

# Intertextuality and the context of reception: Heaven and Hell in *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë

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### Lesson plan

#### Resources and preparation needed

- ❖ **Resource A** Copies of the extract from chapter 16
- ❖ **Resource B** Copies of the Bible verses on separate strips
- ❖ **Resource C** Film clip – *Wuthering Heights*
- ❖ **Resources D** Sheets of A3 paper and coloured + highlighter pens

#### Learning objectives

- ❖ To analyse and understand the language and imagery of the extract
- ❖ To consider the links between the references to Heaven and to Hell and the Bible verses which inspired it
- ❖ To develop an appreciation of Brontë's use of intertextuality.

#### Starter activity: Heaven and Hell posters

- ❖ Introduce the idea of exploring the cultural associations of the two extremes of Heaven and Hell, assuring students that any ideas about the two places from any religious / cultural background is acceptable
  - Distribute the A3 sheets [**Resource D**] to pairs. The paper should be divided in any way they like to denote two opposite 'places' (e.g. it could be folded in half diagonally or from landscape to create a higher and lower region)
  - Using either words or images students populate their 'heaven' and 'hell' with words / ideas / people / things / places which they know from their everyday life or from reading / the news / films / religion.
    - Share the findings and display the posters!

#### Activity one - Chapter 16

- ❖ In pairs, one person taking Heaven and the other Hell, highlight the words taken from the extract [**Resource A**](using different colours) which you associate with Heaven or Hell
  - Analyse how closely the imagery relates to the characters e.g.
    - Is Catherine an angel?
    - Was she ever?
    - How does Nelly's reaction reflect her character?
    - Compare her with Catherine and Heathcliff.
  - Look at the ways in which Heathcliff and Hell reflect what is sometimes described as the Gothic element of this novel.

#### Activity two - Back to Brontë: class discussion

- ❖ Check out what the students know about Emily Brontë's background
  - Where is Haworth?
  - Where did she live? What was her father's profession?
    - Link these elements into the creation of *Wuthering Heights*.
- ❖ Discuss nineteenth century attitudes to religion and church going:
  - What would a daughter of the parsonage know about the Bible?
  - There is evidence that Emily Brontë stopped attending church services once she was old enough to make her own choice:
    - How might this reflect in the language and imagery used in the novel?

#### Activity three: Cross matching

- ❖ Give out the biblical quotations [**Resource B**]
  - In pairs, students try and match the verses to the areas in the text [**Resource A**]
  - Discuss findings and watch film clip [**Resource C**]
  - Explore in pairs how the Bible references make the novel more:
    - Powerful
    - Gothic
    - Shocking
  - Report back findings.

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### **Resources**

#### **Resource A**

#### **Extract from *Wuthering Heights*, chapter 16**

ABOUT twelve o'clock that night was born .. Catherine ... and two hours after the mother died, having never recovered sufficient consciousness to miss Heathcliff, or know Edgar. ... Next morning ... her brow [was] smooth, her lids closed, her lips wearing the expression of a smile; no angel in heaven could be more beautiful than she appeared. And I partook of the infinite calm in which she lay: ... [an] untroubled image of Divine rest. I instinctively echoed the words she had uttered a few hours before: 'Incomparably beyond and above us all! Whether still on earth or now in heaven, her spirit is at home with God!' ... I [saw] a repose that neither earth nor hell can break, and I [felt] an assurance of the endless and shadowless hereafter – .. Eternity ... - where life is boundless in its duration, and love in its sympathy, and joy in its fulness. ...

I ventured soon after sunrise to ... steal out to the pure refreshing air. ... My chief motive was seeing Mr. Heathcliff. ... I wished, yet feared, to find him. I felt the terrible news must be told, and I longed to get it over; but how to do it I did not know. He was there - at least, a few yards further in the park; leant against an old ash-tree, his hat off, and his hair soaked with the dew that had gathered on the budded branches, and fell pattering round him. He had been standing a long time in that position ...

At my approach ... he raised his eyes:- 'She's dead! [] I've not waited for you to learn that. Put your handkerchief away - don't snivel before me. Damn you all! she wants none of your tears!' ...

'Yes, she's dead! [] Gone to heaven, I hope; where we may, every one, join her, if we take due warning and leave our evil ways to follow good!'

'Did SHE take due warning, then? [] Did she die like a saint? Come, give me a true history of the event. How did ... ?'

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He endeavoured to pronounce the name, but could not manage it; and compressing his mouth he held a silent combat with his inward agony, defying, meanwhile, my sympathy with an unflinching, ferocious stare. He resumed at last:

'How did she die?' []

'Quietly as a lamb! [] Her senses never returned: she recognised nobody from the time you left her, [] Her life closed in a gentle dream - may she wake as kindly in the other world!'

'May she wake in torment! [] Why, she's a liar to the end! Where is she? Not THERE - not in heaven ... Oh! ... I pray one prayer - I repeat it till my tongue stiffens - Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest as long as I am living; you said I killed you - haunt me, then! The murdered DO haunt their murderers, I believe. I know that ghosts HAVE wandered on earth. Be with me always - take any form - drive me mad! Only DO not leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh, God! It is unutterable! I CANNOT live without my life! I CANNOT live without my soul!'

He dashed his head against the knotted trunk; and, lifting up his eyes, howled, not like a man, but like a savage beast being goaded to death with knives and spears. I observed several splashes of blood about the bark of the tree, and his hand and forehead were both stained; probably the scene I witnessed was a repetition of others acted during the night.

It hardly moved my compassion - it appalled me: still, I felt reluctant to quit him so. But the moment he recollected himself enough to notice me watching, he thundered a command for me to go, and I obeyed. He was beyond my skill to quiet or console!

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### Resource B

#### Copies of King James Bible verses on separate strips

**Psalm 69: 20**

Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness:

**Psalm 69: 20**

I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.

**Ezekiel 18: 27-8**

When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.

**Luke 22:44**

And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

**John 18:1**

Jesus ...went forth ... where was a garden, into the which he entered.

**Mark 14:42-46**

He ... began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy; <sup>34</sup>And saith .. 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death ... tarry .. watch.'

**1 Corinthians 15:51-52**

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, <sup>52</sup>In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

**Revelation 21:4-5**

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. <sup>5</sup>And he that sat upon the throne said: 'Behold, I make all things new.'

### Resource C <http://www.crossref-it.info/articles/482/Wuthering-Heights-~-ch-16>