

Wuthering Heights – Emily Brontë

Chapter Prompts

Volume I

Chapter One:

Why does Mr. Lockwood find Heathcliff so interesting? In your response pay some attention to what he says about himself.

Chapter Two:

How does Emily Brontë convey a sense that Mr. Lockwood, on this visit to Wuthering Heights, finds himself in a world unlike any he has known before?

Chapter Three:

What characteristics of the ‘horror story’ (or ‘horror film’) genre does this chapter share?

Chapter Four:

By what methods does Emily Brontë deepen our interest in Heathcliff? Consider what we learn about his character, his history, and his effect on other people.

Chapter Five:

What forces bring Heathcliff and Catherine together, as children? Consider their personalities as well as external factors and events.

Chapter Six:

Explain why Hindley’s wife (Frances) and the Lintons react so strongly against Heathcliff, in their various ways.

Chapter Seven:

Give an account, based on this chapter, of Heathcliff’s struggles to find an identity for himself.
Chapter Eight:

‘I did nothing deliberately,’ says Catherine. What sense do we get that the behaviour of the characters in this chapter is determined by forces beyond their control?

Chapter Nine:

Assess the skilfulness of Emily Brontë’s use of Mrs. Dean in this chapter. What problems arise in ‘third-party’ accounts this kind? How does Emily Bronte seek to avoid them?

Chapter Ten:

How does this chapter represent a ‘winding-up’ of the novel’s action, as if it is a spring being tightened?

Chapter Eleven:

Assess Mrs. Dean’s impact in this chapter on a) the unfolding events and b) the reader.

Chapter Twelve:

‘He imagined me in a play, perhaps,’ says Catherine. What are the dramatic elements in this chapter?

Chapter Thirteen:

Is the picture Emily Brontë paints of Isabella’s character, in this chapter, sympathetic?

Chapter Fourteen:

How does this chapter deepen our understanding of Heathcliff?

Volume II

Chapter One:

Why might it be argued that this chapter ends in anti-climax?

Chapter Two:

How does Emily Brontë set in contrast the reactions of Linton and Heathcliff to Catherine’s death?
Chapter Three:

What examples of deranged, irrational or cruel behaviour can be found in this chapter? How does Emily Brontë demonstrate that society has in place ways of controlling such behaviour, but that they can not be relied on?

Chapter Four:

How at this point does the story take on an air of inevitability?

Chapter Five:

Why do you imagine Heathcliff is so eager to have his son? (You may find it helpful to re-read the final part of Book II Chapter Three as you prepare to answer.)

Chapter Six:

Is there anything positive to be taken from this chapter?

Chapter Seven:

What contrasting aspects of human nature are exhibited in this chapter?

Chapter Eight:

How convincing do you find Heathcliff in this chapter? (You may wish to take into account in your answer Mrs. Dean’s reaction to what he says.) What contradictions can you find in his arguments? What, in the end, persuades Mrs. Dean to allow Catherine to visit Linton?

Chapter Nine:

What part do Linton’s manipulations play in this chapter? Try to explain, from your reading of the chapter, why Catherine devotes herself to Linton.

Chapter Ten:

How do some of the characters in this chapter struggle to become better persons?

Chapter Eleven:

What is the most compelling concern for each of the characters in this chapter?

Chapter Twelve:

What internal conflicts or dilemmas does each of the three characters in this chapter face?
Chapter Thirteen:

What evidence is there in this chapter of Heathcliff’s ruthlessness?

Chapter Fourteen:

How does Emily Brontë control the timing of events in this chapter so as to increase their dramatic impact?

Chapter Fifteen:

Does this chapter restore any of the sympathy we may have felt for Heathcliff earlier in the story?

Chapter Sixteen:

Where do our sympathies lie in this chapter?

Chapter Seventeen:

Which of the characters arouses most interest in the reader, in the course of this chapter? Why?

Chapter Eighteen:

How does Emily Brontë work to make the reconciliation of Catherine and Hareton convincing? How successful is she?

Chapter Nineteen:

How does Emily Brontë lead us to speculate about the nature of the ‘change’ Heathcliff talks about, and what indications does she give of what that change may be?

Chapter Twenty:

How does Emily Brontë use Joseph, Mrs. Dean and Mr. Lockwood to bring the novel to its close?
General Essay Prompts

Questions are ordered according to the SCASI structure (Setting, Character, Action, Style and Ideas), with some overlap among the various areas.

* Questions from past AP exams (in some cases slightly shortened)
** Questions derived from past IB exams

Setting

1. How successfully, and by what means, does Emily Brontë create a distinctive setting for her novel?

2. ‘Plot depends for its movement on internal combustion’ (Elizabeth Bowen).

Show how in a novel or play of your choice the fact that the story takes place in a restricted environment (a closed society, an institution, a remote place) provides one of the necessary conditions for ‘internal combustion’ to occur. What other elements necessary to the process (e.g. combustible materials, heat, pressure, ignition) are also present in the story you have selected?

3. ‘This story could not have happened anywhere else.’

Discuss the validity of this comment.

4. Discuss the significance (symbolism) of the novel’s physical, as opposed to social, setting.

5. Does Emily Brontë romanticise rural Yorkshire at the beginning of the nineteenth century? If she does so, how does that contribute to (or detract from) the novel’s impact?

6. How far have novelists you have studied developed a sense of community in their novels? Why have they thought it important, or not important, to do that?**

7. What sense, if any, are we given of a world outside the confined setting of the novel?

8. What part is played in Wuthering Heights by the idea that there is a spiritual world beyond the physical one?

9. Is there any evidence to support the idea that Wuthering Heights is in essence a ghost story?

10. ‘The skill of writing is to create a context in which other people can think’ (Edwin Schlossberg).

How successfully, in Wuthering Heights, has Emily Brontë created such a context?
Character

11. ‘In our world of ordinary men and women – living ordinary lives, frittering away their time on petty activities, it raises our spirits to read of individuals of intensity. They awaken our sense of the potential of humans.’

To what extent do the major characters in a novel or play you have studied ‘awaken our sense of human potential’? Does the experience raise our spirits?

12. Literature often depicts individuals who are, or who see themselves as, different from the people around them. Write an essay in which you explore some of the struggles that arise from such differences (real or imagined) in a novel or play you have studied.

13. ‘An honest man can feel no pleasure in the exercise of power over his fellow citizens.’ Thomas Jefferson.

Explore the means by which, in a novel or play of your choice, one character exercises control over other people. How successful is he (or she)?

14. Explore the methods by which novelists have allowed us to see into the minds of their characters, and suggest, with examples, which methods have been most successful.**

15. Explain, with reference to works you have studied, why writers are frequently drawn to tell stories about characters who are rebellious towards or in some way alienated from society.**

16. ‘Nothing in his life
   Became him like the leaving it.’

Discuss how true this is of the central figure in a tragic novel or play you have studied.**

17. One definition of madness is ‘mental delusion or the behaviour arising from it’. But Emily Dickinson wrote –
   ‘Much madness is divinest Sense –
   To a discerning Eye –’

Novelists and playwrights have often seen madness with a ‘discerning Eye’. Select a novel or play in which a character’s apparent madness or irrational behaviour plays an important role. Then write a well-organized essay in which you explain what this delusion or eccentric behaviour consists of and how it might be judged reasonable. Explain the significance of the ‘madness’ to the work as a whole.*

18. Wuthering Heights tells the story of a fascinating and powerful character, as seen through the eyes of another person. What particular problems does that arrangement present, for both the writer and the reader? You may if you wish compare the novel with another piece of literature in **
which the same pattern appears (suggestions: John Knowles *A Separate Peace*; F. Scott Fitzgerald *The Great Gatsby*; Joseph Conrad *Heart of Darkness, Lord Jim*; Peter Shaffer *The Royal Hunt of the Sun, Amadeus, Equus;* Harper Lee *To Kill a Mockingbird*).

19. ‘Evil, be thou my good’ (Satan, in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*).

How far does Heathcliff adopt this as principle by which to live his life? Does he in any way redeem himself, in our eyes, by the end of the novel?

20. ‘The test of a round character is whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way’ (E. M. Forster).

By this standard, is Heathcliff a rounded character?

21. In her letter to Mrs. Dean from *Wuthering Heights*, Isabella complains of the difficulty of preserving ‘the common sympathies of human nature’ there. Show how the novel is in part an account of how those sympathies are eventually established in the house.

22. Catherine (Linton) complains to Hareton that she feels ‘stalled’. What sense are we given throughout the novel that characters become ‘stalled’ and need to find a way to begin moving forward again?

23. ‘One of the most remarkable features of *Wuthering Heights* is the way in which our sympathies, as we read the novel, shift.’

Discuss that comment.

**Action**

24. ‘I am initially suspicious of all novels with a genealogical tree at the beginning. That’s usually an indication that the plot is going to be convoluted beyond the ability of words alone to maintain clarity.’

Is the concern addressed in the above quotation borne out by the structure of *Wuthering Heights*, and by any difficulty we may have in reading the novel?

25. A character's attempt to achieve something he or she sees as important is central to many plays, novels, and poems.

Choose a literary work in which a character undertakes such an attempt. Show with clear evidence from the work how the character's efforts are used to develop a theme in the work.*

26. A character's need to undo past misdeeds (not necessarily his or her own) is an important driving force in some plays, novels, and poems. Choose a literary work in which a character
attempts to put right something that has happened previously. Show with clear evidence from the work how the character's attempts are used to develop a theme in the work.*

27. In many works of literature, past events can affect, positively or negatively, the present actions, attitudes, or values of a character. Choose a novel or play in which a character must contend with some aspect of the past, either personal or societal. Then write an essay in which you show how the character’s relationship to the past contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.*

28. ‘In the end is my beginning.’

This has been said by an author to explain how he organises his writing. Examine one or more novels or plays to see whether their structure reflects a similar mode of planning.**

29. A novelist has said of his work, ‘It is easy to begin and end a story, but figuring out how to hold up the middle is tough.’

How has a novelist you have studied ‘held up the middle’ in one or more of his or her novels?**

30. ‘Among the most powerful tools at a storyteller’s disposal are suspense and surprise.’ Explain the difference between those two features of novels and plays, illustrating your answer from literature of quality you have studied.**

31. Choose a single episode from a novel that you think would work well on stage, as part of a play, or as a scene in a film. Explain why you have selected that particular episode, and say what would make it an effective piece of theatre or cinema.

32. How far do writers you have studied prepare their readers or audiences for the conclusion of the stories they are telling?**

33. Mr. Lockwood describes Mrs. Dean as ‘on the whole, a very fair narrator’. Would you agree with his assessment?

34. What difficulties can arise for both the novelist and the reader when a story is told through a narrator who is also involved in the events? Illustrate your answer by reference to Wuthering Heights. Are those difficulties increased when the narrator makes extensive use of accounts given to him or her by other characters in the story?

35. Some works of literature use the element of time in a distinct way. The chronological sequence of events may be altered, or time may be suspended or accelerated. Choose a novel, an epic, or a play of recognized literary merit and show how the author's manipulation of time contributes to the effectiveness of the work as a whole. Do not merely summarize the plot.*
36. In great literature, no scene of violence exists for its own sake. Choose a work of literary merit that confronts the reader or audience with a scene or scenes of violence. In a well-organized essay, explain how the scene or scenes contribute to the meaning of the complete work. Avoid plot summary.*

37. In some novels and plays certain parallel or recurring events prove to be significant. In an essay, describe the major similarities and differences in a sequence of parallel or recurring events in a novel or play and discuss the significance of such events.*

38. It has been argued that the ending of a novel or play should offer ‘Not rounding off, but opening out’.

Discuss that idea in relation to one or more pieces of writing you have studied.**

39. ‘Nearly all novels are feeble at the end.’

How far can you defend the novels you have studied against this criticism?**

40. The British novelist Fay Weldon offers this observation about happy endings: ‘The writers, I do believe, who get the best and most lasting response from readers are the writers who offer a happy ending through moral development. By a happy ending, I do not mean mere fortunate events - a marriage or a last-minute rescue from death - but some kind of spiritual reassessment or moral reconciliation, even with the self, even at death.’

Choose a novel or play that has the kind of ending Weldon describes. In a well-written essay, identify the ‘spiritual reassessment or moral reconciliation’ evident in the ending and explain its significance in the work as a whole. *

41. ‘The course of true love never did run smooth.’

Illustrate that saying from plays or novels you know well, showing how the writer in each case makes use of love’s complexity and unpredictability to create a suspenseful narrative.**

42. ‘What is the best way of telling a story?’ (George Eliot, Leaves from a Notebook).

From your reading of Wuthering Heights, what decisions do you think Emily Brontë has taken about ‘the best way of telling a story’?

** Style **

43. Select a passage from the novel (a longish paragraph or two) whose style you see as typical of the whole book, and analyse its stylistic features.

44. ‘The difficulty of literature is not to write, but to write what you mean; not to affect your reader, but to affect him precisely as you wish’ (Robert Louis Stevenson).
Discuss a novel you have studied (or a play or a collection of poetry), explaining how the way it is written it has affected you.

45. ‘DIALOGUE   Must (1) Further Plot; (2) Express Character’ (Elizabeth Bowen). Does the dialogue in *Wuthering Heights* pass that test - or challenge its validity?

46. How far are the differing personalities of the characters in *Wuthering Heights* expressed in the way they speak?

47. What attempts by Emily Brontë to lighten the novel’s tone can you identify?

48. ‘There is little point in having a character in a novel speak in a way that is largely unintelligible.’

Defend Emily Brontë’s use of extreme dialect in Joseph’s speech.

**Ideas**

49. Discuss the writers’ treatment of one or more of the following themes in novels you have studied: love, deceit, power, wealth, war, change, courage, illness and death, self-discovery, redemption.**

50. A critic has said that one important measure of a superior work of literature is its ability to produce in the reader a healthy confusion of pleasure and disquietude. Select a literary work that produces this ‘healthy confusion’. Write an essay in which you explain the sources of the ‘pleasure and disquietude’ experienced by the readers of the work.*

51. Elizabeth Bowen wrote of ‘The primary quality of the novelist – an all-embracing, Christ-like compassion’.

How far does a feeling of compassion permeate *Wuthering Heights*?

52. Examine the ways in which novelists whose work you have studied present stories of failure or suffering. What do you gather about the effect they are trying to produce in their readers?**

53. How does *Wuthering Heights* give us insight into the ways in which misunderstandings arise between people? Does the novel have anything to suggest about how such misunderstandings can be avoided or corrected?

54. How important is it for us to feel, at the end of a novel, that justice has been done? What sort of justice, if any, has been done by the end of *Wuthering Heights*?

55. In some works of literature, childhood and adolescence are portrayed as times graced by innocence and a sense of wonder; in other works, they are depicted as times of tribulation and
terror. Focusing on a single novel or play, explain how its representation of childhood or adolescence shapes the meaning of the work as a whole.*

56. ‘Literature illustrates the heights to which humans can aspire and the depths to which they can sink.’

Examine this spread of human behaviour in a piece of literature you have studied, and show how far the author makes any kind of moral judgement of his or her characters.

57. The relationship between men and women, and the differences in their roles in society, are central considerations in many works of literature. Discuss the part they play in one or more novels or plays you have studied.**

58. ‘The answers you get from literature depend on the questions you pose’ (Margaret Atwood).

What questions might we pose, as we read Wuthering Heights? What answers might we find, or ourselves give, to those questions?

General

59. ‘A dark story set in a dark world, and told darkly.’

Is that an accurate comment on Wuthering Heights?

60. ‘A story of female heroism caught between male weakness and male brutality – and triumphing.’

How sound is that view of Wuthering Heights?

61. Compare Wuthering Heights with Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, paying particular attention to the mood of both novels and the similarities in origins, character and behaviour between Heathcliff and Frankenstein’s creature.

62. What, in the opening pages of Wuthering Heights, will make the reader want to continue into the novel?

63. ‘The writings of women are always cold and pretty like themselves. There is as much wit as you may desire, but never any soul’ (Jean-Jacques Rousseau).

How far, from your reading of Wuthering Heights would you choose to defend Emily Brontë from that criticism?

64. ‘Ultimately, literature is nothing but carpentry. With both you are working with reality, a material just as hard as wood’ (Gabriel Garcia Marquez).
Show how in *Wuthering Heights* Emily Brontë works with reality as if she is shaping wood.

64. ‘Literature is analysis after the event’ (Doris Lessing). How well does that phrase describe the structure and essential nature of *Wuthering Heights*?

65. ‘The important thing in writing is the capacity to astonish. Not shock - shock is a worn-out word - but astonish’ (Terry Southern).

In what ways may *Wuthering Heights* astonish us?

66. ‘The most important thing in a work of art is that it should have a kind of focus’ (Leo Tolstoy).

What would you regard as the ‘focus’ of *Wuthering Heights*?

67. ‘A story must be exceptional enough to justify its telling’ (Thomas Hardy).

Does *Wuthering Heights* meet this criterion?