

LESSON NOTE ON LITERATURE-IN-ENGLISH WEEK 6

SUBJECT: Literature-in-English

TOPIC: African Prose; "Wuthering Heights" by Emily Bronte Cont'd

CLASS: SS1

WEEK: 6

THEMES

1. Love

Love in the novel comes in different forms. There is undying love displayed by Heathcliff for Catherine Earnshaw, both develop love feelings for each other when they are young. Progressively, the feelings are experienced more consciously when they become adults and even in death. The portrayal of this kind of love somewhat borders on the unrealistic. Catherine Earnshaw and Edgar highlight another kind of love that is based on selfishness. On the other hand, the love that exists between Isabella and Heathcliff is love based on infatuation. Similarly, Catherine Linton becomes infatuated with her cousin to whom she is later married. Later she develops yet another form of love for Hareton.

2. Deceit and betrayal

Heathcliff is the king of deceit and betrayal. He appears as helpless and harmless and plays his way into the heart of kind Mr. Earnshaw who takes him off the street and brings him home, defending him against injustices of any kind whether perceived or real. All this eventually counts for nothing as he uses trickery and blackmail to take all that belongs to his benefactor after his death first he blackmails Hindley and drives him to untimely death. Next, he concocts to drive a wedge between Catherine and her husband Edgar. Then, he receives Catherine to marry his son in order to harvest their inheritances. Again, this theme highlights a trend common in our society where humans are driven by deceit which moves them to betray the trust of fellow humans in business transactions, family relations and the like.

3. Revenge and retribution

Health is at the heart of it all. In this book, he is described by the author as a misanthrope or hater of mankind; this fuels revenge and results in retribution. Hindley's unkind action towards the adopted orphan triggers the chain of revenge. When he grows up and has some measure of influence, he returns to exact his revenge on Hindley and extends it to his son Hareton. He also takes out his revenge on Catherine Earnshaw because he feels cheated when she married Edgar who is from a middle class, instead of a nameless urchin like him. He systematically executes his revenge plan: first, he married Edgar's sister Isabella and mortified her in matrimony. The result for Catherine and Isabella is an untimely death. In the same vein, those who rebelled in and received illicit gain by cursing others pain never really go unpunished.

4. Benevolence

This theme is highlighted in the actions of Old Earnshaw who opens his heart and home to the orphaned boy called Heathcliff, even when foster care or an orphanage is an option. Till he dies, he gives everything that a man owes his biological child and even more to the adopted child, leaving a model of philanthropy

worthy of emulation. Also Catherine Heathcliff demonstrates this virtue by sending books to her cousin to enrich his reading experience and assist him to cope with his constant health worries

CHARACTERS AND THEIR ROLES

1. Heathcliff

He is an orphan whose place of origin and family background remained a mystery. He is the protagonist of the novel around whom the idea of love, hate and revenge are woven. Despite being a beneficiary of kindness and generosity, which takes him out of destitution, the only thing he succeeds in bequeathing to the world in turn is unkindness, unfriendliness, revenge and misery. His mean nature is reviewed from the outset when he gives his new tenant, Mr Lockwood, a frosty welcome at their very first meeting, mercilessly, he allows his dogs to maul Lockwood and he is willing to send him out into the bitter snow to meet his death simply because he shows up uninvited. His actions underscored the theme of undying love despite his portrayal as heartless, his feelings for Catherine Earnshaw reveals that he has capability for being amorous.

2. Mr. Lockwood

Mr. Lockwood is a well-to-do gentleman who lacks the courage and patience to make a life-long commitment to the women he comes in contact with in the course of his travels. He is an accomplished bachelor. He does not bargain for the encounters of Wuthering Heights, even though he visits just twice, as the new tenant of Thrushcross Grange. After a second successful visit, he becomes an invalid. Mr. Lockwood represents successful and eligible bachelors who prefer to remain unmarried because of the fear of making any lasting commitment and shouldering marital responsibilities. Instead, they content themselves with gallivanting and living life to the fullest.

3. Catherine Earnshaw

She is the younger sister of Hindley and the daughter of Mr. Earnshaw. After marriage, she is addressed as Mrs. Catherine Linton. Born into a middle-class family in England of the Victorian period, as a young girl she is headstrong and notorious for making mischief. A major flaw in her character is hot temperament; she easily gets furious and unstable once her emotions are agitated. She proves a reliable ally to Heathcliff during those times Hindley maltreats him. She is always condemning his brother and offering the needed support to Heathcliff. She is also used to develop the theme of revenge; this eventually leads to her death. To avenge this, she begins to haunt Heathcliff from the grave till he joins her there. She is also central to the theme of love in the story.

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