

## MIRIAM LEIVERS

Miriam Leivers, Paul's teenage friend and sweetheart, was modelled after Lawrence's own young love, Jessie Chambers. As Jessie was with Lawrence, Miriam is Paul's devoted helpmate in his artistic and spiritual quests. Although beautiful, she takes no pleasure in her physical attributes. Her whole life is geared toward heaven and a mystical sense of nature.

Paul and Miriam's first bond is their mutual love of nature. *Sons and Lovers* tells of their many idyllic country walks. However, whereas Miriam wants to absorb nature, Paul just wants to live in harmony with it. Later, Paul will come to feel, as his mother does, that Miriam wants to absorb his life as well.

Miriam is a loner. By her own choice, she has few friends. When Paul thinks that perhaps they should marry for appearance's sake, she's mortally offended. Though Miriam is physically and socially timid, she refuses to live her life in accordance with superficial standards of etiquette.

Most of Paul's family and friends feel put off by Miriam. She's too intellectual and otherworldly even to know how to hold an ordinary conversation. She lacks the normal joys of living. Her life is an extreme of agony or ecstasy. This lack of normalcy and plain fun is one of the things Paul hates about her.

There are two warring sides to Miriam- her love of Paul Morel and her resistance to her sexual feelings toward him. Her mother taught her that sex is one of the burdens of marriage, and though she doesn't want to believe it, she can't help but listen to the woman who's shaped her life. When Miriam finally gives in to Paul, she does it in a spirit

of self-sacrifice that disappoints both of them. Miriam's inability to enjoy sex makes her an incomplete person in the Lawrentian world, where sex as well as spirituality is necessary to an individual's fulfilment .

Miriam is a very complex character. At times you feel that Lawrence himself is trying to understand exactly what she's like. The narrator, like Paul, fluctuates between pitying and condemning her. But because there are so many opposing elements to Miriam, you have an opportunity to figure out who she really is and what she wants, through your own investigation and interpretation.

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