

Hi and welcome! Today we are going to learn about the plot overview of *Sons and Lovers* by D.H. Lawrence. The novel is divided into two parts. Part 1 consists of chapters 1-6. And Part 2 consists of chapters 7-15. Before we dive into the text, let's look at the background of the novel. As mentioned in my previous module it is important for us to gain an insight into the life of the author to critically appreciate the novel. Knowing about D.H. Lawrence let us now draw parallels between his real life and the important aspects of the novel.

To start with, we need to look at the setting of the novel. We see that it is highly autobiographical in nature. D.H. Lawrence lived in Nottinghamshire Eastwood and in the novel, he named the place Bestwood. The reason being that he spent some of his best years in that place, close to his mother. Hence it is metaphorical in nature. The imagery that he creates is the same as in the real time mining town of Eastwood. During his time there, Lawrence struggled to fit in as a child- he was bad at sport and very sickly. The same portrayal is seen through the character of Paul who is the protagonist of the novel. Lawrence's mother Lydia Lawrence has the exact same characteristics as Mrs. Morel. She was from a higher-class family who settled down for less. Something that she held on to and tried to find fixed through her sons by educating them and making them find jobs which did not include sending them to the pits.

Ernest Lawrence was D.H. Lawrence's brother who died at a young age. The same is depicted through the character of William- who also died young in the novel. Jessie Chambers can be Miriam Leivers in the novel. Jessie Chambers had a strong influence that gave Lawrence the push he needed. They shared an intellectual bond and that seems to be the only bond they could ever share. Frieda Weekley is said to be Clara in the novel. However, the ending of his novel is very different from how his life turned out to be. Lawrence was happily married to Frieda. This stands as a contradicting stance. However, we can say that D.H. Lawrence probably used his writing to emote his true feelings and change the timeline in literature if not in his real life.

Let us now try and understand the plot overview of the text. Part 1 starts off with the early married life of the Morels. The first chapter sets the tone of the entire novel. We see the couple moving into the community flats and are expecting their third child. One fine day, Mrs. Morel along with her children William and Annie sees her husband Walter Morel through the windows of a pub, slowly getting himself drunk. At this point she feels that she is falling apart and does not want to have a third child. She feels alone as ever and coming from the third child would only mean more for her to handle. Meanwhile there is a flashback in time, where young Mrs. Morel remembers the day she first met Mr. Morel- a miner with whom she fell in love with and married within a year. The initial years of marriage passed off happily. Slowly she starts discovering his little lies and deceits. She moves towards developing her spirituality. With the birth of their first child- William, she starts to despise her husband and he takes to the bottle.

In chapter two, we see that Mrs. Morel is pregnant with Paul and at this time Walter feels quite guilty and ashamed of how he has been. As the text progresses you will see how Mr. Morel's character has shaped and he acts as a silent spectator. Paul is born, and the couple continues to drift apart. Mrs. Morel has a growing disdain for her husband, and this leaves him more irritable. There are scenes of domestic abuse, however he immediately is guilty of it. Though his guilt is questionable since he goes back to being drunk.

In chapter three, Mr. Morel is sick with inflammation of the brain. Mrs. Morel does her duty as wife and nurses him to health. This is an important theme in the novel which we will be dealing with at a later

stage. Even though Mrs. Morel does her duty, it ends at it. She does not feel love and affection for the man. Arthur is born and she grows closer to her children and mostly to Paul. He is sickly with bouts of depression and she gives him all her affection. She is also happy that William, age- 13, finds a job at a corporate and is away from the coal mines. He further moves to London with a high paying job. At the same time, she is unhappy with his many girlfriends. At this point we see Mrs. Morel growing possessive of her sons and everything they do. Paul goes on to study languages, Annie studies to become a teacher. Children are rapidly growing, and Mrs. Morel has given all her attention to them.

In chapter four, we see the family dynamics changing drastically. Mrs. Morel has full control of the household and is quite dominating. Mr. Morel is drunk and intolerable and sometimes completely cordial. He tells the kids stories about his time at the coal mines. His behaviour is quite unpredictable. The children, however, dislike their father and have less or no respect for him. This chapter shapes the character of Paul. He's more aware of his longing for his mother, which seems unnatural and is hateful of his father. This chapter also gives us an insight into the mind of an alcoholic. Lawrence has experienced this firsthand, where men drink excessively once out of the pits.

In chapter five, Mr. Morel is sick and is hospitalised. Mrs. Morel again performs her duty as a wife. Paul lands a job and William is moving up in the social strata by earning a good living in London. Mrs. Morel is proud of her sons and feels that it is because of her that the boys have succeeded in life, hence making her feel that she has the right over them and they would do anything for her if she demands it.

Chapter six, the last chapter of part one, stands at a very crucial point. Arthur- the youngest son seems to be more like his father. He is quick, careless, impulsive and does not like the world around him. He wins and has a scholarship and leaves home. This leads to Paul and Mrs. Morel even closer to each other. William returns home for Christmas from England with his fiancé- Lily. He compares her to his mother and is not satisfied even though she could be the most perfect woman. This showcases the upbringing of the boys by Mrs. Morel. We are also introduced to the Leivers family and will see the development in later chapters. At the end of the chapter, William passes away from a disease that causes high fever and inflammation of the skin. Mrs. Morel is unable to control her grief. Paul is ill of pneumonia and this brings Mrs. Morel to reality to care and nurse her son to health.

Part Two begins with a new life for Paul and his friendship with Miriam Leivers. They grow close to each other and have an intellectual bond. Paul has a need for a physical relationship but both never manage to establish it. Mrs. Morel thinks that Miriam isn't good enough for Paul.

Arthur leaves for the army, again showcasing how he constantly wants to move away from this dysfunctional family. Paul takes up painting and is passionate about it. He wins prizes for it. His sketching lets the reader gain an insight into his mind revealing his true nature. Paul meets Clara and finds affinity towards her. It is more of a physical attraction. His meeting with Beatrice and her flirty pass also explicates Paul's need for a physical relation which wasn't getting fulfilled with Miriam. Paul finally calls quits. With this in the background, we see Lawrence also develop the Mother-Son relationship. Mrs. Morel confesses to Paul, saying, "I never really had a husband you know..." she says in the most passionate voice that Paul kisses her. When the drunken father Mr. Morel walks in on them, he immediately senses the dysfunctional relationship shared. At this moment Paul realises that he loves his mother like no other woman in the world.

Paul now moves on to establish a relationship with Clara- a divorced woman who has a very strong personality. At the same time, he is torn between the different feeling i.e. Love for his mother, spiritual connection with Miriam and passion for Clara.

Paul begins to think more of Miriam and feels obligated towards her. The only way to make ends meet was through a physical relationship, which meant marriage to Miriam. The whole idea was highly disappointing, and Paul finally starts seeing Clara more often to satisfy a void that Miriam could never fulfil.

Paul continues his calling and makes a living through art. He has a happy relationship established with his mother. It is the first time that Paul is truly happy- a life with his mother and Clara. However, his mother is aware of Clara's being and is unhappy with it.

Baxter Dawes- Clara's husband fights back. He gets into a fight with Paul at a pub. He time and again shows up at different places to show his dominance and his rightful place. Mrs. Morel is diagnosed with cancer and Paul gradually withdraws from Clara, trying to devote himself to his ill mother.

One evening Paul is told that Baxter Dawes is in the hospital and is not responding to treatment. He visits him and they talk about Mrs. Morel's illness as well. Baxter seemed to be ill because of Paul and Clara's fling. She feels ashamed of herself and goes back to nursing Baxter to health. At this time, they seem to find a way back to each other.

The last chapter shatters Paul as a character. His one and only devotion- his mother dies and he has nothing to look forward to. Mr. Morel sells off the house and goes to live with his family. Paul moves into a different lodging. He moves around unable to catch a hold of himself and his life. Here he meets Miriam and offers to look after him but he says that, 'she would suffocate him of her love'. Paul continues to think of his mother and years for her. He also realises that he has to carry on and live a full life.