

PAUL MOREL:

Paul Morel, the protagonist of *SONS AND LOVERS*, is based on the youthful D. H. Lawrence. Paul is a young man in the painful process of growing up. He is also gradually discovering that he is a gifted artist. Most important to the story, Paul is torn between his passion for two young women, the mystical Miriam and the sensual Clara, and his unyielding devotion to a possessive mother.

You may see Paul merely as a fellow under the thumb of a dominating mother. Some readers feel that his feeling for her is more passionate and that his difficulties with Miriam and Clara stem from this unresolved passion. Only her death frees him at the end. Another view of Paul is that he derives great strength from his mother and is inspired rather than crippled by his relationship to her. The failure of his relationship with Miriam, according to this view, is caused more by her horror of physical intimacy, than by Gertrude Morel's superior place in Paul's affections. How you interpret Paul's relationship with his mother will have much to do with your view of her character.

Another of Paul's conflicts focuses on his apparent hatred for his father. You can see Paul's abhorrence of Walter Morel's vulgarity and alcoholism, but you can also see his imitation of Walter's carefree spirit and lust for life. Isn't some of Paul's own brutality to Miriam derived from his father's behaviour? In some people's eyes, masculine virility is only another version of brutality.

Many readers see Paul's inner conflicts as a reflection of his parent: very different personalities and class backgrounds. He combines his father's working-class simplicity, spontaneity, and sensuality with his mother's middle-class steadfastness, intellectualism, and social ambition. Paul can be viewed as the volatile offspring of both the lower and the middle classes.

He can also be seen as a lovable, charismatic character. He's often kind and jovial, especially to his mother and the shop girls at Jordan's. Paul shares a healthy companionship with other men. It helps him appreciate the everyday joys of life and escape his brooding tendencies.

There's also a dark, brutal side to Paul. He can be very cruel, particularly to his girlfriends. He can't bear Miriam Leivers' super spirituality when it interferes with his sexual desires. After she finally

gives up her virginity to him, he leaves her. Given the importance of virginity to an unmarried woman in the early twentieth century. Paul's treatment of Miriam seems shockingly inconsiderate. Once the proud Clara falls in love with Paul, he leaves her as well, telling her to go home to her husband. If Paul is such a sensitive, caring young man, why does he do such cruel things?

Paul is a fascinating mixture of extremes: vitality and despondency, spirituality and sensuality, love and hate, sensitivity and cruelty. Do you think any of these contradictions are resolved as the story ends?

Prepared by ANKHI SAHA

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

