***Sons and Lovers by D H Lawrence***  (PG 2ND SEM)

It is a 1913 novel by the English writer [D. H. Lawrence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/D._H._Lawrence), originally published by Gerald Duckworth and Company Ltd., London, and Mitchell Kennerley Publishers, New York. While the novel initially received a lukewarm critical reception, along with allegations of obscenity, it is today regarded as a masterpiece by many critics and is often regarded as Lawrence's finest achievement.

**David Herbert Lawrence** (11 September 1885 – 2 March 1930) was an English writer and [poet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poet). His collected works represent, among other things, an extended reflection upon the dehumanising effects of modernity and industrialisation. Lawrence's writing explores issues such as sexuality, emotional health, vitality, spontaneity, and instinct. His works include [*Sons and Lovers*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sons_and_Lovers), [*The Rainbow*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Rainbow), [*Women in Love*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Love), and [*Lady Chatterley's Lover*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lady_Chatterley%27s_Lover).

Important Characters

* **Gertrude Morel**

The first protagonist of the novel. She becomes unhappy with her husband Walter and devotes herself to her children.

* **Paul Morel**

Paul Morel takes over from his mother as the protagonist in the second half of the book. After his brother William’s death, Paul becomes his mother’s favorite and struggles throughout the novel to balance his love for her with his relationships with other women.

**Walter Morel**

Gertrude’s husband, a coal miner.

* **William Morel**

Their first son, who is Mrs. Morel’s favorite until he falls ill and dies.

* **Annie Morel**

Paul’s older sister. When their mother lies dying toward the end of the novel, she and Paul decide to give her an overdose of morphia pills.

* **Arthur Morel**

Paul’s younger brother, not central to the plot.

* **Miriam Leivers**

The daughter of the family at Willey Farm. She befriends Paul and becomes his first love.

* **Clara Dawes**

A friend of Miriam’s, she is a suffragette, who is separated from her husband. She becomes Paul’s second love, and they have a passionate affair.

* **Baxter Dawes**

Clara’s husband. He fights with Paul, but they later become friends while he is ill.

* **Mrs. Radford**

Clara’s mother.

* **Thomas Jordan**

The owner of the factory where Paul works. Paul dislikes him from their first interview because he is rude and makes Paul look foolish. He later fires Baxter Dawes because he knocks him down a flight of stairs.

* **Louisa Lily Denys Western**

A girl William sees in London, and to whom he becomes engaged. The rest of the family is less than impressed with her when he brings her home, and William shortly becomes sick of her as well.

* **Mr. and Mrs. Leivers, Agatha, Edgar, Geoffrey, Maurice**

The family who live at Willey Farm.

* **Fanny**

A hunchback who works in the finishing-off room at the factory, who likes to have Paul come visit her to sing or talk. She organizes the other girls to get Paul a birthday present.

* **John Field**

A man with whom Gertrude is friendly when she is nineteen. He gives her a Bible, which she keeps for the rest of her life. From John she learns that “being a man isn’t everything.”

* **Jerry Purdy**

Walter Morel’s bosom friend. Walter goes for a walk to Nottingham with Jerry, during which he takes the nap on the ground that eventually causes an illness.

* **Mr. Heaton**

The Congregational clergyman who visits with Mrs. Morel every day after Paul is born. He is Paul’s godfather and teaches him French, German, and mathematics.

* **Beatrice Wyld**

A friend of the Morel family who ridicules Miriam and flirts with Paul. She eventually marries Arthur when he returns from the army.

# Sons and Lovers Summary and Analysis of Chapters 1-3

"Hell Row" is a collection of cottages where colliers (coal-miners) live. They work nearby in the small gin-pits, as they have for years, and similar cottages dotting the countryside form the village of Bestwood. Roughly sixty years ago, large, financier-backed mines drove out the gin-pits. The company Carston, Waite and Co. appeared, and Hell Row was burned down. Carston, Waite and Co. expanded their operations and developed six pits. They built housing for the miners; on the site of Hell Row, they established the Bottoms, seventy-two houses on six square blocks at the bottom of a hill. While the houses were fairly substantial and pleasant on the outside, the kitchens, which were the dwelling-rooms, opened on to the ash-pits in back.

[Gertrude Morel](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#gertrude-morel), thirty-one years old, married for eight years, and expecting her third baby in September, is not pleased to move to the Bottoms in July, even though she has a more expensive and desirable house at the end of the strip. [Walter Morel](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#walter-morel), her husband, is a miner. Three weeks into their stay, the wakes (a fair) begin, and he troops off one Monday morning to attend. Their children are excited: William, seven, goes off after breakfast, leaving behind Annie, five. Mrs. Morel promises to take her after dinner.

William returns for noontime dinner. After, he goes off on his own, and Mrs. Morel later takes Annie to the wakes. William has won two egg-cups from a game; Mrs. Morel knows he won them for her, and he gives them to her. He proudly shows her around the grounds. She leaves later with Annie, much to William's disappointment. William comes home later, unhappy from his mother's absence, and reports seeing his father working at a bar.

At night, Mrs. Morel goes to the side garden and watches families returning from the wakes. She feels dreary, as if nothing will happen to her in life. She cannot afford a third child, especially since her despised husband drinks away his wages. Her children are her only happiness. She later goes back into the house and laments her lost youth and feels powerless--only waiting--in life. Her husband returns late at night, and they get in an argument over whether he's been drinking. Mrs. Morel goes to bed.

Mrs. Morel comes from a good family. She has inherited her temper from her father, George Coppard, an engineer embittered by poverty. She hated her father's overbearing behavior toward her mother, whom she loved and favored. She thinks back on her youth, and remembers one afternoon spent behind her house with [John Field](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#john-field), a well-educated young man who gave her a Bible that she still keeps. They discussed his reluctance to go into business; she had mistakenly believed that if one were a man, one could do anything.

She lost touch with Field. At twenty-three, she met twenty-seven-year-old Morel, a hearty, vigorous, humorous man, at a Christmas party. Her sensitive, quiet, intellectual nature was drawn to him, especially since he was completely opposite from her father. Morel, too, was fascinated by her refined qualities. They married the next Christmas, and she was very happy for several months. But it turned out they were not living in his own house, as Mrs. Morel believed, but overpaying rent to Morel's mother.

Morel's lie, his inability to communicate intimately, and his apparent increased drinking soured Mrs. Morel. She gave birth to William around their third Christmas together, and she turned her loneliness and disillusion into passionate love for him, much to Morel's jealousy. They fought constantly over Morel's irresponsibility. One day, he cut off William's beautiful curly hair. This event finalized their rift, and Mrs. Morel would always remember it. Morel's tendency to mock his superiors led to his lower wages, which he squandered on drink.

On the Tuesday morning after the first day of the wakes, [Jerry Purdy](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#jerry-purdy), Morel's best friend, visits. Mrs. Morel hates his cold, manipulative, and domineering nature. The men leave for a ten-mile walk to Nottingham, where they play cards for money. At the Bottoms, Mrs. Morel takes Annie to a nearby brook for relief from the heat. Morel irritably and drunkenly returns late at night. He and Mrs. Morel fight viciously about his drunkenness. He locks her out of the house, then goes to sleep at the kitchen table. Outside, her rage grows. After she raps for a long time at the window, Morel wakes up, ashamedly opens the door, and runs upstairs before she can be angry with him. She cleans up the kitchen and goes to bed, where he is asleep.

Analysis:

Immediately apparent in the novel, especially to a reader in 1913, is its subject matter of miners. While Lawrence was certainly not the first English writer to depict the lower class, or even miners, he does so out of some personal experience (he maintained that the first part of [Sons and Lovers](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers) was largely autobiographical) and with a keen ear for the rhythms of their speechMorel's especiallyand habits.

However, the first chapter is presented mostly from Mrs. Morel's point of view. Lawrence narrates in an omniscient voice that is at times detachedthe opening description of the Bottoms reads almost like the beginning to a fairy talebut more frequently zooms in on the interior emotions of each character.

Mrs. Morel's unhappy life is explored thoroughly. She represents intellect that has not been allowed to flourish because she is a woman; her shock that John Field could not do whatever he wanted as a man is a poignant projection of her own repressed ambitions. Her sense of being "buried alive" is a logical complaint for someone whose husband mines underground all day. However, she is just as repressed by their industrial life, a theme Lawrence will explore throughout the novel.

Though the sensual, passionate Morel seems an odd choice for Mrs. Morel, Lawrence demonstrates here, and elsewhere in the novel, how oppositions can attract as often as they repulse. Morel is also in attractive opposition to Mrs. Morel's loathed father. Still, the marriage is clearly a disaster, pitting mind against body, a conflict in which Lawrence was always interested. Morel is also irresponsible in regards to their children; he drinks away his wages, while Mrs. Morel lives only for William and Annie.

Sons and Lovers is informed by, and revises, Sigmund Freud's early psychoanalytic theories of sexuality. Freud's most famous theory, that of the Oedipus complex, in which the son unconsciously desires his mother sexually while murderously hating his father, is given full treatment in the novel (the complex is named after the eponymous character in the Greek play Oedipus Rex). Here, the relationship between Mrs. Morel and William verges on romantic love; William wins her the egg-cups much as a lover proudly wins his girlfriend a prize at a fair, and he cannot enjoy himself once she leaves. Mrs. Morel, too, has projected the disappointment from her marriage into excessive love for her children, especially William. Lawrence uses several psychological symbols to demonstrate the complex relationships. Morel, threatened by his wife's love for their son, cuts off William's curly hair in a symbolic castration. Lawrence describes the act as "the spear through the side of her love for Morel." His metaphor suggests malevolent phallic imagery.

Tellingly, Mrs. Morel's first name, Gertrude, echoes that of the queen in Shakespeare's Hamlet, another work noted for its Oedipal themes.

Chapter II Summary:

Morel's physical presence seems to diminish around the house. He prefers to breakfast alone. Mrs. Morel gives birth to a boy while ill; Morel is indifferent. The Congressional clergyman, [Mr. Heaton](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#mr-heaton), visits her every day and becomes the child's godfather. Morel complains about the difficulty of his job in front of Heaton. One night, Mrs. Morel escapes to a meadow with Annie and the baby after Morel has kicked William. She watches the sky and feels peaceful in nature. The baby seems sad to her. Though it was brought into the world in an unloved state, she vows to compensate it with love from "all her soul." She calls him Paul.

On Friday night, Morel returns home late and drunk and, during a quarrel, throws a table drawer at his wife. It strikes her brow and draws blood. She pushes him away when he shows concern. When some of her blood drips on Paul, he helps her clean him up. The next day, Morel drinks to alleviate his guilt. However, he never apologizes and claims to himself that it was her fault. The family withdraws further from him.

With no money to drink more, Morel takes some from his wife's purse. Unable to pay for food the next day, she realizes her husband took her money. She confronts him and he denies doing it, then takes some belongings and leaves. The children are anxious he will not return, but their mother assures them he will be back that night. She is nervous, too, knowing that the family is dependent on him. She sees his bundle of belongings outside and knows he has not gone far. He returns later, and she mocks him for leaving his belongings nearby.

Analysis:

Just as Mrs. Morel previously transferred her dissatisfaction with her life to her love for William, here we see her redouble those efforts with Paul. For every cruel turn Morel makes toward her, she reacts with overflowing love for her newborn child. This continues the Oedipal theme hinted at in Chapter I, and also bolsters the idea of oppositions playing off each other.

Another feature of oppositions explored here is how contradictory human nature is. Morel is usually heartless and detached, but he sometimes shows flashes of concern and love for his family. A greater contradiction emerges when he leaves, when Mrs. Morel realizes that "her heart was bitter, because she had loved him." In her anxiety over her husband's presumed departure, she has understood that she has some fund of love for him (they even share a somewhat romantic moment when he brings her tea in the morning). However, it is possible if she is confusing dependence with love, a mixture she seems to inflict upon her children as well.

Mrs. Morel gains insight into her life while in the meadow. In Chapter I, she was at peace among the flowers in her garden (the flowers will become an important symbol). The Modernist literary movement borrowed the Romantic tradition of transcendence in nature and frequently transplanted it to a number of other settings, including urban ones. James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, especially, were fascinated with how the single momentJoyce preferred the term "epiphany"; Woolf, "moments of being"could elevate a human beyond his normal mental and spiritual state into a transcendent vision of himself and the world. Lawrence continues to use nature as the setting for these epiphanies, and it seems a logical choice for Mrs. Morel, constrained by her house and the nearby dirty mines.

Lawrence is adept at planting small scenes within larger narrative sweeps to highlight general behavior. For instance, the scene in which Morel interrupts his wife and Heaton explains, without abstract commentary, Morel's jealousy over Heaton's relationship with his wife and even his child, his bitterness over his job in comparison with the clergyman's, and his growing irritation with his wife.

Chapter III Summary:

Morel is sick with inflammation of the brain, and Mrs. Morel nurses him in his ill mood. The neighbors help out with housework and money. Morel gets better and the relations between him and his wife are improved; he is dependent on her, and she can tolerate him now that she has a new baby. Mrs. Morel devotes her attention to William, who is growing into a smart, lively young man, while Morel feels left out. When Paul is seventeen months old, another boy is born, Arthur. Mrs. Morel is pleased that Arthur immediately loves his father, who often returns his affection.

Paul is small and reserved, follows his mother around, and sometimes cries without knowing why. William gets in trouble with a neighbor one day for ripping her son's collar. Morel wants to whip him for punishment, but Mrs. Morel threatens that he will regret it if he touches their son.

Mrs. Morel joins the Women's Guild, a club attached to the Bestwood Co-Operative Wholesale Society, where women meet weekly and discuss the social benefits of co-operation and other developments. Her children admire her membership in the intellectual community. When William is thirteen, his mother gets him a job at the Co-op office, though Morel wants him working in the mines. William attends night school and becomes an excellent clerk and book-keeper, and goes on to teach night school. He is an excellent athlete and dancer. He gives his money to his mother and befriends the middle-class young men of Bestwood. He also enjoys the company of many girls in town, none of whom his mother approves of.

William leaves the Co-op when he is nineteen and gets a job, with a raise, in Nottingham. Annie is studying to be a teacher, Paul is doing well in school, and Arthur is trying to get a scholarship for school in Nottingham. After a year, William receives an offer for an even higher-paying job in London. His mother despairs, knowing she will miss him. He reads aloud and burns his love-letters from girls in front of Paul and his mother.

Analysis:

The third chapter details the effects of the Oedipus complex that has been developing in the first two chapters, but with a twistit appears that, with William, there is a reverse Oedipus complex at play. Mrs. Morel seems to be in love with her son, who desires her approval but is not nearly as dependent on her as she is on him. Her jealousy over the girls who visit him and have sent him love-letters is thinly veiled.

The effect William's departure will have on Paul, her more effeminate son, is unclear, but we have seen ample evidence so far that Mrs. Morel has a tendency to transfer dissatisfied feelings from one area of her life (such as her marriage) to another area (her children). We may assume that she will project her longing for William onto Paul, though how that love may mutate is unclear.

Complicating this Oedipal relationship is Morel, who acts in an infantile, dependent manner and becomes, in effect, an ignored middle child. While this temporarily enhances his relationship with his wife, whatever love they had (which she admitted to having in the last chapter) is gone, and he no longer has the power of being an imposing father figure.

Alongside Morel's growing dependence is Mrs. Morel's burgeoning independence (aside from her dependence on her children). She easily defeats and bullies Morel in a fight and, more importantly, joins the Women's Guild and recalls her former intellectual skills that have been out of service for so long.

# Sons and Lovers Summary and Analysis of Chapters 4-6

Chapter IV Summary:

Paul, small like his mother, is mature and sensitive. Annie is very attached to him. After he accidentally jumps on a doll of hers, he decides to burn the doll in a "sacrifice." The sacrifice disturbs Annie, who says nothing. Among the children, Paul hates Morel the most. One day, Paul watches with the rest of the family as Morel and William nearly engage in a fistfight. Mrs. Morel stops the fight, to William and the other children's dismay.

The family had moved to a house on the top of the hill while William was growing up. Morel liked the house, but the vast, windy space in front of the house terrified the children, especially at night. As a boy, Paul hated his father and would often pray for his death. The family would wait anxiously to eat dinner for Morel, who would stop to drink before coming home. Morel was completely locked out of family affairs. His bad temper was occasionally interrupted by periods of cheerfulness, often occurring when he did handiwork. Paul was susceptible to bronchitis, and his mother never expected him to live. While sick, he would sleep in bed with his mother and recuperate. Still, Mrs. Morel was preoccupied with William.

When William leaves for Nottingham, Mrs. Morel turns her attention to Paul; the two brothers are jealous of each other but remained close. On Fridays, Paul collects his father's earnings from the crowded offices on Greenhill Lane. Though it is a nerve-racking experience for him, his mother calms him down afterward. He loves reuniting with her after she has gone shopping, as he does one day when she buys a dish with cornflowers on it. The children play games with neighborhood friends.

William, Mrs. Morel's "knight," is returning from London for five days over Christmas. The family prepares with food and decorations. On Christmas Eve, his train is late, but William eventually arrives to a joyful homecoming. He gives them presents and delicacies. When he leaves, everyone is miserable. When he has the opportunity to go to the Mediterranean over the summer, even with his mother's blessing, he decides to go home for his vacation.

Analysis:

Paul's burning of the doll is similar to William's burning his love-lettersexcept that William had real girls he was sacrificing as he moved to London, whereas Paul sacrifices the doll out of guilt for jumping on it. However, Paul's action may shed some light on William's; perhaps William felt guilty for dallying with women and making his mother jealous, and burning the letters was his way of assuaging his guilt.

Another similarity between Paul and William develops when Mrs. Morel buys the dish with cornflowers on it. The egg-cup William won for her at the wakes had "moss-roses" on it, and flowers are frequently depicted as calming agents which soothe Mrs. Morel in times of anxiety (she often goes into the garden for respite from her husband). Indeed, the cornflowers delight Paul, and flowers seem to bond other characters throughout the novel.

Previously, Mrs. Morel felt like she was being "buried alive," a logical complaint for someone married to a miner. Here, we learn that the children dislike the vast, open spaces around their new house. While not physically constricting, this space is still a "tight place of anxiety" to the children. No matter where they are, the characters always feel bound by their environment.

The characters are also bound to their love and dependence on William. While Mrs. Morel's dependent love was already well established, we see how his presence can temporarily revive the family, and how his absence can return it to misery.

Lawrence continues to use two forms of temporal shifts here: he laces small scenes into larger narrative sweeps, and uses a flashback for much of this chapter. The purpose is not to construct the temporal movement of the characters' lives, since episodic, achronological narratives are inferior to tight, chronological narratives in that regard. Rather, Lawrence constructs a sense of the characters' emotional movement; an event from years ago may have as much to do with their present feeling as one from last week.

Chapter V Summary:

A work accident lands Morel in the Nottingham hospital with a compound fracture in his leg. Mrs. Morel makes the trip to see him and relates the news to the children. She feels sorry for him, but is mostly indifferent to his pain. Morel soon gets better, and the family is relieved, though they were peaceful and happy in his absence. Paul, now fourteen, is not suited for manual labor, preferring more artistic pursuits like painting. His ambition is to share a cottage with his mother after his father dies. At his mother's request, he unhappily searches through the newspapers for a job.

Meanwhile, William easily climbs London's social ladder, studies Latin to accelerate his legal career, stops sending money home, and becomes taken with a lady. Paul receives an interview with [Thomas Jordan](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#thomas-jordan), a manufacturer of surgical appliances in Nottingham. He and his mother take the train and arrive at the busy warehouse. He is nervous in his interview with Jordan, a small, curt old man, but secures a job. After, he and his mother indulge in an expensive dinner out in Nottingham and browse several shops before returning home. William sends home a revealing photograph of his lady, [Louisa Lily Denys Western](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#louisa-lily-denys-western). His mother disapproves of Lily's outfit, so he sends a different picture.

Paul starts work, and his mother is proud of him. He works in the "Spiral" corner of the dark, second-floor warehouse, under the supervision of Mr. [Pappleworth](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#pappleworth), a thin, somewhat shrewd man. He starts Paul on copying work orders and other tasks. Paul soon learns to like work, especially Pappleworth, despite his supervisor's occasional irritability. He befriends the girls who work there, including [Polly](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#polly), an overseer with whom he starts having dinner; [Connie](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#connie), an attractive redhead whom he romanticizes; [Louie](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#louie), with whom he jokes; [Emma](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#emma), an old, condescending woman; and [Fanny](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#fanny), a lively hunchback. Each night he gives his mother his earnings and tells her of his day.

Analysis:

Lawrence uses the words "prisoner" and "bondage" to describe industrialism's effect on Paul. Immediately contrasting these suffocating words are pastoral images of sunflowers, corn, and woods; flowers once again symbolize a peaceful world apart from the demands and responsibilities of work and family. Ironically, Paul loves work and feels free in the warehouse, showing the first signs of confidence and befriending not only his supervisor but various women.

Though we do not see evidence of Mrs. Morel's jealousy over Paul's relationships with these women yet, again she does not mask her disapproval of William's romantic relationships. Lily's youth, beauty, and wealth threaten her, and it seems doubtful she will ever bless any union of her eldest son.

Moreover, William is drifting further from the family. He is more devoted to his own career, and he uses his money for his personal life. It seems Paul has started working not only to compensate for this loss of income, but to take over William's position as the responsible son. Paul even gleefully announces that he is the "'man in the house'" when his father is in the hospital.

With this new status comes a more confused sexual identity. When Paul and his mother go to Nottingham together, Lawrence describes them as "feeling the excitement of lovers having an adventure together." Paul's Oedipus complex is sketched out in his ambition to share a cottage with his mother after his father dies. Although this does not include the Oedipal desire of murdering the father, the psychological implications are clear.

Chapter VI Summary:

Arthur grows up into an impulsive, selfish, athletic, attractive boy. He hates his father, whose body is decaying and who fights constantly with his children. Arthur wins a scholarship to a school in Nottingham and lives there during the week with an aunt, coming home on the weekends. Annie is a junior teacher, and will soon get a raise. Mrs. Morel and Paul are inseparable when he is home.

William is engaged to Lily, and he brings her home over Christmas. She dresses and acts almost as a "princess," though she has worked as a secretary for the last year. At Easter, he comes home alone, but discusses Lily with his mother. Paul receives a raise. He and his mother take a trip to a friend's farm. Paul compliments his mother's outfit. They walk through the countryside, and Paul picks her flowers. They reach the farmhouse of the Leivers. Paul talks to their fourteen-year-old daughter, Miriam, and meets the three Leiver boys. After they leave, Mrs. Morel says if she were Mr. Leiver's wife, the farm would be better run.

William and Lily make another visit, and Paul spends a good deal of time with them. Lily's materialism, lack of intellect, and queenly demeanor around the family irritates William. He confides in his mother, who suggests he might break off the engagement. He fights with her in front of his mother, who reprimands him. He later makes up with Lily, though he hates her. The three of them walk to the train station for their departure, and William insults Lily more, saying she would forget about him if he died.

William returns again in October, to Mrs. Morel's delight. William, who looks gaunt, repeats his idea that if he died, Lily would soon move on. Later, he shows his mother a rash on his throat he believes his collar made. When he is back in London, she receives a telegram saying he is ill. She rushes to London and finds William mumbling nonsense in bed, his face discolored. A doctor diagnoses it as pneumonia and erysipelas (a skin disease). Mrs. Morel stays with him as he raves madly, and he dies in the night. She wires home the news and tells Morel to come. Later in the week, he and Mrs. Morel return, and the family puts William's coffin in the house. They later bury him.

Mrs. Morel becomes more distant during the fall, even to Paul. Around Christmas, he gets a bad case of pneumonia. Mrs. Morel asks the doctor if he would not have gotten it had she not let him go to Nottingham. When the doctor says it is possible, she thinks she should have "'watched the living, not the dead.'" She lovingly tends to Paul, whose condition worsens until one night he thinks he will die. He is bed-ridden for nearly two months, but his illness brings Mrs. Morel out of her mourning. Lily sends Mrs. Morel a letter indicating her social life is back on track, and she never hears from her again. Morel avoids the cemetery in his daily walks.

Analysis:

William seems to foreshadow his death when he repeatedly mentions that Lily would forsake his love if he died. (Lawrence also says that William proves a "prophet" when Lily does, indeed, forget about William after his death.) Perhaps the one symbolic association we may make with William's death stems from his becoming aware of the erysipelas when he wears a collar. The lifestyle he has adopted in Londonexcessively ambitious in the social and working worlds, engaged to a materialistic ladyhas collared and bound him as much as Morel's mining has imprisoned him.

Mrs. Morel, too, dislikes Lily largely because she has somehow escaped this prison. Though Lily, as a secretary, is not at a much higher station in life than Mrs. Morel, nor does she have much intellect, she acts far above Mrs. Morel. Mrs. Morel's jealousy comes out in deceptive, manipulative behavior. She suggests William break off his engagement, then reprimands him for fighting with Lily in front of her.

We again see flowers acting as a bonding agent for Paul and his mother, when he picks her forget-me-nots in the country. His exuberant appreciation of his mother's outfithe claims that if he saw her on the street, he'd say "'Doesn't that little person fancy herself!'"exposes some complex psychological masking. He transfers his own "fancying" of his mothera guilty, incestuous feeling if he admitted to itonto her to assuage his conscience.

Mrs. Morel, however, shows the first glimmers of attraction to a male who is not one of her own sons when she critiques Mrs. Leiver to Paul and proposes that she herself would have made a better wife for Mr. Leiver. She does not fully own up to these desires, calling Mrs. Leiver "'lovable'" at the end, just as she never seems completely aware of how her maternal love borders on romantic love for her sons.

Mrs. Morel now has another emotion to deal with: guilt, for William's death. She compensates for his death, and her feeling that it should have been her, by heaping attention on Paul. That he becomes ill with pneumonia as well allows her to enact the maternal duties of nursing she wishes she could have used for William.

# Chapters 7-9

Chapter VII Summary:

Paul visits the Leivers' farm several times in the fall. Miriam, though a romantic, is distant with Paul, afraid he will scorn her as her brothers do. She is deeply religious, and wants to be educated and rise above her status as swine-girl. Paul visits one day and chats with Miriam as she prepares dinner. Miriam is distracted by Paul's watching her, and she burns the potatoes. The family puts down Miriam while they eat. Paul, Miriam, and Mrs. Leivers spend a day exploring the countryside. As he convalesces, Paul develops his relationship with Mrs. Leivers and her children, including Edgar, the eldest.

Paul and Miriam spend more time together. Paul hates it when Miriam lavishes love on her unaffectionate five-year-old brother. Miriam expresses to Paul her dissatisfaction with being a woman and her desire to learn. Paul tutors her in algebra, though her slow learning frustrates him. Paul often avoids her and spends more time with Edgar. Paul continues to paint at home, often with his mother nearby. He then shows his finished sketches to Miriam. He goes to art school one day a week.

Miriam shows Paul a favorite wild-rose bush of hers in the woods. The two share an intimate moment before parting. Paul does not understand why his mother, who believes Miriam is trying to reduce Paul's manhood, is angry over how late he stays out with Miriam. After a fight with her, Paul kisses his mother's forehead.

Neither Paul nor Miriam acknowledges their growing love for each other. On Good Friday, when Paul is nineteen and the family lives in a new home, Paul organizes a walk to nearby Hemlock Stone. Miriam comes along and, watching Paul, realizes she loves him. A few days later, they all make another trip to Wingfield Manor and other destinations.

Miriam has an older sister, Agatha, a school-teacher who competes with Miriam for Paul's attention. Miriam feels shameful for desiring Paul. She also stops visiting his house after receiving several insults from his family. Paul continues to tell himself and her that they are only friends. One evening, they pick flowers and Paul pins them on her dress. The family goes on a holiday at a cottage with some other friends, including Miriam. She and Paul walk along the beach and nearly kiss, but they are too afraid. Mrs. Morel criticizes him for staying out late. The Morels turn against Miriam, and even Paul hates her for spoiling his "ease and naturalness."

Analysis:

Paul dislikes it when Miriam smothers unreturned love on her youngest brother not only because Paul is not the recipient, but because it reminds him of how his mother loved and favored William. The old feelings of jealousy that must have been present when he observed his mother's closer relationship with William reemerge.

Miriam is also like Mrs. Morel in her desire to learn more and transcend her gender's societal limitations. Mrs. Morel's own jealousy of Miriam, therefore, is not only a product of her ever-present disdain for any girl who shows an interest in one of her sons. Mrs. Morel envies Miriam's independence which she herself has forsaken for a family.

Paul strengthens the connections between the two women when he fuses his mother and Miriam through his painting: his mother provides the artistic inspiration, and Miriam helps him shape the final product. But this blending confuses Paul's sexual desires, evident when the image of his mother, and not Miriam, presides in his head at night. Perhaps Miriam is simply a way for Paul to get to a younger version of his mother, before she was ruined by her husband and William's death.

It is possible to read Miriam's wild-rose bush as a symbol for the female vagina. She and Paul make their way "'Down the middle path'" through the dense undergrowth of the woods to "have a communion together," and they finally reach the bush, which Lawrence twice describes with the sexualized words "splashing" and "splashed." Moreover, the roses, some of which are "expanded in ecstasy," have a "white, virgin scent."

Again, nature and, more specifically, flowers intimately bond characters, as when Paul shows Miriam the celandines, and in their frequent nature walks.

Chapter VIII Summary:

Arthur, wild and always in trouble, gets a job on an electrical plant. One day Mrs. Morel receives a letter from him reporting that he impulsively joined the army, but he wants her to get him out. Paul tries to convince her the army will do him some good, but she is opposed to the idea. She takes the train to Derby but cannot get Arthur out of the army.

Paul wins prizes for two paintings, which makes his mother proud.

One day, Miriam introduces Paul to a striking blonde woman, [Clara Dawes](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#clara-dawes). Mrs. Dawes, who appears to be poor, has separated from her husband and taken up Women's Rights, and her cleverness interests Paul. He knows and dislikes her burly, handsome husband, [Baxter Dawes](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#baxter-dawes), a smith at Jordan's factory. Another night, Paul and Miriam discuss Mrs. Dawes, and then Paul expresses frustration that he is only "'spiritual'" with Miriam. He wants to kiss her but is somehow held back. The next day, Edgar and Miriam come for tea, and they all go to chapel later. Paul often criticizes her religious beliefs, which hurts her deeply. Mrs. Morel continues to believe Miriam is draining Paul of his individuality. Paul is still confused; he feels allegiance to his mother, but he cannot deny his tenderness toward Miriam. He is often cruel with Miriam. They have numerous close brushes with physical contact.

Paul becomes the overseer at Jordan's. Annie is engaged. On Friday nights, the miners split up their money at Morel's house. Before they arrive, Mrs. Morel and Morel discuss Morel's body and how it used to look. After they divvy up the money, Mrs. Morel is angry about how little her husband has left her. Paul tries to calm her down before she goes out. Miriam comes over and Paul shows her a design he has made on a cloth for her. A friend of the Morel's, [Beatrice](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#beatrice), shows up and calls attention to Miriam's muddy boots. She playfully fights with Paul and sits between him and Miriam. The bread that Paul is supposed to watch for his mother burns. Beatrice soon leaves, and Paul helps Miriam with her French. Every week she writes a diary entry in French, and he reads this week's entry, essentially a love-letter to him. He tries to ignore the passion in the letter and corrects her grammar. They lock eyes and nearly kiss before he leaps up and turns the bread in the oven. He reads her some French poetry.

Later at night, Mrs. Morel is angry at having lugged home the groceries by herself. She and Annie criticize Paul for paying attention only to Miriam. Paul argues with his mother about Miriam; Paul tells her he has more in common with Miriam since she is young. Mrs. Morel is hurt. When he kisses her, she hugs him, cries, and expresses her animosity toward Miriam, who she believes will take Paul from her. Paul assures he does not love Miriam. Morel intrudes and takes a piece of pork-pie. When Mrs. Morel says she didn't buy it for him, he throws it into the fire. Paul reacts, and Morel purposely punches close to Paul's face. Paul is distracted by his mother, who has fainted. He lies her down on the couch. When she recovers, he begs her not to sleep with Morel, but she insists she will. Everyone tries to forget the fight.

Analysis:

The discussion of Morel's body is important, especially coming after various descriptions of the close calls Miriam and Paul have had in physical contactMiriam even touches Paul once intimately on his sides. Lawrence shows the importance of the body in romantic relationships, and how that almost makes up for lack of spiritual communion; Mrs. Morel nearly remembers her long-abandoned passion for Morel when she examines his body.

The brief flirtation scene between Paul and Beatrice marks, for the first time, a love triangle of sorts that does not involve Mrs. Morel. Paul has a love/hate relationship with Miriam that affirms Lawrence's theme of oppositions, and he vacillates frequently with her in this chapter. Every time he sees a window open onto their love, he recalls something that instills some hatred in him. His burning the bread also recalls the time Miriam distractedly burnt the potatoes while Paul watched her.

Often, that something is his mother. Mrs. Morel returns to her rightful place in the novel's real love triangle when she openly admits to her reasons for hating Miriam. Her interaction with Paul is sexually charged, full of intimate physical contact. She says "'I've never had a husbandnot really'" almost as a plea for authentic romance in her life, and Paul's desire that she not sleep next to Morel sounds like more than merely a son's concerned view.

Paul's winning the art prizes is similar not only to William's "sporting trophies" for his mother, but to William's winning the egg-cup at the wakes long ago. In all three cases, the sons live for their mother, who lives through them.

Chapter IX Summary:

Conflict continues between Paul and Miriam. Paul visits her in a cold mood, and they look at the daffodils behind the house. Paul criticizes her for fondling all the daffodils as if she is fawning for their love. Paul tells her they should "'break off,'" and that he cannot "'physically'" love her. She assumes his family has influenced his decision.

Paul remains more strongly with his mother, who devotes her full attention to him. He visits Miriam a week later and says he and his family think it is inappropriate for him to visit as much as he does without their begin engaged, and that he does not love her enough to become engaged. They decide to curtail their visits a little bit, and he soon leaves.

Still, Paul loves being at the Leivers' farm, and continues to visit, although he spends more time with Edgar. Miriam invites him to meet Clara Dawes again. Paul notices her body when he talks to her. She is aloof with him, and Paul leaves to meet Edgar, with whom he discusses Clara. He rejoins the women later. Later, Mrs. Leivers asks Clara if she is happier now, and Clara says she is, so long as she can remain "'free and independent.'" Clara, Miriam, and Paul go for a walk. They see a neighbor's stallion, and Clara is fascinated by the horse. Paul's awareness of Clara heightens at the expense of his attention to Miriam. Paul and Miriam pick flowers, but Clara refuses to pick them. Absorbed in her body, Paul unthinkingly scatters some cowslips over Clara.

Paul treats his mother to a trip and an expensive dinner. They must keep stopping so Mrs. Morel can rest, which enrages him. He tells her he wishes he had a young mother. He relates his feelings about Clara; he likes her because she is "'defiant.'" Mrs. Morel remains neutral.

Annie gets married. Paul promises his mother he will never marry, and vows to live with her. Mrs. Morel buys Arthur out of his obligation to the military. He courts Beatrice. Paul longs for something else out of his home, although he feels attached to it. He spends time with both Miriam and Clara; Miriam always suffers when they are all together, as Paul plays joyously with Clara more. He writes Miriam a letter in which he call her a nun, says that they can love each other only spiritually, not physically, and breaks off hope for a marriage between them. Though he remains friends with Miriam, his desire for sex grows, as does his interest in Clara.

Analysis:

Paul makes several differentiations between physical and spiritual love in this chapter. Sensual Clara epitomizes the physical, much as Paul's father does. She is fascinated by the great stallion's physique, roughhouses with Paul, and cuts a striking, full figure.

Miriam, clearly, opposes Clara, much as Mrs. Morel does. She is the far more spiritual figure, as Paul points out. Even Miriam's few instances of physicality are projected through another, purer medium. When she "caress[es] with her mouth and cheeks and brow" the "wildlooking daffodil," Lawrence hints at her repressed sexual desires; he explodes this when he writes "Rhythmically, Miriam was swaying and stroking the flower with her mouth, inhaling the scent which ever after made her shudder as it came to her nostrils." The numerous double entendres are easy to pick out, and Paul is the phallic "wildlooking daffodil" she so strongly desires.

Flowers otherwise continue to play an important role in the novel. When Clara refuses to pick them because she thinks they become like "'corpses'" when they are picked; this is indicative of her liveliness and sensuality. Paul picks them because "'I like them, and want them.'" He, too, indirectly expresses his true desire for Clara through the flowers.

Paul says he likes Clara because she is "'defiant'" and "'angry,'" but perhaps what really appeals to him is her own reference to her "'free and independent'" life. This alludes to her separation from her husband, and we see that Clara is the one woman in the novel who is unfettered by the men in her life. She is exactly what Mrs. Morel could never be, an independent woman who does not need her unloving husband.

Mrs. Morel is downplayed here as she seems to age well beyond her years, except when Paul takes her out to dinner and says "I'm a fellow taking his girl for an outing.'" He is still obsessed with his mother, wanting to live with her yet wanting something else out of life, and romantic confusion over her and Claraseven years his seniorseems inevitable.

# Sons and Lovers Summary and Analysis of Chapters 10-12

Chapter X Summary:

Paul, now twenty-three, wins first prize in an exhibition for a painting, which he also sells. Morel is jealous of his son's achievement. Mrs. Morel gives William's old evening suit to Paul. Paul tells his mother he does not want to belong to the middle-class, but prefers his status among the "'common people.'" He continues his halfway relationship with Miriam, neither breaking it off nor committing to her. Mrs. Morel approves of neither her nor Clara, and urges him to meet a woman who will make him happy.

Arthur is married, has a child, and leaves the army and works. Paul becomes connected to the Socialist, Suffragette, Unitarian people in Nottingham through Clara. One day, Paul is sent to deliver a message to Clara. She seems ashamed of her mother, [Mrs. Radford](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#mrs-radford), with whom she lives. Later, Paul learns that the female overseer of the Spiral girls is leaving Jordan's. He asks Clara if she would want her job back there. She soon resumes working there, though the girls who remember her dislike her. Being educated, she considers herself "apart" from her class, and does not mingle with the other workers. Paul is intrigued by her sense of mystery. They often talk and argue at work.

On Paul's birthday, [Fanny](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#fanny) and the girlsexcept for Claraget Paul premium paints. Clara tells Paul that she is aware of some secret the girls have been plotting without her. He tells her about the paints, but tells her they are jealous of his relationship with her. She later sends Paul a volume of verse. They discuss her unhappy marriage; her husband "'degraded'" her, and ultimately she left him because he was unfaithful to her. Paul believes if he ever marries, it will be to Miriam; he can only be friends with Clara, since she is still married. Clara's friendship with Miriam wanes. Paul tells Clara he thinks Miriam wants only a "'soul union'" with him, but Clara says Miriam wants him.

Analysis:

This chapter details various class tensions. Paul believes he doesn't want to belong to the middle-class although, as his mother points out, the people he prefers to associate withespecially Miriamare middle-class.

Clara's superiority at work, and her reluctance to converse with the working-class women, on the other hand, suggests that Paul is much closer to the working-class than he might otherwise be. He is good friends with all the girls, and their gift to him of paintsa decidedly middle-class, artistic giftindicates their hope that he will rise beyond the factory and someday paint for a living.

Paul's attraction to Clara's body continues. When he watches Clara at work, there are some similarities to when Miriam bent over the daffodils in Chapter IX: "She bent over her machine, grinding rhythmically, then stooping to see to see the stocking that hung beneathHe watched the handsome crouching of her back." Miriam's actions with the daffodils were nearly sexually explicit but, in the end, virginal and pure, whereas even Clara's manual labor is tinged with sexuality.

Paul calls Clara "Penelope," a direct reference to Penelope in Homer's Odyssey. While Paul makes the connection with Clara's habit of waiting and weaving, the name also recalls the theme of fidelity in the Odyssey. Penelope held off her suitors for twenty years as she waited for her husband's return, while Clara is separated from her husband but not legally divorced. Exposition about the marriage complicates this allusion; Clara's husband was unfaithful to her, not the other way around. Though Paul vows to remain only friends with her, we sense that soon she and Paul will develop a sexual relationship.

Chapter XI Summary:

Paul's feelings are still conflicted over Miriam in the spring; he believes his shyness and virginity defeat whatever physical desire he might have toward her. He feels he should try to be physical with her, though it seems there is an "eternal maidenhood" about her. Mrs. Morel's hatred for Miriam increases as Paul visits her more, and she decides to give up her struggle.

Paul tells Miriam he must marry a woman and suggests that they have been too pure. They kiss and, when Paul walks home with her, he asks her to "'have'" him. She says she does not want to now, and admits she is afraid. They part, and Miriam worries Paul only wants his "satisfaction" from her.

Paul courts her more, though he never gives in to passion with Miriam. He picks some cherries at her farm and throws them at her; she hangs two over her ears. Paul watches the fiery sunset and rips his shirt coming down from the cherry tree. They walk into the darkness of the woods, where Miriam "relinquishe[s]" herself to Paul in a "sacrifice in which she felt something of horror." It rains on them as they lie on the ground for a while.

Miriam's grandmother becomes ill and Miriam takes care of her. Around the holidays, her grandmother feels better and stays with her daughter in Derby; Miriam has the house to herself, and Paul visits her. She cooks him a great dinner. Paul makes love to her at night for the first time.

Paul worries that Miriam does not find sex pleasurable; she denies this, and says she will like it more when they are married. Paul's love for her diminishes, and his interest in Clara renews. He tells his mother he will break off his relationship with Miriam. He tells Miriam that since he does not want to marry her, they should break it off and live separate lives. She is bitter and wonders why he has such power over her. They part, and Paul goes to a bar, where he flirts with some girls and soon forgets about Miriam.

Analysis:

This chapter is the most explicit thus far in terms of sexuality, but Lawrence's descriptions are still a far cry from his later work. The preponderance of sexual euphemisms"'You will have me,'" "'belong to each other,'" "'his satisfaction,'" "relinquish," "sacrifice"reflect both what the prudish Paul and Miriam would say and what was permissible in literature in Lawrence's repressive time. He was instrumental in breaking literary sexual boundaries, but [Sons and Lovers](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers) seems to suffers in accuracy from its puritanical language; while Miriam "relinquishe[s]" herself to Paul in the woods, they have intercourse for the first time in the cottage, so it is unclear exactly what "relinquish" means.

Lawrence also uses a number of other techniques to comment indirectly on the budding sexuality of his characters. The cherry is a symbol of virginityspecifically of the hymenand Paul's throwing the cherries at Miriam is an aggressive act that releases his frustrations over their virginity. To break the hymen metaphor open even more, Lawrence has Paul accidentally rip his shirt-sleeve. Miriam, ever the pure virgin, promises to mend it, but not before exploring his warm skin underneath, an action indicative of her sexual curiosity.

The colors of the sunset while Paul picks the cherries also mirror the climax of orgasm: "Gold flamed to scarlet, like pain in its intense brightness. Then the scarlet sank to rose, and rose to crimson, and quickly the passion went out of the sky." The use of weather to reflect a character's dispositionknown as pathetic fallacyis frequently used in literature, but Lawrence's erotically charged images allow him to explore the nature of sexuality without appearing indecent.

When Paul breaks up with her, Miriam frequently returns to the word "bondage." She feels enslaved to Paul, and is upset that he has so much power over her. This bondage, which we have seen in Mrs. Morel, is one of Lawrence's main concerns: how does a woman remain liberated yet still enjoy the romantic and sexual company of a man?

Chapter XII Summary:

Paul slowly rises in the art world, making some money and friends. On holiday with Paul, Mrs. Morel faints, which worries Paul. Immediately after his break with Miriam, he makes a pass at Clara, and kisses her a week later. He is anxious waiting to see her again, and during work they meet. They walk by a river, and Paul explains to Clara that he left Miriam because he did not want to marry, both to Miriam and in general. They kiss and hold each other's bodies. They go down the steep incline of the bank to the river and see two fishermen, then continue on. Paul finds a private spot. Later, they get off the ground, climb up the bank, and clean themselves up. Paul asks her if she feels like a "'criminal'" or a "'sinner.'"

Paul comes home late and tells his mother he was with Clara. He says he does not care what people say. Since his mother does not approve, he offers to invite her to tea on Sunday. With Miriam one day, he talks about his day with Clara, excluding the part about the river, and she inquires about Clara's marriage. She says she may visit them on Sunday.

On Sunday, Paul meets Clara at the train station, worried that she will not show up. They walk to his home past the coal-pits, and Paul introduces Clara to his mother. He shows her around the house, and Clara and Mrs. Morel get along fairly well, and Morel is pleasant, as well. Later, she and Paul walk through the garden, and Miriam arrives as promised. Miriam invites Clara to come up to her farm, but Clara says she does not know when she can come. Miriam leaves bitterly. Paul feels guilty, and feels worse when he later hears his mother and Clara discussing their hatred of Miriam.

They go to chapel and meet Miriam there. Later, Paul and Clara take another walk and discuss Miriam; Clara accuses Paul of still having feelings for her. He kisses her out of rage and they walk to a field. Paul holds her tight, but she says she must leave to catch her train. They run, and she makes the train. When Paul returns, his mother says he will tire of Clara. Paul goes to bed and cries. The next day, he is aloof with Clara, but soon warms up to her.

Paul and Clara go see the famous actress Sandra Bernhardt perform in Nottingham. They attend in fancy dress, and Paul admires Clara's body, frustrated he cannot touch her. He kisses her arm. After the play, he tells her he loves her. Since his last train has left, she invites him to sleep at her houseshe can sleep with her mother. They go to her house, where Mrs. Radford is insulting to them. Clara gets Paul a pair of her husband's pajamas. He and Clara play cards as Mrs. Radford slowly prepares for bed and Paul's hatred for her mounts. Finally, they stop, and Paul goes to Clara's room. He cannot sleep, and he hears Clara and her mother outside. Mrs. Radford goes to bed, and Paul goes downstairs into the kitchen, where Clara sits by the fire. They kiss and touch each other, but she refuses to back to her room with him. Paul goes to bed.

Mrs. Radford wakes him in the morning. At breakfast, Paul invites the two of them to the seaside on his expense.

Analysis:

Lawrence again omits explicit sexual information when Clara and Paul go to the river. Their descent down the wet riverbank mimics the act they are about to perform, and to indicate intercourse, Lawrence merely starts a new paragraph with "When she arose" The coquettish conversation afterward also implies sex, with Paul's denial that Clara is a "'criminal'" or "'sinner.'"

Lawrence again focuses on Paul's obsession with Clara's body. It seems that Paul spends as much thought on Clara's body as he did on Miriam's personality. We can see the reasoning behind this preoccupation; not only does her body arouse in him a new, sensual being, he is transformedinto her. He loses himself in her body, identifying with her specific parts: "He was Clara's white heavy arms, her throat, her moving bosom." Paul gains access to a femininity previously unknown to him.

Oddly, Mrs. Morel is not jealous of her son's relationship with Clara, at least at first. Perhaps this is because Clara does not want to compete with her, and though the girls at work think Clara is snobby, Clara does not threaten her in the same way Miriam did. Mrs. Morel sees that Paul desires Clara most for her body, and not his spiritual connection with her, as he did with Miriam. However, as Mrs. Morel's own body decays in old age, she returns to her jealous ways when she says Paul's attraction to Clara will not last. Clara represents a displacement of her as a maternal figure for Paul, but a far younger, healthier, and more beautiful maternal figure.

Another mother figure is presented in greater depth here, Mrs. Radford. Her hostility towards Paul seems to stem from her sadness over her husband's death, alluded to just once.

# Sons and Lovers Summary and Analysis of Chapters 13-15

Chapter XIII Summary:

[Baxter Dawes](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers/study-guide/character-list#baxter-dawes), Clara's husband, sees Paul drinking in a bar with some friends. Dawes has not been doing so well lately. Paul, though his enemy, wants to befriend Dawes. Dawes makes a reference to Paul's theater date the other night, though he doesn't reveal to the other men who Paul's date was. The men want to know who it was, and Dawes incites Paul, who throws his beer in Dawes's face. Dawes is thrown out.

Paul feels distanced from his mother, since he cannot speak to her about his sexual life. When Paul tells Clara about his altercation with her husband, she is angry that Paul does not want to fight him. Paul runs into him at the factory, and Dawes threatens and grabs him. Jordan intervenes and tells Dawes to leave. Dawes throws him on the floor before leaving. Jordan fires him and takes him to trial for assault, where Paul testifies. The case is dismissed after the magistrate insults Dawes, and Jordan believes Paul gave away the case. Clara is angry that Paul mentioned her name in the trial. Paul confides to his mother that he does not always love Clara, and he feels that he can never "'belong'" to any woman, at least while his mother is alive.

Clara remains passionately in love with Paul. Paul tells her he plans to leave Nottingham and go abroad soon, though he would not leave his mother behind for a long period of time. Clara remains unsatisfied, feeling she does not have Paul. Paul loses his passion for her, but her desire for him and his body rages on. They take a trip to the seaside, and Paul questions who Clara is, and what her appeal is to him. She is upset that he wants to spend time with her only at night, and not in the day. He admits that he sometimes wants to marry her and have children with her, but she confesses she does not want a divorce from Dawes, since he "'belongs'" to her. She knows that she and Paul will separate at some point.

Clara and Paul walk past Dawes on the road one night. Dawes tries to make himself unnoticeable. After, Clara compares Paul unfavorably with Dawes in regards to their intimacy together. During his love-making, Paul feels alive and passionate, but their sex life soon grows stale.

One night, while Paul is running to make his train, Dawes finds him and punches his face. After several more blows, Paul chokes Dawes. He lets go, but Dawes recovers and kicks Paul, who falls unconscious. A nearby train's whistle, and the fear that people are coming, sends Dawes scurrying off. Paul eventually recovers consciousness and gets home. In the morning, his mother sees evidence of the fight on his wounded face, and tends to him. He tells her about the fight, and after Clara and Miriam visit him on separate days, he confides to his mother that he does not care about them.

The official story is that Paul had a bicycle accident, and he returns to work. His relationship with Clara feels empty, and he and his mother seem to avoid each other. Mrs. Morel stays with Annie in Sheffield for a week, and Paul visits. Mrs. Morel is sick in bed, and reveals she has a tumor on her side. She has been in pain for months, though she never complained to Paul. Paul goes to a doctor for a consultation, and the doctor agrees to see Mrs. Morel the next day. He diagnoses it as possibly a tumor, and says an operation is impossible, though if it is a tumor he can sweal (singe) it away. Paul promises his mother he will return next week. Clara tries to get Paul to forget about his mother's problems, but he cannot. Morel visits his wife the next week, though the visit is awkward. Mrs. Morel stays at Sheffield for two months, her condition worsening, until she goes home.

Analysis:

Another bearer of jealousy emerges in this chapter, Baxter Dawes. His brand of jealousy is a more conventional kind in literature, that of the jilted (in his eyes, at least) lover. Other conventional actions emerge from this: threats, insults, the humiliating encounter (when Dawes makes himself unnoticeable), the comparisons by the woman between the two men, and the fight.

Paul's pacifism, and his lack of knowledge of even how to fight, disappoints Clara, who seems to relish the idea of two men fighting for her. However, generally she is far more subdued now, no longer an elusive, mysterious figure to Paul. Now Paul is the more magnetic character. There is a great deal of description of Paul's body in this chapter as seen through her eyes, a contrast to previous chapters in which Paul's point of view focused on Clara's body.

Interestingly, the description of Paul's body coming alive in the fight is similar to the description of his body during love-making. Perhaps the fight releases his pent-up hatred for both Clara and Miriam as well as for Dawes. Meanwhile, Mrs. Morel's body continues to decay, and death is now imminent.

There is also much discussion in this chapter of possessiveness and bondage. Clara is bound to Paul, who does not feel the same degree of bondage toward her, or any woman, except his mother. Clara also feels Dawes belongs to her, which is why she cannot divorce him.

Lawrence refers to Paul as "Morel" during his fight with Dawes. This change emphasizes that the battle is between two men, rather than a man (Dawes) and a boy (Paul).

Chapter XIV Summary:

Mrs. Morel's doctor tells Paul that Baxter Dawes is in his fever hospital. Paul asks him to tell Dawes he will visit. The doctor reports that he did, and Dawes seemed angry at first, then refused to say anything. Paul visits and the two men trade gruff, but not impolite, comments. Dawes looks very sick with typhoid. Paul leaves him some money before going.

Paul informs Clara about Dawes's illness. She is shocked, and grows distant from Paul. She feels guilty for having treated Dawes badly, and feels that he loved and respected her more than Paul does. She visits Dawes and tries to make up, but there is too great a distance between them. Paul visits Dawes a few more times, as well, though they do not mention Clara.

Mrs. Morel gets sicker, and her relationship with Paul grows more strained and fearful as they pretend she is not dying. Paul is deeply affected, at times unable to work. He spends less time with Clara. They go to the seaside for her birthday (which he initially forgets) and discuss his mother's indomitable will to live. Soon after, he visits Dawes and makes the first mention of Clara, revealing that their romance is fading. He says he plans to go abroad when his mother dies.

Paul sees Miriam, who kisses him repeatedly until he pulls away from her. During December, Paul stays home all the time to tend to his mother, along with Annie, and the task is torturous to both of them. He and Annie decide to give her an overdose of morphia to speed up her death. He puts it in her milk, she sleeps heavily through the night, and dies in the morning. Paul informs his father and takes care of other business relating to her death. Paul looks at her dead body at night; it seems youthful to him. He kisses her lips and strokes her hair, but sadly knows that she will never return. Morel avoids looking at his dead wife's body.

They have a funeral. Paul's relationship with Clara remains distanced. Dawes heals slowly and stays with Paul for a few days at the seaside, their friendship much stronger now. Paul suggests that Clara wants Dawes and belongs to him, and suggests they reunite. Clara comes the next day, and Paul says he is leaving that afternoon. Clara says she will join him later. She does not, however, and begs Dawes to take her back, which he does.

Analysis:

The two illnesses in this chapter demonstrate how the sick body can either cripple or restore relationships that were, on some level, dependent on the body.

Mrs. Morel's illness and death has an adverse effect on both Morel and Paul. Morel is unable to deal with his wife's death, refusing to look at her in sickness and death. He wants only to remember her as his "young wife" with whom he shared a passionate, physical relationship, and not as the cancerous woman who loathed him.

Paul's physical relationship with his mother, on the other hand, has lasted longer than Morel's and is more deeply rooted. The effect of his mother's dying, therefore, has a more complicated effect. He is unable to stand seeing her waste away, and his overdosing her is as much for his and Annie's sake as their mother's. Moreover, his action reverses that of Oedipus; rather than kill his father, Paul kills his mother. Though he is still beholden to his mother, he is beginning to understand he must live without her.

Paul's reaction to his mother's death is intensehe repeats "My lovemy loveoh, my love!"but Lawrence spends little time discussing the death at first. When Paul visits Mrs. Morel's body again at night, however, his near-necrophiliac kissing and stroking reveals his pent-up desires. He wants her to be "young again" not only so she can be a youthful mother but, one suspects, so she can be the perfect romantic object Paul has not found in Miriam or Clara. His relinquishing Clara to Dawes can be seen as Paul's understanding that Clara is not a substitute for his mother, and that he must move on in life. He tells Dawes that none of his women has ever wanted to "'belong'" to him, and though it seems that Miriam gladly would have wanted this, it is clear that no one ever wanted it as much as his mother.

Conversely, Dawes's illness restores his relationship with Paul and, eventually, Clara. The friendship the two rivals form is curious but plausible; perhaps Paul feels he can befriend Dawes since he is no longer threatened by the older man's formerly strong body (the other reason, as Paul explains, is that the passion has died out in his romance with Clara).

Chapter XV Summary:

Clara goes with Dawes to Sheffield, and Paul hardly sees her after that. Paul and Morel cannot bear to be alone in the house together, so Paul moves to Nottingham, and Morel lives with another family in Bestwood. Paul loses the drive to paint and spends his time drinking in bars. One night he comes home late and, while watching two mice nibble crumbs of food, urges himself to live for his mother's sake. However, it is a half-hearted attempt; he knows that he wants to die.

He sees Miriam at church one Sunday and feels comforted by her. She goes home with him to eat supper. She compliments him on his old sketches, and says she will soon become a teacher at the farming college in Broughton. She suggests they get married, but he does not want to. He gives her some flowers before he takes her to her cousin's house.

Paul, feeling lost, wonders where he will go next. He calls out to his mother, longing to touch her. He resolves not to "give into the darkness," and he walks resolutely back to town.

Analysis:

The brief concluding chapter is despairing until the very end, when Paul finally releases himself from the hold of his mother and chooses to return to life.

A hold, indeed, for much of [Sons and Lovers](https://www.gradesaver.com/sons-and-lovers) is about bondage to someone else. Here, Paul refuses to be bound, to belong, to Miriam, but not because he fears bondage. Miriam is too sacrificial and passive; he wants a woman who will claim him as strongly for herself as his mother did. For him, this is the only kind of relationship that can duplicate the intense love he had with his mother. Paul does not seem to understand until the final moments of the novel, however, that his mother's love was smothering, jealous, and ultimately destructive. His release from her feels like a victory; he may now be able to love someone else.

Flowers reappear here, but now they symbolize Paul's parting from Miriam, and not a bond. The other imagery that is important is the city's "gold phosphorescence" in the final paragraph. Frequently in the novel, Lawrence paints scenes of happiness and love with light colors of the sky. The return of these light colors here signifies Paul's choice of life over the "darkness" of death.

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