

**“Brontë’s effective use of a range of contrasts helps to create a darkly fascinating world in the course of her novel, *Wuthering Heights*”**

**Discuss this statement, supporting your answer with reference to the novel.**

In Emily Brontë’s gothic romance ‘Wuthering Heights’, there is a constant contrast between good and evil, light and darkness, love and hate, each of which ultimately contribute in creating a darkly fascinating world. I believe that its gothic elements also contribute to this dark world, where the dead refuse to let the living be and always find ways of coming back to haunt them. In this essay, I will be discussing the specific contrasts in the novel and how they all assist in creating and shaping the definitive darkness seen throughout ‘Wuthering Heights’. This includes the contrast between Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, each of the characters and the living versus the dead.

From Mr. Lockwood’s description in chapter one, it can be observed that Wuthering Heights has a menacing, foreboding air about it. Its location on the dark, misty moors, gives the weather-beaten farmhouse an air of mystery, along with a supernatural aura of evil. Once we learn about the history of the house and its inhabitants, it becomes clear that the house itself personifies the cold, dark and evil side of life. Sturdy, substantial and stubborn, the house is at one with the surrounding moors; fierce but unchanging. It may be a house, but it is certainly not a home for any of the characters that occupy its residence. Thrushcross Grange, on the other hand, is the antithesis of Wuthering Heights. It is bucolic and tranquil, a stark contrast to the dark, brooding tactility of Wuthering Heights. The Grange represents the tamed, more refined and civilised life of the Lintons. On an ill-advised attempt to spy on the Lintons as children, Catherine and Heathcliff are caught, and Catherine is injured. When Heathcliff returns to Wuthering Heights, he tells Nelly *“Both of us were able to look in by standing on the basement, and clinging on the ledge, and we saw — ah! it was beautiful”* This exuberant description by Heathcliff shows a warm, wealthy household in complete contrast to the Heights,

just as the characters themselves are more composed and cultured compared to the almost “savage” inhabitants of Wuthering Heights. Unlike Wuthering Heights, it is “*elegant and comfortable*”, reflecting the nature of Edgar Linton himself, who is very gentle, polite, and well mannered. However, this cultured, supposedly luxurious image, unravels later on in the novel when Catherine marries Edgar Linton and moves into Thrushcross Grange. Catherine is enchanted by the elegance and grace of the Lintons and their house, but she has the sense to realise that in order to retain her place as a young lady in society, she must distance herself from Heathcliff, at least publicly. Her choice of husband confines her to the propriety of The Grange, rather than with her true love, Heathcliff. Interestingly, the houses seem to switch roles over the course of the novel, as slowly the dark influence of Wuthering Heights takes over the tranquility and light of the Grange. The darker world of Wuthering Heights starts to seep into the bones of Thrushcross Grange, as the respective inhabitants' come to blows. However, in the end, the light of Thrushcross Grange prevails as the conflict of two generations of Earnshaws and Lintons is resolved, by the marriage of young Catherine Linton and Hareton Earnshaw.

It could be said that Wuthering Heights is structured around contrasting characters. Yet, their lives are all intertwined and connected. An example of two contrasting characters is Heathcliff and Edgar Linton. Heathcliff and Edgar are perfect foils for one another, opposite in just about every way. Edgar is blue-eyed, fair, mild-mannered, and tolerant to the point of being a pushover, especially when it comes to Catherine. Heathcliff is dark, overcast, and full of seething anger and hatred. When Edgar Linton first visits Catherine at Wuthering Heights, Nelly remarks on how distinctly he differed from Heathcliff, “*The contrast resembled what you see in exchanging a bleak, hilly, coal country, for a beautiful fertile valley; and his voice and greeting were as opposite as his aspect.*” This, once again, references the darker world of Wuthering Heights. We know very little of Heathcliff’s early childhood, but it is safe to assume that it was far from pleasant, along with Hindley’s constant physical and psychological abuse. Both he and Catherine experienced a childhood devoid of emotion and love. Heathcliff’s mysterious past is somewhat alluring, and it adds to the gothic and dark feeling within the novel. The only thing that Heathcliff and Hindley seem to share is a love for Catherine, and even the nature of their love is sharply contrasted. Heathcliff’s love for Catherine is deeply rooted, a soulmate connection, whereas Edgar’s love is all forgiving and slightly deluded. Even in death, Edgar and Heathcliff are at odds. Heathcliff bribes the sexton to bury him alongside Catherine, which most likely had

Edgar Linton turning in his (relatively new) grave on her other side. However, it portrays how deeply fascinating Heathcliff's character is, in comparison to the slightly boring, unfortunate Edgar, *"I'd not exchange, for a thousand lives, my condition here, for Edgar Linton's at Thrushcross Grange"*

Death is never far away in 'Wuthering Heights', both literally and figuratively. Personally, I believe that the contrast lies between the living and the dead. From beginning to end, there's no avoiding the supernatural, which aids in creating a darkly fascinating world. The first encounter of a "ghost" is in Lockwood's dream. He dreams that he hears a tapping at the window and is grabbed by the *"little, ice cold hand"* of Catherine's ghost. He attempts to pull away, but the hand won't let him go, begging to be let in. This sets a precedent for the rest of the novel, the dead will simply not let the living live. When Heathcliff arrives in the room after hearing Lockwood's screams, it is clear that Catherine's ghost is a very real presence to him. This, for me, suggests that the significance of ghosts in Wuthering Heights is the longing Heathcliff and Catherine have for one another. It has somehow managed to become a force of nature more powerful than death. As Catherine is contemplating her marriage proposal to Edgar, Catherine tells Nelly about a dream she had about her death, *"Heaven did not seem to be my home; and I broke my heart with weeping to come back to earth"* It is strange that Catherine would consider dying during what should be a happy time in her life, but the dream serves two purposes. It is a metaphor for how Catherine feels about leaving Wuthering Heights and, more ominously, it foreshadows Catherine's death. After the initial shock of Catherine's death, Heathcliff implores her to haunt him, *"I cannot live without my life! I cannot live without my soul!"* He certainly got what he asked for, as the "ghost" of Catherine follows him day and night. Whether or not this is purely psychological on Heathcliff's behalf is unclear, but I believe it is what drives him to his eventual death and, of course, adds to the dark world Bronte created. When young Cathy Linton moves into Wuthering Heights years later, her resemblance to Catherine overwhelms Heathcliff, reminding him of his loss. He spends the entire night walking outside and upon his return, tells Nelly that *"Last night I was on the threshold of hell. Today, I am within sight of my heaven."* Heathcliff refuses all food, demands that he be left entirely alone and appears to be communicating with an invisible apparition. The next morning, Nelly uses another key to get into his room, finding him dead. In the night, Heathcliff had flung open the windows and let the rain come in. This is strikingly similar to Lockwood's first night at Wuthering Heights, when the ghost of Catherine tries to enter through the window. I believe that this signals the conclusion of

the dark world of Wuthering Heights and allows the light of Thrushcross Grange (Cathy Linton) to infiltrate its walls, once and for all.

In conclusion, Brontë's use of contrast in Wuthering Heights does help to create a darkly fascinating world. The contrasting settings of the dark Wuthering Heights and the bucolic Thrushcross Grange initiates this, closely followed by the disparity of Heathcliff and Edgar Linton. Brontë often blurs the lines between life and death, most obviously through the appearance of Catherine's ghost but also demonstrates how the living suffer more of a hell than the dead. This range of contrast engages the reader and enthrals them by creating a darkly fascinating world between the pages of Wuthering Heights, *"I have to remind myself to breathe -- almost to remind my heart to beat!"*