescent-destiny seemed to enlarge; the blanks of existence were filled up; my bodily health improved; I gathered flesh and strength" (1)*

One of the reasons why Jane is passionately attracted to Mr.Rochester is her childhood. The oppresion that she experienced in Gateshead Hall from Mrs.Reed and from Mr. Brockleburst in Lowood School, made a malignity in Jane. She always been an inferior in her whole life and she can not express her feelings,thoughts, emotions, desires. Her struggle is a rebellion against being inhibited and isolated. Even when she become a teacher in Lowood, *she is not free to express her own essential nature.(2)* . But when she comes to Thornfield Hall, she steps into a new world, where she is treated as an equal. Also, Mr.Rochester does not treat her as a paid subordinate, telling that; "you did forget it, and that you care whether or not a dependent is comfortable in his dependency" (3)

Mr.Rochester falls in love for Jane very quickly but he does not express it to Jane. He goes to an vacance in Europe and bring his friends to throw a party in Thornfield. A young lady, Blanche Ingram includes in the novel who is flirting with Mr.Rochester. Blanche's beauty is famous, also Adele admires her elegance and Mr.Rochester prefers to spend time with

(1)(2)(3): <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/cs6/jane130.html>

Blanche instead of Jane. But Jane does not jealous of Blanche, on the contrary, she notices her superficiality, artificiality and understands that she is only interested in Mr.Rochester for his fortune. Rochester is also aware of it and he actually hates Blanche but he wants to learn what Jane feels for him and just wonders if Jane will get jealous. Soon, Mr.Rochester proposes Jane marriage. She accepts but always educates herself not to overwhelm and not to lose her indepenence. This act of Jane is also a result of her childhood.

In the day of the wedding, a friend of Mr.Rochester says Jane that Rochester has an insane wife,Bertha Mason, locked up in the Thornfield Hall for years. She is the reason of the unknown, creepy laughters come at night and she is the one who tried to murder Rochester. Jane gets confused and doesn't know what to do. But again because of her childhood experiences, her dignity provokes Jane to flee from Thornfield Hall and leave Mr.Rochester. *She was able to uphold the strict moral values that he could not. Furthermore, Jane was able to retain her self-worth and dignity despite sacrificing her passionate feelings.(1)* Maybe she wants to prove to Mr.Rochester and also for herself that she is free and can still decide on her own.

When she leaves Thornfield, penniless and alone, she walks for miles hungry. She sleeps in outdoors, try to get a job nearby the town and someone named St. John brings her home. Jane lives here with St. John and her sisters; Mary and Diana. This departure from Thornfield, is the most difficult decision that Jane makes throughout the novel. She believes that, being wife of Rochester will be self imprisonment and once again, it can be seen that her lonely and tough childhood makes Jane strong and addicted to independence.

St. John is a cold, kind, hard-working person, and wants to become a missionary in India. He thinks that Jane has the right qualities for an ideal missionary wife and he proposes

(1):<http://www.gradesaver.com/jane-eyre/q-and-a/how-do-the-other-character-influence-jane-eyre-and-how-does-she-become-a-better-person-out-of-it-51551/>



marriage to Jane. Jane refuses it and also complains about St. John for being distant and suppressing his feelings. She also disagrees with St. John's model of Christianity and believes that love is the power which brings people together. It can be seen that her childhood experiences are effective in her attitude towards the religion. Because her first friend Helen Burns affects Jane with her thoughts about God and religion.

One week later, while St. John insists Jane on marriage, Jane hears Rochester's voice from a great distance. She sets forth to Thornfield but then learns that Bertha Mason ablazes the mansion earlier and dies in that fire. Jane finds out where Rochester live, and they marry. It is mentioned that they lives as equals, and Jane becomes fully independent. She visits Adele in her school and realizes how Adele is unhappy. Then, she finds another school, a more suitable one for Adele. Because Jane knows how it feels to be unhappy, lonely in a school from Lowood and helps Adele not to experience such things as Jane does.

In Charlotte Bronte's novel, the development of Jane Eyre is depicted and as it can be seen her desire for freedom, self confidence is the only reason what she had in her childhood. Being humiliated by Mrs. Reed and teachers in Lowood, affects the later life of Jane Eyre. In every decision, she inevitably gets affected by her remaning traces in her infancy.

## **Wuthering Heights**

In the other novel, Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights, the protagonist is Heathcliff and throughtout the novel, the development of him and his passionate love for Catherine is depicted. In this novel, Heathcliff will also be affected by his childhood memories in his decisions or attitudes for people.

Heathcliff is an orphan and a gypsy boy brought by Mr. Earnshaw to Wuthering Heights. He is a poor, powerless boy when he enters the house, but then he becomes cruel and evil. *His language is "gibberish" and his dark otherness provokes the labels "gipsy," "wicked boy," "villain," and "imp of Satan." This poor treatment is not much of an improvement on his "starving and houseless" childhood, and he quickly becomes a product of all of the abuse and neglect.*(1)

Especially, Hindley, the son of Mr. Earnshaw, hates Heathcliff and provokes fights. Although he lives with Earnshaw family, he is never given the last time Earnshaw. He is unwelcomed, not counted as a family member and for Hindley (the son of Mr. Earnshaw), Heathcliff is a direct threat. *"from the very beginning, [Heathcliff] bred bad feeling in the house"* (Bronte, 26).

So, the background of Heathcliff is unknown and mysterious. In the beginning, Mr. Earnshaw introduces Heathcliff as *"as dark almost as if it came from the devil"* (2). But Heathcliff takes advantage from that, and seem very dark, scary. His coming causes a polarisation in the family, for instance Catherine and her father become his allies, but Hindley becomes Heathcliff's enemy. It can be seen that his arrival to the Wuthering Heights, can be counted as bad luck, as it causes arguments between the family members, and disrupt their ongoing traditions and habits. But in the meantime, Catherine is the only person that help Heathcliff for not being isolated and outsider. They become very good friends and spend time a lot together. He has a special affection on her and an endless compassion. Because they have common points for instance, they are both wild, harsh and passionate.

(1): <http://www.scribd.com/doc/24926869/Wuthering-Heights-Shmoop-Literature-Guide>

(2) <http://www.literature.org/authors/bronte-emily/wuthering-heights/chapter-04.html>

When Heathcliff is fully attached and obsessed to Catherine, Catherine accepts engaging with Edgar Linton, to ensure that she is provided financially. Edgar Linton is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Linton and lives in Thrusscross Grange in a wealthy way. After, he becomes the master of Grunge and falls in love with Catherine. For social advancements, Catherine engages with Linton, even if she loves Heathcliff madly. When Heathcliff learns this, he disappears for three years.

This disappearance can be mentioned as the development of Heathcliff or even transformation; because he becomes almost a different person. He returns with money and power to take revenge on Hindley, Edgar and Catherine. It can be seen that, the childhood experiences and the background that Heathcliff has, deeply affects his decision of leaving Wuthering Heights and returning to take revenge. He has been suffering since childhood, by humiliated, mistreated by Hindley, lost his social position, rejected by Catherine or isolated because of his social class. The capitalism is changing the economy, the social stratification and also the relationships in the novel. Catherine marries Edgar Linton for his reputation and fortune. But, Heathcliff is just the opposite of Edgar; poor, powerless, just a tough young man. Being an orphan and gypsy is a disadvantage for Heathcliff and the reasons of why Heathcliff is so furious to everyone and frustrated to life.

After he returns to Wuthering Heights, he is described as, *“He had grown a tall, athletic, well-formed man; beside whom [Edgar] seemed quite slender and youth-like.”* and *“A half-civilised ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows and eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued; and his manner was even dignified: quite divested of roughness, though stern for grace.”*(Bronte,69) So, this appearance change in Heathcliff, shows how he develops and improves himself.

‘Wuthering Heights’ could be considered as the novel of revenge and it is the revenge of Heathcliff. It’s the most strong feeling that he has all through the novel. It

becomes so powerful that he lives his days to take his revenge and maybe that strong motivation makes him a rich and mighty man. Earning money could be considered as only a tool to take revenge. He hasn't got the right goal to earn money and become rich. It is not for living in good conditions; only for coming back to the place where he spends his childhood and is seen as a founding who brought evil for the family.

He becomes merciless as an adult due to the childhood days in which he received no love. This lack of love hurt him so badly that he lives all his love with his consuming passion for revenge.

On the other hand, his strong love for Catherine is undeniable. So it is really amazing how a devil can have such a pure and loyal love for a human being. It is clear that this pure love shows his pure part of his character, a part which hasn't been discovered because of his isolated and lonely childhood days. This could be called an eternal love. He is completely loyal to Catherine. "*Existence after losing her would be hell*".(1) These words give the extent of his love. Unfortunately after her death he is focused totally on his revenge. It is clear to see that misery makes him more merciless. Maybe she is the only who truly understands his deeper suffering and the source of it. She summarizes his psychological situation and the real reason why he has become so cruel.

It is easy to justify his capacity for hatred after the days he spends as an ignored and mistreated child in Wuthering Heights. As he could not get any love from people, he could not find the right way to show his capacity for love. Catherine's rejection of his love is the final stage for him. True love turns into an abiding craving for revenge.

As a child he had the chance to run away from Hindley and his mistreatments. But he chooses to stay and fight back. He endures the pain because of his devotion to Catherine.

(1): [http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/novel\\_19c/wuthering/mystic.html](http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/novel_19c/wuthering/mystic.html)

Although he thinks he could take this pain, unfortunately he leads all his life with the traces of these sufferings of his childhood.

After Catherine's death, he has got nothing to lose, he becomes so destructive that his ambition for revenge expands onto the next generation.

As the author distorts the character as if they are on mirrors, she takes common themes and exaggerates them like love becomes obsession, contempt becomes hatred and peaceful death becomes the part of hell. All these strong themes are in Heathcliff's childhood and adulthood. As they are not directed correctly they become destructive all through his life.

"I have lost the faculty of enjoying their destruction and I am too idle to destroy for nothing."

(1) This is his final stage. All that strong desire for revenge has finally drained him. He does not enjoy it anymore. Peace will be back in Wuthering Heights again.

But, his loyalty to Catherine is endless. He hates everyone except Catherine. She is the one who understands him and behaves like him. Heathcliff and Catherine can be seen as soulmates more than being lovers.

Also the violent acts that Heathcliff does, is another result of his childhood memories. He marries with Edgar Linton's sister; Isabella Linton, who is a charming young lady with blonde hair, pale skin and attracted to Heathcliff. Heathcliff hates Isabella but he marries her to annoy her brother Edgar Linton. That is the way that Heathcliff take revenge on Edgar. And he treats Isabella very badly by disregarding her feelings to him. *[Heathcliff] seized, and thrust [Isabella] from the room; and returned muttering – "I have no pity! I have*

(1): <http://www.literature.org/authors/bronte-emily/wuthering-heights/chapter-33.html>

*no pity! The more the worms writhe, the more I yearn to crush out their entrails! It is a moral*

*teething; and I grind with greater energy in proportion to the increase of pain." (1)*

(1): <http://classiclit.about.com/library/bl-etexts/ebronte/bl-ebronte-wu-14.htm>

## Conclusion:

Jane in "Jane Eyre" and Heathcliff in Wuthering Heights have some similarities for their undergoing tough childhoods and they both end up differently because they take different point of views which are affected by their early years. They are both orphans belong to no where, no one and humiliated by others everywhere they go. These complexities from their characters, determine their decisions and the reasons of their behaviours. However, both of them end up in different ways in their lives. Bad childhood experinces make Jane stronger stabilized whereas Heathcliff beomes an insane man who cannot find the real happiness.

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