



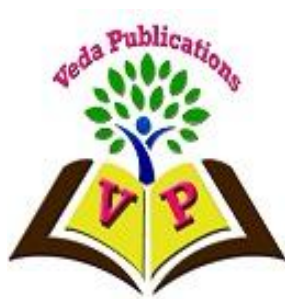
SETTING AS CRUCIAL FACTOR IN DETERMINING CHARACTERS' BEHAVIOUR: STUDY ON EMILY BRONTE'S *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

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ABSTRACT



Wuthering Heights is believed to be an extremely popular study text at an advanced level. The combination of a compelling plot, the highly charged emotions, the complexity of narrative voice and structure, and the combined use of features of Gothic and Romantic literature make of it an excellent breath-taking novel to study. The choice of this novel stems from the fact that its effective images are believed to have a great impact on the characters' behaviour. The setting of the novel also contains other elements that determine how characters act; such as the sublime landscape, the moors, the old houses and the harsh weather. This study is carried out to survey the significance of the setting in directing the characters behaviour, either positively or negatively. Through the study it is clear that people are deeply influenced by their place of residence and surroundings. The inhabitants of the house Wuthering Heights are cruel and unwelcoming individuals while the residents of the house Thrushcross grange are more refined and behaved better through the actions of the story.

Keywords: *Setting, Characters, Behavior, Wuthering Heights, Thrushcross Grange*

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INTRODUCTION

Being the only novel by Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* has a great place on the list of world great literature. The author is regarded as one of the finest writers of the nineteenth century. Like her sister Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* is based partly on the Gothic tradition of the late eighteenth century, a style of literature that featured supernatural encounters, crumbling ruins, moonless nights, and grotesque imagery, seeking to create the effects of mystery and fear. Nonetheless, *Wuthering Heights* is believed to have transcended its genre in its complicated observation and artistic subtleness.

England of the post industrial-revolution period was dominated by the tendency to abandon agricultural life and move towards urbanization. This may be the reality behind which drew Emily Brontë's attention and made her conscious of the domain and the theme of abandoning one's beautiful pastoral natural life for the search of the emerging new industrial civilization. To Emily Brontë, there were no problems with the rural life, but it was the modern sophisticated industrial society that was problematic. (Giddens: 157). Believing that wild nature should remain protected rather than cultivated, she thus presents the opposing forces of Thrushcross Grange, representing the "civilized" of society and *Wuthering Heights*, in which the essential nature of man still resides in the body of Heathcliff. In her allegory of man's inevitable fall from nature in a society that aims to domesticate it, Emily uses the sublimity of the Gothic narrative to underline her belief that the anthropocentric view of the "civilized" man will be the destruction of all that is nature.

DEFINITION OF SETTING

Webster, M. (1985) defined setting as "the time and place of the action of a literary, dramatic, or cinematic work". Therefore, setting refers to the geographical location, time period, daily lifestyle of the characters and climate of the story. In novel and play, the setting plays an important role. In short stories, sometimes it is important, while at others times it is less important. The concept of setting in literary work has been changing according to theme. For example, Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies have the setting of palaces, castles, whereas in

modern and post-modern times when drama came to be the houses of common people, schools, castles, forests and hospital have been taken as settings for actions to take place.

Milhorn (2006) argues that in order to properly convey the setting, the writer must have sensitivity to the atmosphere they are trying to create. In other words, the author is to give the reader a sense of how it feels to be in that particular place. If the sky is grey then the scene might be depressing; so the writer is expected to convey this to the readers. Without this fourth dimension the setting becomes a weak imitation of reality.

The setting, much like all the other basic elements of narration, is closely connected to the character and the plot. However, since many pieces of fiction are very complex, it is best to take the plot, the story and characterization, and the setting of the story as reference points in the rich experience of creative writing.

SETTING OF WUTHERING HEIGHTS

Setting is considered to be a major component of any good story. In order to make story which may request the readers, a good setting is absolutely indispensable. The theme of novel is not only created through characters and successfully be revealed, but also a suitable atmosphere or cause of conflict be created. Setting is one of the most important elements in story writing. Therefore, audience will benefit by making use of the atmosphere and the setting in *Wuthering Heights*, where the two houses in which the story takes place are artfully described. It is evident that the intricate description by Emily Brontë, help in developing the plot and create suspense.

Wuthering Heights composed of the two main settings; one noticeably being *Wuthering Heights* and the other is the house *Thrushcross Grange*. The two houses generate a wonderful atmosphere overflowing with conflicts that match up with the plot. The setting is filled with passion and strength, but it is also filled with doomed intensity. The two are opposed in many ways: "*Wuthering Heights*" is dark and cold, located on a hill high above the more bright and attractive "*Thrushcross Grange*", which is situated in the valley below. The two houses are not far away from each other. They are only four



miles away from one another other, but the people are frequently getting lost while roaming between these houses.

The name of the house Wuthering Heights suggest to the reader the nature of the building. Wuthering is a local word meaning wild winds, which well imply that the inhabitants of Wuthering Heights are wild and strong-willed. The house itself is an old stone building that seems scary and very uneasy. Even the words that are used to describe the house seem to be of a cruel and conflicting nature; "kitchen was forced to retreat altogether into another quarter" (W.H:2).

On the other hand, "Thrushcross Grange" in comparison to "Wuthering Heights" is a much newer house in such a protected area of the moors that keeps the house safe from the winds. The house is much grander and welcoming to outsiders, "Both of us were able to look in by standing on the basement, and clinging to the ledge, and we saw — ah! it was beautiful a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson-covered chairs and tables, and a pure white ceiling bordered by gold, a shower of glass-drops hanging in silver chains from the centre, and shimmering with little soft tapers."(W.H: 89).

The inhabitants of the two houses are different, and their characteristics seem to be decidedly influenced by place, rather than by heritage. Each house has its own influence on its people, and when Catherine was bitten by the dog and nurtured back to good health by the Lintons, Catherine returns with a completely different personality, less wild more and socially minded. Wuthering height's wild location and uneasy status makes the inhabitants more induced to follow their own passions and have a defending and cruel nature. This kind of cruel nature and wild passions may well indulge the readers into the world of heights, causing a deep impact on the characters and the readers as well.

The houses to some extent symbolize the characteristics of the inhabitants. The house Thrushcross Grange considered being a good place to live in, and its residents believe that they are better humans than those who live in Wuthering heights. Hence, the Lintons' influence has led Catherine into a better lifestyle. Wuthering Heights is a harder

working house which makes it a somewhat depressing place that has influence on the characters' relationships with each other. The passionate love between them sparks, when Heathcliff and Catherine have roamed the moors together.

THE HOUSE "WUTHERING HEIGHTS"

The archaic castle of Wuthering Heights is located over the beautiful landscape of the moors. The role of the house is important, for it is the main setting for the greater part of the narration. It almost seems as a living breathing entity reflecting the harsh nature of its dwellers. As an old farmhouse, Wuthering Heights stands alone in the middle of the vast moorlands. For Lockwood the house presents itself with an air of neglect as he mentions the grass around it growing wild, where "cattle are the only hedge-cutters" (W.H :2). As a home, Lockwood explains the name and location of "Wuthering Heights" as:

Wuthering being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there, at all times, indeed: one may guess the power of the north wind, blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few, stuned firs.....the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones.(W.H :2)

The above description creates a clear and vivid image of a fenced-off space, shadowy and hostile with the rough exterior of the house, its rough edges and sun-deprived thorns, suggesting its dark atmosphere. The antagonism is further emphasized in the chained gates and barred doorways which simultaneously serve to ban entrance, while conveying a prison-like atmosphere for the souls occupying the house. Paralleling the rough exterior, the house's interior atmosphere proves to be equally aggressive with its hostile inhabitants and dogs that are "not kept for a pet" (W.H: 4). This is clearly portrayed in Lockwood's initial visit where he is assaulted by the house dogs, after which he is insulted by Heathcliff who claims the dogs would have disregarded him. (W.H: 5).



Through Lockwood's visit to Wuthering Heights, the reader learns of the hostile atmosphere, seemingly stemming from the presence of Heathcliff, whose brutal treatment draws all liveliness from the inhabiting of the house, creating the air of bitterness and hostility which seems to have overcome and conquered Lockwood. Here is a description of his encounter with the supernatural in Catherine's old room on the night of the snow-storm as stated by Lockwood:

"I muttered, knocking my knuckles through the glass, and stretching an arm out to seize the importunate branch; instead of which, my fingers closed on the fingers of a little, ice-cold hand! The intense horror of nightmare came over me: I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed, 'Let me in—let me in!'" (W.H: 20)

The second scene also contains supernatural presence, in which Lockwood hears Heathcliff's sobbing and begging Catherine to come in "Come in! Come in!" he sobbed. 'Cathy, do come. Oh, do—*once* more! Oh! my heart's darling! hear me *this* time, Catherine, at last!" (W.H: 22). Lockwood's visits to Wuthering Heights may well serve to initiate the narrative and provide the external account needed for the reader. The visits may also afford for the reader's curiosity regarding the people and how things came to be as they are. The author provides a second narrator, equally "normal" as Lockwood in the character of Nelly Dean, the housekeeper who relates to Lockwood the story of the house that contained the villain protagonist, which is Heathcliff. These elements provide background for the learners to establish effective setting to when they come writing their own story.

THRUSHCROSS GRANGE

Thrushcross Grange, when compared to the unfriendly out in the open farmhouse on the heights, is situated in the valley with none of the depressing features of Heathcliff's home. Opposing to Wuthering Heights, Thrushcross Grange is crammed with light and warmth. "Unlike Wuthering Heights, it is elegant and comfortable...a splendid place carpeted with crimson, and crimson-covered chairs and tables, and

a pure white ceiling bordered by gold." (W.H: 89) The house Thrushcross Grange is the most suitable dwelling of the children of the peace. The atmosphere of Thrushcross Grange implies the link the residents have with the upper-class Victorian lifestyle. Although the Linton's appearance is often shallow, appearances are kept up for their friends and their social standing. While Wuthering Heights is always full of activity, life at the Grange always seems peaceful. Linton's existence here at Thrushcross Grange is as "different from Heathcliff's as moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire."(W.H: 80) The Lintons often portray themselves as shallow, arrogant people, but life here is much more cheerful than the inmates of Wuthering Heights lives were.

THE INSPIRATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The description of the beautiful landscape is one of the important elements that contribute to the reader's power of imagination and evoke their sense of creativity while reading Wuthering Heights. The beauty of the landscape can engage the readers to follow the story of the novel more closely and benefit from it.

The regular emphasis on landscape in *Wuthering Heights* gives the setting a symbolic importance. Largely, it is composed of moors: wide, wild expanses, high but somewhat soggy, and thus infertile. Moorland cannot be cultivated, and its uniformity makes navigation difficult. It features particularly water logged patches in which people could potentially drown. Thus, the moors serve very well as symbols of the wild threat posed by nature. As a setting for the beginnings of Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship, the moorland transfers its symbolic associations onto the love affair.

In *Wuthering Heights* the engagement of the reader is tenable in the removal from the sphere of comfort, with the author relocating him to the desolate Northern English moors. The landscape serves to create an atmosphere of isolation, and even detention, as suggested by Mr. Lockwood when he exclaims: "In all England, I do not believe that I could have fixed on a situation so completely removed from the stir of society" (W.H :1). This description indicates that there are no many dwellers neighbouring this house. That atmosphere is further emphasized by Mr. Lockwood who knows where the



road to the outside world lies, but he never follows it to the outer world. When characters in the story leave, the reader remains behind, awaiting their return, or news that they have died (Watson: 100). By providing the reader with a vivid picture of the wide expanses of continuous moorlands, the author has managed to create an atmosphere of danger. Lockwood's fear of travelling the moors evokes the feeling of the sublime, as he stresses the threat posed to strangers roaming the moors with its pits, and deep swamps, in which they could potentially drown (W.H :26).

THE WEATHER

The weather is like the scenery of a desolate landscape; its harshness remains as a powerful resource to reconcile the desired suspense and terror to the reader. Changes in the weather would thus generally indicate a dramatic shift in the narrative, an oncoming disaster of some sort. The forces of the nature are engaged on the night when Mr. Earnshaw's died. The writer has used them to prophesize a horrible change. As Nelly Dean relates: "A high wind blustered round the house, and roared in the chimney" (W.H: 37), this signal stands for overthrow of Heathcliff, upon Hindley's return as head of the family. Ever since Heathcliff has been besmirched to the category of a mere farm worker, and thus an inferior husband where Catherine is concerned, a second forceful storm occurs as he departs from Wuthering Heights. Magnifying the scene is the exclamation that it "was a very dark evening for summer...", and that the "storm came rattling over the Heights in full fury" (W.H: 75). On the other hand, the separation of the lovers is emphasized with the "violent" wind and thunder breaking a nearby tree in half, resulting in its falling across the roof, sending a "clatter of stones and soot into the kitchen fire" (W.H:75).

The different elements of weather and atmospheres are, additionally, used to give emphasis to the dramatic atmosphere in relation to the deaths of Catherine and Heathcliff. The shift in the direction of the winds in consequence occurs following Catherine's death, where a fall of snow interrupts the early weeks of summer, killing the flowers that had just begun to emerge and silencing the birds (W.H: 150). On the night of Heathcliff's death, however,

rain pours down throughout the night and, showering the bed in which Heathcliff parts, "...his face and throat were washed with rain..." (W.H: 298). The weather here is used as a symbol to show a change in the atmosphere of the narrative's material world, and its influence on the behaviour of the character can thus be shown.

On that bleak hill-top the earth was hard with a black frost, and the air made me shiver through every limb. Being unable to remove the chain, I jumped over, and, running up the flagged causeway bordered with straggling gooseberry-bushes, knocked vainly for admittance, till my knuckles tingled and the dogs howled.(Brontë :6)

The above description shows the state of weather in Wuthering Heights. It describes the vast land of moors and the trees and the chilly air of the hill-top. The changes of weather are used to stand for narrative shift. The weather also is used to imply that something horrible is going to occur. All These help engage the readers to build visual and sensory images which help promote creativity, especially when describing the setting and dramatic scenes. In effect, more suspense will be added.

THE IMPACT OF SETTING ON CHARACTERS

The characters' mood in a novel can sometimes be portrayed and reinforced through their physical surroundings. Their morals and values are described in such a way as to reflect the surroundings they are placed in, which will help the reader understand them better. This technique of creating suspense can be used in determining characters' development and behaviour. The good use of setting is clearly demonstrated in Wuthering Heights, which is a story of love and hate between two families, whose characteristics are symbolized by the houses in which they live.

The main characters in the novel Wuthering Heights is Heathcliff. As an orphan gypsy unloved since his birth, Heathcliff grows up to become a sadistic, cruel, vengeful and immoral man. He is usually described by other characters and often referred to as something like the devil or as evil and this is precisely reflects the way he behaves and acts.



He is described by the intense and violent and destructive passion and love towards Catherine Earnshaw, and this causes him to scorn all members of the Linton family of Thrushcross Grange, and he is led to devastate them in different ways. The atrocious Heathcliff abuses Isabella, Edgar Linton's sister, by using her fascination with him as a tool of revenge towards the Lintons, he constantly and savagely attacking Linton, his own dying son, and even his tenant, Mr. Lockwood, cannot escape his cruelty.

The technique in which the narrative is written is suggestive of many similarities between Heathcliff's character and the actual house in which he happens to grow up, that is Wuthering Heights. It is a dark, bleak, and unpleasant place situated on a high, windy crest amidst the moors. Not only is the atmosphere of Wuthering Heights similar to that of Heathcliff, but also both are described in a similar way. The house is described as "grotesque, with strong...narrow windows...deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large, jutting stones" (W.H :4), which is similar to Heathcliff's personal appearance; his savage face is illustrated as having "brows lowering, the eyes deep set and singular...black eyes withdrawn so suspiciously under their brow" (W.H :93). His dark, immoral attitude is enhanced by his personal physical description, which is not different from that of the house and the surroundings. The doldrums of the main character Heathcliff is not only revealed through the way he conducts but also through the setting against which the actions of the novel are laid down.

In contrast to Heathcliff's revengeful character there is the warm and gentle Edgar Linton, whose personality befits his dwelling, Thrushcross Grange, the "beautiful, splendid place" where "the sky is blue, and the larks are singing, and the becks and brooks are all brim full" (W.H:171). Raised in a loving family and comfortable house, Edgar has become a well respected, dignified gentleman in the neighborhood and a "kind master" to Ellen Dean. Thrushcross Grange, in which everyone is in order and pleasant, it symbolizes the civilized its inhabitants, especially the kind-hearted Edgar, who usually treats Catherine with utmost patience and affection, resolving to marry her despite witnessing

her oppressiveness conduct towards Ellen. He even takes pity upon Linton, when others think of him as "the worst-tempered bit of a sickly slip that ever struggled into his teens". The Grange grand residence is described as having "crimson-covered chairs and tables", a "pure white ceiling bordered with gold" and", a shower of glass drops"; similarly, Edgar handles his affairs with grace. He is as gentle and gracious as the Grange, in which he lives and dies as a generous soul.

On the other hand, Catherine Earnshaw, who has spent her lifetime between the two houses; Wuthering Heights and the Grange, is believed to show herself as similar in temperament to the atmosphere of the two houses. Portrayal of her character is set against them. Ellen describes Catherine as being "a wayward, quarrelsome girl, her temper matching the "[seasons] of steady rain". At the Heights "she [has] the bonniest eye, the sweetest smile, and lightest foot in the parish". These appeasing qualities are representation of the pleasant life at the Grange. At the same time, Catherine is capable of being extremely disagreeable and selfish, which is apparent when she shows her love for Heathcliff despite the hurt she causes to her husband. Nonetheless, Catherine is also capable of gentleness and kindness a trait which is noticed by Ellen while conversing with Mr. Lockwood, "She [seems] almost over fond of Mr. Linton; and even to his sister, she [shows] plenty of affection" (W.H:131).

Like the house Thrushcross Grange, Catherine usually displays evidences of warmth and kindness in her own womanly sense, and she tries to be polite and civilized. But like the Heights, Catherine can be stormy and almost violently ardent at times. This trait shows after her quarrel with Heathcliff and Edgar, she resolves to "dashing her head against the arm of the sofa, and grinding her teeth, so that [one] might fancy she would crash them to splinters"(W.H:157). Perceptibly, Catherine appears as a character that combines what is most pleasant and wonderful at Thrushcross Grange, with the harmful and disorderly nature of Wuthering Heights.

It is the novelist's imagination and emotional power, figurative language, as well as her masterly handling of different dialects which make the characters of Wuthering Heights fit into the



surroundings. Without the contrast between Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange the novel might have lost much of its thrilling appeal to the reader. Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange represent the two opposing forces that are personified in their residents. Emily Bronte has prepared Heathcliff and Wuthering Heights to represent of each other, both have the same characteristics such as being cold, dark, and alarming like a storm. The house, Thrushcross Grange and the Linton family are projected as more welcoming and peaceful. Their good qualities are portrayed by the warmth of the embellishment and richness of the surrounding landscape of the down valley beneath the hills of Wuthering Heights.

As has been mentioned earlier, the story takes place in two main settings; Wuthering Heights and Thrush cross Grange, both situated on the harsh and desolate moors of Yorkshire. It is believed that Emily Bronte grew up and lived in this place, and so her depiction of it is very accurate; for she uses her knowledge of the surroundings to emphasize the moods and attitudes of the characters. The inhabitants of Wuthering Heights such as Heathcliff are generally angry, ill-tempered, vengeful, and often immoral. These attitudes are clearly reflected through the large, cold and dark house, situated on top of a ruthless hill amidst the moors.

Thrush Cross Grange, on the other hand, is a more distinguished, calm house, situated in a valley of the moors. Its residents, including Edgar Linton, are usually more refined, with more morals and calmer attitudes than those of Wuthering Heights. Catherine Earnshaw is a character who generates conflict throughout the whole novel and between the two characters, Edgar and Heathcliff. Catherine's attitudes are also projected through the environment in which she has grown, in between the two contrary houses. It is not only the contrasting attitudes, values, and morals of the characters that make the novel so charming, but also the physical contrasts between the landscapes in the novel between the two houses.

The entrance to the Thrushcross Grange symbolizes the acquisition of a certain social status. In spite of not being social scene as such, but Catherine is still appreciative by her reception into

the Linton mansion. Heathcliff, on the other hand, is not welcomed in either household. So the setting in the novel seems to help in reflecting the themes of social class stratification, family differences, property, and divisions.

CONCLUSION

Through the analysis it can be concluded that the setting in Wuthering Heights has a great impact on the plot development, characters' behaviour and the writing creativity of the novel. Through extensive descriptions of the characters' dwellings and their surroundings, the author helps the reader understand these characters. The setting "Wuthering Heights" is remarkably significant. Emily has effectively made use of the two houses by comparing them to their dwellers' characters and giving the reader a sense of satisfaction and involvement in the narrative. Doubtless, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, along with their dwellers represent two completely contrasting mentalities and states of behavioral patterns: one of uncontrolled passion and dark broodiness, the other of politely refined affection and soft compassion. Heathcliff's love for Catherine is risky with danger and hostility; Edgar loves Catherine with gracious stillness, and Catherine returns affection to each of them accordingly. The Grange is a symbol of civilization, warmth, and decency; Wuthering Heights is a symbol of wildness, cruelty, and evil. Such utter difference between the environments and climates of the two households symbolizes the distinction between the temperaments of their inhabitants. Eventually, the setting played an enormous impact on the characters' behaviour each according to his/her place of residence either Wuthering heights or Thrushcross Grange.

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