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## Peace-Out Troublemaker

The last page in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* leaves the reader with many new connections and symbols, as well as a feeling of satisfaction that peace has been restored to the Earnshaw and Linton families. The three members of the older generation have reunited to relive their childhood and enjoy each other's company once again. The reader finishes the book confident that Heathcliff has matured and come to agree with the other characters, that Catherine rests peacefully in the spiritual underground with the two men in her life who mean the most to her, and that Cathy lives happily with Hareton in the real world, free from the conflict and disorder caused by Heathcliff. Lockwood stresses that Heathcliff's transformation and honorable departure resolved the disputes between all three groups.

As he approaches the last few days of his life, Heathcliff finally experiences the feelings of peace and harmony that evaded him in his early years as an inhabitant of Wuthering Heights. Bitter about the loss of Catherine, Heathcliff dedicates his life to the destruction of the family lineage and to gaining revenge for his dissatisfaction. Alone, a failure, he patronizes both Cathy and Hareton with malicious rules and brutal punishments. With thoughtful insight into Heathcliff's motivation for torturing the young couple, Cathy remarks that "[his] cruelty rises from [his] greater misery!" (219); Heathcliff handles his own unhappiness by releasing aggression onto others. An intruder to the family, Heathcliff never fits in with his kin, and remains an unhappy outcast on through adulthood. Heathcliff ultimately realizes that he relates to none of his family members and no longer belongs at Wuthering Heights, but as a result, heaven enters his sight and overwhelms him with an unfamiliar feeling of joy. When Heathcliff confesses to Nelly "I have nearly attained my heaven, and that of others is altogether unvalued...by me" (255), he reveals that he recognizes peace in his soul for the first time, that he no longer possesses the desire to harm Cathy or Hareton, and that he has completed his life and no longer covets others' joy. At last, Heathcliff lays down to rest in tranquility - near the moors, the only place he belongs.

In the second half of the book, Catherine experiences a dreadful conflict that directly parallels Heathcliff's. Dying in the midst of a dispute with her own heart, Catherine remains in Wuthering Heights at the request of Heathcliff, determined to haunt him until his death. Not long before she dies, Catherine gives birth to her own reincarnation, and names that daughter Catherine after herself. Cathy never gets to know her mother, but Heathcliff immediately recognizes a distinct similarity between the two women that compels him to treat the younger Cathy as he treated her

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mother. Heathcliff's last plea to Catherine, "may you not rest, as long as...I am living"(130), places an enormous responsibility on his beloved sister, and also reveals his determination to interfere with the course of nature, his self-centered dedication to creating turmoil. Heathcliff refuses to allow Catherine to act on her own will: on the night of Heathcliff's death, when Catherine's ghost cuts the dying Heathcliff's arm by pulling at it through the window, the conflict endured by the two families ends once and for all. As a result, Cathy has the freedom to marry Hareton and pursue her own happiness, and consequentially allows her mother to rest peacefully with the thrill of knowing that the Earnshaws have prevailed. In one of the last scenes of the book, when a young boy informs Lockwood that "They's Heathcliff and a woman, yonder, under t' Nab"(257), he reaffirms that the two souls rest blissfully, enjoying their chief amusement: the company of the moors. To Catherine, Heathcliff's passing marks a new beginning in her life after death, an opportunity to enjoy the "slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth" (258).

Unequivocally, death symbolizes a peaceful voyage to the spiritual realm and a reunion of old friends, but it can also lead to new opportunities, or a beneficial change for those left behind. Heathcliff entered Wuthering Heights and the Earnshaw family as a young child, and soon afterwards began to interfere with the predicted destiny of his surrogate family. Linton, Heathcliff's son with Isabella, presents the only possible way for Heathcliff to become genetically related to the family, but the weak child dies before having an children with Cathy. Declaring "[Linton's] life is not worth a farthing"(223), Heathcliff hints that Linton lacks the strength to survive, and thus reveals that for the sake of the families, none of his decedents can survive. When Cathy yells at Heathcliff "you cannot make [Linton and I] hate each other!" (219), she offers a concrete example of the disturbance that her uncle has created within the family. The conflicts that Heathcliff instigates damage the family, and his death lifts an enormous weight off of the shoulders of Cathy and Hareton. Cathy Linton can finally marry Hareton Earnshaw, changing her name to Cathy Earnshaw, the same name her mother had as a child. When Lockwood leaves Wuthering Heights for the last time, no evidence remains that Heathcliff ever existed - except for the subtle grave beside Catherine's own.

Lockwood's sympathetic portrayal of Heathcliff during the scenes leading up to his death provide the reader with an insightful and conclusive ending to the Earnshaw family's story. Heathcliff's acceptance of his inevitable demise allows the people he loves the most to rest once and for all. Heathcliff and Catherine escape through the broken window and lose

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themselves forever in the spiritual world of the moors, interred together in their natural playground.

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