

TED ANKARA COLLEGE FOUNDATION HIGH SCHOOL

GROUP 2

ENGLISH B EXTENDED ESSAY

Candidate Name: İzgi Başak Nalbant

Candidate Number: D1129051

Supervisor: Enise Yavuz

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Research Question: "In Wuthering Heights, how do the concepts of revenge, prejudice and class distinction shape the main characters' relationships, and lives."

Abstract

The purpose of this extended essay is to examine, how the themes and related concepts which are analysed in Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights effect the overall story and main characters' relationships. As Wuthering Heights is one of the classics and it reflects the class distinction at the beginning of the 19th century, the story and the themes impressed me very much. After the researches I have made, I decided to expand my researches and write my extended essay on this novel. Throughout the essay the outcomes of the social differences, effects of the revenge and prejudice are examined in order to understand the general ideas and themes of the novel. Especially, main characters' ideas and points of view are analysed. Furthermore, the effects of these ideas and how they contribute to the novel are discussed.

(Word Count: 135)

Introduction

Social class distinction and the outcomes of these distinction such as, insuppressible prejudice, hate and desire for taking revenge play an important role in shaping a person's life and they affect any person's relationships in a great deal. In Emily Bronte's novel: Wuthering Heights, these concepts are examined throughout the story. The effects of these concepts can be clearly seen in the relationship between the main characters of the novel: Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw. 'Undestroyable love' of Heathcliff and his powerful desire to take revenge are the main feelings and emotions that build the entire novel. The emotions directly affect the events that take place in the novel. The title of the book 'Wuthering Heights' is the name of the place where the story starts. The story of Catherine and Heathcliff is narrated by the servant of the house, Mrs Dean to a stranger, Mr Lockwood. In this novel, class distinction, desire for taking revenge and prejudice are strongly associated with each other and they form the basic problem in Heathcliff's life, the people around him and his relationship with Catherine. As the British author, Thomas Fuller said; *"Let him who expects one class of society to prosper in the highest degree, while the other is in distress, try whether one side of the face can smile while the other is pinched."*¹ In this novel, the main aim of Heathcliff is to be the one who enjoys life by giving harm to the people who humiliated Heathcliff due to the fact that he is from a lower class.

In the 1800s in Northern England, society had lower and upper social classes. The story begins in the middle of the 1770s when Heathcliff comes to the Wuthering Heights. The two main families of the novel are, Earnshaws who

are the owner of the Wuthering Heights and Lintons who are the owner of the Thruscross Grange. Children of these families are raised under very well circumstances. They are educated, they have servants. Each of them has a chance to be 'a spoiled and ignorant child'. The story examines social class distinction and effects of this distinction towards the behaviour of the person and his surroundings and his relationships. Owning a land, having a property, being wealthy or having a powerful family background are the major factors for a respectful class in the societies.

Outcomes of the social differences

When the main character of the story, Heathcliff, first comes to Wuthering Heights he has nothing not even a surname or a possession. After Mr Earnshaw passes away, he loses his chance to get educated because of Mr Earnshaw's son, Hindley Earnshaw. Heathcliff is insulted and despised by everyone except his best friend Catherine, who is also his eternal love. He is known as 'a wicked boy' and he cannot change this impression about him until he leaves The Wuthering Heights and comes back again. Although Heathcliff has never been insulted by Catherine before, Catherine's injury and her inevitable stay at Thruscross Grange has altered her behaviour very much. She begins to look down on her best friend, Heathcliff. *'She bestowed seven or eight kisses on his cheek within the second, and then stopped, and drawing back, burst into laugh, exclaiming 'Why, how very black and cross you look! And how – how funny and grim!'* (Bronte, pg. 37). She realizes the differences

between Heathcliff and herself. When she is a guest at Grange, she feels like a young lady and is impressed by the astonishing life that Lintons have. In the story Lintons symbolize the 'higher social class' as they are wealthy and well-educated. One of the reason for Heathcliff's huge ruthlessness to Lintons is because of his suffering from the attitudes of the society owing to the class distinction. Lintons' life is far different from the life of Catherine and Heathcliff. Therefore, one of the main reasons that Catherine decides to marry Edgar Linton is the esteemed position of the Linton family in the social life. *"And he will be rich, and I shall like to be the greatest women of the neighbourhood, and I shall be proud of having such a husband."* (Bronte, pg.55). Even though she prefers Edgar Linton as her husband, she emphasizes that she and Heathcliff are having one soul together. Yet, her selfish manners give lots of harm not only to everyone around her but also herself. Heathcliff leaves Wuthering Heights when he hears Catherine's approval to Edgar Linton's proposal of marriage. If Heathcliff were educated or if he were in the upper class of the society, he would be together with Catherine and they would live happily ever after. Hindley Earnshaw's oppressive behaviour towards Heathcliff makes him lose all his self-confidence. When Heathcliff leaves Wuthering Heights and comes back his new life seems to be fulfilled with taking revenge from all of the people who had insulted him.

Heathcliff's life can be separated into two main parts. First part starts when he comes to Wuthering Heights and lasts when he leaves this place. Before he leaves, he is silent to the great injustice around him. His coming back to Wuthering Heights, that can be classified as the second part of his life

is the beginning of his new cruel and pitiless life. He seems he has managed to rebel to his fate and settled his life in the upper side of the social classes. He is obsessed with possessions and properties. He has gained some money from somewhere, he has a high potential to be the 'respectful person' as he has become 'Mr Heathcliff'. " ... *I meditated this plan - just to have one glimpse of your face: a stare of surprise, perhaps, and pretended pleasure; afterwards settle my score with Hindley; and then prevent the law by doing execution on myself. ... Nay, you'll not drive me off again. You were really sorry for me, were you? Well, there was cause. I've fought through a bitter life since I last heard your voice; and you must forgive me, for I struggled only for you!*" (Bronte pg.70). After a very short time, Heathcliff takes all of Hindley Earnshaw's belongings and becomes the landlord of Wuthering Heights and he arranges all his plans for owning all of the belongings of Lintons(owners of the Thruscross Grange) too. Although he gains a much more powerful identification, it does not bring any real happiness or peace to him. In contrast to all of these emotions, Heathcliff's life is now filled with 'hatred and cruelty'. Certainly his uncontrollable hatred affects all the people around him, his love Catherine, his wife Isabel, Hindley's son Hareton and Heathcliff's son Linton.

Another difference between the upper and lower classes are 'the power' they have in the society. Power symbolizes the superiority as the powerful ones have much more chance to control the others. If someone is powerless as he/she has not the proper criteria for being the dominant and the powerful one, he or she cannot rebel against the society or against the people who have a very bad attitude towards them. After Mr Earnshaw's passing away Heathcliff

is silent to every injustice that he has to struggle in his life. However, after some point he manages to run away which is a kind of rebellion against the society. When he comes back he becomes the dominant and powerful figure in the society, as he becomes a wealthy man and seems like a gentleman. He has a huge power which is accepted by everyone in the society. Nevertheless, the prejudice for him seems not to alter. Edgar Linton still believes that Heathcliff does not deserve to be taken as a gentleman. If Linton understood the 'hatred' that surrounds Heathcliff's heart, he would not give permission to Heathcliff's visit at the very beginning.

Effects of the 'revenge' concept

As it can be understood from all the manners of Heathcliff, 'hate' is not the only hurting outcome of social class distinction. 'Revenge' or even the dream of taking revenge one day from the ones who insulted him or who refused him is the main aim of Heathcliff. Revenge is one of the requirements for him. Therefore, he behaves as if he can not live without calming down his desire for revenge. He lives only for attacking other people and ruining their lives. The only thing that might stop him is reaching his aim which is hurting other people. He is so obsessed with his future plans that would give a lot of harm to everyone around him, he does not even think that the things that he does, will ruin her soulmate's; Catherine's and his life too. *"I want you to be aware that I know you have treated me infernally-infernally! Do you hear? And if you flatter yourself that I don't perceive it, you're a fool; and if you fancy I'll*

suffer unrevenged, I'll convince you of the contrary, in a very little while!" (Bronte, pg.81). His heart is broken by Catherine. He is furious at her. Hence, his emotions towards her are powerful and undestroyable. He sees Catherine as she is as naive as an angel.

There are two main reasons why Heathcliff wants to marry Isabella Linton (little sister of Edgar Linton); first he wants the inheritance of the Linton family and second he intends to hurt Edgar Linton. Both of these reasons can be classified as the result of the 'lack of attentiveness' during his childhood. In addition to this, 'searching for a respectful place in the society', 'being the most powerful one' are the basic reasons for his decision about marriage. The taste of the revenge and all the factors which cause this revenge play a vital role in the novel, in the basic events and also in Heathcliff and Catherine's relationship. In a way, Heathcliff destroys the possibility of taking back his soulmate, Catherine from his enemy, Edgar Linton. His cruel behaviour and his fight with Catherine's husband, break Catherine's heart deeply. Heathcliff's aim is not to hurt Catherine and also Heathcliff remarks that Catherine is not the person that he'll take revenge. However, Heathcliff seems that he cannot distinguish the behaviour that will harm Catherine and the other people.

One of the most dramatic thing during Heathcliff's childhood, is that he loses his chance to be an educated person. After Mr Earnshaw passes away his son, Hindley gets the opportunity to behave Heathcliff as a servant and does not let him be with Catherine or have education. Like possession, 'education' and 'knowledge' are also very valuable terms for admiration in the society.

Hindley Earnshaw behaves him so cruelly that Heathcliff is not able to gain any personal skills or even have a strong personality. Since he is a little child he is eager to plan a way of revenge for Hindley Earnshaw. *"I'm trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don't care how long I wait, if I can only do it at last. I hope he will not die before I do!"* (Bronte pg.42). As a result he reaches his target and takes all the possessions he has. He behaves Hindley's son, Hareton as a worthless person in front of Hindley's eyes. Hareton is very similar to young Heathcliff but this time Heathcliff is the one who gives harm instead of being the mistreated one. Heathcliff makes Hareton a gardener in his house: Wuthering Heights. Actually, Hareton should have been the owner of this house as he is the inheritor of Earnshaw's. However, the house, Wuthering Heights belongs to Mr Heathcliff now. Especially, when Hareton meets Cathy (Catherine's daughter) and when Cathy looks down on him Hareton feels like Heathcliff feels once upon a time. Heathcliff wants everyone to understand the cruelty that he has to resist in his life, especially in the first part of his life. Heathcliff prefers or he has been forced to be the bitter man and the crushing one. The conditions of his life forced him to gain this kind of identity. After reading the book, the reader still has a question mark in his/her mind. Is Heathcliff a really bad person? Did he have to behave like this? Surely, the environmental factors and irreversable circumstances force him to behave like this. However, living for revenge or harming everyone around give pleasure to nobody including him. As a result, he might choose another way for the second part of his life. *"It is a poor conclusion, is it not", he observed, having brooded a while on the scene he had just witnessed. ... My old enemies*

have not beaten me; now would be the precise time to revenge myself on their representatives: I could do it; and none could hinder me. But where is the use? ... I have lost the faculty of enjoying their destructions, and I am too idle to destroy for nothing.' (Bronte, pg.234). Never turning back could be another way, which is a way absolutely gives less harm to Catherine and Catherine's life. Nevertheless, he cannot leave his love, Catherine forever. Also he feels that he has to poison the lives of all people that poisoned his life before.

Effects of the 'prejudice' concept

One of the outcomes of the social class difference is the 'prejudice' especially for the lower class people. Prejudice is the immutable negative ideas against someone and usually it is a kind of discrimination. Heathcliff is not able to alter any of the unfairable ideas related with him. Lintons and Earnshaw's (except Mr Earnshaw) behaviour against Heathcliff can be interpreted as discrimination and their opinions, ideas about Heathcliff is a proof for their 'prejudice' to Heathcliff. Heathcliff's different appearance and language irritate and annoy Lintons when they first see him. *'I declare he is that strange acquisition my late neighbour made, in his journey to Liverpool – a little Lascar, or an American or Spanish castaway.'* (Bronte, pg.35). Heathcliff believes that like Hindley Earnshaw, Lintons also play a huge role in the separation of Catherine and Heathcliff. They have a constant prejudice for him, they call him *'a wicked boy'* and they are not pleased with his speech or

even himself. According to Heathcliff, Edgar Linton is the one who steals his love from him.

In the story the love of the Catherine and Heathcliff are so powerful that even 'the death' cannot separate the lovers. Both of them believe and know that they are having the same soul in their bodies. However, this is not enough for them to be together in their life times. If there weren't an undestroyable prejudice for Heathcliff, they would be together. Even Catherine has a little prejudice about her best friend, she does not believe in Heathcliff or their future. She expects to have a comfortable and respectful life and she prefers to marry Edgar Linton rather than Heathcliff. Real love cannot beat the admiration and desire for possession and esteem. '*It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now, so he shall never know how I love him: and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am.*' (Bronte, pg.57). Her choice consists a lot of concepts, prejudice, pressure of the society on a person, social class distinction. It is like the game of dominoes, one of them affects the other one due to the fact that they are so associated with each other. These elements form the reason of the decisions that have been made. In this story, this relationship can be seen very clearly. For instance, prejudice affects Catherine's decision. She prefers to be with Edgar Linton, they get married. Catherine loses Heathcliff permanently.

According to Catherine's point of view, Heathcliff and her love for each other is so real and nobody cannot change it. She is very committed to Heathcliff, she is capable of defending Heathcliff against everyone including her husband. Catherine defends Heathcliff when he throws away the apple

source at Edgar's body or when her husband and Heathcliff have a quarrel with each other. Although she is attached to Heathcliff, Catherine is aware of the fact that Heathcliff has become a very merciless person and he cannot give up all the plans he has and forget what has happened in the past. She tries very hard to change Isabella Linton's mind who begins to fall in love with Heathcliff. Catherine knows that Heathcliff can only use Isabella for his merciless plans. *"He is not a rough diamond— a pearl- containing oyster of a rustic: he's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man. ... I know he couldn't love a Linton; and yet he'd be quiet capable of marrying your fortune and expectations."* (Bronte, pg.74). Beside her love for Heathcliff, she seems that she really loves his husband, Edgar Linton too. The reasons that she has counted to Mrs Dean for marrying Edgar Linton are very weak and quite unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, the first three years of their marriage, is very peaceful and Catherine is very pleased with her new life. Then, Heathcliff comes and everything changes. Catherine does not want to leave Edgar Linton or does not think being 'lovers' with Heathcliff when he comes back. She seems as if she were enjoying Heathcliff's companionship and this friendship is enough for her. However, when she gets ill, she reveals out all of the feelings that has been suppressed by her for years. *"If I've done wrong, I'm dying for it. It is enough! You left me too: but I won't upbraid you! I forgive you. Forgive me!"* (Bronte, pg.117). Their final conversation is very touching and it persuades the reader to believe in their immortal love. Once more, reader feels that Catherine and Heathcliff are sharing 'one soul together'. According to Nelly Dean, the most unfavorable qualification of Catherine is that she is too selfish and she believes that the

world is turning around her. She might have tried to keep away from Heathcliff after his return in order to protect her family from Heathcliff's cruelty. However, she wants everyone to love her, care about her. That's why she does not give much importance to Edgar Linton's ideas. It damages his relationship with her husband and also with her sister-in-law, Isabella Linton and with Heathcliff. She is not able to form a pleasing relationship with anyone around her, including Nelly Dean. Catherine's curiosity and enthusiasm about the upper social classes make Catherine to lose Heathcliff, her soulmate. *"Nelly, I am Heathcliff! He's always, always in my mind: not as any pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself, but as my own being."* (Bronte, pg.59).

Heathcliff sets his mind on the revenge that he'll take from Edgar Linton. He marries Edgar's sister, behaves her as if she were not a human-being. He forces Edgar Linton's daughter, Cathy to marry his son, Linton. He makes cruel plans and owns all of the possessions and inheritance of Edgar Linton. He gets everything that he can from Mr Linton. However, he can not get back Catherine. She is the only one that has a meaning in Heathcliff's life. Unfortunately, he has to suffer in all his life time because he lost his love, his soul. His planned revenge does not bring him any happiness at all. Catherine's death can not dissuade him from his bitterness. It just makes him much more reckless. He gives his all love to Catherine and nobody else, not even to his own son Linton Heathcliff. He is a sick and spoiled boy. Heathcliff just standed Linton for using him on his cruel revenge plan. This can be a valid proof for his obsession related with revenge and how he hates everything except Catherine.

After Catherine's death, he seems like he is far away from being a human.

"Be with me always -take any form- drive me mad! Only do not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! It is unutterable! I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!" (Bronte, pg.122)

Second 'love' relationship of the book, that resembles the first one, is between Hareton Earnshaw and Cathy Linton (Catherine's daughter). This young couple is similar to Catherine and Heathcliff in several ways, the main reason for this similarity is the social class difference between them. After Catherine's death, for Edgar Linton, her daughter Cathy is the most valuable person. She has always Nelly with her. She is accustomed to 'caring' and 'love'. She is raised under very good conditions, she is very well-educated. Even though Heathcliff seems that he can do everything for Catherine, he has not any sympathy for his love's daughter, Cathy. He forces her to marry his son. He imprisons her. In addition to this, he separates Cathy from her father and from Mrs. Dean. His heart is like a stone nobody has a power to stop him until he realises young Cathy and Hareton's love for each other. He sees love, he sees Catherine, he sees himself and Catherine when he looks at this young couple. In contrast to Cathy, Hareton is ignored by his father and he is familiar with 'disregard' and 'antipathy'. He does not have a chance to get educated, he was so ignorant. He hardly knows the meaning of 'love'. When they first meet, Cathy looks down on Hareton, she does not even want to accept that Hareton is her cousin. However, the major difference between this young couple and the old couple 'Heathcliff and Catherine', is the end of their relationships. Hareton and Cathy manage to overcome the difficulties of

'different social classes' they belong to. Young Cathy realizes that they can deal with this problem. *"I've found out, Hareton that I want – that I should like you to be my cousin, now, if you had not grown so cross to me, and so rough."* (Bronte, pg.227). She helps Hareton for developing his reading. Their 'love story' finishes with a happy ending opposite to Catherine and Heathcliff. The huge similarities between these two relationships make reader to compare these couples. It is a way for convincing the reader that there might be another ending for poor Heathcliff and Catherine. They might have surmounted 'the society pressure or the consequences of the social class difference'.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Emily Bronte examines the social class difference and questions its results in her novel. The plot and the complicated relationships in the novel deal with the basic problem of the relationships especially in the nineteenth century. The story examines most of the reasons that causes differences between people, how people react them or how much it effects people's life. The bitterness of Heathcliff and his cruelty make the reader believe that the social classes might change a person's life and behaviour completely. His coming back to Wuthering Heights just for his desire for revenge and the events that pursues each other is a sensible way of showing the outcomes of the difference in social classes. Also the thrilling relationship of Heathcliff and Catherine, their eternal loyalty for each other and the main

themes of the novel, are combined with each other so successfully. The reasons and the outcomes of the main themes are linked to each other and they formed the basic problems of the relationship in this novel. Unchangeable prejudice makes Heathcliff to feel insulted and fulfilled with hatred. This 'hatred' causes his desire for taking revenge. As a matter of fact, both of these themes are the main conclusions of the social class distinctions. If there had not been this kind of huge class differences between poor and rich, ignorant and well-educated, there would not be any reason for Heathcliff's rebellion against life and society. When all of these powerful factors come together they alter people's decisions, point of views and their lifes completely. In this love story, the main characters', Heathcliff's and Catherine's lifes completely change with the effects of social class distinctions, invariable prejudice for lower classes and desire for taking revenge.

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