



## Exploring Senior Cycle Texts

### *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* by Anne Brontë

*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* written by Anne Brontë is included as part of the Prescribed Material for the Leaving Certificate English Examination in 2027 and 2028 and it may be used as part of the comparative study in both Higher and Ordinary level.

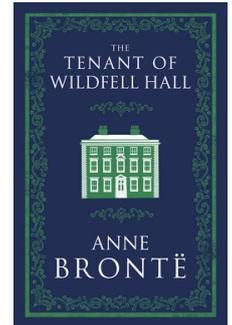


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Bloomsbury

#### Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- Please note that *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* covers themes which could be considered sensitive or controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



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### Before you read... (Teacher Guidance)

These activities support students in activating prior knowledge, exploring historical context, and making connections with themes and character prior to reading. Adapt as appropriate for your class.

#### 1. Exploring Context

Facilitate discussion to elicit students' understanding of women's lives in the nineteenth century. You may wish to prompt consideration of how marriage, social expectations, and class influenced women's choices.

Invite students to draw on stories or texts they know in which characters attempt to escape difficult or restrictive circumstances.

#### 2. Connecting to Modern Experience

Introduce the idea that the central character must make challenging personal decisions. Encourage students to consider how similar situations might arise today through paired or small-group discussion.

#### 3. Considering Narrative Openings

Before reading, invite students to suggest an opening line for a story set in a manor or estate. Compare students' ideas with Brontë's opening line in Chapter 1 and discuss how openings shape expectations.



## Extract

### **Background of the novel:**

The *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is set in the English countryside and tells a story about social expectations, morality, and women's independence. It explores serious themes in a realistic way, showing the struggles people faced in Victorian society. Anne Brontë portrays Helen's courageous decision to leave her husband, Arthur, in order to protect herself and her son. In the following extract, Helen asserts her resolve through writing a letter to Arthur where she announces her decision to leave him for the sake of her own integrity and her child's welfare:

### Chapter XLIV The Retreat - Helen's Letter

*I have made my choice, Arthur: I must leave you. If I stay with you, I shall be lost body and soul. If I go, I save my child, and I save myself. But I am not running away; you know I have your own promise that I may go whenever I please, and take my son with me. That promise I shall claim. Do not attempt to hinder me - for if you do, it will be all the worse for us both.*

*You may forget me, if you will, but I cannot forget that I am a mother, and my child's welfare must come before all. I will not see him sink into vice and misery because of your example. I shall watch over him from afar, and pray for him, and if possible, guide him in the better way. But with you I can do nothing. Your presence is destruction to my better resolves your words, your actions, are a continual barrier to my improvement.*

*I cannot remain to be ruined by your side, or worse, to see my son corrupted by your influence. It is not a matter of choice. It is duty, Arthur, duty to myself, to my child, and to my God. I leave you now, while I have strength to go, before I am dragged down too far to rise again. Think not that I go in anger. Though you have deeply wronged me, I forgive you. May God forgive you too, and make you a better man than you have been.*

*(Brontë, 1996, Ch. 36, p. 213)*

## Activities based on the Reading (Teacher Guidance)

The following questions may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the novel. Students may like to complete the activities individually or collaboratively.

### 1. Exploring Language and Emotion

Guide students in examining the descriptive and emotive language used in Helen's letter. You may wish to encourage paired work in identifying key words or phrases that reveal Helen's emotional state and discussing their effect on the reader.

### 2. Considering Perspective

Invite students to explore the extract from Arthur's perspective. This may be approached through an imagined interview, role-play, or a visual mapping of his possible thoughts and justifications on receiving the letter.

### 3. Reflecting on Moral Choice

Facilitate discussion on Helen's decision to leave Arthur in order to protect herself and her child. Encourage students to consider whether her actions can be viewed as morally justified and to reflect on how they might respond in a similar situation.

## Reflect and Respond

The following question may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the novel.

### 1. Exploring Narrative Perspective

Facilitate paired or small-group discussion exploring how the novel might differ if Gilbert narrated the story without Helen's diary. You may wish to prompt consideration of perspective, omission, and bias.

Invite students to respond creatively by composing a descriptive piece written in Gilbert's voice, reflecting insights arising from discussion.

### 2. Reimagining the Scene

Support students in adapting a selected scene for an alternative form, such as a radio script or a retelling from another character's perspective. Encourage attention to narration, dialogue, and how shifting viewpoint alters emotional impact.

### 3. Character Exploration

You may wish to use a hot-seating activity in which students assume the role of a character and respond to questions about motivations and decisions. Following discussion, students may produce a personal response reflecting on the character they gained greatest insight into.

### 4. Visual Interpretation

Encourage students to create a visual mapping of a key scene, representing setting, symbolism, character relationships, and emotional atmosphere. Display responses and facilitate peer feedback to support comparison of differing interpretations.

### 5. Considering Bias and Reliability

Guide students in examining narrative bias and reliability by revisiting a key moment in the novel and rewriting it from an alternative narrator's perspective. Discussion may focus on how viewpoint shapes inclusion, omission, and reader understanding.



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