

The Chronology of

*Wuthering
Heights*

by

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1926, Charles Percy Sanger published a short essay called “The Structure of Wuthering Heights” in which he examined how detailed the novel is in matters such as chronology, genealogy and law. He gave a detailed timeline of the events in the story but, apart from a few incidents, does not explain how he came to his conclusions. While researching the story for my website (www.wuthering-heights.co.uk), I decided to attempt to construct my own timeline and see how it compares.

Sanger did not invent any dates which could not be determined from the novel so his timeline is full of approximations (eg. “Hindley Earnshaw was born before September 1757”). I decided, while working out a timeline, to actually choose specific dates for the events, even those that cannot be accurately defined. This was partly because, when working out dates using lunar phases, a calendar and chosen day was necessary. I also liked the idea of having actual days rather than ‘sometime in May’.

Most of these days were chosen randomly as long as they fitted with the descriptions of the novel but, sometimes I chose relevant dates to Emily Brontë. Heathcliff’s birthday, for instance, is 30 July, the same as Emily’s, and Hindley’s dates of birth and death match those of Branwell Brontë. Where I select a day for these reasons, I will note it (it is the day and month which matches, of course, not the year).

Notes: to avoid confusion Catherine Earnshaw (the mother) is always referred to as “Catherine”; Catherine Linton (the daughter) is always referred to as “Cathy”.

Dates that I have chosen are marked in green (eg. **30 July**).

Quotations from the novel are indicated like this with important words relating to the chronology are marked like so.

Chapter 2: The Calendar

Emily Brontë gives one date in *Wuthering Heights* with a day of the week and, unfortunately it is wrong. In chapter 21, we read:

Time wore on at the Grange in its former pleasant way till Miss Cathy reached sixteen. On the anniversary of her birth we never manifested any signs of rejoicing, because it was also the anniversary of my late mistress's death. Her father invariably spent that day alone in the library; and walked, at dusk, as far as Gimmerton kirkyard, where he would frequently prolong his stay beyond midnight. Therefore Catherine was thrown on her own resources for amusement. This **twentieth of March** was a beautiful spring day, and when her father had retired, my young lady came down dressed for going out, and said she asked to have a ramble on the edge of the moor with me: Mr. Linton had given her leave, if we went only a short distance and were back within the hour.

So Cathy's birth and Catherine's death were on 20 March 1784 (the working out of the year will be shown later). In chapter 15, we read:

The **fourth was Sunday**, and I brought it into her room after the family were gone to church.

This is the day before Catherine's death so we know that she died on Monday 20 March 1784. However, the calendar for 1784 shows that 20 March 1784 was a Saturday.

It is not a surprise that this date is wrong: we *are* talking about a fictional story, after all, not an account of history. Emily may have used an incorrect calendar (maybe she constructed it herself and worked it out wrongly) or she may simply have not bothered with one (although the consistency of so much of the novel suggests otherwise). Whatever the reason, we are faced with a choice. As so many events occurred on specific days of the week, what calendar do we use? Clearly not the actual 1784 calendar as it stands. What about adjusting the days of the week for 1784 so that 20 March *is* Monday? An easier option is that the calendar for 1780 *does* match, with 20 March being on a Monday. Both 1780 and 1784 are leap years as well, so by simply using the calendar for four years before the novel's year, we have a match. I use the terms *W-Year* (the year as used in "Wuthering Heights") and *C-Year* (the year with the chosen calendar) for convenience. So W-1784 is equal to C-1780.

All goes well until 1800. The substitute year, C-1796, is a leap year but W-1800 is not (because it is not divisible by 400). So we need to find an alternative which has only 365 days and will link in with W-1799 (or, rather, the calendar year C-1795). That year is 1802 and, for similar reasons, the calendars used for W-1801 and W-1802 are C-1803 and C-1809 respectively. As far as the lunar calendar is concerned, I use the same year as the substituted year until 1800, using the term *L-Year*. So W-1784 is C-1780 and also L-1780. As mentioned, the calendars for W-1800 to W-1802 depart from the four year difference but the L-Years can continue so that W-1800 uses C-1802 but L-1796. There would actually be a day difference because of 1796 being a leap year and 1800 not, but one day is irrelevant.

In the table "Comparison of the Calendars" on page 3, I show the relevant years in *Wuthering Heights* and their equivalent calendars.

Explanations: *W-Year* (eg. W-1784) is the year as mentioned in "Wuthering Heights" (eg. Cathy's birth is in 1784); *Lp Yr* is whether that year is a leap year or not (marked by a grey background); *20 March* is the day of the week that 20 March should be on according to the book; *C-Year* is the nearest year which actually matches the calendar (eg. C-1780); *L-Year* is the year used for calculating lunar cycles; *1 Jan* and *31 Dec* are the days of the week that those days are on; *M-Year* is a modern year whose calendar matches the C-Year as it can be difficult to find a calendar for the 18th century (eg. M-1972).

Table 1: Comparison of the Calendars

W-Year	Lp Yr	20 March	C-Year	L-Year	1 Jan	31 Dec	M-Year
1771		Friday	1767	1767	Thursday	Thursday	1959
1772	Yes	Sunday	1768	1768	Friday	Saturday	1960
1773		Monday	1769	1769	Sunday	Sunday	1961
1774		Tuesday	1770	1770	Monday	Monday	1962
1775		Wednesday	1771	1771	Tuesday	Tuesday	1963
1776	Yes	Friday	1772	1772	Wednesday	Thursday	1964
1777		Saturday	1773	1773	Friday	Friday	1965
1778		Sunday	1774	1774	Saturday	Saturday	1966
1779		Monday	1775	1775	Sunday	Sunday	1967
1780	Yes	Wednesday	1776	1776	Monday	Tuesday	1968
1781		Thursday	1777	1777	Wednesday	Wednesday	1969
1782		Friday	1778	1778	Thursday	Thursday	1970
1783		Saturday	1779	1779	Friday	Friday	1971
1784	Yes	Monday	1780	1780	Saturday	Sunday	1972
1785		Tuesday	1781	1781	Monday	Monday	1973
1786		Wednesday	1782	1782	Tuesday	Tuesday	1974
1787		Thursday	1783	1783	Wednesday	Wednesday	1975
1788	Yes	Saturday	1784	1784	Thursday	Friday	1976
1789		Sunday	1785	1785	Saturday	Saturday	1977
1790		Monday	1786	1786	Sunday	Sunday	1978
1791		Tuesday	1787	1787	Monday	Monday	1979
1792	Yes	Thursday	1788	1788	Tuesday	Wednesday	1980
1793		Friday	1789	1789	Thursday	Thursday	1981
1794		Saturday	1790	1790	Friday	Friday	1982
1795		Sunday	1791	1791	Saturday	Saturday	1983
1796	Yes	Tuesday	1792	1792	Sunday	Monday	1984
1797		Wednesday	1793	1793	Tuesday	Tuesday	1985
1798		Thursday	1794	1794	Wednesday	Wednesday	1986
1799		Friday	1795	1795	Thursday	Thursday	1987
1800	No	Saturday	1802	1796	Friday	Friday	1993
1801		Sunday	1803	1797	Saturday	Saturday	1994
1802		Monday	1809	1798	Sunday	Sunday	1995

Chapter 3: Lockwood's Story

We begin with the dating of Lockwood's story: that is, his stay at Thrushcross Grange and his visits to Wuthering Heights. There are nine relevant events in his narration:

Table 2: Lockwood's Story

Chap.	Event	Notes from the Novel
1	Lockwood's first visit to Wuthering Heights	Noted as 1801.
2	Lockwood visits Wuthering Heights again. Has to stay overnight.	The next day.
3,4	Lockwood sees Catherine's ghost at the window. Returns to Thrushcross Grange. Ellen begins her story.	The next day.
10	Heathcliff sends grouse to Lockwood who is ill.	Three weeks on.
10	Ellen continues her story.	One week on. Four weeks after the second Wuthering Heights visit.
15	Lockwood continues the story.	One week on.
30	End of Ellen's story.	Second week in January.
31	Lockwood rides to Wuthering Heights to take his leave of Heathcliff.	"In a day or two."
32	Lockwood's return visit to Thrushcross Grange and Wuthering Heights.	September 1802. A bright moon.

This timeline can be broken down into three sections: from the first visit to chapter 15; from the end of Ellen's story to Lockwood leaving; and Lockwood's return.

The second part is easy, taking in a few days around the second week in January 1802 so I chose **10 January 1802** as the day when Ellen finishes her story (strictly speaking when Lockwood finishes writing it down) and **12 January** as his visit to the Heights to take his leave.

The return visit we know is in September 1802 and there is a bright moon when Lockwood visits the Heights. Our amended calendar shows that the new moon was on the 10th and the full moon on the 25th so it must be fairly late in the month. I chose **27 September**.

So we are left with the initial section. Sanger explains his reasoning for this.

Lockwood begins his account in 1801; it is snowy weather, which might be in January or February or in November or December. But he returns in 1802 before his year's tenancy is out. Hence the story begins at the end of 1801. A Michaelmas tenancy begins on the 10th October—not on 29th September—because when the calendar was reformed eleven days were left out. Therefore, the story begins after 10th October 1801. Now after Lockwood has been ill three weeks Heathcliff sends him some grouse, the last of the season. Since the Game Act, 1831, grouse may not be shot after 10th December, so we may take this as about the date for the last grouse. Thus the story begins about the middle of November, and this fits pretty well with the later indications.

My dating fits Sanger's with specific dates: the novel begins on **22 November 1801** with Lockwood writing down his account of his visit to Wuthering Heights. On the **23rd**, he returns to the Heights and has to stay the night. Early on the **24th**, (about three in the morning), he wakes from the nightmare with Catherine's ghost and returns to Thrushcross Grange at noon. Later on, Ellen begins her story and finishes at half one in the morning (**25th**).

Heathcliff sends grouse when Lockwood had been confined to bed with a cold for three weeks. As Sanger, says, the grouse season finishes on 10th December so I put this date as **15th December** (as

Heathcliff is the master of Thrushcross Grange, probably the area magistrate, and a law unto himself, I could imagine him shooting a day or so later). Ellen's story continues a week later (22nd) in chapter 10 and, again a week later, in chapter 15 (30th). This leaves eleven days before the second section.

So we have a chronology for Lockwood's story and, as we look at the story of Heathcliff, we will see how the two narrations merge. For the beginning, though, we look at Catherine.

Chapter 4: The Main Story

Since we know with certainty the date of Catherine's death, we should look at the dates concerning her first.

4.1 Catherine's Death

There are several days either side of her death which are marked. Her funeral took place on 24 March:

Mrs. Linton's funeral was appointed to take place on the **Friday** following her decease; and till then her coffin remained uncovered, and strewn with flowers and scented leaves, in the great drawing-room. (chapter 16)

and the day of Heathcliff's visit to her body was on the 21st:

I held no communication with him: still, I was conscious of his design to enter, if he could; and on the **Tuesday**, a little after dark, when my master, from sheer fatigue, had been compelled to retire a couple of hours, I went and opened one of the windows; moved by his perseverance to give him a chance of bestowing on the faded image of his idol one final adieu.

The days leading up to her death are also marked in one paragraph in chapter 15:

In the evening, she said, **the evening of my visit to the Heights**, I knew, as well as if I saw him, that Mr. Heathcliff was about the place; and I shunned going out, because I still carried his letter in my pocket, and didn't want to be threatened or teased any more. I had made up my mind not to give it till my master went somewhere, as I could not guess how its receipt would affect Catherine. The consequence was, that it did not reach her before the **lapse of three days. The fourth was Sunday**, and I brought it into her room after the family were gone to church. There was a manservant left to keep the house with me, and we generally made a practice of locking the doors during the hours of service; but on that occasion the weather was so warm and pleasant that I set them wide open, and, to fulfil my engagement, as I knew who would be coming, I told my companion that the mistress wished very much for some oranges, and he must run over to the village and get a few, to be paid for on the morrow. He departed, and I went upstairs.

The Sunday was, of course, the eve of her death and the day of Heathcliff's last meeting with her: that is, 19 March 1784. If that was the "fourth" day, then the first, the day of Ellen's visit to Isabella at Wuthering Heights, was Wednesday 15th. This is relevant to working out the dates of Isabella's elopement and marriage to Heathcliff which is examined in "4.3 Isabella's elopement" on page 8.

Catherine rises from her delirium caused by Edgar's clash with Heathcliff at the beginning of March which I make the **third**.

The first time she left her chamber was at the **commencement of the following March**.

4.2 Catherine's Marriage

Heathcliff returned in the September of 1783:

On a mellow **evening in September**, I was coming from the garden with a heavy basket of apples which I had been gathering...I set my burden on the house-steps by the kitchen-door, and lingered to rest, and drew in a few more breaths of the soft, sweet air; my eyes were **on the moon**, and my back to the entrance, when I heard a voice behind me say 'Nelly, is that you?' (Chapter 10)

Ellen remarks that there were about six months between the marriage and his reappearance:

Not to grieve a kind master, I learned to be less touchy; and, for the space of **half a year**, the gunpowder lay as harmless as sand, because no fire came near to explode it.

which would date the marriage as around March 1783.

We know that Hareton was nearly five when Ellen left to become the maid to Catherine after the marriage:

Much against my inclination, I was persuaded to leave Wuthering Heights and accompany her here, Little Hareton was **nearly five years old**, and I had just begun to teach him his letters.

and he was born in June 1778 so that would put the date before June 1783.

Also, between Heathcliff's return and Catherine's death, Ellen visits Hareton on a frosty morning, ten months after the marriage:

One time I passed the old gate, going out of my way, on a journey to Gimmerton. It was about the period that my narrative has reached: a **bright frosty afternoon**...Further reflection suggested this must be Hareton, my Hareton, not altered greatly since I left him, **ten months since**.

Ten months from March would be November which could be frosty but December or January would be more likely. Here are the clues to the marriage date:

Table 3: Catherine and Edgar's Marriage

Date	Event	Clue	Wedding
August 1780	Mr Linton's death	three years	August 1783
June 1778	Hareton's age	nearly five	March–May 1783
September 1783	Heathcliff's return	half a year	March 1783
Dec 1783–Jan 1784	Ellen visits Hareton	ten months	February or March

All the dates are vague: “three years” could mean simply 1783 minus 1780; “nearly” could be a week short, or three or four months; “half a year” is six months but could easily mean five or seven; and the last clue is vague because we don't know exactly when Ellen visits the Heights.

March or April are probably the best months. In selecting the day, I didn't want it to be too close to 20 March, Catherine's birthday, as that would seem too coincidental, dying a year after her wedding day. So it's late March or early April. The day of Ellen's visit to Wuthering Heights and Hareton, which was before Heathcliff eloped with Isabella on 13 January, I set as **8 January 1784**. Since “ten months” is a fairly precise period, that means about early March 1783 as the date Ellen leaves Wuthering Heights to move to the Grange with the marriage a few days earlier. The first week of March would have Hareton four years nine months, possibly a little too early for ‘nearly’ five, so I selected a day between the first week and the twentieth. Catherine and Edgar marry on **Friday 12 March 1783**.

Ellen had to be persuaded to join Catherine at Thrushcross Grange so she leaves Hareton on **17 March**. Heathcliff's return I mark as **24 September** which leaves 28 weeks between marriage and return, approximately Ellen's “half a year”. Hareton, whose birth I selected as **10 June 1778**, was four years nine months, so “nearly five”. The gap between the leaving Hareton and seeing him in January is 9.8 months so “ten months” is accurate.

Before we leave the subject, we also have Ellen's statement to Lockwood near the beginning:

‘You have lived here a considerable time,’ I commenced; ‘did you not say sixteen years?’

‘**Eighteen**, sir: **I came when the mistress was married**, to wait on her; after she died, the master retained me for his housekeeper.’

As she said this in late November 1801, that would make 18.7 years after leaving Wuthering Heights to go to Thrushcross Grange, fitting her estimate.

By the way, if Hareton was born on 10 June 1778, a normal pregnancy would have seen him conceived around September 1777, a few weeks before they left the college for Wuthering Heights.

4.3 Isabella's elopement

The (slightly more than) one year between Catherine's marriage and her death includes the crucial elopement of Isabella and her marriage to Heathcliff. As noted before, Ellen visits Isabella at the Heights on 15 March 1784 in response to Isabella's letter to her which arrived on the same day.

As soon as I had perused this epistle I went to the master, and informed him that his sister had arrived at the Heights, and sent me a letter expressing her sorrow for Mrs. Linton's situation, and her ardent desire to see him; with a wish that he would transmit to her, as early as possible, some token of forgiveness by me.

'Forgiveness!' said Linton. 'I have nothing to forgive her, Ellen. **You may call at Wuthering Heights this afternoon**, if you like, and say that I am not angry, but I'm sorry to have lost her; especially as I can never think she'll be happy.

In chapter 13, we read:

I should mention that Isabella sent to her brother, **some six weeks from her departure**, a short note, announcing her marriage with Heathcliff. It appeared dry and cold; but at the bottom was dotted in with pencil an obscure apology, and an entreaty for kind remembrance and reconciliation, if her proceeding had offended him: asserting that she could not help it then, and being done, she had now no power to repeal it. Linton did not reply to this, I believe; and, **in a fortnight more**, I got a long letter, which I considered odd, coming from the pen of a bride just out of the honeymoon. I'll read it: for I keep it yet. Any relic of the dead is precious, if they were valued living.

Assuming the letter was taken by a servant from the Heights to the Grange directly, the letter to Ellen was sent a fortnight after the letter to Edgar. I put this date at **29 February** (15 days). This note was sent six weeks after the elopement which was the same day that Catherine rose from her bed (after Edgar's clash with Heathcliff). This was a Thursday with no moon:

'It was Monday evening,' I replied, 'and this is **Thursday night**, or rather Friday morning, at present.'

There was no moon, and everything beneath lay in misty darkness: not a light gleamed from any house, far or near all had been extinguished long ago: and those at Wuthering Heights were never visible—still she asserted she caught their shining.

so I make the elopement as taking place on **13 January**, putting 47 days (6.7 weeks) between that day and the letter to Edgar. I chose **25 February** as the date of the marriage, so that her letter announcing the marriage arrives four days later. (We don't know where the 'happy' couple went on their honeymoon although, as Isabella fled to somewhere near London later, it may have been in the same area. Wherever it was, it probably took a few days for the letter to reach Edgar.)

Isabella and Heathcliff arrive at Wuthering Heights after dark so I assume it was **14 March**, with Isabella sending the note to Ellen early the next day.

In chapter 13, it begins:

For two months the fugitives remained absent; in those two months, Mrs. Linton encountered and conquered the worst shock of what was denominated a brain fever.

My dating fortunately puts it at almost exactly two months so that matches.

Table 4: Isabella and Heathcliff's Elopement

Date	Event	Notes
12 January	Isabella and Heathcliff meet in the plantation	Day before elopement
13 January	Isabella and Heathcliff elope	Thursday, no moon
25 February	Isabella and Heathcliff marry	Shortly before sending first letter
29 February	Isabella's note to Edgar announcing her marriage	Six weeks from elopement
14 March	Isabella and Heathcliff arrive at Wuthering Heights	Day before second letter
15 March	Isabella sends note to Ellen who visits Wuthering Heights	Fortnight later

Isabella and Heathcliff elope late at night on the same day that Catherine rises, 13 January:

Mrs. Linton, **on the third day**, unbarred her door, and having finished the water in her pitcher and decanter, desired a renewed supply, and a basin of gruel, for she believed she was dying.

This is the third day and the first was 10 January, the day when Edgar clashed with Heathcliff (see page 8). It is also the day after Heathcliff and Isabella met in the plantation:

'No, she's a sly one,' he remarked, shaking his head. 'She keeps her own counsel! But she's a real little fool. I have it from good authority that **last night** (and a pretty night it was!) she and Heathcliff were walking in the plantation at the back of your house above two hours; and he pressed her not to go in again, but just mount his horse and away with him! My informant said she could only put him off by pledging her word of honour to be prepared on their first meeting after that: when it was to be he didn't hear; but you urge Mr. Linton to look sharp!

There is one other date here to mention. Sometime between Heathcliff's return (24 September 1783) and his clash with Edgar which begins the sequence (10 January 1784), Isabella visits Wuthering Heights with Catherine and meets Heathcliff. This was on the 25 September and, a few paragraphs on, we read:

She was at that time a charming young lady **of eighteen**; infantile in manners, though possessed of keen wit, keen feelings, and a keen temper, too, if irritated.

This could be referring to any date between September and Ellen's visit to Hareton at the Heights (8 January) but is an important marker for Isabella's (and other's ages). We shall return to this later.

4.4 Heathcliff's Departure

Going back to the days before Catherine's marriage and Heathcliff's return, our first dates to determine are the deaths of Mr and Mrs Linton and the departure of Heathcliff:

But the poor dame had reason to repent of her kindness: she and her husband both took the fever, and **died within a few days of each other**.

Edgar Linton, as multitudes have been before and will be after him, was infatuated: and believed himself the happiest man alive on the day he led her to Gimmerton Chapel, **three years subsequent to his father's death**.

So we have two three-year timings. The Lintons died around March 1780 if we go by three years before the marriage; because Heathcliff was gone three years, his flight would have been around September 1780. The only other indications we have are that Heathcliff was sixteen when he fled but nobody knows when he was born, even Ellen, so that is only an estimate. Ellen also says that she is twenty-two:

Then I put her through the following catechism: **for a girl of twenty-two** it was not injudicious.

but again, we don't know of her birthdate so that does not help. The most useful pieces of information are:

It was a very dark evening for **summer**.

and the speech from Joseph:

‘Yon lad gets war und war!’ observed he on re-entering. ‘He’s left th’ gate at t’ full swing, and Miss’s pony has trodden dahn two rigs o’ corn, and plattered through, raight o’er into t’ meadow! Hahsomdiver, t’ maister ’ull play t’ devil to-morn, and he’ll do weel. He’s patience itsseln wi’ sich careless, offald craters—patience itsseln he is! Bud he’ll not be soa allus—yah’s see, all on ye! Yah mun’n’t drive him out of his heead for nowt!’

If a ‘rig of corn’ is a field, as it is in Scotland, then we must be near or at harvest time, suggesting late summer. There is also a storm which would match the season.

In the end, I went for **5 August 1780** as the crucial day when Edgar proposes to Catherine and Heathcliff flees Wuthering Heights. Mr Linton, I have dying on **19 August** and Mrs Linton on the **21st**. This makes 3.13 years that Heathcliff is absent and a gap of 2.6 years from the Lintons’ deaths to the marriage. If we think of the three years as being “1783 minus 1780”, we can live with that inaccuracy.

Note here then that we have a year for Heathcliff’s birth. If he really was about sixteen in August 1780, he was born between August 1763 and August 1764. This is the only indication of Heathcliff’s age (apart from Lockwood’s observation that he looked “about forty” when he visits in 1801. I decided to make his birthdate **30 July 1764**, the same as Emily Brontë. This makes him sixteen by a week when he runs away and seven when he first comes to Wuthering Heights.

4.5 Catherine at the Grange

The next important date backwards is the day when Catherine and Heathcliff visit Thrushcross Grange and the former stays there after she is attacked by the dog. She returns home on Christmas Eve after staying there five weeks.

Cathy stayed at Thrushcross Grange **five weeks: till Christmas**. By that time her ankle was thoroughly cured, and her manners much improved.

and

After playing lady’s-maid to the newcomer, and putting my cakes in the oven, and making the house and kitchen cheerful with great fires, **befitting Christmas-eve**, I prepared to sit down and amuse myself by singing carols, all alone...

The date that the pair visited the Grange was a Sunday. Using my adjusted calendar, Christmas Eve in 1784 was on a Friday and the Sunday of five weeks before was 21 November.

Two ages appear during this incident when Heathcliff says:

Isabella—I believe **she is eleven, a year younger than Cathy**—lay screaming at the farther end of the room, shrieking as if witches were running red-hot needles into her.

If he is right, then Catherine was born between November 1764 and November 1765 with Isabella between November 1765 and 1766. You would expect him to know Catherine’s age accurately but he may be guessing at Isabella’s and, indeed, there is a difficulty with this age. To see the reasoning, go to “4.10 The Problem of Catherine and Isabella’s Ages” on page 13.

4.6 Hindley

This leads us back to Mr Earnshaw’s death and Hindley’s return from college with Frances.

We know that Mr Earnshaw died in October:

But the hour came, at last, that ended Mr. Earnshaw’s troubles on earth. He died quietly in his chair **one October evening**, seated by the fire-side.

and this is supported by a statement at the return of Catherine from Thrushcross Grange:

Heathcliff was hard to discover, at first...Therefore, not to mention his clothes, which had seen **three months’ service in mire and dust**, and his thick uncombed hair, the surface of his face and hands was dismally beclouded.

Until Mr Earnshaw died, Heathcliff would have been treated like a favoured son and it was only on Hindley’s return that he became a servant. The three months period ending on Christmas Eve would indicate

approximately the end of September as the return of Hindley. So I opted for **2 October 1777** as the date of Mr Earnshaw's death with Hindley returning with Frances on **11 October** (allowing for a message to be sent to him and travelling time).

Hindley was three years at college:

Young Earnshaw was altered considerably in the **three years of his absence**. He had grown sparer, and lost his colour, and spoke and dressed quite differently; and, on the very day of his return, he told Joseph and me we must thenceforth quarter ourselves in the back-kitchen, and leave the house for him.

so that would make 1774 as the year that he left Wuthering Heights. As the academic year begins around September or October, I have him leaving on **5 October 1774**.

4.7 The Arrival of Heathcliff

When did Mr Earnshaw travel to Liverpool and return to Wuthering Heights? We know that it was in summer, at the beginning of harvest, when Catherine was six:

One **fine summer morning**—it was the **beginning of harvest**, I remember—Mr. Earnshaw, the old master, came downstairs, dressed for a journey; and, after he had told Joseph what was to be done during the day, he turned to Hindley, and Cathy, and me—for I sat eating my porridge with them—and he said, speaking to his son, 'Now, my bonny man, I'm going to Liverpool today, what shall I bring you? You may choose what you like: only let it be little, for I shall walk there and back: sixty miles each way, that is a long spell!' Hindley named a fiddle, and then he asked Miss Cathy; **she was hardly six years old**, but she could ride any horse in the stable, and she chose a whip.

Harvest traditionally starts on 1st August (Lammas) and ends about the harvest moon. The harvest moon is the full moon nearest the September Equinox (about 23 September). The actual days will depend on the weather, of course, especially in the north of England and on moorland. So I make it **10 August 1771** as the day Mr Earnshaw leaves for Liverpool with **12 August** as the day he returns late in the evening with Heathcliff.

We can take some birthdays from here. If Catherine was six, then she would have been born between August 1764 and August 1765. If she was 'hardly six', it would be late spring or summer 1765. I did not want to make her birthday too late as this causes problems with Isabella's age (see "4.10 The Problem of Catherine and Isabella's Ages" on page 13) so I went for **28 May 1765** as Catherine's birthday. (Brontë fans will recognise this as the date of Anne Brontë's death.) This makes her six years and eleven weeks on Heathcliff's arrival.

We also know that Hindley was fourteen at the time:

Hindley and Cathy contented themselves with looking and listening till peace was restored: then, both began searching their father's pockets for the presents he had promised them. **The former was a boy of fourteen**, but when he drew out what had been a fiddle, crushed to morsels in the great-coat, he blubbered aloud...

which makes his birth between August 1756 and August 1757. This means he would have gone off to college at the age of 17 or 18. The other indicators of his are when Ellen visited Hareton and Wuthering Heights and thought of Hindley:

One time I passed the old gate, going out of my way, on a journey to Gimmerton. It was about the period that my narrative has reached: a bright frosty afternoon; the ground bare, and the road hard and dry...The sun shone yellow on its grey head, reminding me of summer; and I cannot say why, but all at once a gush of child's sensations flowed into my heart. Hindley and I held it a favourite spot **twenty years before**. I gazed long at the weather-worn block; and, stooping down, perceived a hole near the bottom still full of snail-shells and pebbles, which we were fond of storing there with more perishable things; and, as fresh as reality, it appeared that I beheld my early playmate seated on the withered turf: his dark, square head bent forward, and his little hand scooping out the earth with a piece of slate.

This was January 1784 so the twenty years before would have been 1764 with Hindley between six and a half and seven and a half. There is also his death which followed soon after Catherine's:

The end of Earnshaw was what might have been expected; it followed fast on his sister's: there were **scarcely six months between them**.

I chose **24 September 1784** as his death, 27 weeks after his sister.

'Hindley Earnshaw! Your old friend Hindley,' he replied, 'and my wicked gossip: though he's been too wild for me this long while. There! I said we should draw water. But cheer up! He died true to his character: drunk as a lord. Poor lad! I'm sorry, too. One can't help missing an old companion: though he had the worst tricks with him that ever man imagined, and has done me many a rascally turn. He's **barely twenty-seven**, it seems; **that's your own age**: who would have thought you were born in one year?'

To be barely twenty-seven, his birthday would have to be at the latter half of his August 1756-7 range. Catherine's birthdate is already May so I went for the apt date of **26 June 1757**; apt because it was the birthday of Branwell Brontë, the sole brother in the family who had high hopes and opportunities but who threw it away through drink. (Branwell's date of death was also 24 September.) So he was fourteen and two months when Heathcliff arrives, and twenty-seven and a quarter when he died.

4.8 Ellen Dean

The paragraph above also brings to mind Ellen's age. It states that she was the same age as Hindley and born in the same year although that could mean in the same calendar year or within twelve months.

Ellen also mentions her age when she is discussing the proposal from Edgar:

Then I put her through the following catechism: **for a girl of twenty-two** it was not injudicious.

This was August 1780 and there is another where she was talking to the young Cathy:

'None can tell whether you won't die before us,' I replied. 'It's wrong to anticipate evil. We'll hope there are years and years to come before any of us go: master is young, and I am strong, and **hardly forty-five**.

This occurs in October or November 1800. Putting these ranges in a table:

Table 5: Ellen's Age

Date	Event	Age	Earliest	Latest
Aug 1780	Talking to Catherine	22	August 1757	August 1758
Sep 1784	Hindley's death	27	September 1756	September 1757
Oct 1800	Talking to Cathy	hardly 45	October 1754	October 1755

Clearly these three ages cannot tally and it is the last one which is out. I chose **10 August 1757** as her birthday. This makes her just under twenty-two on the first date, just over twenty-seven on the second, and forty-three on the last. It makes a difference of six and a half weeks between her birthday and Hindley, showing that they were born in the same year.

4.9 Frances

A few dates remain from the period before Catherine's death. Hindley's wife, Frances, has little information about her but we hear:

...he brought a wife with him. What she was, and where she was born, he never informed us: probably, she had neither money nor name to recommend her, or he would scarcely have kept the union from his father.

My feeling then is that she was a servant that he met at college, a good reason for keeping her presence secret. That and her general immaturity suggests a young age. She was presumably younger than Hindley and obviously at least sixteen when she married him so I decided then that she was born on **8 February 1760** (Elizabeth Brontë's birthday). This made her fourteen and a half when Hindley arrives at college and

seventeen and a half when they arrive at Wuthering Heights. I had them marry on **3 March 1777** when she was just seventeen.

She dies after Hareton was born (10 June 1778) and, presumably from the doctor's comments, before the winter was out. I didn't want the period between his birth and her death to be too long so I put her sad departure on **15 September 1778** (the day when Maria, mother of the Brontë children, died).

A final date is Mrs Earnshaw who died less than two years after Heathcliff's arrival: namely **6 May 1773** (the death of Maria Brontë, the eldest sister).

4.10 The Problem of Catherine and Isabella's Ages

Both Catherine and Isabella have their ages mentioned twice in the novel. When Catherine is caught at Thrushcross Grange (21 November 1777), Heathcliff says she is twelve and Isabella eleven. Catherine is also said to be six when Heathcliff first arrives (summer 1771) while Isabella is eighteen when she is falling in love with Heathcliff (between September and December 1783). Assuming that Heathcliff would know Catherine's age precisely, the only certain date is that she is twelve on 21 November 1777. This means she was born between 22 November 1764 and 21 November 1765. We don't know the exact date of Heathcliff's arrival, simply noted as "a summer morning at the beginning of harvest". Assuming a normal harvest, this would narrow down to a range from, say, 1 July to 31 August. So Catherine's birth must have been between 22 November 1764 and 1 July 1765. Only these days would make her six when Heathcliff arrives and twelve at Thrushcross Grange.

Knowing the range of Catherine's birth, we can look at Isabella. She was reported to be eighteen between September and December 1783 which would make her born between about 1 September 1764 and 31 December 1765. But there is only a narrow range when the two ranges coincide, from the end of September 1764 to the end of September 1765. Isabella must have been born between these dates. But this makes her age when Catherine goes to Thrushcross Grange as between 12 years 2 months and 13 years 2 months.

The only way that Isabella could be eleven on 21 November 1777 and eighteen when she falls in love with Heathcliff is if she was born in December 1765 and the latter incident happened in the last few weeks of December 1783. But the quote about being eighteen does not sound like a sudden change of age, rather like she has been eighteen for a while:

His new source of trouble sprang from the not anticipated misfortune of Isabella Linton evincing a sudden and irresistible attraction towards the tolerated guest. She was at that time a charming young lady of **eighteen**; infantile in manners, though possessed of keen wit, keen feelings, and a keen temper, too, if irritated.

I decided it was too artificial to try and match the descriptions completely and so simply assumed that Heathcliff's estimate of Isabella's age when she went to Thrushcross Grange was in error, an understandable mistake. In the end, these are the dates I selected with Isabella being clearly eighteen during November and December as she falls in love with him.

Table 6: Catherine and Isabella's Dates

Date	Event	Cath.'s Age	Isabella's Age
28 May 1765	Catherine born	–	–
14 October 1765	Isabella born	20 weeks	–
12 August 1771	Heathcliff arrives at Wuthering Heights	6 yrs 2 mns	5 yrs 10 mns
21 November 1777	Catherine caught at Thrushcross Grange	12 yrs 6 mns	12 years 1 mns
1 November 1783	Isabella in love with Heathcliff	18 yrs 5 mns	18 yrs 1 mns

4.11 After Catherine's Death

Going forward in time, there are further dates concerning Isabella. We know that Catherine died on 20 March 1784 and her funeral was on the 24th. The day after that, Isabella flees Wuthering Heights and runs away to the south where she gives birth to Linton:

I believe her new abode was in the south, near London; there she had a son born a **few months subsequent to her escape**. He was christened Linton, and, from the first, she reported him to be an ailing, peevish creature.

There are other indications elsewhere of her death and his birth such as a paragraph just afterwards:

Fortunately its mother died before the time arrived; some **thirteen years** after the decease of Catherine, when Linton was **twelve, or a little more**.

and again for Isabella:

I said Mrs. Heathcliff lived **above a dozen years** after quitting her husband.

and from Cathy:

'**Linton is just six months younger than I am,**' she chattered, as we strolled leisurely over the swells and hollows of mossy turf, under shadow of the trees.

So, if he is six months younger than Cathy, he was born around 20 September. I selected **14 September**, the last dated complete poem by Emily (in 1846) and the date of death of the Duke of Wellington, a hero to the Brontë children.

While on the subject of Linton, can we be sure that Heathcliff was his father? He hardly resembles him. If he was born on 14 September, then a full pregnancy would put his conception about mid-December. This is about four weeks before Isabella and Heathcliff fled but, by then, she must have been completely besotted with him and it is not unimaginable that they had sex during that time. On the other hand, Linton was "an ailing, peevish creature" from birth and it is quite possible that he was premature. From elopement to birth is 35 weeks, an eight-month pregnancy.

Staying on conceptions, Cathy, who was a "puny, seven-months' child", must have been conceived around August 1783, the month before Heathcliff returned and proving that *he* was not the father as some have thought.

Hindley, as we have seen, died on 24 September and the story then moves ahead seven years.

4.12 Linton

In the summer of 1797, Isabella writes to Edgar to ask him to adopt Linton as she is dying. The clues to the dating of this are, as shown above, that her death was about thirteen years after Catherine's, when Linton was twelve "or a little more". Linton was twelve on 14 September 1796.

Edgar is gone three weeks, collecting Linton and presumably waiting with Isabella until she dies. It was also in July as we read:

He was away **three weeks**. The first day or two my charge sat in a corner of the library, too sad for either reading or playing; in that quiet state she caused me little trouble; but it was succeeded by an interval of impatient, fretful weariness; and being too busy, and too old then, to run up and down amusing her, I hit on a method by which she might entertain herself.

The **summer shone in full prime...**

I got together good store of dainties, and slung them in a basket on one side of the saddle; and she sprang up as gay as a fairy, sheltered by her wide-brimmed hat and gauze veil from the **July** sun, and trotted off with a merry laugh, mocking my cautious counsel to avoid galloping, and come back early.

My dating then is that Edgar leaves Thrushcross Grange on **1 July 1797**. Isabella dies on **12 July** (Emily's earliest dated poem in 1836), making it thirteen years four months since Catherine's death and with Linton twelve years and ten months old. Edgar and Linton arrive at Thrushcross Grange on **22 July**, three weeks later. The next day, Linton is taken to Wuthering Heights by Ellen.

4.13 Cathy's First Visits

One date concerning Cathy is already approximately determined in the previous section, for when Edgar is gone, she goes exploring on the moors and meets Hareton. We have two ages mentioned here:

Her hat was hung against the wall, and she seemed perfectly at home, laughing and chattering, in the best spirits imaginable, to Hareton—now a great, strong lad of **eighteen**—who stared at her with considerable curiosity and astonishment: comprehending precious little of the fluent succession of remarks and questions which her tongue never ceased pouring forth.

and

‘Come, come!’ I repeated. ‘I’ll tie the riband. Now, let us have no petulance. Oh, for shame! You **thirteen** years old, and such a baby!’

Cathy is actually thirteen and four months but there is an error here as Hareton was born in June 1778 so is actually nineteen (just). We’ll excuse Ellen a minor mistake here and note this day as **10 July**.

There is another period with no noted events here until Cathy’s sixteenth birthday, 20 March 1797 when, walking on the moors with Ellen, she is taken to Wuthering Heights by Heathcliff. Ages are again noted here:

She pointed to Hareton, the other individual, who had gained nothing but increased bulk and strength by the addition of **two years to his age**: he seemed as awkward and rough as ever.

and

Linton stood on the hearth. He had been out walking in the fields, for his cap was on, and he was calling to Joseph to bring him dry shoes. He had grown tall of his age, **still wanting some months of sixteen**.

Actually, there were two years and eight months between the two visits and Linton was fifteen and a half.

Cathy is prohibited from visiting Wuthering Heights again until she meets Heathcliff at the park boundary:

On an afternoon in **October, or the beginning of November**—a fresh watery afternoon, when the turf and paths were rustling with moist, withered leaves, and the cold blue sky was half hidden by clouds—dark grey streamers, rapidly mounting from the west, and boding abundant rain—I requested my young lady to forego her ramble, because I was certain of showers.

The next day, she and Ellen visit Wuthering Heights, after which Cathy says:

‘I can get over the wall,’ she said laughing. ‘The Grange is not a prison, Ellen, and you are not my gaoler. And besides, **I’m almost seventeen**: I’m a woman.

although, at this time, she would be five months away from seventeen. The following day, Ellen goes down with a cold for three weeks.

My dates here are **25 October 1800** when Cathy meets Heathcliff, the **26th** for her visit and **27th** when Ellen is ill.

Ellen recovers on **15 November** (2.7 weeks) and two days later, **17 November**, Ellen discovers Cathy’s surreptitious communications with Linton from which she is prohibited again.

The following night she seemed more impatient still; and **on the third** from recovering my company she complained of a headache, and left me. I thought her conduct odd; and having remained alone a long while, I resolved on going and inquiring whether she were better, and asking her to come and lie on the sofa, instead of upstairs in the dark.

At this point in Ellen’s narration to Lockwood, she says:

‘These things happened **last winter**, sir,’ said Mrs. Dean; ‘**hardly more than a year ago**. Last winter, I did not think, at another twelve months’ end, I should be amusing a stranger to the family with relating them!’

The date of her narration is 30 December 1801 so it *would* be just over a year on.

4.14 Cathy and Linton

In chapter 25, we begin with some dating information:

‘Was Catherine obedient to her father’s commands?’

‘She was,’ continued the housekeeper. ‘Her affection for him was still the chief sentiment in her heart; and he spoke without anger: he spoke in the deep tenderness of one about to leave his treasure amid perils and foes, where his remembered words would be the only aid that he could bequeath to guide her. He said to me, **a few days afterwards**, “I wish my nephew would write, Ellen, or call. Tell me, sincerely, what you think of him: is he changed for the better, or is there a prospect of improvement, as he grows a man?”’

“He’s very delicate, sir,” I replied; “and scarcely likely to reach manhood: but this I can say, he does not resemble his father; and if Miss Catherine had the misfortune to marry him, he would not be beyond her control: unless she were extremely and foolishly indulgent. However, master, you’ll have plenty of time to get acquainted with him and see whether he would suit her: it **wants four years and more to his being of age.**”

Edgar sighed; and, walking to the window, looked out towards Gimmerton Kirk. It was a misty afternoon, but the **February** sun shone dimly, and we could just distinguish the two fir-trees in the yard, and the sparsely-scattered gravestones.

It is clearly February although Catherine’s prohibition from visiting Wuthering Heights occurred in November so the phrase “a few days afterwards” should really be “a few months afterwards”. Linton was sixteen and five months in February so, indeed, more than four years to his coming of age at twenty-one. This date, by the way, I set at **4 February 1801**.

The next events occurred when:

Summer was already past its prime, when Edgar reluctantly yielded his assent to their entreaties, and Catherine and I set out on our first ride to join her cousin.

and their next visit occurs on Thursday week:

Seven days glided away, every one marking its course by the henceforth rapid alteration of Edgar Linton’s state. The havoc that months had previously wrought was now emulated by the inroads of hours. Catherine we would fain have deluded yet; but her own quick spirit refused to delude her: it divined in secret, and brooded on the dreadful probability, gradually ripening into certainty. She had not the heart to mention her ride, when **Thursday** came round; I mentioned it for her, and obtained permission to order her out of doors:

Cathy notes of Linton:

‘But I think,’ said Cathy, ‘you’d be more comfortable at home than sitting here; and I cannot amuse you today, I see, by my tales, and songs, and chatter: you have grown wiser than I, **in these six months**; you have little taste for my diversions now: or else, if I could amuse you, I’d willingly stay.’

although it is actually about nine months since they last saw each other and another sentence confirms the month:

We deferred our excursion till the afternoon; a golden afternoon of **August**: every breath from the hills so full of life, that it seemed whoever respired it, though dying, might revive. Catherine’s face was just like the landscape—shadows and sunshine

Piecing these clues together, I set the initial visit on **18 August 1801** and the return on **25 August 1801**, both Thursdays. It is this second date that is the fateful one when Ellen and Cathy are held captive by Heathcliff.

As they are held captive, Heathcliff says:

‘I know how to chastise children, you see,’ said the scoundrel, grimly, as he stooped to repossess himself of the key, which had dropped to the floor. ‘Go to Linton now, as I told you; and cry at your ease! **I shall be your father, tomorrow**—all the father you’ll have in a few days—and you shall have plenty of that.

which suggests that Linton was married to Cathy on the next day, **26 August**. It would make sense for Heathcliff to arrange this as quickly as possible since, the longer she and Ellen are missing, the more chance of searchers from the Grange finding them.

Ellen is held captive for five nights and four days:

And there I remained enclosed the whole day, and the whole of the next night; and another, and another. **Five nights and four days I remained**, altogether, seeing nobody but Hareton once every morning; and he was a model of a jailor: surly, and dumb, and deaf to every attempt at moving his sense of justice or compassion.

so she was released on the afternoon of **30 August**. Cathy escapes and arrives early the next morning and this marks Edgar's death, **31 August 1801**.

This point also gives us a clue to Edgar's birth from the sentence:

Very young he looked: though his actual age was **thirty-nine**, one would have called him ten years younger, at least.

If he was thirty-nine on 31 August 1801, he must have been born between September 1761 and August 1762. We know that he is older than Heathcliff from Ellen's words to the latter in chapter 7:

You are younger, and yet, I'll be bound, you are taller and twice as broad across the shoulders; you could knock him down in a twinkling; don't you feel that you could?'

and Heathcliff was born in 1764. There is no other clue to Edgar's birthdate. I would have gone for 17 March as that was Mr Brontë's (Emily's father's) birthdate but that is too close to Catherine's death so I opted for **17 January 1762**, Anne Brontë's birthdate. This makes him thirty-nine and seven months at death.

The days following his death can be estimated now. His funeral was **4 September**, with Cathy accompanying Heathcliff to Wuthering Heights on the **5th**. One quote about Heathcliff is confirmed:

It was the same room into which he had been ushered, as a guest, **eighteen years before**: the same moon shone through the window; and the same autumn landscape lay outside.

Eighteen years from September 1801 is September 1783, the month when Heathcliff returned from his three-year absence. (By the way, it was not the same room according to the book – it is the parlour that he enters eighteen years before and the library on the later date – unless the parlour and library are meant to be the same.)

4.15 Cathy Alone

The stories of Lockwood and Heathcliff now begin to come together. In chapter 30, we read:

I had a long talk with Zillah about **six weeks ago, a little before you came**, one day when we foregathered on the moor; and this is what she told me.

This moment in Ellen's narration is 10 January 1802. Six weeks before is late November 1801 and Lockwood's first visit to the Heights was 22 November. I cannot make the six weeks fit so I opted for **17 November**, seven and a half weeks before.

We don't know exactly when Linton dies although it is at least several days after Cathy's arrival. She stays in her room a fortnight after his death and comes down on a Sunday, saying:

"I've been starved **a month and more**," she answered, resting on the word as scornful as she could.

So, if she arrived on 5 September and was there a month or more before coming down, my datings are thus: **6 September** – Cathy asks for a doctor; **22 September** – Linton dies; **9 October** – Cathy comes down from her room and Hareton tries to impress her; **17 November** – Ellen meets Zillah.

4.16 The Death of Heathcliff

So we enter the final days of the story with Hareton and Cathy growing closer, and Heathcliff declining. Before that, there is Ellen's moving to Wuthering Heights to replace Zillah:

I was summoned to Wuthering Heights, **within a fortnight of your leaving us**, she said; and I obeyed joyfully, for Catherine's sake.

Lockwood left on or soon after 12 January 1802 and Ellen moved to the Heights on **24 January**. Then the action moves to spring.

Mr. Heathcliff, who grew more and more disinclined to society, had almost banished Earnshaw from his apartment. Owing to an accident **at the commencement of March**, he became for some days a fixture in the kitchen.

On **Easter Monday**, Joseph went to Gimmerton fair with some cattle; and, in the afternoon, I was busy getting up linen in the kitchen.

With my adjusted calendar, Easter Monday would have been on **3 April** so that is the day that Hareton and Cathy finally begin to bond. The next day, **4th**, is when Cathy persuades Hareton to dig up some of Joseph's fruit bushes. Heathcliff leaves after breakfast and returns at dusk. We learn and confirm a few ages here:

The red fire-light glowed on their two bonny heads, and revealed their faces animated with the eager interest of children; for, though **he was twenty-three and she eighteen**, each had so much of novelty to feel and learn, that neither experienced nor evinced the sentiments of sober disenchanted maturity.

'I mun hev' my wage, and I mun goa! I hed aimed to **dee wheare I'd sarved fur sixty year**; and I thowt I'd lug my books up into t' garret, and all my bits o' stuff, and they sud hev' t' kitchen to theirseln; for t' sake o' quietness.

Hareton was indeed twenty-three and Cathy was eighteen a few weeks before so those ages match. We also get an idea of Joseph's age. If he had served for sixty years, he must be around seventy (much older than that would be unlikely in the nineteenth century). I chose the birthdate of **17 March 1730**, the date of Mr Brontë's birth.

Then we enter the final six days of Heathcliff's life, all marked off in the novel. We begin on a day where Heathcliff leaves the farmhouse during the night (day 1):

One night, after the family were in bed, I heard him go downstairs, and out at the front door. I did not hear him re-enter, and in the morning I found he was still away. **We were in April then**: the weather was sweet and warm, the grass as green as showers and sun could make it, and the two dwarf apple-trees near the southern wall in full bloom.

The next day (day 2), while Cathy and Ellen are sitting out under the fir trees, Heathcliff returns. Later, he retires to bed in Catherine's old room.

The following day (day 3), Heathcliff sees visions at the table, then leaves the house.

He returns in the early hours of the next morning (day 4) where he talks with Ellen about his funeral. He retires at dusk.

He is heard talking during the early hours of day 5 and locks himself in, refusing to see the doctor.

Finally, on day 6, Ellen sees Heathcliff's window open at dawn and finds him dead inside. We don't know whether he died in the morning of day 6 or the evening of day 5 but there are clues which suggest that he had been dead some time, probably the night before.

I could not think him dead: but his **face and throat were washed with rain; the bed-clothes dripped**, and he was perfectly still. The lattice, flapping to and fro, had grazed one hand that rested on the sill; **no blood trickled from the broken skin**, and when I put my fingers to it, I could doubt no more: he was dead and stark!

I hasped the window; I combed his black long hair from his forehead; I tried to close his eyes: to extinguish, if possible, that frightful, life-like gaze of exultation before any one else beheld it. **They would not shut**: they seemed to sneer at my attempts; and **his parted lips** and sharp white teeth sneered too!

So on what day did Heathcliff die? We know that day 2 was in April so that was between 1 April and 30 April. If he died on day 5, that would mean that he died between 4 April and 3 May. There is no suggestion that it was in May so I chose the timeline in the table below.

Table 7: The Final Days of Heathcliff

Date	Events	Notes
6 March	Hareton injured in a shooting accident.	Commencement of March
3 April	Hareton and Cathy grow closer.	Easter Monday
4 April	Cathy persuades Hareton to clear some of Joseph's bushes.	Next day
24 April	Heathcliff leaves the farmhouse during the night.	
25 April	Cathy and Ellen in garden; Heathcliff returns.	In April
26 April	Heathcliff sees visions and leaves.	Next day
27 April	Heathcliff returns in early hours. Retires at dusk.	Next day
28 April	Heathcliff locks himself in and dies in the night.	Next day
29 April	Heathcliff found dead in his room.	Next day

There is one complication. When Lockwood first meets Ellen on his return (27 September 1802), she says:

‘Ah! you have not heard of Heathcliff's death, I see,’ she continued.

‘Heathcliff dead!’ I exclaimed, astonished. ‘How long ago?’

‘Three months since: but sit down, and let me take your hat, and I'll tell you all about it. Stop, you have had nothing to eat, have you?’

But three months before September is late June. It is clearly stated that the final five days of his life began in April. Even if we assumed Lockwood returned in the beginning of September and Heathcliff died at the latest possible date, 4 May, that is still 17 weeks or more than four months. I can only assume that the “three months” should have been “five months” and it was a mistake by Emily (or Ellen).

4.17 Summary

So we have a feasible dating of the main dates in “Wuthering Heights”. There are a few contradictions in the text but it is surprisingly consistent which suggests that Emily Brontë constructed a genealogy and/or timeline as she wrote the story. Remembering the detailed stories that the siblings created in childhood, it would not be unexpected.

As a reference, the dates chosen for the births, deaths, and marriages of the main characters are shown below.

Table 8: Main Characters' Vital Dates

Character	Birth	Death	Marriage	Age Died
Joseph	17 March 1730 (Mr Bronte's birth)	–	–	–
Hindley Earnshaw	26 June 1757 (Branwell's birth)	24 September 1784 (Branwell's death)	3 May 1777	27
Ellen Dean	10 August 1757	–	–	–
Frances	8 February 1760 (Elizabeth's birthday)	15 September 1778 (Maria's death)	3 May 1777	18
Edgar Linton	17 January 1762 (Anne's birthday)	31 August 1801	12 March 1783	39
Heathcliff	30 July 1764 (Emily's birthday)	28 April 1802	25 February 1784	37
Catherine Earnshaw	28 May 1765 (Anne's death)	20 March 1784	12 March 1783	18
Isabella Linton	14 October 1765	12 July 1797 (earliest dated poem by Emily)	25 February 1784	31
Hareton Earnshaw	10 June 1778	–	1 January 1803	–
Cathy Linton	20 March 1784	–	26 August 1801 and 1 January 1803	–
Linton Heathcliff	14 September 1784 (last dated poem by Emily and Wellington's death)	24 September 1801	26 August 1801	17

There were also:

Mrs Earnshaw, died 6 May 1773 (Maria's death)

Mr Earnshaw, died 2 October 1777

Mr Linton, died 19 August 1780

Mrs Linton, died 21 August 1780

Chapter 5: The Almanack

5.1 Lockwood's Story

Tuesday 22 November 1801

Chapter 1

Lockwood begins his story, writing in the evening of how he had visited Wuthering Heights earlier. He had arrived at Thrushcross Grange a few days before (he said he was “calling as soon as possible after my arrival” and Ellen already knows him when he returns). When he leaves the Heights, he says he will call again “tomorrow”.

Wednesday 23 November 1801

Chapter 2

Lockwood wakes at Thrushcross Grange. The afternoon is misty and cold. He has dinner between 12:00 and 13:00 and, afterwards, because his room is being cleaned, decides to go to Wuthering Heights earlier than planned. When he arrives, it is still daylight but the table is laid for an evening meal. The night comes early (dusk would have been around 16:40).

Chapter 3

Zillah escorts him to Catherine's old room around 21:00. He finds Catherine's Bible which is dated around 1776. He reads about an incident on a Sunday in October or November 1777 (when Mr Earnshaw is only recently buried) and falls asleep.

Lockwood estimates Heathcliff as about forty and Cathy as not yet seventeen.

Zillah has only been living at Wuthering Heights a year or two.

Thursday 24 November 1801

Chapter 3

Lockwood wakes from his nightmare just before 03:00. He cannot return to sleep so he goes into the kitchen until daylight (which would have been about 07:15). When it appears, he leaves and Heathcliff escorts him to Thrushcross Grange. It is 12:00 as he enters and he says it took exactly four hours so he must have left about 08:00.

Chapter 2

Lockwood relates the story of what happened the day before and in the morning (probably between about 13:00 and 16:00).

Chapter 4.

When Ellen brings him his supper (after 16:30), she begins to tell him the story of Wuthering Heights and Heathcliff.

Ellen says that she has been at Thrushcross Grange for 18 years, since Edgar and Catherine married.

Chapter 7

Ellen pauses in her story at 23:00.

Friday 25 November 1801

Chapter 9

Ellen ends her story at 01:30 and retires to bed. Lockwood also goes to bed an hour or so later.

Thursday 15 December 1801*Chapter 10*

Heathcliff sends grouse to Lockwood (shooting season finishes on 10 December) who is ill in bed. (Seven days before Ellen continues her story.)

Thursday 22 December 1801*Chapter 10*

As Lockwood lies ill in bed in the morning, Ellen continues her story. (Lockwood has been confined to bed for four weeks.)

Friday 30 December 1801*Chapter 15*

Lockwood continues the story, (one week on), relating what Ellen told him.

Chapter 25

The story pauses, then continues.

Tuesday 10 January 1802*Chapter 30*

Lockwood finishes writing down Ellen's story (second week in January).

Thursday 12 January 1802*Chapter 31*

Lockwood visits Wuthering Heights at 11:00 to tell Heathcliff that he is leaving and gives Cathy a note from Ellen.

Friday 13 January 1802*Chapter 31*

Lockwood writes down the description on the visit to the Heights the day before.

Wednesday 27 September 1802*Chapter 32*

Returning to the north of England, Lockwood is passing close to Gimmerton when he decides to stay at the Grange instead of an inn (at 12:00). He reaches the Grange before sunset (which is about 18:30). As the sun is going down, he makes his way to Wuthering Heights and Ellen tells him the last part of the story.

5.2 Heathcliff's Story**Monday 10 August 1771***Chapter 4*

Mr Earnshaw leaves for Liverpool (on a fine summer morning at the beginning of harvest). He is gone three days.

Catherine is "hardly six years old".

Wednesday 12 August 1771*Chapter 4*

Mr Earnshaw returns about 23:00 with Heathcliff. Ellen is banished for leaving Heathcliff on the landing.

Heathcliff looked older than Catherine (who is six). Hindley is fourteen.

Saturday 15 August 1771

Chapter 4

Ellen returns (a few days afterwards) and finds that Catherine and Heathcliff are already very close.

Saturday 6 May 1773

Chapter 4

Mrs Earnshaw dies (less than two years after Heathcliff's arrival).

Friday 5 October 1774

Chapter 5

Hindley is sent off to college.

Saturday 2 October 1777

Chapter 5

Mr Earnshaw dies (October evening).

Monday 11 October 1777

Chapter 6

Hindley returns for the funeral with his wife, Frances. He has been absent three years.

Sunday 21 November 1777

Chapter 6

Heathcliff and Catherine are locked in the wash-house for an offence and are found missing at supper time. Late at night Heathcliff returns alone. They had escaped and gone over to Thrushcross Grange where it was dark or nearly so (twilight is about 16:30).

Isabella is eleven and Catherine twelve.

Monday 22 November 1777

Chapter 6

Mr Linton pays a visit to Wuthering Heights to complain to Hindley about Catherine and Heathcliff.

Friday 24 December 1777

Chapter 7

Catherine returns to Wuthering Heights (she was at Thrushcross Grange for five weeks). It is Christmas Eve. Heathcliff remains absent from Catherine.

Saturday 25 December 1777

Chapter 7

Heathcliff rises early and vanishes onto the moors until the family go to church. Ellen smartens up Heathcliff until Hindley, Catherine, Edgar and Isabella return from church. Heathcliff is banished to the garret while everyone else has Christmas dinner. In the evening, the Gimmerton Band come around and there is a dance. Catherine crosses the roof to see Heathcliff.

Heathcliff is younger than Edgar.

Friday 10 June 1778*Chapter 8*

Hareton is born (in the morning of a fine June day).

Thursday 15 September 1778*Chapter 8*

Frances dies in the evening or night. Hindley begins to go into decline.

Monday 5 August 1780*Chapter 8*

Hindley goes away for the afternoon and Heathcliff takes the time off as well. He complains to Catherine that she spends more time with Edgar than him. Edgar arrives and has an argument with her but they make up and, when Hindley arrives back drunk, Edgar leaves after asking her to marry him.

Heathcliff is sixteen.

Chapter 9

Hindley drops Hareton from the banisters and Heathcliff catches him. Catherine talks to Ellen and explains that Edgar had asked to marry her and she had accepted. Heathcliff runs away from Wuthering Heights. (It is a dark summer evening.) About midnight there is a storm which damages the kitchen chimney stack.

Ellen is twenty-two.

Tuesday 6 August 1780*Chapter 9*

Ellen goes to bed about 00:30 leaving Catherine crying over Heathcliff in the kitchen. Ellen comes down later than usual to a sunny morning. Catherine goes to her room and falls into a delirium and fever.

Monday 19 August 1780*Chapter 9*

Mr Linton dies of the fever.

Wednesday 21 August 1780*Chapter 9*

Mrs Linton dies of the fever.

Friday 12 March 1783*Chapter 9*

Edgar and Catherine marry (three years after his father's death).

Thursday 8 April 1783*Chapter 9*

Ellen goes to live with them at Thrushcross Grange.

Hareton is nearly five.

Friday 24 September 1783*Chapter 10*

(It is a mellow afternoon in September. The moon is up.) Ellen comes upon Heathcliff in the Grange grounds. He had called at Wuthering Heights in the morning.

Saturday 25 September 1783*Chapter 10*

Catherine and Isabella visit Wuthering Heights where Heathcliff is staying. Isabella starts to fall in love with him during the following months.

Isabella is eighteen when she falls in love.

Saturday 8 January 1784*Chapter 11*

Ellen walks to Wuthering Heights in the afternoon and sees Hareton for the first time in ten months (since she left him).

Monday 10 January 1784*Chapter 11*

Heathcliff embraces Isabella. Heathcliff clashes with Edgar in the evening. Catherine retreats to her room for three days.

Wednesday 12 January 1784*Chapter 12*

Heathcliff is in the plantation with Isabella and tries to get her to elope with him.

Thursday 13 January 1784*Chapter 12*

Catherine unlocks her door and eats. Around midnight, still upset, she looks through the feathers in her pillow. It is just before midnight that Isabella elopes with Heathcliff.

Friday 14 January 1784*Chapter 12*

In the early hours of the morning, Catherine ponders on being back at Wuthering Heights. As Edgar comforts her, Ellen leaves and rescues Isabella's dog who has been hung up by Heathcliff. This is at 02:00.

Friday 25 February 1784*Chapter 13*

Heathcliff and Isabella marry.

Tuesday 29 February 1784*Chapter 13*

Edgar receives a note from Isabella announcing her marriage.

Friday 3 March 1784*Chapter 13*

Catherine leaves her chamber after her delirium (at the beginning of March).

Tuesday 14 March 1784*Chapter 13*

Heathcliff and Isabella return to Wuthering Heights. They stop at the edge of the Grange about 18:00 and arrive at the Heights after dark. Heathcliff spends six hours in the Grange grounds.

Wednesday 15 March 1784*Chapter 13*

Isabella sends a letter to Ellen in the morning who visits Wuthering Heights in the afternoon.

Sunday 19 March 1784*Chapter 15*

Ellen gives Heathcliff's note to Catherine after the family have gone to church. Heathcliff and Catherine have their final meeting. Edgar returns to find Catherine has fainted.

Monday 20 March 1784*Chapter 16*

Cathy is born just after midnight (of the 19th) and Catherine dies around 02:00. Just after sunrise (about 05:40), Ellen goes outside to see Heathcliff.

Tuesday 21 March 1784*Chapter 16*

A little after dark, Heathcliff enters the Grange to see Catherine's body.

Friday 24 March 1784*Chapter 16*

Catherine's funeral. Weather turns bad in the evening.

Chapter 17

Hindley tries to stay sober for the funeral but fails. Isabella stays up late with him.

Saturday 25 March 1784*Chapter 17*

Shortly before 01:00, Heathcliff returns and is locked out by Hindley. He breaks down the window partition and gets in, beating up Hindley. Isabella retires to her room. She comes down again at 11:30 and, shortly after, escapes while Heathcliff is fighting with Hindley. She flees to Thrushcross Grange and Ellen; after a rest, she leaves the area.

Thursday 14 September 1784*Chapter 17*

Linton born (a few months subsequent to Isabella's escape).

Sunday 24 September 1784*Chapter 17*

Hindley dies (scarcely six months after Catherine). Heathcliff leaves him in the afternoon and Hindley locks the doors against him. He spends the night drinking himself to death.

Hindley is twenty seven, the same age as Ellen.

Friday 29 September 1784*Chapter 17*

Heathcliff breaks in in the early morning and finds Hindley dead. Ellen goes up to Wuthering Heights to arrange the funeral.

Monday 1 July 1797*Chapter 18*

Edgar leaves to pick up Linton from Isabella.

Wednesday 10 July 1797*Chapter 18*

At 08:00, Cathy comes to Ellen to say that she is going off on a ride around the park as an 'Arabian merchant'. She leaves the Park and goes onto the moor. Towards evening, Ellen notices that she has not returned and goes off to Wuthering Heights to find her. They return to Thrushcross Grange.

Hareton is supposed to be eighteen although he was born in June and this is July so he is nineteen. Cathy is thirteen.

Friday 12 July 1797*Chapter 17*

Isabella dies, thirteen years after Catherine's death when Linton was twelve (or a little more).

Monday 22 July 1797*Chapter 19*

Edgar returns to Thrushcross Grange with Linton in the evening. After tea, Joseph arrives to take Linton to Wuthering Heights but it is too late in the day and Edgar says that he will have to wait till the next day.

Linton is six months younger than Cathy.

Tuesday 23 July 1797*Chapter 20*

Ellen wakes Linton at 05:00 to take him to the Heights. They arrive at 06:30 and Ellen leaves him there.

Saturday 20 March 1800*Chapter 21*

On Cathy's sixteenth birthday, she goes onto the moor with Ellen. They come across Heathcliff and Hareton who take them to visit Linton at the Heights. In the afternoon, they return to the Grange.

Linton is not yet sixteen.

Sunday 21 March 1800*Chapter 21*

Cathy reveals to Edgar her visit to the Heights. She is prohibited from more contact and tries to send letters.

Monday 25 October 1800*Chapter 22*

Ellen and Cathy go for some exercise in the park (an afternoon in October or the beginning of November). At the wall which skirts the grounds, Cathy climbs onto it and, when her hat falls off, climbs down the other side to retrieve it. There she meets Heathcliff who invites her to visit Linton while he is absent.

Ellen is forty-five in the book (but actually forty-three).

Tuesday 26 October 1800*Chapter 23*

Ellen and Cathy ride to Wuthering Heights to see Linton in the morning. At 12:00 they return to Thrushcross Grange.

Wednesday 27 October 1800*Chapter 23*

Ellen is confined to bed with a cold for three weeks. Cathy visits Linton.

Monday 15 November 1800*Chapter 24*

Ellen recovers from her illness enough to get up. In the evening, Ellen asks Cathy to read to her but she is restless.

Tuesday 17 November 1800*Chapter 24*

Cathy has another restless evening and apparently goes to bed with a headache. Ellen finds her absent and learns about her visits to the Heights. Ellen tells Edgar.

Wednesday 18 November 1800*Chapter 24*

Cathy is told by her father that she can no longer visit Linton at the Heights (although Linton could visit the Grange).

Friday 4 February 1801*Chapter 25*

Edgar ponders on Cathy's future and whether she should marry Linton.

Sunday 20 March 1801*Chapter 25*

Cathy's seventeenth birthday. Edgar decides not to visit Catherine's grave. He writes to Linton.

Thursday 18 August 1801*Chapter 26*

Ellen and Cathy finally visit Linton again (summer is past its prime) but he is not well. Cathy promises to return in a week.

Thursday 25 August 1801*Chapter 27*

Ellen and Cathy visit Linton after a week although Edgar is growing worse (golden afternoon in August). Heathcliff appears and takes them to the Heights where he locks them inside until Cathy marries Linton. Around dusk (20:00), servants visit the house to enquire about Ellen and Cathy but are sent away. At 21:00, they go upstairs to Zillah's room for the night.

Friday 26 August 1801*Chapter 27*

At 07:00, Heathcliff comes to take Cathy away but leaves Ellen locked in Zillah's room. Cathy is married to Linton.

Tuesday 30 August 1801*Chapter 28*

In the afternoon, Zillah arrives to release Ellen. She rushes back to see Edgar who is close to death. Men are sent to the Heights to fetch Catherine but return without her.

Edgar is thirty nine.

Wednesday 31 August 1801*Chapter 28*

At 03:00, Cathy arrives at the Grange just in time to see Edgar who dies within the next half hour (harvest moon is up).

Saturday 3 September 1801*Chapter 29*

Linton is punished by Heathcliff for helping Cathy to escape.

Sunday 4 September 1801*Chapter 29*

Edgar's funeral. While the sexton is digging the grave, Heathcliff gets him to remove the side of Catherine's coffin.

Monday 5 September 1801*Chapter 29*

Heathcliff arrives in the evening to take Cathy to Wuthering Heights.

Tuesday 6 September 1801*Chapter 30*

During breakfast, Cathy asks if a doctor can be brought for Linton.

Thursday 22 September 1801*Chapter 30*

During the night, Linton dies.

Friday 23 September 1801*Chapter 30*

Cathy refuses to come down from her room (stays there a fortnight).

Sunday 9 October 1801*Chapter 30*

Cathy comes down from her room (Sunday afternoon, "a month and more" after arriving). Hareton tries to be kind to her but is spurned.

Thursday 17 November 1801*Chapter 30*

Ellen has a long talk with Zillah about what is going on in Wuthering Heights (six weeks ago in the narrative, a little before Lockwood came).

Tuesday 24 January 1802*Chapter 32*

Zillah leaves Wuthering Heights and Ellen goes to live there (within a fortnight of Lockwood's departure).

Monday 6 March 1802*Chapter 32*

Hareton has a hunting accident and is confined to the farmhouse (at the commencement of March).

Monday 3 April 1802*Chapter 32*

On the afternoon of Easter Monday, Cathy decides that she wants to be friends with Hareton and he responds.

Tuesday 4 April 1802*Chapter 33*

Before breakfast, Cathy persuades Hareton to dig up an area of Joseph's garden for flowers. They argue with Heathcliff at breakfast who sees Catherine in her face. Heathcliff leaves after breakfast and returns at dusk.

Joseph had been working at Wuthering Heights for sixty years. Hareton is twenty three and Cathy eighteen.

Monday 24 April 1802*Chapter 34*

Heathcliff leaves the farmhouse during the night.

Tuesday 25 April 1802*Chapter 34*

Cathy and Ellen sit under the fir trees in the garden in the morning and Heathcliff returns. At dinner (12:00), he does not eat his meal and acts odd. At 20:00, Ellen takes him some supper that he does not eat. He goes to bed in Catherine's old room rather than his. (We were in April then.)

Wednesday 26 April 1802*Chapter 34*

In the morning, Heathcliff sees visions while at the table. Then he leaves the house.

Thursday 27 April 1802*Chapter 34*

Heathcliff returns in the early hours of the morning. He does not go to bed and, at 04:00, talks with Ellen about his funeral. He retires at dusk.

Friday 28 April 1802*Chapter 34*

Heathcliff is heard talking during the early hours. He locks himself in and refuses to see the doctor. (Heathcliff possibly dies in the evening – see 29 April).

Saturday 29 April 1802*Chapter 34*

It rains till dawn (04:00). In the morning, Ellen sees Heathcliff's window is open from outside and she enters his bedroom to find him dead. His eyes cannot be closed suggesting he had been dead some time, probably the night before. (In chapter 33, stated as three months before Lockwood's return which would have been June). Hareton stays by the corpse all night.

Thursday 10 August 1802*Chapter 34*

Ellen meets a shepherd boy on the moor who has seen Heathcliff and Catherine's ghosts. (A month before Lockwood's visit.)

Monday 1 January 1803*Chapter 34*

Cathy and Hareton due to marry.