

# Wuthering Heights

## *Sample Analytical Paper Topics*

The following paper topics are designed to test your understanding of the novel as a whole and to analyze important themes and literary devices. Following each question is a sample outline to help you get started.

### TOPIC #1

*Wuthering Heights* can be viewed as the struggle between civilized, conventional human behavior and its wild, anarchistic side. Put simply, the novel contrasts the good and evil in human nature.

#### *Outline*

- I. **Thesis Statement:** *In Wuthering Heights, Brontë depicts the clash between good and evil in human nature.*
- II. **Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights as representatives of good and evil**
  - A. The Grange—gracious and comfortable; its residents, Edgar and Isabella are conventional, kind, and well-mannered.
  - B. The Heights—dark and foreboding; its residents Heathcliff, Hindley, and Catherine are selfish and wild.
- III. **Characters as contrasts in human nature**
  - A. Catherine and Edgar—she makes him miserable with her wild scenes and passionate attachment to Heathcliff, while she cannot thrive in his world of gentleness and order.
  - B. Isabella and Heathcliff—Her romantic innocence is destroyed by his calculated use of her in order to gain his revenge.
- IV. **Conclusion**
  - A. Hareton—redeemed from the Earnshaw taint of savage brutishness by Cathy's love, is restored to his position by Heathcliff's death.
  - B. Cathy—retaining her father's noble qualities, she submerges her mother's impetuous nature as she matures.
  - C. The irreconcilable aspects of good and evil are resolved by the successful futures of the second generation family members.

### TOPIC #2

Brontë is unusual as an author in her refusal to make value judgements about her characters. The reader is not entirely certain if Heathcliff is meant to be viewed as demonic or sympathetic. Decide which view the text best supports.

#### *Outline*

- I. **Thesis Statement:** *Heathcliff is primarily a one-dimensional character, entirely evil, incapable of goodness.*
- II. **Heathcliff's evil**
  - A. Obsession with revenge
  - B. Cold-blooded ruination of Hindley

- C. Destruction of Edgar's contentment
- D. Brutality towards Isabella and Linton
- E. Cheating Hareton and Cathy of their inheritances

### III. Conclusion

- A. Heathcliff dies because his capacity to do further evil wanes.
- B. His spirit still haunts the moors, implying that he has never found peace.

## TOPIC #3

From an early age, Heathcliff has experienced injustices. First, he was an orphan, living on the streets of Liverpool, when Mr. Earnshaw found him. The rest of the Earnshaw family is appalled of the idea of Heathcliff joining their family. Hindley is cruel to Heathcliff as a child, and Edgar refuses to allow Heathcliff and Catherine to be friends. Heathcliff's revenge later in life on the Earnshaw family may be justified.

### Outline

- I. **Thesis Statement:** *Heathcliff, while embodying the evil side of human nature, was driven to revenge by the ill treatment he received.*
- II. **Injustices done to Heathcliff**
  - A. Hindley's childhood cruelty
  - B. Edgar's social disparagement
  - C. Hindley's humiliating treatment as an adult
  - D. Edgar's refusal to allow his friendship with Catherine
- III. **Conclusion**
  - A. Heathcliff's evil nature can, to some extent, be justified.
  - B. His humanity is redeemed by his capacity to love Catherine.
  - C. Heathcliff's evil is revoked by his disinclination to interfere with Hareton's and Cathy's happiness.
  - D. He attains peace in the fulfillment of an afterlife spent with Catherine.

## TOPIC #4

In *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë employs stylistic devices such as symbolism and recurring motifs.

### Outline

- I. **Thesis Statement:** *Brontë employs use of symbolism and motifs to add dimension of depth to *Wuthering Heights*.*
- II. **Symbolism**
  - A. Thrushcross Grange symbolizes civilization and gentility, with its well-tended grounds, gentle inhabitants, and gracious atmosphere.
  - B. *Wuthering Heights* symbolizes decay and savagery, whipped by bitter northern winds, with its brutish residents and foreboding atmosphere.
- III. **Motifs**
  - A. Dogs
    - 1. Heathcliff's dog attacks Lockwood.
    - 2. Mr. Linton's dog attacks Catherine.
    - 3. Heathcliff hangs Isabella's dog.

4. Little Hareton emulates Heathcliff by hanging a litter of puppies.
5. Hareton is treated like a puppy, either patted or whipped.

B. Windows

1. Catherine's ghost tries to enter through a window.
2. Catherine awaits Heathcliff while sitting by a window.
3. Heathcliff holds vigil under Catherine's window.
4. Window blows open at Heathcliff's death, suggesting the freeing of his tortured spirit.

**IV. Conclusion:** Stylistic devices such as symbolism and recurring motifs add a depth of understanding to the novel.