

Extended Essay- English B

Research Question:

'To what extent the concepts of "love" and "isolation" can be associated with the setting of the novel "Wuthering Heights" by Emily Bronte'.

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Pelin ÖNER

TED Ankara College Foundation High School

D1129011

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Abstract:

The purpose of this extended essay is to examine the characters in Emily Bronte's "Wuthering Heights", and question the impact of the setting on the characters' attitude towards two important themes in the novel - 'love' and 'isolation'. The importance of social values in the 18th and 19th century and the effects of industrialization and capitalism on these values are used by Bronte to illustrate the role of social status and the power of money. Bronte's usage of these themes along with the setting and her shaping of the characters in the novel according to these values drew me to explore the importance of the setting on the characters decisions. This paper investigates how isolation from social areas and social values affects the actions of characters and to what extent changes in these circumstances can shape one's decisions about both his/her future life and the lives of other characters.

149 words

SECTION I- INTRODUCTION AND THE SETTING

In Emily Bronte's novel "Wuthering Heights", the main theme is the obsessive love between Catherine and Heathcliff which brings destruction to the people around them. In "Wuthering Heights", plot affects the main characters and this brings major changes in the lives of every character that takes part in the actions going on in Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. The events take place between the houses of Earnshaw and Linton. The effects of capitalism and industrialization in the 18th and 19th centuries and society's demands about money, economy and social status can be clearly seen by means of the changing relationships and intentions of individuals throughout the novel.

To start with, as we take the environment surrounding Wuthering Heights into consideration, we see that the harsh, severe weather shapes both Wuthering Heights and the people living in it. The house Wuthering Heights takes its name from the nature enclosing it. Wuthering describes "a wind that blows loudly and strongly"¹. Heights means "an area of hilly or mountainous terrain, especially one that is noticeably elevated above the surrounding region"².

'Wuthering' being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there at all times, indeed; one may guess the power of the north wind blowing the edge, by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. (Bronte, page 2)

¹ http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_561511754/wuthering.html

² http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_/heights.html

It is seen in the novel that Bronte builds the house of the Earnshaws, *Wuthering Heights*, above hills and mountains, in a terrain that takes winds blowing noisily and it is surrounded by moors, which makes it very difficult to reach Gimmerton. On the other hand, the house of the Lintons, Thrushcross Grange, is "a large farmhouse or a country house with other buildings such as stables or barns attached to it"³. To sharpen the contrast, Bronte builds up Thrushcross Grange in a terrain that is less affected by the winds and not surrounded by the moors, and which is in a place from which it is easier to reach Gimmerton. Eventually, it can be concluded from the environment surrounding them that these two houses are in sharp contrast; *Wuthering Heights* is in harsh conditions and isolated from society more with the help of both moors and hills, whereas Thrushcross Grange is in more lively conditions and not much isolated from Gimmerton society.

In addition to this, The Moors play a big role in both connecting *Wuthering Heights* and Thrushcross Grange and also separating them from the village of Gimmerton and its society. This isolation from village people's society and being bound to each other, causes the combination of the gothic and romantic elements in the novel and their effects on the characters in the novel to be obviously seen. Even more, relationships in Thrushcross Grange and in *Wuthering Heights*, the differences between characters' behaviour in these two houses also emphasizes the romantic and gothic elements, where Thrushcross Grange represents romantic elements and *Wuthering Heights* represents gothic elements. Effects of gothic elements such as haunted houses, dark corridors and winding basements in *Wuthering Heights* and the extreme landscapes of the moors, strongly blowing winds and rugged mountains surrounding *Wuthering Heights*, give misery and gloom to the love and lead to the

³ http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary_/grange.html

isolation between the obsessive demonic hero Heathcliff and the passionate Catherine. These gothic elements also shape the strong love between Catherine and Heathcliff and make them bound strongly and passionately to each other. On the other hand, the romantic elements such as soft nature in Thrushcross Grange and kind relationships between individuals, are used as illustrations of smooth love between Catherine and Edgar. In addition to this, romantic elements such as class difference and the demand for good behaviour in society are explained through Edgar, Isabella and Cathy in Thrushcross Grange. Bronte uses this contrast of elements as a way to distinguish the different types of relationships and loves in Heights and Grange. Furthermore, Bronte applies gothic elements in the novel to sharpen Heathcliff's isolation and romantic elements to stress the importance of the society's demands on relationships. All in all, the circumstances and contrasts between these two houses shape the atmosphere in these houses. This shapes the attitude of people brought up in different atmospheres to be excessively different from each other.

SECTION II –CONCEPT OF ISOLATION

"I, who had determined to hold myself independent of all social intercourse, and thanked my stars that, at length, I had lighted on a spot where it was next to impracticable..." (Bronte, page 22). Lockwood defines Wuthering Heights' isolation from the society with the words above, which also explain the isolation of the setting of "Wuthering Heights" from society and its values.

In Wuthering Heights setting, family life and the cultural values of the family shape people who were brought up in it. The family of Mr. and Mrs. Earnshaw is pretty much isolated from the society in Gimmerton and they have no communication with people in Gimmerton because of the moors and rocks surrounding their home of Wuthering Heights. In addition to this, the sharp conditions that the family live in

make them considerably healthier and also resistant than other people living in that neighbourhood. These isolated circumstances make Hindley and Catherine live under the authority of their parents, without having any other friends to communicate with. After the little orphan, named Heathcliff, is introduced to the family, family life in Wuthering Heights changes.

Catherine and Hindley live under the guidance and love of their parents, but after Heathcliff arrives, the love of Mr. Earnshaw towards his own children changes and eventually Heathcliff becomes the favourite child of Mr. Earnshaw. This mostly affects Hindley and causes him to be very jealous of Heathcliff. He steadily abuses Heathcliff in order to take his revenge: *"They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room...I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it might be gone on the morrow."* (Bronte, page 26). All these events and the isolation of the place cause Heathcliff slowly to be alienated from the community surrounding him.

Catherine, in the beginning like everyone else in the house, does not like this little child but as Hindley leaves Wuthering Heights to study, their isolation makes them come closer and after all they become friends. Their natures are very much alike, they both love running wildly in the moors, seeking freedom and doing things together in the wild nature: *"But it was one of their chief amusements to run away to the moors in the morning and remain there all day, and the after punishment grew a mere thing to laugh at... Joseph might thrash Heathcliff till his arm ached; they forgot everything the minute they were together again..."* (Bronte, page 32). After the death of Mr. Earnshaw, educational and cultural authority upon them and the last role model to them disappears. Hindley does not represent any authority to either Catherine or Heathcliff. Instead of being a role model, he chooses to take his revenge on Heathcliff by degrading him and making him a servant.

In the beginning, Hindley's abuses and Heathcliff's low social status as a servant don't affect the relationship between Catherine and Heathcliff; they continue to live freely without any responsibility or any ambition to be equal to people around them. Heathcliff's isolation and separation from Catherine starts when they watch the Lintons secretly one night. They see the orderly family life in Thrushcross Grange which they lack in Wuthering Heights:

Ah! It was beautiful – a splendid place carpeted with crimson... a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre, and shimmering with little soft tapers... Shouldn't they have been happy? We should have thought ourselves in heaven! (Bronte, page 33)

This scene affects them very much, by making them want to live in that lovely place. His words also carry the suggestion that if they lived in a warm and lovely place like Thrushcross Grange rather than an isolated place like Wuthering Heights, he and Catherine would probably be calmer and happier. The signs of the effects of Grange and the first hints of a struggle between Heathcliff and Edgar, which will lead Heathcliff to be more isolated from society than he was with Catherine, is seen after the arrival of Catherine to Heights from Grange. When a dog bites Catherine's leg and Heathcliff is forced out of the house while Catherine stays inside, both their mental and physical separation begins.

During Catherine's visit to Thrushcross, she faces the cultural values and orderly family life of the Lintons, which is severely different from the life in Heights. The Lintons raise their children under their guidance and education. Besides that, they teach Edgar and Isabella good manners and the society's cultural values which are undergoing strong changes at that time. Their children become caring and loving under these circumstances, they are not wildly free as Catherine and Heathcliff and

also they have a bond with Gimmerton society and its values. Later on, Catherine starts to mark the differences between Heathcliff and Edgar Linton, which are mainly caused by the conditions they are brought up in and the impact of an unusual environment on Catherine.

Doubtless Catherine marked the difference between her friends, as one came in and the other went out. The contrast resembled what you see in exchanging a bleak, hilly, coal country for a beautiful fertile valley... He had a sweet, low manner of speaking, and pronounced his words as you do: that's less gruff than we talk here and softer. (Bronte, page 49)

These changes in Catherine's manners and thoughts are mainly the results of the 18th century English society's values, which are influenced by industrialization and capitalism. As a part of this society, besides his good education, politeness, good manners and the way he talks and dresses, Edgar Linton also affects Catherine with his social status and wealth. In order to be impressive and powerful, a man should possess Edgar Linton's qualities in the 18th century. However, Heathcliff is not educated, he is rude, wild and bad mannered and also degraded as a servant in Wuthering Heights. He has no social status, no money, education or inheritance rights. Many things, such as the demands of the society or Catherine's interest in social status and good manners, her ambition of becoming the most power-holding lady of the neighbourhood, affect her choice of Edgar to be her husband. Her love for Heathcliff becomes less important compared to the will for social status and respect that she gained at Thrushcross Grange:

I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now. (Bronte, page 57)

In conditions of poorness and degradation, Heathcliff knows that he can not impress Catherine and convince her to be his wife. Effects of circumstances like Hindley's mistreatment or money and social class and not having any inheritance rights, cause Heathcliff to be more and more isolated and revengeful. In order to earn power and respect, and also to be equal to people around him, Heathcliff disappears for three years and returns as a wealthy capitalist man. By making Heathcliff a part of the society he hates, a capitalist himself, and Catherine to be unhappy and dispirited in the life she chooses, Bronte draws a strong image that the obsessions and passionate love of one can bring destruction to everyone around him/her.

SECTION III- THE CONCEPT OF LOVE

Throughout the novel, Bronte portrays different types of lovers and feelings of characters to each other. First of them, and the most destructive one, is the passionate love between Catherine and Heathcliff, which grows wilder as they spend time together and also which is highly affected by the environment. Their love results from the unity of their souls. However, passion causes them to be torn apart and destroyed. On the other hand, the love which rises from these impacts with the surroundings, is the soft and kind love that Edgar Linton feels for Catherine which helps to break the unity of Catherine and Heathcliff. This love which doesn't fit her is punished in the end by the passionate love of Heathcliff.

After Mr. Earnshaw's death, the lack of educational and cultural authority and being isolated from the society give them the chance of growing wildly and spending all their time together without having any responsibility. This fact makes them to be bounded to each other and having the same souls causes them to share a feeling - love. Their love is as wild and free as themselves and the nature that they live in. Catherine and Heathcliff's unity breaks down when realize the big difference between

the Linton children and themselves. This is mainly caused by the contrast between environments surrounding the two houses and the values of the two families. The Earnshaws raise their children without the pressure of social values or status struggles. This independence allows Hindley, Catherine and Heathcliff to be pretty much wild and free individuals. On the other hand, the Lintons are more connected to social values, to have a rank and place in the society, which leads them to raise their children as more naive individuals who respect and obey the rules of the class they belong to. As they watch Edgar and Isabella Linton in their house and their fight over a dog, Catherine and Heathcliff become aware of the fact that their view of happiness and the Lintons' are so much different. For instance, Catherine and Heathcliff think that they are capable of being happy when they do things together, never fighting over things that they both want, whereas Edgar and Isabella are not much capable of seeking union and agreement between each other. This contrast between the behaviour of the Linton and the Earnshaw children are highlighted during Isabella and Edgar's fight over a puppy and Heathcliff's words: *"When would you catch me wishing to have what Catherine wanted? Or to find us by ourselves, seeking entertainment in yelling and sobbing and rolling on the ground divided by the whole room?"* (Bronte, page 33).

During her stay in Thrushcross Grange, Catherine enjoys her visit and slowly she learns the cultural values and good manners she lacks. This causes the change in her behaviour; her wildness disappears and she becomes closer to the Lintons. Through her friendship with the Lintons, she learns to be a lady, to be polite, tidy and careful about her appearance. This makes her to be different from the Catherine she used to be and cause her disconnection from Heathcliff as well. She slightly becomes the bridge between Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange and her wild,

irresponsible nature and bad manners which she used to have in Wuthering Heights leave their place to more naive manners and a caring nature. She is much more affected by Linton's politeness and kindness, while she also fills the lack of cultural education in her soul. This causes her to learn the cultural values that 18th century society demands, such as having good manners, good education and good looks.

Her change and becoming a connection between the two houses during her visit, also affect another important thing that shapes the future of the characters in the novel - her view about social classes. She feels and learns the importance of having a social status and wealth and this causes the changes of ideas about love and marriage. Bronte sets her novel in the 18th century, where capitalism and industrialization change the demands about money and economy, which bring along the substitution of the social structure and class values. In an environment affected by these interchanges, Catherine learns the value of marriage for social class and wealth, which she never cared or thought about in Wuthering Heights. Spending her time with Edgar and learning new values influences Catherine deeply and results in the appearance of another kind of love in the novel. Dissimilar to the obsessive love between Catherine and Heathcliff, Edgar's love is more pure, soft and kind, which does not include much passion or obsession. In addition to the difference of feelings that Catherine experiences between Edgar and Heathcliff, reasons for the appearance of her feelings for them are immoderately different too. During her conversation with Nelly Dean, Catherine expresses her intentions of marriage to Edgar for a good place on the social ladder and to become the most powerful lady in the neighbourhood: *"And he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest woman of the neighbourhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband."* (Bronte, page 55). In her conversation with Nelly Dean, Catherine also reveals her pursuit of union with

Heathcliff, whom she thinks is her soul. She has married Edgar only for his social status, for his politeness, kind manners and his youth. Being influenced by a circumstance that values politeness and joy, her love for Edgar appears around these values. On the other hand, her love for Heathcliff is shaped around her own house and her own wild nature, which makes her bonds with Heathcliff to be unbreakable and closer to her nature. However, being a connection between two different natures causes Catherine's love to be divided into two pieces, as one piece makes her marry Edgar for society's demands and to be powerful, the other piece remains obsessively connected to Heathcliff until she dies.

After Heathcliff's disappearance for three years, Bronte draws the action in her novel in a way which shows the impressions of two different environments on the characters. Different from the Catherine who married Edgar under the effect of different circumstances and values that she was not used to, the impact of a peaceful environment and unusual values on Catherine does not last long. In addition to this, Heathcliff returns as a rich, powerful and wealthy man, but the lessons he learned and the values he gained when he was away from his house, do not have lasting effects on Heathcliff. As soon as the two lovers unite again, they return to their obsessive nature, which causes their passionate love to reappear and destroy the lives of all the other characters.

Parallel to the impact of the setting on Catherine's feelings, Heathcliff also suffers from the isolation he grows up in and the effects of this isolation on his love. From the day he is brought to Wuthering Heights, his soul and his wishes are shaped by the circumstances, especially Hindley's hate for him and his ambition to make Heathcliff a worthless servant. He is forced to grow uneducated and rude, apart from society's values or any chance to be a gentleman. However, in order to be equal to

the people around them, it is very important to own land and to hold the power of money. If a gentle, kind man possesses these qualities, he is able to impress many people, just like Edgar Linton does. Edgar Linton is such a man, who lives in richness and power, along with good manners and social status. On the other hand, Heathcliff is just the opposite of him, an isolated, degraded and yet a passionate man. Being torn apart from the society and its demands results in him not having a place in the social classes or to own the right to be equal to the people around him. When Catherine returns from Thrushcross Grange as a young lady, Heathcliff realizes that his manners and his nature do not affect Catherine anymore and in order to impress her and earn her love again, he should gain power and be like Edgar: *"I wish I had light hair and a fair skin, and was dressed and behaved as well, and had a chance of being as rich as he will be!"* (Bronte, page 39) . At the end of his disappearance for three years, Heathcliff returns as a man who has managed to be equal to people around him, especially to Edgar. All these changes and Heathcliff's actions are driven by his obsessive love for Catherine and the effects of his alienation. However by behaving according to society's demands, which allows him to have a place in the social classes, Heathcliff believes that he can beat Edgar and unite with Catherine's love again. Nevertheless, both Heathcliff's past desires of owning Heights and Grange and his longing for taking revenge on Edgar Linton, result in his marriage with Isabella.

All in all, if it's looked at from two different perspectives, it can be said that the relationship and love between Catherine and Edgar Linton arose from the demands of social status and power and ends with the birth of a little child, Cathy. Anyhow, the impact of alienation, capitalism and a lack of social status causes Heathcliff and

Catherine's love to be pulled apart, resulting in the marriage of Heathcliff with Isabella and destruction of all the characters in the novel.

SECTION IV- CONCLUSION

By means of the changing feelings and intentions of the characters, Bronte portrays the impact of the setting and the environment on individuals that grow up together. Firstly, Bronte gives a general view of the setting of both Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, by showing the mere contrasts and differences between these houses, their buildings and their environment. The isolation of Wuthering Heights by means of moors and hills is strongly emphasized by Bronte, the contrasts between Thrushcross Grange's lively atmosphere and Wuthering Heights' melancholic climate attracts the reader's attention. Wuthering Heights is isolated from Gimmerton society and people living in Wuthering Heights have no communication with Gimmerton people, but Thrushcross Grange is very close to Gimmerton, thus does not have any difficulty such as being separated from the society. However people living in Thrushcross Grange are more affected by the change of the society in the 18th and 19th century, when compared to Wuthering Heights people. The changes in society's requests about money, status and the power of capitalism show their effects on Thrushcross Grange people. Thus effects of isolation, social classes and the modification of the society's values, play a big role on the relationships between the characters in the novel and finally result in their destruction. The importance of the setting and its effects on the relationships between Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange can be seen more clearly during the communication that starts from Catherine's visit to Thrushcross Grange to her decision of marriage to Edgar. During this process, 18th and 19th century variations and different social structures between the two houses show their effects by means of lovers and isolated people.

Isolation and alienation mostly affect Heathcliff and give him his desire to be equal with the people around him, whereas Catherine's isolation from society ends with her bonding with Edgar and the cultural values she learns from him. Effects of capitalism play a big role on the characters in the novel as well, where demand for money and power makes Heathcliff end up as a capitalist who has lost all his feelings except his obsessive love and will for revenge, and where passion for social status and a comfortable life makes Catherine's soul to be imprisoned in her own body. In the end, Catherine's infelicity and Heathcliff's obsessions and his isolation drive them to unhappiness and give them the desire to merge in the after life. Their actions in order to unite again bring destruction to everyone in the novel. This destruction arises from the obsessive love between Catherine and Heathcliff and reaches a climax with Catherine's choice of Edgar and Heathcliff's disappearance for three years, ending with Catherine's death and Heathcliff's self-destruction.

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