

Wuthering Heights: Main Themes

Good versus Evil: -

Wuthering Heights explores religious notions of good and evil as its primary theme, supported by subthemes like judgment versus pity, love and obsession, and violence and revenge, all rooted in religious concepts. The narrative illustrates individual choices leading to either goodness or wickedness, where qualities such as pity, humility, love, and forgiveness signify goodness, while judgment, pride, obsession, and violence signify evil. The first half of the novel delves into characters' inherent inclinations towards good or evil, influenced by their environment, with references to biblical imagery. Free will and personal choices emerge as central themes, particularly as characters like Hindley forsake God and descend into villainy. The latter half depicts characters aligned with goodness, such as Catherine, Isabella, and Hareton, confronting evil embodied by Heathcliff. Heathcliff's ultimate choice between good and evil condemns him to a hellish existence, alongside Cathy, who also rejects religion. Characters like Mrs. Dean embody virtues of love, pity, humility, and forgiveness, contrasting with Heathcliff and Cathy's embodiment of evil traits. Joseph represents religious hypocrisy, lacking qualities of goodness despite believing himself righteous, contributing to an environment fraught with evil.

Judgment versus Pity:-

Brontë distinguishes between divine judgment and personal judgment among individuals in Wuthering Heights. She emphasizes that lacking pity in personal judgment often results in pain, injustice, and suffering for the judged individual, asserting that judging others is harmful and unjust. The narrative repeatedly evokes pity for characters like Heathcliff and Hindley, highlighting the detrimental outcomes of lacking pity. Class distinctions are intertwined with the judgment versus pity theme, with servants expected

to sympathize with their masters, while masters tend to lack pity. Instances where servants lack pity, such as Zillah towards Catherine and Mrs. Dean towards Cathy, showcase the negative effects of judgment and the benevolent nature of pity. Pride versus humility extends this theme, where prideful individuals are judgmental, while humble ones are sympathetic. However, while judgment harms the judged, pride brings sorrow to the prideful. Humility, demonstrated through serving and fulfilling duty, brings rewards, unlike pity. Catherine's storyline exemplifies the theme's conclusion, as her humility towards Hareton leads to rewards of happiness and love at Thrushcross Grange.

Violence and Revenge:-

Brontë explores the impact of physical violence through Hindley and Heathcliff's relationship in *Wuthering Heights*. She illustrates how abuse can lead to vengeful behavior when forgiveness is absent, resulting in a cycle of violence to alleviate pain. Isabella serves as a voice of reason, acknowledging the destructive nature of violence and its repercussions. Linton's interaction with Heathcliff reveals how violence breeds apathy and fear, perpetuating a desire to avoid further harm. Hareton and Linton exemplify how neglect and apathy can manifest as forms of violence. Brontë contrasts attributes despised by Heathcliff, such as duty, compassion, charity, and kindness, as antidotes to violence, offering avenues to combat its destructive effects.

Love and Obsession:-

In the first half of "*Wuthering Heights*," Brontë suggests that going against one's true feelings is akin to rejecting love, leading to negative consequences, as seen through the tragic fate of Cathy. The novel also explores the theme of love turning into an unhealthy obsession, particularly through the characters of Cathy and Heathcliff, who idolize each other to a detrimental extent. However, Brontë delves into various other aspects of love as well. Mr. Lockwood represents a superficial understanding of love, underpinned by cowardice. Isabella embodies a misguided notion of love, realizing later that what she thought was affection was actually rooted in violence and animosity. Conversely, Catherine and Hareton symbolize love's ability to conquer pride and malevolence, underscoring the idea that balanced affection leads to happiness.

Humanity versus Nature:-

Brontë is preoccupied with the opposition between human civilization and nature. This is represented figuratively in her descriptions of the moors, but she also ties this conflict to specific characters. For example, Catherine and Heathcliff resolve to grow up "as rude as savages" in response to Hindley's abuse, and Ellen likens Hindley to a "wild-beast". The natural world is frequently associated with evil and reckless passion; when Brontë describes a character as 'wild,' that character is usually cruel and inconsiderate—take for example Heathcliff, Catherine Earnshaw, and Hindley. However, Brontë also expresses a certain appreciation for the natural world; Linton and Cathy Linton's ideas of heaven both involve peaceful afternoons in the grass and among the trees. Likewise, Hareton is actually a very noble and gentle spirit, despite his outward lack of civilization and his description as a "rustic".

Classism: -

In "Wuthering Heights," Emily Brontë examines classism, the societal division based on social status. The story contrasts the rough Earnshaws of Wuthering Heights with the refined Lintons of Thrushcross Grange, illustrating the rigid class structures of 19th-century England. Characters like Heathcliff, a foundling, face discrimination due to their low social standing, highlighting the barriers to upward mobility. Catherine's choice to marry Edgar Linton for social status rather than love showcases the influence of societal expectations. The mistreatment of characters like Heathcliff and Hareton due to their lower class underscores the dehumanizing effects of class prejudice. Overall, "Wuthering Heights" serves as a commentary on the injustices of classism and the struggle for social equality.