



Unit AS 2:

The Study of Prose pre 1900

Bronte: Wuthering Heights

In this Unit there are 4 Assessment Objectives involved – A01, A02, A03 and A05.

A01: Textual knowledge and understanding, and communication

In this examination, the candidate should be able to articulate informed and relevant responses that communicate effectively knowledge and understanding of a selected novel.

This AO involves the student's knowledge and understanding of the novel, and ability to express relevant ideas accurately and coherently, using appropriate terminology and concepts. Quality of written communication is taken into consideration in all units.

A01

Summary of Content

LOCKWOOD'S ARRIVAL AND FIRST IMPRESSIONS Chapters I-III

The novel begins in 1801, narrated by the bewildered new tenant of Thrushcross Grange, Mr Lockwood, who is renting the property from Heathcliff. Lockwood recounts his strange encounter with Mr Heathcliff in his diary. Despite being made unwelcome on their first meeting, Lockwood returns to Wuthering Heights the next day and is stranded because of heavy snowfall. This gives him an opportunity to find out a little about the inhabitants of the three-hundred-year-old house, but the information he gleans only serves to confuse and intrigue him. The relationships within the Wuthering Heights household appear hostile but the reasons for the hostility are not revealed to Lockwood (or the reader) at this point.

The housekeeper, Zillah, brings Lockwood to a bedroom where he will stay for the night. There, he sees three names carved into the wooden panels: Catherine Earnshaw, Catherine Heathcliff and Catherine Linton. He also finds books belonging to the previous resident of the bedroom, Catherine Earnshaw, in which she has written several diary-style entries. The revelations of the young Catherine Earnshaw provoke more curiosity and offer a little information about her brother Hindley and the young Heathcliff.



Lockwood falls asleep but has nightmares in which the ghost of Catherine tries to gain entry to the room. His cries bring Heathcliff into the bedroom. Heathcliff is distressed on hearing of Lockwood's dream and begs Catherine's ghost to return. The next morning Lockwood leaves Wuthering Heights and returns to Thrushcross Grange as quickly as possible.

NELLY'S MEMORIES OF THE YOUNG CATHERINE AND HEATHCLIFF Chapters IV- IX

Suffering from the wintry conditions, Lockwood is taken ill. The housekeeper of Thrushcross Grange, Nelly Dean, tends to him. During their conversation it becomes clear that Nelly knows the history of the people Lockwood had encountered at Wuthering Heights: for example, that an orphaned Heathcliff had been rescued from the streets of Liverpool in the 1770s by Mr Earnshaw and brought to his home (Wuthering Heights) to be reared with his own children, Catherine and Hindley; and that, at first, Catherine and Hindley had disliked Heathcliff but that Catherine had come to love him.

As Nelly shares her memories of the 1770s with Lockwood, she becomes the main narrative voice and we are forced to rely on her recollections. According to Nelly, Hindley hated Heathcliff as he believed Heathcliff had stolen his parents' affections away from him.

Some years later Hindley was sent to college and during his absence, Mr Earnshaw died. The bond between Heathcliff and Catherine intensified as they consoled each other through their grief.

Hindley returns to Wuthering Heights as heir following his father's death, bringing with him his wife Frances. As the new master of Wuthering Heights he makes significant changes to the household, most notably removing the privileged position that Heathcliff had enjoyed. Hindley turns Heathcliff into a servant, thereby denying him an education and making it difficult for Catherine and Heathcliff to continue their friendship. Nevertheless, Catherine and Heathcliff escape to the Moors when the opportunity presents itself. On one such walk, they spy on the Linton family who live in Thrushcross Grange. The Lintons' dog bites Catherine and her screams of pain bring the Lintons out to discover Catherine and Heathcliff on their property. The Lintons tend to Catherine's injuries in their home but Heathcliff is ordered to return to Wuthering Heights.

Nelly recounts to Lockwood Catherine's transformation when she returns to Wuthering Heights five weeks later. Mrs Linton has tutored Catherine in the decorum and etiquette¹ befitting her social status. Catherine is overjoyed to see Heathcliff again but their reunion is soured when she remarks on his ragged appearance and compares him unfavourably to the Linton children - Edgar and Isabella. Heathcliff resents the haughtiness Catherine has shown and refuses her apology – jealous of her new friendship with Edgar Linton in particular.

Nelly reveals to Lockwood that both Heathcliff and Catherine cried with disappointment that their reunion had gone so badly, and Nelly promised to help Heathcliff look like a gentleman when the Lintons returned for dinner the next day. Upon Edgar's arrival at Wuthering Heights he insults Heathcliff who, in turn, responds by throwing hot apple sauce over Edgar's face. Heathcliff is banished to his room by Hindley. Catherine is annoyed with Edgar, whom she blames for the fracas. Later

1 The customary code of polite behaviour in society or among members of a particular profession or group (Oxford Dictionary - <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/etiquette>)



that night Heathcliff confides in Nelly that he will wreak revenge on Hindley for his maltreatment.

Nelly's story moves on to the next summer (1778), when Hindley and Frances Earnshaw's son, Hareton, is born. Following Hareton's birth, Frances takes ill and dies a few months later. Nelly becomes the primary care-giver for Hareton as Hindley, grief-stricken, turns to drink and takes his anger out on Heathcliff.

Catherine meanwhile, according to Nelly, struggles to balance her friendships and feelings for Edgar and Heathcliff. Heathcliff's jealousy of Edgar has increased substantially and he entreats Catherine to stop seeing him – just as Edgar arrives for a visit. Catherine, annoyed by her quarrel with Heathcliff, is ill-tempered with Edgar and Nelly. She pinches Nelly but denies it when questioned by Edgar. She then slaps Nelly across the face. Edgar is horrified by this series of events and vows never to return to Wuthering Heights. Catherine shows remorse and Edgar forgives her. In this moment of raw emotion, they express their love for each other.

Catherine reveals to Nelly that Edgar has proposed and she seeks Nelly's counsel. Despite thinking Edgar is handsome, cheerful and has good social standing, she is uncertain whether to accept his proposal because of her love for Heathcliff. Catherine admits, however, that she could not marry Heathcliff because Hindley has reduced him to an uneducated, uncouth servant. Of this conversation, only the degrading comments are overheard by Heathcliff, and heartbroken, he leaves Wuthering Heights. Catherine searches for Heathcliff all night – but to no avail. The heartache resulting from Heathcliff's departure and the illness she suffers after spending all night in the rain bring Catherine to the brink of death. Mrs Linton brings Catherine to Thrushcross Grange for convalescence and she recovers. Mr and Mrs Linton die shortly afterwards.

CATHERINE'S MARRIED LIFE, AND HER DEATH Chapters X-XVII

Three years later, Edgar and Catherine marry and Nelly is ordered to accompany Catherine, as her maid, to her new home: Thrushcross Grange.

Shortly after Catherine and Edgar's marriage, Heathcliff returns. He calls at Thrushcross Grange and Catherine welcomes him enthusiastically. The loving bond between Heathcliff and Catherine remains, and this vexes Edgar. Heathcliff reveals that he will stay at Wuthering Heights with Hindley. Hindley's gambling has created a financial crisis and Heathcliff has acquired wealth.

Now living in such close proximity to Catherine, Heathcliff visits Thrushcross Grange regularly. Isabella Linton, who is eighteen years old, becomes infatuated with Heathcliff – much to the annoyance of Edgar. Isabella's feelings for Heathcliff also cause a rift between Isabella and Catherine. On one of Heathcliff's visits, Catherine, fuelled by jealousy, embarrasses Isabella by telling Heathcliff that Isabella "dotes" on him. While Heathcliff has no interest in Isabella, he quickly establishes that Isabella is the heir to her brother's estate.

Nelly recalls during this conversation with Lockwood how she went to visit Hindley at Wuthering Heights and met Hareton, now a young child. Hareton does not remember her nor how she cared for him as a baby. He hurls stones and abuse at her and reveals he has learned this behaviour from Heathcliff. Nelly also finds Heathcliff had prevented Hareton from receiving an education by threatening any prospective tutors. Nelly also remembers how, on a visit to Thrushcross Grange, Heathcliff encountered



Isabella in the garden. They embrace, and Nelly who has seen this, tells Catherine. Catherine beseeches Heathcliff to leave Isabella alone for fear that Edgar will forbid Heathcliff from visiting again. They have a heated exchange in which Heathcliff admits that his plan is not to hurt Catherine, rather his target is Edgar. Nelly tells Edgar of the afternoon's events and Edgar resolves to ban Heathcliff from Thrushcross Grange. Edgar and Heathcliff argue and Edgar strikes Heathcliff. Catherine is furious with Edgar. Edgar insists that Catherine choose between ending her friendship with Heathcliff or ending their marriage. Catherine refuses to answer and flies off into a rage, injuring herself. She locks herself in her room, rejecting offers of food for several days. Catherine becomes delirious and declares she will die. Meanwhile, Heathcliff and Isabella elope.

After two months, Catherine begins to recover and it is revealed that she is pregnant. Nelly tells Lockwood that by this point Isabella has written to Edgar to apologise for eloping but Edgar refuses to reply to his sister. Isabella sends a letter to Nelly in which she confesses her unhappiness: she can now see how unfeeling Heathcliff is.

Nelly visits Isabella at Wuthering Heights to bring her the sad news that Edgar has disowned her. Whilst there, Heathcliff demands that Nelly arrange an opportunity for him and Catherine to meet. Heathcliff speaks cruelly of Isabella and Edgar – his hatred for the Lintons is evident. Isabella now recognises that her marriage was merely a ploy by Heathcliff to aggravate Edgar. Heathcliff threatens Nelly until she agrees to deliver a letter from him to Catherine.

Heathcliff comes to Thrushcross Grange to meet with Catherine, who is severely weakened from her lengthy illness. Their conversation is bittersweet as they profess their love for each other and their despair at the pain they have caused each other by not striving to be together. Edgar finds the two together. Catherine faints and Heathcliff refuses to leave the grounds until he knows if Catherine has recovered. Catherine gives birth to Cathy Linton at midnight but dies two hours later. When Nelly tells Heathcliff of Catherine's death he is distraught and cries for Catherine's ghost to haunt him.

A few days later Isabella calls at Thrushcross Grange in flight from Wuthering Heights and her tyrannical husband. She had entreated Heathcliff to let her come to Thrushcross Grange to look after her brother and her new-born niece but Heathcliff had refused. She tells Nelly that a drunken Hindley told her he planned to murder Heathcliff. When Heathcliff gained entry to the house the previous evening he and Hindley had a violent struggle. The next morning, another argument broke out and Isabella made her escape.

Nelly tells Lockwood that Isabella settled in the London area and soon after, gave birth to a son whom she named Linton. The child was sickly and delicate from birth. Heathcliff learned of the birth of his son through village gossip and vowed to claim him when it suited him. Nelly offers her opinion to Lockwood that Edgar was pleased to hear that Isabella had left Heathcliff but the brother and sister did not fully reconcile.

Nelly tells Lockwood that when she learned that Hindley had died and subsequently that, because of Hindley's debts, Heathcliff now owned Wuthering Heights and had taken informal guardianship of Hareton, she had attempted to take Hareton back with her to Thrushcross Grange. (Edgar is Hareton's uncle by marriage). However, her attempt was in vain as Heathcliff threatened to assert his legal right to Linton if she



pursued gaining custody of Hareton.

TWELVE YEARS LATER – CATHY’S TEENAGE YEARS Chapters XVIII-XXXI

Nelly’s narrative moves on twelve years. She glosses over Cathy’s early childhood, briefly relaying to Lockwood that Cathy was a happy and spirited child, strong-minded and somewhat indulged by her father. Edgar, however, prohibited Cathy from leaving the grounds of Thrushcross Grange.

Edgar left Cathy in the care of Nelly while he went to the sickbed of Isabella. Isabella, knowing that she would soon die, wanted Edgar to look after Linton.

Nelly recalls how, during Edgar’s absence, Cathy stole out of the grounds. Cathy’s wanderings brought her into contact with Hareton and the two immediately strike up a friendship. When Nelly searches for Cathy she is told that Cathy is at Wuthering Heights. Nelly knows that Edgar will be outraged if he learns that Cathy has been there and so orders Cathy to leave. Cathy is keen to stay with her new friend until she finds out that Hareton’s father is not the master of the house; she assumes Hareton is a servant and becomes cold towards him. Hareton reacts to this sea-change aggressively and insults Cathy. The housekeeper of Wuthering Heights tries to calm the friction by announcing that the two are cousins. This news horrifies Cathy. Nelly surmises that Hareton’s brutish behaviour is a result of Heathcliff’s design to degrade the son of his old enemy.

Edgar sends a letter home to say that, following Isabella’s death, he and Linton would soon arrive back at Thrushcross Grange. Cathy is delighted with the prospect of a “real’ cousin” to share her time with, but Linton’s frail health means he is an unwilling playmate. Linton’s stay at Thrushcross Grange is brief as Heathcliff sends word that he wants his son delivered to Wuthering Heights immediately.

Nelly tells Lockwood that the following day she was charged with the task of bringing Linton to Wuthering Heights. She recalls how Heathcliff was unsentimental when he met his son for the first time and made it clear that Linton would merely be an item of possession and a means to claim ownership of Thrushcross Grange upon Edgar’s death.

Nelly confirms to Lockwood that she learned, through village gossip, that Heathcliff and Linton’s relationship remained distant and ill-humoured.

Nelly continues by refocussing on the events when Cathy is sixteen. While out walking, Cathy runs ahead of Nelly and encounters Hareton and Heathcliff. Heathcliff invites Cathy and Nelly to Wuthering Heights to spend some time with Linton. Heathcliff reveals to Nelly his intentions, namely that Linton and Cathy should marry in order to secure beyond doubt Linton’s inheritance of Thrushcross Grange.

Heathcliff tells Cathy that her father does not like him and that she should keep her visit to Wuthering Heights a secret. Heathcliff’s plotting continues as he not only encourages Cathy to chat with Linton but also with Hareton. Linton and Cathy laugh at Hareton’s inability to read. Heathcliff boasts to Nelly that he has ruined all the fine prospects of Hindley’s son.

Back at Thrushcross Grange, Cathy tells her father about her visit to Wuthering Heights and rebukes him for quarrelling with Heathcliff. Edgar tells Cathy of Heathcliff’s



poor treatment of her aunt Isabella and implies that Heathcliff is responsible for her death. He forbids Cathy to make any further contact but Cathy disobeys and writes numerous letters to Linton. Nelly finds Linton's responses and discovers they express feelings of love. Nelly agrees to keep the letter-writing a secret from Edgar but burns the letters and insists Cathy does not write any more.

Nelly reveals that for a couple of months Cathy is distracted tending to her father who has taken ill. But one day, whilst out walking, Cathy and Nelly meet Heathcliff. Heathcliff complains that Cathy has treated Linton unfairly and that he has greatly failed due to the heartache she has caused. Cathy is upset at this news, and so she and Nelly visit Linton. Linton is indeed very frail but musters the energy to scold Cathy for keeping her distance. She explains that she loves Linton but the friction between Edgar and Heathcliff has been the reason for her lack of communication. Linton reacts emotionally and demands more of Cathy's time. Nelly tells Lockwood that this caused Cathy to visit Wuthering Heights in secret for a number of weeks.

During one of her visits to Linton, Hareton tells Cathy that he can now read a little but still knows nothing of figures. Cathy laughs at Hareton and calls him a "dunce". Humiliated and angry, Hareton interrupts Cathy and Linton and roughly ejects Linton from the room. Later, Cathy confided in Nelly that she had feared for her and Linton's lives. When Cathy returned to Wuthering Heights a few days later, Linton blamed her for the incident. Cathy shared with Nelly that her visits to Linton provoked a mixture of happiness and despair for her. Nelly recalls to Lockwood how she betrayed Cathy's confidence by relating all to Edgar who then forbade Cathy from returning to Wuthering Heights again.

Nelly tells Lockwood that her story has now reached recent events – the year 1800. Edgar, who is very ill, begins to consider if Linton would be worthy of Cathy's hand in marriage and so he acquiesces in Cathy and Linton resuming their letter writing and is eventually persuaded to consent to Cathy meeting with Linton on the moors. When they meet, it is clear that Linton is incredibly weak; nonetheless he arranges to meet Cathy again the following week.

On this second meeting on the moors, Nelly and Cathy are shocked by Linton's fading health. Linton reveals that Heathcliff has a dastardly plan but can offer no details because Heathcliff arrives. Heathcliff coerces Cathy and Nelly into assisting Linton back to Wuthering Heights and, once there, he locks them inside. Imprisoned, Linton is able to explain that they would not be released until he and Cathy are married. Cathy is inconsolable at the thought of her father believing she has abandoned him. After five days Nelly is released but she fails to free Cathy. She returns to Thrushcross Grange and sees that Edgar is very close to death. She reassures Edgar that Cathy is "alive and well". Edgar realises that Heathcliff's plan is to make Thrushcross Grange his own.

Cathy escapes from Wuthering Heights, by insisting that Linton assist her, and she manages to reach Thrushcross Grange and see her father before he dies.

The evening after Edgar's funeral, Heathcliff comes to Thrushcross Grange to take Cathy back to Wuthering Heights. Cathy concedes because she loves Linton. Nelly begs to be appointed housekeeper at Wuthering Heights so that she can continue to care for Cathy but Heathcliff refuses her.

Heathcliff tells Nelly that he has arranged to be buried with Catherine. He says he has



been haunted by Catherine's ghost for eighteen years and he is eager to be with her again in death.

Zillah, the housekeeper at Wuthering Heights, tells Nelly that it has been a difficult transition for Cathy at Wuthering Heights. Cathy nursed Linton until his death. Heathcliff revels in the triumph of his plan: all of the Earnshaw and Linton property now belongs to him.

Zillah tells Nelly that Hareton has attempted to be friendly towards Cathy but she has rejected his advances.

Lockwood now relates the final stage of the narrative. He travels to Wuthering Heights to tell Heathcliff that he will be leaving Thrushcross Grange and brings a note for Cathy from Nelly. Tension between Cathy and Hareton is obvious – she taunts him for his lack of education and he reacts angrily to her jibes. Lockwood surmises that Hareton wishes to impress Cathy, but she cannot forgive the part he has played in her imprisonment in Wuthering Heights. Heathcliff has now become restless and anxious, unsettled by how much Hareton resembles Catherine.

LOCKWOOD'S SECOND VISIT CHAPTERS XXXII-XXXIV

In September 1802 Lockwood is back in the area and decides to call at Thrushcross Grange only to be told that Nelly is now at Wuthering Heights. Nelly tells Lockwood that shortly after his departure, she was told to serve at Wuthering Heights because Zillah had left. She also tells him that Heathcliff had died three months previously. Nelly also recounts how Cathy and Hareton's relationship improved after Cathy offered to teach Hareton to read and promised to taunt him no further. It also became clear that Hareton had suffered Heathcliff's wrath for defending Cathy on several occasions. Not only had Cathy and Hareton reconciled but they soon became affectionate and had plans to marry.

Nelly tells Lockwood that the resemblance that Cathy and Hareton have to Catherine had haunted Heathcliff, and that Heathcliff had faltered in his plan to inflict pain and anguish on the descendants of Hindley and Edgar.

In his last days, desperate to be reunited with Catherine, Heathcliff ate only once a day and walked alone at night on the Moors. Heathcliff had repeated to Nelly his funeral requests – to be buried alongside Catherine – and when he died, Nelly ensured his wishes were fulfilled.

The villagers claim to see the spirits of Heathcliff and another walk the moors....

Characters

Heathcliff

With his first words, Lockwood introduces Heathcliff as a “solitary neighbour” who lives in a “perfect misanthropist's² heaven”. For the remainder of the novel, Brontë weaves a complex narrative that goes some way to explain the complicated history behind this flawed hero of *Wuthering Heights*.

2 A misanthropist is someone who hates other people.

As a young child, Heathcliff has suffered hardships – he was abandoned on the



streets of Liverpool to fend for himself (see Contexts). He is presented as being uncommunicative and mysterious when he is brought to the Earnshaw home.

The compassion shown to him by Mr Earnshaw and then Catherine is reciprocated and we learn that he sincerely loves and respects his adoptive father. His love for Catherine becomes all-consuming, matched only by his hatred for those who have wronged him. Through his relationship with Catherine we learn that Heathcliff has the capacity to be loyal, noble and deserving of her love. We pity his inability to live happily with his soulmate, yet his self-confessed plotting to destroy Hindley and Edgar, and his callous treatment of Isabella, Linton and Hareton force the reader to despise him too.

He is a character of many contradictions. For example, he is placid in response to Hindley's repeated beatings as a youth, yet confidently blackmails Hindley in Chapter 4; he purposefully contrives to destroy Hareton's birth-right to be a gentleman only to show him more love and respect than his own son, Linton.

The ruthless elements which dominate Heathcliff's character for the majority of the novel are mitigated by his earnest and overwhelming love for Catherine. In this way, Brontë has created an atypical hero – one whose actions appal the reader, yet we understand that his misguided behaviour stems from his love for Catherine and his hatred towards those who have kept them apart. This dark and unsociable facet of his character allows Heathcliff to be considered as a Byronic hero (see Activities).

Catherine Earnshaw

Like Heathcliff, Catherine is a complex character who does not fit neatly into the conventions of either a literary heroine or a Victorian lady. As a girl, she is passionate, carefree and forthright – a free spirit who frequently speaks honestly and bluntly. As a young woman, her vivaciousness is tempered by her acknowledgement of the strict social expectations of her time and she struggles to conform.

Her rejection of Heathcliff in favour of the more respectable Edgar should be judged against this Victorian backdrop rather than modern social standards. From this perspective she can be viewed as a victim of circumstances – she cannot be with her soulmate because the Victorian social structures would not permit it. Notwithstanding, she repeatedly demonstrates an extraordinary capacity for selfishness and self-indulgence.

Edgar Linton

In striking contrast to Heathcliff, Edgar is slow to anger. He is patient, calm and kind as was befitting of a Victorian gentleman; he is a man of principles and adheres strictly to the Victorian social hierarchical ideas. While he is steadfast in his love for Catherine, and is a devoted husband and father, he is pompous towards Heathcliff from the outset because of Heathcliff's lower social standing. He also stubbornly refuses to be reconciled with Isabella, following her marriage to Heathcliff, until she is on her deathbed. Here, his personal antagonism reinforces his feeling that Heathcliff is socially unacceptable.

Nelly Dean

Nelly's character provides the main narrative voice in the novel, but she is also an active participant in many of the events, for example, Cathy's imprisonment in Wuthering Heights prior to her marriage to Linton (Chapter 27).



She would have Mr Lockwood (and the reader) believe that she was a trusted confidante to Catherine, Heathcliff, Cathy and Edgar. Despite being of a much lower social status than most of the other characters, her advice is sought at regular intervals. Her advice shows her to be sensible and sage but her interference frequently leads to further conflict arising.

It is Nelly's perspective that the reader is forced to rely upon. She edits conversations, switches between different time-frames and offers her own judgements on the other characters, their motives and their feelings. In this way she offers insights but her views are tempered by her own moralising.

Cathy Linton

In many ways, Cathy is an embodiment of the main characteristics associated with her parents. She is loving and loyal but also has a capacity for obstinacy, subterfuge and wilful disobedience. She expresses remorse for her ill-treatment of others (e.g. when she lies to Nelly or her cruel jibes at Hareton) and stoically accepts the fate Heathcliff has designed for her.

Her admirable qualities of compassion and patience, along with her carefree spirit, ability to recognise her errors and desire to make amends, makes her victorious 'happy ending' with Hareton seem deserved.

Linton

A sickly character who seems content to wallow in self-pity. He is cowardly and weak but gains a little redemption by flouting his father's instruction to keep Cathy imprisoned at Wuthering Heights while her father is on his deathbed. He is little more than a pawn in Heathcliff's vengeful plan and this unenviable position garners some sympathy for his predicament.

Hareton

Although born into a privileged class, the deaths of Hareton's mother, father and aunt leave him at the mercy of Heathcliff. In spite of losing his inheritance and the social status afforded him by his birth-right because of Heathcliff's actions, Hareton displays no malice towards Heathcliff.

Heathcliff's attempts to reduce Hareton to an uncouth farmhand who resents his social superiors are almost successful, but Cathy is able to see the inherent kindness within Hareton and save him from this fate.

Themes

A number of themes will be noted in Wuthering Heights and they often intersect within the narrative. Below is a list of some of the major thematic treatments – but others can be identified.

Family relationships – through the interactions of the members of the Earnshaw family, the Lintons and the pseudo-family of the Heathcliffs, the complexities of sibling rivalries and parental responsibilities are examined. Brontë presents a series of family units which are tested by jealousy, disappointment, upheaval and death.



Love - Brontë depicts a range of romantic (and platonic) relationships and explores how love can devastate as well as enhance. The limits and limitations of love are questioned as the characters struggle to fulfil their desires, and resist or acknowledge their responsibilities and the expectations others have of them.

Hate/Revenge – Hindley, Edgar and Catherine all engage in arguably spiteful actions but Heathcliff is certainly the master of pursuing revenge. Brontë's novel considers the motives for revenge and whether it can be justified – or, indeed, satisfied.

Nature versus Nurture – nineteenth-century English societal views of class are challenged by the transformation of characters (e.g. Heathcliff, Linton, Hareton) depending on the environment they are raised in and how they are conditioned by parental influences.



A02: Narrative methods

In this examination, the candidate should analyse the writer's use of such narrative methods as form, structure and language.

The student should analyse relevantly the ways in which meanings are shaped in novels. This means identifying narrative methods and showing how these methods relate to the key terms of the question.

Discussing narrative methods - advice to teachers and students:

As this unit is closed book, examiners will be realistic about the amount of detail which can be provided in the time available. It is anticipated that the larger-scale features of form, structure and language will be most useful in constructing a relevant response in the time available.

A few general stylistic features:

Narrative voices

Wuthering Heights is written as a non-linear narrative. The opening three chapters are set in 1801 and told from the perspective of Mr Lockwood, but it is Nelly who provides a retrospective narration for the majority of the novel. Brontë has Nelly recount conversations and observations but the housekeeper's 'eye-witness' accounts of events are open to bias and personal judgement, making her version of the events suspect in places.

On a number of occasions Nelly is used to voice the perspective of other characters' viewpoints. For example, she relates to Lockwood what Isabella told her about the events at Wuthering Heights, or what the young Cathy shared with her regarding Cathy's conversations with Linton or Hareton.

Through Lockwood's participation in the action Brontë also adopts an unusual narrative voice. Lockwood's initial position is one of confusion and curiosity – similar to the position of the reader. The questions Brontë has him pose to the other characters shape the narrative and lead the reader towards an understanding of the various events at Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. However, his characterisation as a man suffering from the effects of exposure (fevers, nightmares, etc.) impacts on the reliability of the narrative elements he recounts.

Brontë makes use of another narrative device in Chapter 3 in the diary-style entries from Catherine's youth which Lockwood reads. The value of the insights gained from Catherine's revelations in her reading-books also requires careful consideration, because of their haphazard nature:

“Some were detached sentences; other parts took the form of a regular diary, scrawled in an unformed childish hand.”

In addition, Lockwood becomes drowsy and elects to sleep, thereby ending the possibility for the reader of discovering more information about Wuthering Heights in the 1770s from Catherine's perspective.

Numerous conversations are used by Brontë to drive the narrative and provide insights



into characters' motives and personality traits. Exchanges between characters frequently reinforce their social status (use of orders, dialect, etc.) and express their emotions (anger, despair, joy). Dialogue gives the impression of immediacy of action within the narrative.

Setting

The two main environments of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange provide a striking contrast to the Moors. The homesteads reflect – to widely differing degrees – the civilised influences which impact on the characters as they are governed by rules of expected behaviour; the Moors however, is an environment associated with wild abandon, freedom and non-conformity.

Use of contrasts

Brontë makes repeated use of contrasts throughout the novel. Wuthering Heights is contrasted with Thrushcross Grange to highlight the differing cultures and moral codes the houses represent. Characters are presented with opposing traits and interests – e.g. Heathcliff and Edgar; Linton and Hareton. The most striking set of contrasts arguably centres around the relationships Brontë sets at the heart of her novel – e.g. Heathcliff and Catherine's relationship is contrasted with Edgar and Catherine's relationship; or Cathy and Linton's relationship as opposed to Cathy and Hareton's relationship. Contrasts in language and motifs can also be easily identified. For example, the barred doors of Wuthering Heights are detailed in Mr Lockwood's first visit in Chapter 2 but following Heathcliff's death, the "doors and lattices were open" in Chapter 32.

Imagery

There is a wealth of imagery to consider whilst studying the novel. For example: Imagery of imprisonment – the many references to windows, doors, gates and locks in *Wuthering Heights* (see 'Use of contrasts' above) helps to reinforce the presentation of characters as jailers or trapped victims. This may be interpreted perhaps as an extended metaphor which reflects the engrained social class system of eighteenth- and nineteenth- century English society and/or its defined gender roles. For example, in Chapter 15, close to death, Catherine muses:

“the thing that irks me most is this shattered prison...I'm tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world...”

Animal imagery – consider how many times Heathcliff is compared to various animals. For example: “a mad dog”, “savage beast”, “wolfish man”, “a vicious cur”. Nature imagery – perhaps unsurprisingly given the rural location in which the novel is set, images of the natural world are offered frequently and for a multitude of reasons. For example, in reference to Catherine's transition in becoming the mistress of Thrushcross Grange following her marriage to Edgar, Nelly describes Catherine's presence at Thrushcross as “not the thorn bending to the honeysuckles, but the honeysuckles embracing the thorn.” (Chapter 10)

Images associated with heaven and hell, fire, the earth and water also feature in the novel. For example, in Chapter 9, Brontë uses such imagery when Catherine is voicing her indecision regarding her prospective marriage to Edgar because of her feelings for Heathcliff:



“It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now; so he shall never know how I love him...Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same; and Linton’s is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire.”

Figurative language

As stated in the general guidance, lengthy quotations are not expected in this section of the examination which is ‘closed book’. Students might be better advised to select brief quotations which demonstrate their understanding of Brontë’s style or characterisation. For example, Nelly’s description of Heathcliff’s eyes in Chapter 7 not only makes use of figurative techniques but also helps to convey the complexities of his character (his inner struggle between good and evil):

“that couple of black fiends, so deeply buried, who never open their windows boldly, but lurk glinting...like the devil’s spies...change the fiends to confident, innocent angels”.

Pathetic fallacy

The novel is dominated by descriptions of wet and stormy weather conditions, with snow and thunder also featuring frequently. The weather reflects the generally negative and upsetting experiences of the main characters and their lives, which seemingly lack calm and continuity. However, Brontë completes the novel with a positive weather description – symbolically pointing to happier times for the characters:

“under the benign sky...the soft wind breathing through the grass.”



A03: Contexts

In this examination, the candidate should demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which a novel is written and received by drawing on appropriate information from outside the novel.

No particular type of context will be stipulated in the question. However, contextual information which is made relevant to the key terms of the question will be rewarded. Students should be aware that little credit can be given for contextual information that is introduced merely for its own sake. They should remember that the text has primacy over the context. A good response will use contextual information sparingly and judiciously.

The following information is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, but is intended as a helpful guide to teachers and students. It reflects some of the contextual areas which might be found useful. Remember the remarks above about balancing text and context in a response.

The novel spans the period 1772 – 1802 but Brontë wrote it in 1847 (published 1848).

Social Rank

By the eighteenth-century, social classes in England formed an entrenched system. A person's social class was displayed easily through their attire, speech, pastimes and behaviour. Education was reserved for the higher social classes. Maintaining the social rank one was born into was a high priority for the upper classes and so marriages were often treated like financial transactions rather than being based on romantic affection. The Industrial Revolution (late eighteenth / early nineteenth century) created a number of opportunities for the growing middle classes to improve their financial status. This then led to a desire to be accepted by the established gentry. Manuals such as *How to Behave* and *Hints from a Gentleman* were readily available: <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-middle-classes-etiquette-and-upward-mobility>

Foundlings in 18th-Century England

Heathcliff was rescued from the streets of Liverpool by Mr Earnshaw. Orphans and abandoned children were commonplace in this era: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/foundling_01.shtml

Gender

Gentlemen in the nineteenth century: <http://www.victorianweb.org/history/gentleman.html>

Ladies in the nineteenth century:

The narrative poem '*The Angel in the House*' by Coventry Patmore outlined clear expectations of a Victorian married woman. Guidebooks about how a lady should behave in a range of circumstances were also published. For example, in 1856 Emily Thornwell's *Ladies Guide* was published: http://www1.assumption.edu/WHW/old/Thornwell_Lady's_Guide.html



Although it was an ancient idea, the Victorians strongly believed in the doctrine of separate spheres. This ideology defined different spheres for the two genders - placing males as the dominant gender whilst females were defined as the weaker sex both physically and intellectually. Upper- and middle-class females had very little independence and were confined to the domestic sphere. This unequal status was supported by laws such as the law of primogeniture which effectively disinherited women. Inheritance of land and goods passed through the male line, making females dependent on males (father, then husband). See: <http://www.ncgsjournal.com/issue51/weber.htm>

Despite these distinct gender divisions, the beginnings of the Women's Movement and the rise of feminism can be traced back to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries. In 1792 *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* by Mary Wollstonecraft was published. It called for women to be given a status more equal to that of their male counterparts, notwithstanding social rank.

Health

Poor sanitation led to a variety of health-related issues and concerns in this period. England experienced repeated cholera epidemics in the 1840s and 1850s and tuberculosis was a recurring threat. Brontë's sisters, Maria and Elizabeth died of tuberculosis in 1825; her brother Branwell succumbed to the disease in 1848. Emily Brontë contracted tuberculosis herself after nursing her brother and died later that year.

Haworth (Yorkshire) – where Brontë wrote *Wuthering Heights* – had a particularly high death rate.

Literary context

The Gothic novel

Features associated with a Gothic text include:

- the use of mysterious, wild or marginalised settings;
- unclear divisions between benevolent and malevolent characters, with the male protagonists often demonstrating traits of both good and evil; may feature hero or anti-hero or Byronic hero;
- female protagonists are frequently the agents of their own destruction as well as being victims worthy of pity;
- use of supernatural elements (e.g. ghosts, visions, premonitions, nightmares);
- use of violent conflict and character contrast to heighten the impact of the powerful versus the vulnerable;
- images of darkness, imprisonment, death, suffering, turmoil;
- the natural world presented in a dark and disturbing manner.



A05: Argument and interpretation

In this examination, the candidate should offer opinion or judgment in response to the given reading of the text, taking account of the key terms as the basis of the argument. This AO is the driver of Unit AS 2 and is of primary importance.

A05 can be satisfied in full by the candidate developing his/her own reading in response to the given reading. If, however, critics are used, they must be:

- *used with understanding;*
- *incorporated into the argument to reinforce or be seen as an alternative to the student's opinion;*
- *not used as a substitute for the development of the student's own opinion;*
- *properly acknowledged.*

Coherence and relevance of argument will be rewarded. Students should be aware of the importance of planning in the sequencing and illustration of the reading they wish to put forward. They should also beware of the danger of replacing the key terms of the question with others of their own choosing which they assume mean much the same thing.

It might also be helpful to note that in the predecessor of this unit examiners frequently regretted the sacrifice of quality to quantity in responses.

The following information is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, but is intended as a starting point for teachers and students. It reflects some of the thematic, stylistic and contextual issues which may be explored and developed further both in the classroom and through teachers' and students' own independent research.

Specimen Question:

In *Wuthering Heights*, Brontë tells us little about social conditions in nineteenth-century England.

With reference to the narrative methods used in the novel, and relevant contextual information, **show to what extent** you agree with the above statement.

In order to construct a meaningful and cogent argument (and to move beyond making simple assertions and offering unsupported opinions) students should use A02 and A03 elements to support and enhance their point of view. Convincing arguments will be based on a secure understanding of how Brontë has used narrative methods (A02) to convey her message. Students will also encounter difficulties in presenting an argument which is focused on the stimulus statement without knowledge of the context(s) in which the novel is written and received (A03).

A few relevant points are listed below. Some of these will come to mind at once. Some are the product of a little reflection. They will enable the student to establish a basis



for his/her argument, and can then be matched with the novel itself and the narrative methods which Bronte uses.

Social-historical context on the social conditions in nineteenth-century England

The following points may form part of an argument but are not prescriptive or exhaustive:

- Heathcliff is a foundling (and presumed to be an orphan). Orphans and/or abandoned children were commonplace in nineteenth-century England, especially in urban areas. Initial descriptions of Heathcliff are disparaging to reinforce his lowly social status.
- Hindley's ability to prevent Heathcliff from becoming a gentleman is reflective of nineteenth-century England's entrenched social class system. Brontë clearly distinguishes between the educated characters and the lower-class, uneducated characters through the use of formal language and dialect in the dialogue she presents. In addition, despite their usual friendliness, Catherine slaps Nelly (her social inferior) when Nelly displeases her. Nelly's requests to remain at Wuthering Heights are also ignored when Catherine moves to Thrushcross Grange.
- When Heathcliff returns after his three-year absence, he is financially secure – indicating perhaps the growing opportunities in this society to be 'upwardly mobile'. The contrast in the characterisation of (e.g.) Hindley and Heathcliff, Edgar and Heathcliff reflects the nineteenth-century focus on the breeding and manners required of a socially acceptable gentleman.
- The nineteenth-century ideology of the 'separate spheres' and the laws which oppressed women are clearly demonstrated through Brontë's portrayal of the three main female characters (Catherine, Isabella and Cathy) who are, to varying degrees, at the mercy of their fathers, husbands and brothers.
- The character development of Catherine, after instruction by Mrs Linton during her convalescence, illustrates the requirement for nineteenth-century ladies to behave according to a strict set of societal expectations, detailed for example in Patmore's *'The Angel in the House'*.
- The relative opulence enjoyed by the gentry of nineteenth-century England is detailed through the descriptions of Thrushcross Grange (interior and exterior).
- Many living in the rural communities of nineteenth-century England had to contend with unsanitary conditions and poor diet (contributing to low life expectancy); Brontë highlights this concern through the numerous episodes which describe the ill-health and deaths of characters.
- The harsh weather conditions of this period which in turn caused a number of failed harvests are presented by Brontë in a number of chapters.
- Other contextual areas/information will of course be accepted provided relevance is demonstrated.



Activities

- Take a tour of *Wuthering Heights*, the Moors and Thrushcross Grange at <http://wuthering-heights.co.uk/index.php> (Locations)
- Research the characteristics of a Byronic hero. How far do you agree that Heathcliff is an example of a Byronic hero?
- Consider Nelly's role in the novel. Do you consider her to be a reliable narrator?
- Chart the relationships in the novel. What parallels can be noted?

Links

- As an introductory exercise the 38-minute video which can be found at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_MXJCSRB-Rg provides a 'lecture-style' overview of Brontë's life and the content of *Wuthering Heights*.
- In addition to the specific links indicated as part of the Contextual Information (AO3), the following links to the British Library may be useful in provoking class discussion:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsJ7CGN8tPc&index=1&list=PLVRvouzCZmFdyGHbk43hoRClshPrLZ3DI>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ImqD5e2_4OE&index=2&list=PLVRvouzCZmFdyGHbk43hoRClshPrLZ3DI

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mFZ4bSxFtdA&list=PLVRvouzCZmFdyGHbk43hoRClshPrLZ3DI&index=3>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fyGNVUAJvpA&list=PLVRvouzCZmFdyGHbk43hoRClshPrLZ3DI&index=4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHhRo3eIMyk&list=PLVRvouzCZmFdyGHbk43hoRClshPrLZ3DI&index=20>

These clips (approx. 4 minutes) are short insights offered by Prof. John Bowen, University of York.

- The British Library has a range of resources (articles, videos, illustrations, contemporary reviews of the novel, etc.) to support classroom-based and independent learning: <http://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians>