



D.H LAWRENCE'S SONS AND LOVERS: DISCOURSE OF FAMILIAL AND LOVE RELATIONSHIPS

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Sons and Lovers a novel by D. H. Lawrence is semi-autobiographical. His first mature novel, it is a psychological study of the familial and love relationships of a working-class English family Sons and Lovers is characterized by a strong running theme of Oedipus complex. It plays out between Mrs. Morel, a mother of four and wife of an alcoholic and her three sons, William, Paul and Arthur.

The novel is told from a third person perspective but remains closest to Mrs Morel. The narrator is partially omniscient, however it can be seen that he can narrate thoughts of Mrs. Morel only and not the other characters. The novel revolves around Paul Morel, the sensitive young artist whose love for his mother, Gertrude (Mrs. Morel), overshadows his romances with two women: Miriam Leivers, his repressed, religious girlfriend, and Clara Dawes, an experienced, independent married woman. Unable to watch his mother die slowly of cancer, Paul kills her with morphine. Despite losing her and rejecting both Miriam and Clara, Paul harbors hope for the future. The ending of the novel is ambiguous and leaves some for the reader's imagination, although it rids Paul's story with the possibility of a perfect or symmetrical ending, as we will see further.

The exposition rages over the opening three chapters of the book as it gives us some background on the village of Bestwood and this neighborhood in it, which is where Gertrude and Walter Morel have moved with their children.

Coming from a prim and proper family, Gertrude's falls for Walter because he is a young miner who dances well and laughs at danger. But in a short span of time there's a rapid change in their relations. As time goes on, we watch as Walter develops a habit of drinking and transforms into a boozehound and abusive father.

Gertrude hates living in poverty, and her situation only gets worse as she gives birth to her third and fourth children: Paul and Arthur. In this part of the story the author reveals that William ends up taking Walter's place in Gertrude's heart. She however bet wrongly on her marriage, so now she has to content herself with raising her children. And she way overdoes it with her love and investment in them.

By showing us all of these family issues and character flaws up front, Lawrence uses the exposition stage of the novel to lay the groundwork for the conflicts that will trouble the young Paul Morel for the rest of this book. The rising action follows this moment in the novel as the conflict becomes complex. As William, her eldest son grows up, his baby charm transforms into a boyish one which is slowly roughening to a manly exterior. Soon, he's making a lot of money for the family, and moves to London. Gertrude is unsettled by the idea of losing her young son to another world she's not a part of. However as the turn of events would have it, his big future plans come to a sudden halt as he dies. Mrs. Morel is devastated. The dead son and her drunkard husband both symbolize a downward trajectory in Gertrude's life. The attention then shifts to Paul who she starts focusing on, which at times gets obsessive. Another conflict arises when Paul meets a young girl named Miriam Leivers and falls in love with her. Not completely as his doubts are magnified by his mother's insecurities about losing his soul to Miriam. Paul and Miriam's complicated relationship serves as the main conflict for the rest of the book. The tension in the plot escalates as Paul feels like he has to choose between Miriam, his mother, and even himself

The novel reaches its climax as his mother's health assumes importance. Eventually, Paul finds out that his mother is living with a tumor on the side of her belly. Mrs. Morel and his sister, Annie induce guilt in his introspection as he was too busy preoccupied with his and Clara Dawes' carnal relations.

While he experiences sadness on his mother's approaching death he on the other hand actually gets frustrated that the stubborn old woman takes so *long* to die.

One day, over dinner, Paul tells Annie that he's going to give his mother an overdose of morphine to kill her. This is followed by Gertrude slowly losing consciousness and conceding to death. The question that arises after this is that the relationship between Mrs. Morel and her son had always complicated Paul's love for Miriam. With Mrs. Morel gone, though, Paul might just be able to live like a normal adult. But *will he?*

The falling action is depicted simultaneous to his mother death, Paul loses all sense of direction in his life and starts drinking and hanging out in bars, just like his father. The

resolution to the question of what happens with Miriam is answered when their romantic reconciliation fails and they go their separate ways. The denouement winds down with Paul choosing life over death in midst of all his anguish and dilemma, however not choosing to be with Miriam.

Oedipus complex in Sons and Lovers

Sigmund Freud's most celebrated theory of sexuality, the Oedipus complex, takes its name from the title character of the Greek play Oedipus Rex. In the story, Oedipus is prophesied to murder his father and have sex with his mother which he eventually achieves. Freud argued that these repressed desires are present in most young boys. D.H. Lawrence was aware of Freud's theory, and Sons and Lovers famously uses the Oedipus complex as its base for exploring Paul's relationship with his mother. Paul is hopelessly devoted to his mother, and that love often borders on romantic desire. Lawrence writes many scenes between the two that go beyond the bounds of conventional mother-son love. Completing the Oedipal equation, Paul murderously hates his father and often fantasizes about his death.

His mother also fuels his dissatisfaction with his two instrumental romantic and sexual relationships. Even she says that she can let another woman for her son but not Miriam because she leaves no room, but a bit of room for Mrs. Morel.. Here Paul's love with Miriam is neglected by his mother because his mother does not let it and cannot bear it. About Miriam Mrs. Morel says:

"I can't bear it. I could let another woman- but not her-she'd leave me no room, not a bit of room."

Paul assuages his guilty, incestuous feelings by transferring them elsewhere, and the greatest receivers are Miriam and Clara. However, Paul cannot love either woman nearly as much as he does his mother, though he does not always realize that this is detrimental to his romantic life. The older, independent Clara, especially, is a failed maternal substitute for Paul. In this setup, But Lawrence adds a twist to the Oedipus complex: Mrs. Morel is saddled with it as well. She desires both William and Paul in near-romantic ways, and she despises all their girlfriends. She, too, engages in transference, projecting her dissatisfaction with her marriage onto her smothering love for her sons. At the end of the novel, Paul takes a major step in releasing himself from his Oedipus complex. He intentionally overdoses his dying mother with morphine, an act that reduces her suffering but also subverts his Oedipal fate, since he does not kill his father, but his mother.

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