**Summary Wuthering Heights Schmoop**

In the winter of 1801, our narrator, Lockwood, shows up at Wuthering Heights to make arrangements with Heathcliff to rent the nearby manor, Thrushcross Grange. (These names are insane, we know.) Heathcliff, the landlord, makes no effort to be pleasant (read: he's a Gloomy Gus) and immediately becomes a source of deep curiosity to Lockwood. A snowstorm forces Lockwood to spend the night at Wuthering Heights, and he has crazy nightmares complete with a wailing ghost named Catherine Linton trying to come through the window. Cheery!  
  
Settled into his new house, Lockwood invites the housekeeper, Ellen "Nelly" Dean, to tell the story of the curious inhabitants of Wuthering Heights. Nelly is all too happy to recount the dark tale of the Earnshaws, the Lintons, and, mostly, Heathcliff.  
  
We jump into the past as Nelly recounts the story. Nelly starts to work for the Earnshaws as a young girl. Everything is fine until Mr. Earnshaw takes a trip to Liverpool and returns with a swarthy little orphan child named Heathcliff. Though Earnshaw's daughter, Catherine, takes to the boy after only some initial aversion, the son, Hindley, resents his father's favoritism of the strange, mannerless boy.  
  
Soon Catherine and Heathcliff are inseparable, but Hindley's bitterness has only grown, so he goes off to college. Catherine and Heathcliff briefly enjoy a sort of idyllic, adventurous childhood out on the stormy moors and snuggling in the oak-paneled bed.  
  
When Mr. Earnshaw dies, Hindley returns from college, with his new wife Frances, to claim his place as master of Wuthering Heights. College hasn't altered Hindley's feelings toward Heathcliff, so he decides to make life miserable for his adopted brother by treating him like a servant.  
  
With Hindley acting the tyrant, Catherine provides Heathcliff's only solace. They remain allies and friends. One night Heathcliff and Catherine ramble down to Thrushcross Grange to spy on the Linton children, Edgar and Isabella, who live a pampered and protected existence. When a dog bites Catherine, she is forced to stay at the Grange for five weeks to recuperate. While there, she captures the affections of young Edgar. Back at Wuthering Heights, life without Catherine has been miserable for Heathcliff, but with Edgar in the picture things will never be the same.  
  
Frances dies after giving birth to a son, Hareton. Without his wife to help tone down his rage, Hindley becomes even more vengeful toward Heathcliff. Hindley resents his new son, and he becomes an abusive alcoholic. His primary activity is making life miserable for Heathcliff and, as a consequence, for everyone else in the house.  
  
Though Catherine confesses to Nelly an all-consuming love for Heathcliff, she still marries Edgar. (Even out on the isolated moors, social class dictates whom you marry.) Heathcliff takes off for three years to who knows where. When he returns, Heathcliff finds Catherine and Edgar married and living at Thrushcross Grange.  
  
Heathcliff is now on a mission of revenge against Hindley, who is in even worse shape than before. Loaded with a bunch of money gained during his mysterious absence, Heathcliff sets into motion his master plan to acquire Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange. Heathcliff exploits the fact that Hindley is a drunken mess and engages him in extended bouts of gambling that eventually lead Hindley to mortgage Wuthering Heights to pay his debts. The house now belongs to Heathcliff.  
  
Heathcliff continues to visit Catherine at Thrushcross Grange, though her husband Edgar treats him like a low-born outsider. In order to acquire Edgar's property, Heathcliff marries Isabella Linton, who brings out all of his abusive instincts.  
  
A violent argument between Edgar and Heathcliff sends Catherine to the sickbed, from which she never really recovers. She does, however, give birth to a daughter, also named Catherine. When Catherine dies, Heathcliff's sorrow and rage increase and he pleads for Catherine's ghost to haunt him.  
  
Unable to take his abusiveness any longer, Isabella flees for London, where she gives birth to a son, Linton Heathcliff.  
  
For the next thirteen years, Nelly Dean stays at Thrushcross Grange to raise Catherine, a feisty daddy's girl. Edgar and Nelly make sure that Catherine knows nothing of Wuthering Heights or its master. But, like her mother, Catherine is drawn to adventure and wants to explore the moors and all of its craggy, windswept spots. When Nelly forbids her to leave the property of Thrushcross Grange, Catherine goes off on her own. She ends up at Wuthering Heights, where she meets Hindley's son Hareton. Heathcliff's despicable treatment of the young man has turned Hareton into a grunting, uneducated oaf. Still, Catherine is happy to have some companionship.  
  
When Isabella dies, Edgar retrieves his fragile, dismal nephew Linton and brings him back to live with them at Thrushcross Grange. Heathcliff has other plans, and demands that his son live with him, though Linton did not even know his father existed. The contrast between Linton and Hareton is stark, but Heathcliff can't stand either of them.  
  
Eventually young Catherine encounters Heathcliff on the moors and ventures to Wuthering Heights, where she meets Linton, whom she only vaguely remembers. She and Linton begin a secret correspondence of love letters sent via the milk-fetcher. When Edgar and Nelly become sick and bedbound, Catherine begins to sneak up to Wuthering Heights to visit Linton. The miserable and suffering Linton becomes a tool of his father's plot for revenge—marrying Catherine would ensure that Linton inherits Thrushcross Grange.  
  
At a prearranged meeting between Catherine and Linton, Heathcliff lures Nelly and Catherine back to Wuthering Heights, where he imprisons them and forces Catherine to marry Linton. Soon after, Edgar dies and so does the sickly, young Linton. Heathcliff is now master of both Wuthering Height and Thrushcross Grange. He keeps his widowed daughter-in-law with him at Wuthering Heights so that she can work for him as a common servant. He rents out Thrushcross Grange to Lockwood.  
  
Nelly's story is now complete. Lockwood's fascination with Heathcliff has turned to disgust and he gives notice to Heathcliff that he will be leaving Thrushcross Grange to return to London. Six months later, however, he is back in the neighborhood and visits Nelly, who gives him an update on the dramatic tale.   
  
Despite her initial rejection of Hareton as an illiterate boor, Catherine warms to him and begins teaching him how to read. Heathcliff finds himself too obsessed with the dead Catherine to even care about the younger generation or even to bother eating or sleeping. Instead of continuing his cycle of abuse and revenge, he wanders the moors, stares into the middle distance, and makes broken-hearted appeals to Catherine's ghost. Heathcliff dies in the oak-paneled bed, a water-logged, grimacing stiff.  
  
Hareton and Catherine inherit the two houses. They plan to marry on New Year's day and have created a new atmosphere of renewal and hope. Lockwood leaves the happy lovers and passes by the gravestones of Catherine, Heathcliff, and Edgar. Heathcliff's grave plot is fresh and not yet covered with grass.