Society's Impacts On People In Relationships In Chronicle Of A Death Foretold And Wuthering Heights

Society has the ability to influence people tremendously, especially in romantic relationships. The theme of "society's impacts on people in relationships" is prevalent in the 1847 novel Wuthering Heights, the 1894 short story The Story of an Hour, the 1981 novella The Chronicle of a Death Foretold, and the 2018 film Us and Them. This is an important theme to be aware of as society will always be present and will always be able to influence people. With increased awareness, we are able to understand just what it takes to be our own person, and how to celebrate love as it is, with less toxic input from the society around us.

In Emily Brontë's only novel Wuthering Heights, the social construct that is revealed to be the motivation for a relationship to be broken apart is class. This is shown in Catherine's speech to Nelly of her acceptance of Edgar's marriage proposal so she could be the "greatest woman of the neighbourhood". Catherine's attitude to her true love was tainted from the moment she stated, "It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff now, so he shall never know I love him." Catherine's love for Heathcliff was pure and powerful, but it was society's strongest poisoned air she breathed that made her push him away. Brontë is telling her readers that although the action of the story is so far from the bustle of society, social ambition motivates many actions of her characters, no matter who they're hurting, including themselves and their loved ones. She uses Catherine's decision to exemplify the effect of the social considerations of class status on people's actions. The setting of the story was intentionally in an isolated moor to show just how far society can reach – wherever you are, toxic social constructs have the chance to corrupt you and your relationships with others.

The Story of an Hour, Kate Chopin's short story, set in the 18th century United States, is a strong example of how severely societal norms can influence a person's outlook on their relationship with a significant other – similar to Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship. Louise Mallard, our protagonist, is a woman who believes in one's freedom and independence. She isn't fully aware of just how much she abhorred society's stifling idea of marriage until her husband, Brently Mallard, dies. She realises that as a widow, "There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature." Kate Chopin makes it clear throughout the story that it wasn't Brently at fault, it was the entire construct of marriage that Louise was critiquing. One could argue that without being indirectly "forced" into a marriage by society's standards, Louise and Brently could have been well and truly in love. As Chopin (through Louise's voice) considers the oppressive dictates forced on people in romantic relationships, she concludes that it is the direct result inevitably and unavoidably brought about by the institution of marriage, constructed by society.

Likewise, Gabriel García Márquez's novella The Chronicle of a Death Foretold showcases how society and it's outlook on gender roles ruin a person's chance of having a real romantic relationship. Set in a Colombian town in the late 19th century, it tells the story of how man was murdered because of a young girl who didn't want to be married – Angela Vicario. This girl lived back when women's life was bounded by expectations of marriage. The narrator describes the upbringing of Angela Vicario and her siblings: "My mother thought there were no better reared

daughters. 'Any man will be happy with them because they've been raised to suffer.'"
Márquez is showing the readers that the idea that women were expected to suffer in married life is extremely damaging – no woman enters a marriage expecting to be happy unless they were fortunate enough to love the man her parents chose for her. These binding ideas of how women would be treated in marriage suffocated Angela Vicario so much that she did not even realise she loved the man who tried to marry her – she was too scared to conform to a standard so degrading. Márquez conveys exactly how society's expectation for the ideal wife in marriage ruined what could have been a perfectly loving relationship.

How society negatively impacts people's romantic relationships is conveyed realistically in the 2018 film Us and Them directed by René Liu. Like Márquez's novella, the pressure of society was too overbearing for a true long-lasting relationship to form. Due to all the people around him becoming successful, Jianqing strives for success himself, and ends up losing his girlfriend. Despite all his material success he obtained in the long run, Jianqing is not truly happy. When the estranged couple meet ten years later, Jianqing says, "I tried really hard to become what you wanted me to be." The film is set in the early 2000's Beijing society where there was a tremendous pressure to "make it". The struggles of both protagonists in the big city echoes the struggle of many who are saddled with expectations from society. As a result of this "make it in five years or lose everything" high-pressure environment, Jianqing loses sight of what is important to him (ultimately, he realises it's his relationships) and ends up truly losing everything. Liu makes an excellent case on how society's notion of material success may negatively impact an individual's tie to their significant other.

The idea that society can impact a person's choices regarding a relationship is significantly displayed in the British novel Wuthering Heights, the American short story The Story of an Hour, the Colombian novella The Chronicle of a Death Foretold, and the Chinese film Us and Them. Readers and audiences of these texts are able to sense the gravity of the damage that society did to the relationships in them. These texts teach us to be aware of society's reach and how eventually, true love is more important than conforming to a social standard.