

# wuthering definition oxford english dictionary

**wuthering definition oxford english dictionary** is a phrase that draws attention to the precise meaning and usage of the word "wuthering" as documented in one of the most authoritative linguistic resources, the Oxford English Dictionary (OED). This article explores the comprehensive definition provided by the OED, examining its etymology, historical context, and how the term fits into modern English usage. Understanding the wuthering definition oxford english dictionary is essential for scholars, students, and enthusiasts of English literature, especially given the word's connection to classic literary works. Additionally, this article delves into the phonetic details, synonyms, and examples illustrating the word's application. By unpacking the nuances of "wuthering," readers will gain a clearer insight into its linguistic and cultural significance. The article is structured to provide a thorough overview, from the origin of the term to its contemporary relevance.

- Understanding the Oxford English Dictionary's Definition of Wuthering
- Etymology and Historical Usage of Wuthering
- Phonetics and Pronunciation According to the OED
- Contextual Examples and Literary Significance
- Synonyms and Semantic Variations of Wuthering

## Understanding the Oxford English Dictionary's Definition of Wuthering

The Oxford English Dictionary provides a detailed and authoritative definition of the word "wuthering." According to the OED, wuthering is primarily an adjective describing a specific type of atmospheric condition characterized by strong, turbulent winds. The term is traditionally associated with the blustery weather typical of the Yorkshire moors in England, a characteristic that has been immortalized in literature. The dictionary's entry outlines the word's meaning as "blowing fiercely with a roaring sound," emphasizing the sensory experience of the wind's force and noise. This precise definition highlights the significance of wuthering as more than just a descriptive term; it conveys a vivid environmental phenomenon that affects mood and setting. The Oxford English Dictionary's reliability ensures that the wuthering definition oxford english dictionary reflects both historical depth and linguistic accuracy.

## Core Definition and Usage Notes

In the OED, "wuthering" is classified as a regional adjective, specifically tied to Northern English dialects, especially from Yorkshire. The dictionary notes that the word is used chiefly to describe weather conditions, particularly wind that is wild, turbulent, and accompanied by a howling or roaring noise. This usage is crucial for understanding the word's atmospheric and emotive qualities. While the term is less common in everyday speech today, it remains a potent descriptive word in literary contexts, often evoking a sense of isolation, harshness, or untamed nature.

## Etymology and Historical Usage of Wuthering

The etymology provided by the Oxford English Dictionary traces the origins of "wuthering" to Northern English dialects, dating back to the 16th century or earlier. The word likely derives from a verb form connected to "wuther," which means to blow or roar with the wind. The OED highlights that this term has roots in Old English and possibly Old Norse, reflecting the linguistic influences found in Northern England due to historical Viking settlements. Understanding the etymology enriches the appreciation of the word's cultural and geographical specificity.

## Historical Context and Evolution

Historically, "wuthering" gained prominence in regional speech well before it entered literary usage. The Oxford English Dictionary documents early citations that describe weather patterns on the moors and uplands of Northern England, where the wind's sound was both a natural phenomenon and a symbol of the wild landscape. Over time, the word's usage expanded through literary incorporation, most famously by Emily Brontë in her 1847 novel "Wuthering Heights," where the term encapsulates the bleak, stormy environment surrounding the story's setting. The OED records this literary adoption as a pivotal moment in the word's history, cementing its place in the English lexicon.

## Phonetics and Pronunciation According to the OED

The Oxford English Dictionary provides phonetic transcriptions to guide accurate pronunciation of "wuthering." The standard British English pronunciation is typically represented as /'wʊðərɪŋ/ or /'wʌðərɪŋ/, reflecting subtle regional variations. The OED explains that the initial syllable is pronounced with a short vowel sound similar to "wood" or "wuther," followed by a soft voiced "th" sound as in "this," and ending with a schwa sound in the final syllables. This phonetic detail is essential for learners and speakers aiming to pronounce the word authentically,

particularly in academic or literary discussions.

## **Pronunciation Variants and Regional Influences**

Because "wuthering" is a dialectal term, its pronunciation can vary based on regional accents. The OED acknowledges that in some Northern English dialects, the vowel sounds may shift slightly, and the "th" sound might be articulated with more emphasis or softened depending on local speech patterns. This variety illustrates the word's strong ties to specific geographic and cultural contexts. However, the dictionary's standard phonetic guidance serves as a reliable reference for general use.

## **Contextual Examples and Literary Significance**

The Oxford English Dictionary includes numerous quotations and examples that illustrate how "wuthering" is employed in context. These examples demonstrate the word's evocative power, particularly in describing the natural environment's mood and character. The literary significance of "wuthering" cannot be overstated, especially given its association with Emily Brontë's "Wuthering Heights," where the term helps create a vivid, atmospheric backdrop that shapes the narrative's tone and themes.

## **Notable Quotations from the OED**

- Early usage describing stormy moorland winds as "the wuthering blasts swept across the hills."
- Emily Brontë's novel reference: "Wuthering Heights" itself is named to evoke the wild and tempestuous nature of the setting.
- Other literary examples where "wuthering" conveys a sense of isolation and natural power.

These contextual examples from the Oxford English Dictionary highlight the word's function in capturing both the physical and emotional atmosphere, contributing to its enduring appeal in English literature.

## **Synonyms and Semantic Variations of Wuthering**

While "wuthering" is distinctive in its regional and literary flavor, the Oxford English Dictionary also acknowledges related words and synonyms that share similar meanings. These semantic variations expand the understanding of the word's place within the broader lexicon of atmospheric descriptors. Recognizing these synonyms can assist users in selecting the most appropriate

term for different contexts.

## Common Synonyms and Related Terms

- **Blustery:** Characterized by strong winds and gusts, often noisy and turbulent.
- **Windy:** A general term for weather with noticeable wind movement.
- **Stormy:** Weather involving storms, heavy wind, and precipitation.
- **Gusty:** Marked by sudden, brief increases in wind speed.
- **Roaring:** Describes a loud, continuous sound often caused by wind.

These synonyms illustrate the range of expressions related to "wuthering," each carrying nuances that the Oxford English Dictionary helps clarify. Selecting the right synonym depends on the intensity, sound, and emotional impact desired in the description.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the definition of 'wuthering' according to the Oxford English Dictionary?

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, 'wuthering' is an adjective describing a roaring or turbulent sound, especially of the wind.

### Is 'wuthering' a common word in modern English usage?

No, 'wuthering' is considered archaic or poetic and is not commonly used in everyday modern English.

### Where does the word 'wuthering' originate from?

The word 'wuthering' originates from Northern English dialects, particularly from Yorkshire, and is related to the sound of the wind blowing fiercely.

### How does the Oxford English Dictionary illustrate the use of 'wuthering'?

The Oxford English Dictionary often illustrates 'wuthering' with examples

from literature, such as Emily Brontë's novel 'Wuthering Heights', where it describes the turbulent weather.

## **Can 'wuthering' be used as a verb or only as an adjective?**

In the Oxford English Dictionary, 'wuthering' is primarily used as an adjective to describe a roaring or turbulent sound, especially of the wind.

## **What part of speech is 'wuthering' according to the Oxford English Dictionary?**

The Oxford English Dictionary classifies 'wuthering' as an adjective.

## **Does the Oxford English Dictionary provide pronunciation for 'wuthering'?**

Yes, the Oxford English Dictionary provides phonetic pronunciation for 'wuthering', typically noted as /'wʊðərɪŋ/ or /'wʌðərɪŋ/.

## **Is 'wuthering' associated with any particular region or dialect in the Oxford English Dictionary?**

Yes, the Oxford English Dictionary associates 'wuthering' with Northern English dialects, especially from Yorkshire.

## **What is the historical usage period of the word 'wuthering' in the Oxford English Dictionary?**

The Oxford English Dictionary notes that 'wuthering' has been in use since at least the 18th century, with literary prominence from the 19th century.

## **Does the Oxford English Dictionary list any synonyms for 'wuthering'?**

The Oxford English Dictionary suggests synonyms for 'wuthering' such as 'blustering', 'howling', 'roaring', or 'turbulent', especially in reference to wind or weather.

## **Additional Resources**

### **1. *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë**

This classic novel is the quintessential source of the word "wuthering," depicting the turbulent and stormy moors of Yorkshire. The story explores intense emotions and complex relationships, set against a backdrop of wild

weather and rugged landscapes. It provides a vivid illustration of the term as used in the Oxford English Dictionary.

2. *The Oxford English Dictionary: A History* by Simon Winchester

This book traces the fascinating development of the Oxford English Dictionary, including the origins and detailed definitions of words like "wuthering." It offers insights into how the dictionary captures the evolution of the English language and its rich literary heritage. Readers gain an understanding of lexicography and the cultural significance of words.

3. *The Brontë Myth* by Lucasta Miller

Focusing on the lives and works of the Brontë sisters, this biography delves into the context behind Emily Brontë's use of language, including the atmospheric term "wuthering." It explores how their environment influenced their writing style and vocabulary. The book sheds light on the literary and historical background of the word.

4. *Words and Their Stories: The Oxford English Dictionary and the Lexicographers Who Made It* by David Crystal

David Crystal explores the stories behind fascinating English words, including those with literary origins like "wuthering." The book reveals the rich history and cultural layers embedded in dictionary definitions. It is an engaging resource for anyone interested in the intersection of language, literature, and history.

5. *Emily Brontë: Wuthering Heights and Other Writings* (Oxford World's Classics)

This edition compiles Emily Brontë's works alongside scholarly notes that explain the linguistic and cultural significance of terms such as "wuthering." The introduction provides context on the word's meaning as it appears in the Oxford English Dictionary. It's an excellent resource for readers seeking deeper understanding of Brontë's language.

6. *The Language of the Brontës* by Juliet Barker

Juliet Barker examines the distinctive linguistic style of the Brontë sisters, including their use of regional dialect and atmospheric words like "wuthering." The book discusses how such language choices contribute to the mood and meaning of their novels. It provides a thorough analysis relevant to the definition of "wuthering."

7. *English Words and Their Origins* by Joseph T. Shipley

This book covers the etymology of many English words, with entries detailing words related to weather and natural phenomena, such as "wuthering." It explains the origins and historical usage of these terms in literature and everyday speech. The book is a useful reference for understanding the roots of words found in the Oxford English Dictionary.

8. *Storm and Stress: The Romantic Imagination* by David Perkins

This study of Romantic literature highlights how authors like Emily Brontë used language evocative of nature's power, including words like "wuthering," to create atmosphere and emotional intensity. The book explores the thematic

importance of wild landscapes and turbulent weather in Romantic writing. It offers context for the literary and dictionary usage of such words.

9. *Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology* by C.T. Onions

A comprehensive resource on the origin and historical development of English words, this dictionary includes detailed entries on terms like "wuthering." It traces the word's lineage from Old English and regional dialects to its literary prominence. This volume is invaluable for anyone researching the precise definition and background of English vocabulary.

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