



كلية : الآداب

القسم : اللغة الانكليزية

المرحلة: الرابعة

الفصل الدراسي: الاول

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اسم المادة باللغة العربية : رواية

اسم المادة باللغة الإنكليزية : Novel

Sons and Lovers by D. H. Lawrence

Introduction

1- D. H. Lawrence: An Overview

D.H. Lawrence was an English novelist, poet, playwright, and essayist who lived from 1885 to 1930. He is best known for his controversial novel **Lady Chatterley's Lover**, which was initially banned in several countries due to its explicit sexual content.

Lawrence was born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, England, and grew up in a mining community. He attended Nottingham University College and then taught in Croydon and London before devoting himself to writing full-time.

Lawrence's early works, such as **Sons and Lovers** and **The Rainbow**, dealt with the themes of sexuality, class, and family relationships. Later in his career, he became increasingly interested in mysticism, spirituality, and the concept of the "life force."

In addition to his novels, Lawrence was also a prolific poet, and his poetry often reflected his views on nature and the human condition. He also wrote several plays, including **The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd** and **Touch and Go**.

Despite his success as a writer, Lawrence faced criticism and censorship for his controversial ideas and frank depictions of sexuality. He died of tuberculosis in 1930 at the age of 44.

Today, Lawrence is considered a major literary figure of the 20th century, and his works continue to be studied and appreciated for their exploration of complex themes and vivid characterizations.

المحاضرة الثانية

2- Sons and Lovers: An Overview

Sons and Lovers is a novel by D.H. Lawrence, published in 1913. It is widely regarded as one of Lawrence's most significant works and is often considered semi-autobiographical, drawing heavily from his own experiences growing up in a mining town.

The novel tells the story of Paul Morel, a young man who is torn between his deep attachment to his mother, Gertrude, and his desire for romantic relationships with other women. The complex relationship between Paul and his mother forms the central theme of the novel, exploring the psychological and emotional struggles that arise from such a close bond.

The narrative spans Paul's childhood, adolescence, and early adulthood, providing a detailed portrayal of his life in the working-class mining community of Nottinghamshire. It delves into the dynamics of his family, particularly his strained relationship with his hard-drinking, abusive father, Walter, and his troubled interactions with his older brother William and younger siblings.

As Paul grows older, he becomes entangled in a series of passionate but ultimately unsatisfying relationships with two women: Miriam Leivers and Clara

Dawes. Miriam, a devout and introspective young woman, represents a spiritual connection for Paul, while Clara, an independent and sexually liberated suffragette, offers a more physical and intellectual connection. Through these relationships, Lawrence explores the themes of love, sexuality, and the conflict between body and spirit.

Sons and Lovers is known for its psychological depth, vivid characterizations, and its exploration of the complexities of human relationships. Lawrence's prose is richly descriptive, capturing the nuances of the characters' emotions and the industrial landscape that shapes their lives. The novel reflects Lawrence's preoccupation with the challenges of intimacy and the search for authentic connections in a world dominated by social and cultural constraints.

Sons and Lovers received critical acclaim upon its publication and has since become recognized as a classic of English literature. It remains a powerful exploration of love, family, and the individual's struggle for self-discovery in the face of societal expectations.

المحاضرة الثالثة

Sons and Lovers Summary

Part I

Gertrude (soon to be **Mrs. Morel**), an intelligent young woman from a middle-class English family, meets a young miner, at a country dance. Although Gertrude has a religious and ascetic temperament, she is attracted to Walter Morel's vigorous nature and thinks he is very handsome when she sees him dance at the party. The pair are married a few months later and soon Mrs. Morel becomes pregnant. The first few months of their marriage are happy, but Mrs. Morel finds that she cannot really talk to her husband and that, despite their

initial attraction, the couple have little in common. She discovers that Walter is not as wealthy as she believed and that they do not own the house they live in, but rather rent it from Walter's mother. She dislikes life in the mining community and does not get along with the other women, who find her haughty and superior. Mrs. Morel gives birth to a son, who she names **William**, and she adores him immensely. Although she and Mr. Morel are still friendly with each other, she has lost interest in him and the rift between them widens after the birth of the child. One morning, when William is a toddler, Mrs. Morel comes downstairs and finds that Mr. Morel has cut all the boy's hair off. Mrs. Morel is horrified, and this action drives a wedge between her and her husband. She focuses all her love on her son and delights in planning for his future and watching him grow up.

Mrs. Morel has a second child, **Annie**, and then gets pregnant with a third. One day, not long before her due date, a fair comes to town and Mrs. Morel reluctantly goes along to please William, who cannot enjoy the fair without her. While she is there, Mrs. Morel sees that Mr. Morel, who has taken to drinking frequently, is in the beer tent and she is not surprised when he returns home drunk that evening. A few weeks later, there is a public holiday and Mr. Morel uses this time to go out drinking with his friend **Jerry Purdy**, whom Mrs. Morel cannot stand and who is a misogynist. When Mr. Morel comes back that night, he is very drunk and the couple fight. Mr. Morel locks Mrs. Morel out of the house and she calms herself down by looking at the **moon** and the **flowers** in her garden. When she returns, Mr. Morel lets her back in but goes to bed without talking to her.

المحاضرة الرابعة

Sons and Lovers Summary Part II

Mrs. Morel gives birth to another boy. One night, shortly after the birth, when she has taken the children out of the house to avoid Mr. Morel's temper, she sits and watches the sunset on a nearby hill and decides to name the baby **Paul**. As she looks down at the little infant, she is overcome with guilt and sadness. She thinks that the baby looks sad because she did not want him while she was pregnant. Paul grows into a serious and thoughtful child. William, meanwhile, is very active and charming. Mrs. Morel gives birth to a third son, **Arthur**, whom Mr. Morel is instantly fond of. When William is old enough, he gets a job as a clerk and is very successful and well-liked. He is offered a position in London and gleefully accepts. Although Mrs. Morel is proud of William, she is devastated to see him leave home. At first, William visits home a lot and sends money to his family. However, as time goes on, he begins to get caught up in city life and spends his money on his fiancée, **Louisa Lily Denys Western**. William brings the young woman home to meet his family and they are disappointed to find that she acts superior to them and treats them like her servants. As their relationship goes on, William comes to despise his fiancée, but he will not end the engagement. Mrs. Morel is shocked and depressed when, during another visit, William is openly cruel to Louisa. Not long after this, William contracts pneumonia and dies, leaving Mrs. Morel heartbroken.

Paul, meanwhile, grows into an intelligent young man and takes a job as a clerk in Nottingham. He enjoys the work and gets along well with his colleagues, but the long hours take a toll on his health. Mrs. Morel continues to grieve for William, and Paul, who is also very close to his mother, is desperate to bring her out of herself and to win her attention back. When Paul is struck down with pneumonia, Mrs. Morel realizes, to her horror, that she has neglected him. She does everything in her power to nurse him back to health. Paul recovers well and from then on, Mrs. Morel is committed to him and pins all her hopes for the future on him. During his time off work after his illness, Paul begins to visit a nearby farm owned by **Mr. Leivers**. He strikes up an unusual friendship with the Leivers' daughter, **Miriam**, who is very timid, religious, and intellectual. Mrs. Morel dislikes her and feels that she is bad for Paul. Although Paul and Miriam get along well, there is a physical awkwardness between them. They are both immature and neither understands that they are attracted to each other. Mrs.

Morel watches their relationship closely and wishes that Paul would break things off; she is jealous of the time he spends with Miriam. Paul returns to his job at the factory after a while, but his hours are shorter and he has more time to work on his painting, which is his real interest. During this time, Miriam realizes that she is in love with Paul, but she feels ashamed of this physical attraction because it clashes with her religious views. Miriam does not tell Paul about her feelings. The family goes on holiday to the seaside and Miriam goes with them. Paul spends most of his time with Mrs. Morel, however, and only sees Miriam in the evenings.

المحاضرة الخامسة

Sons and Lovers Summary Part III

Around this time, Paul wins a prize for his painting in a Nottingham exhibition. One night, he meets Miriam at the exhibition along with a young woman called **Clara Dawes**. Clara is married to a man named **Baxter**, who works in the same factory as Paul, but the pair have separated. Paul thinks Clara is snooty and believes she is a “man hater” because she is involved with the suffragettes. He also dislikes Baxter, who was rude to him on his first day at the factory. Miriam and Paul continue their platonic relationship, but it puts a strain on them, as they both wish to become a couple but do not know how to do so. Paul resents Miriam because he feels she is too spiritual and that this hampers him from behaving physically, or being “ordinary,” with her. Miriam is hurt and confused, but she continues to maintain that she is good for Paul and that he “belongs to her.” One night, when Paul is out with Miriam, Mrs. Morel is taken ill. When Paul returns, Annie berates him for neglecting his mother. Paul tries to break things off with Miriam, but he still visits the farm often because he is friends with her brother, **Edgar**. One afternoon, Paul is invited to Miriam’s house to have tea with Clara Dawes. Although Paul still dislikes Clara, he finds her impressive and attractive.

Not long after this, Paul delivers a parcel to Clara's house, which is near the factory where he works. He learns that she lives with her mother, **Mrs. Radford**, and that she is desperately unhappy. Paul gets Clara a job in the factory, but still finds her haughty and reserved at work. Her presence irritates him and he goes out of his way to annoy her. During the summer, Paul and Miriam get engaged, but Paul breaks off the engagement several weeks later. He strikes up a relationship with Clara but continues to see Miriam often. Baxter Dawes finds out about Paul and Clara, and Baxter and Paul get into a fight in a pub. Baxter later attacks Paul in the **dark**, while he is walking back from Clara's house. Paul is not seriously hurt and feels a strange bond with Baxter after this incident.

During this period, Mrs. Morel's health begins to decline. While she is on holiday in Sheffield, staying with Annie, she falls ill and is diagnosed with cancer. Paul is horrified at the thought that his mother may die. He stays in Sheffield to nurse her and, while he is there, learns that Baxter is in the hospital nearby, recovering from typhoid. Paul goes to visit him, and the two men become friends. After a few weeks, Mrs. Morel is able to travel home, but it is understood by everyone that she will not live very long. Although Paul is still in contact with both Miriam and Clara, he finds that he no longer cares for them and he dedicates all his time to caring for his mother. Mrs. Morel dies gradually and painfully; Annie and Paul, who care for her, can hardly bear the strain. Finally, after Mrs. Morel has grown unbearably ill, Paul poisons her with the painkillers he has been given by the doctor. She is buried alongside William, and Mr. Morel can no longer bear to live in the house that he shared with his wife. He and Paul move out and take separate lodgings in Nottingham.

المحاضرة السادسة

Sons and Lovers Summary Part IV

Not long after Mrs. Morel's death, Paul goes on a trip to the seaside with Baxter and invites Clara to join them. He has lost all interest in her, and in life generally since his mother's death, and he is suicidal with grief. He believes that Clara wishes to reconcile with Baxter and arranges things so that he leaves them together in the cottage. Clara is angry with Paul for manipulating her, but she does forgive Baxter and agrees to return to him as his wife. For a long time after this, Paul wishes to die and feels he has no connection with life. One night, he sees Miriam outside church and invites her back to his house. Miriam is sad to see that he has deteriorated and suggests that they get married. Paul rejects her, and Miriam decides that she will never see him again. After she has gone, Paul catches a car out into the country and walks across the fields in the dark. He calls out to his mother and wishes to end his life so he can be with her. He is determined not to die, however, and knows he cannot kill himself. Miserable yet resolute, Paul walks back across the dark fields, in the direction of the town.

المحاضرة السابعة

Characters in Sons and Lovers

Paul Morel

Paul is the protagonist of the novel, and we follow his life from infancy to his early twenties. He is sensitive, temperamental, artistic (a painter), and unceasingly devoted to his mother. They are inseparable; he confides everything in her, works and paints to please her, and nurses her as she dies. Paul has ultimately unsuccessful romances with Miriam Leiver and Clara Dawes, always alternating between great love and hatred for each of them. His relationship fails with Miriam because she is too sacrificial and virginal to claim him as hers, whereas it fails with Clara because, it seems, she has never given up on her estranged husband. However, the major reason behind Paul's break-ups is the long shadow of his mother; no woman can ever equal her in his eyes, and he can never free himself from her possession.

Gertrude Morel

Mrs. Morel is unhappily married to Walter Morel, and she redirects her attention to her children, her only passion in life. She is first obsessed with William, but his death leaves her empty and redirects her energies toward Paul. She bitterly disapproves of all the women these two sons encounter, masking her jealousy with other excuses. A natural intellectual, she also feels society has limited her opportunities as a woman, another reason she lives through Paul.

Miriam Leiver

Miriam is a virginal, religious girl who lives on a farm near the Morels, and she is Paul's first love. However, their relationship takes ages to move beyond the Platonic and into the romantic. She loves Paul deeply, but he never wants to marry her and "belong" to her, in his words. Rather, he sees her more as a sacrificial, spiritual soul mate and less as a sensual, romantic lover. Mrs. Morel, who feels threatened by Miriam's intellectuality, always reinforces his disdain for Miriam.

Clara Dawes

Clara is an older woman estranged from her husband, Baxter Dawes. Unlike the intellectual Miriam, Clara seems to represent the body. Her sensuality attracts Paul, as does her elusiveness and mysteriousness. However, she loses this elusiveness as their affair continues, and Paul feels she has always "belonged" to her husband.

Walter Morel

Morel, the coal-mining head of the family, was once a humorous, lively man, but over time he has become a cruel, selfish alcoholic. His family, especially Mrs. Morel, despises him, and Paul frequently entertains fantasies of his father's dying.

William Morel

William, Mrs. Morel's "knight," is her favorite son. But when he moves away, she disapproves of his new lifestyle and new girlfriends, especially Lily. His death plunges Mrs. Morel into grief.

Baxter Dawes Dawes, a burly, handsome man, is estranged from his wife, Clara Dawes, because of his infidelity. He resents Paul for taking Clara, but over time the

men become friends.

Annie Morel Annie is the Morel's only daughter. She is a schoolteacher who leaves home fairly early.

Arthur Morel Arthur, the youngest Morel son, is exceptionally handsome, but also immature. He rashly enters the military, and it takes a while until he gets out. He marries Beatrice.

Louisa Lily Denys Western Lily, William's girlfriend, is materialistic and vain. Her condescending behavior around the Morels irritates William, and she soon forgets about him after his death.

The Leivers The Leivers own a nearby farm that Paul and Mrs. Morel visit. They have three sons< Edgar being the eldest< and two daughters, including Miriam.

Edgar Leivers The eldest Leiver son, Edgar and Paul become friends.

Agatha Leivers The elder sister of Miriam, Agatha is a school-teacher who fights with Miriam for Paul's attention.

Beatrice A friend of the Morel's who stops by and insults Miriam and flirts with Paul. She eventually marries Arthur.

Mrs. Radford Clara's mother, with whom she lives. Clara is embarrassed by her.

Thomas Jordan A curt, old man, Jordan employs Paul at his warehouse of surgical appliances.

Pappleworth Paul's supervisor at Jordan's.

Fanny A lively hunchback who works at Jordan's.

Polly Worker at Jordan's whom Paul regularly has dinner with.

Connie An attractive, redheaded worker at Jordan's.

Louie Facetious worker at Jordan's.

Emma Old, condescending worker at Jordan's.

Mr. Heaton Clergyman who visits Mrs. Morel and becomes Paul's godfather.

Dr. Ansel Mrs. Morel's doctor.

Jerry Purdy Friend of Morel's.

John Field Childhood friend of Mrs. Morel's.

المحاضرة الثامنة

Themes in Sons and Lovers: part I

Oedipus complex

Perhaps 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 (and he does, though unwittingly). Freud argued that these repressed desires are present in most young boys. (The female version is called the Electra complex.)

[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.

Paul assuages his guilty, incestuous feelings by transferring them elsewhere, and the greatest receivers are Miriam and Clara (note that transference is another Freudian term). However, Paul cannot love either woman nearly as much as he does his mother, though he does not always realize that this is an impediment to his romantic life. The older, independent Clara, especially, is a failed maternal substitute for Paul. In this setup, [Baxter Dawes](#) can be seen as an imposing father figure; his savage

beating of Paul, then, can be viewed as Paul's unconsciously desired punishment for his guilt. Paul's eagerness to befriend Dawes once he is ill (which makes him something like the murdered father) further reveals his guilt over the situation.

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 morphia, an act that reduces her suffering but also subverts his Oedipal fate, since he does not kill his father, but his mother.

Bondage

Lawrence discusses bondage, or servitude, in two major ways: social and romantic. Socially, Mrs. Morel feels bound by her status as a woman and by industrialism. She complains of feeling "buried alive," a logical lament for someone married to a miner, and even the children feel they are in a "tight place of anxiety." Though she joins a women's group, she must remain a housewife for life, and thus is jealous of Miriam, who is able to utilize her intellect in more opportunities. Ironically, Paul feels free in his job at the factory, enjoying the work and the company of the working-class women, though one gets the sense that he would still rather be painting.

Romantic bondage is given far more emphasis in the novel. Paul (and William, to a somewhat lesser extent) feels bound to his mother, and cannot imagine ever abandoning her or even marrying anyone else. He is preoccupied with the notion of lovers "belonging" to each other, and his true desire, revealed at the end, is for a woman to claim him forcefully as her own. He feels the sacrificial Miriam fails in this regard and that Clara always belonged to Baxter Dawes. It is clear that no woman could ever match the intensity and steadfastness of his mother's claim.

Complementing the theme of bondage is the novel's treatment of jealousy. Mrs. Morel is constantly jealous of her sons' lovers, and she masks this jealousy very thinly. Morel, too, is jealous over his wife's closer relationships with his sons and over their successes. Paul frequently rouses jealousy in Miriam with his flirtations with Agatha Leiver and [Beatrice](#), and Dawes is violently jealous of Paul's romance

with Clara.

المحاضرة التاسعة

Themes in Sons and Lovers: part II

Contradictions and oppositions

Lawrence demonstrates how contradictions emerge so easily in human nature, especially with love and hate. Paul vacillates between hatred and love for all the women in his life, including his mother at times. Often he loves and hates at the same time, especially with Miriam. Mrs. Morel, too, has some reserve of love for her husband even when she hates him, although this love dissipates over time.

Lawrence also uses the opposition of the body and mind to expose the contradictory nature of desire; frequently, characters pair up with someone who is quite unlike them. Mrs. Morel initially likes the hearty, vigorous Morel because he is so far removed from her dainty, refined, intellectual nature. Paul's attraction to Miriam, his spiritual soul mate, is less intense than his desire for the sensual, physical Clara.

The decay of the body also influences the spiritual relationships. When Mrs. Morel dies, Morel grows more sensitive, though he still refuses to look at her body. Dawes's illness, too, removes his threat to Paul, who befriends his ailing rival.

Nature and flowers

Sons and Lovers has a great deal of description of the natural environment. Often, the weather and environment reflect the characters' emotions through the literary technique of pathetic fallacy. The description is frequently eroticized, both to indicate sexual energy and to slip past the censors in Lawrence's repressive time.

Lawrence's characters also experience moments of transcendence while alone in nature, much as the Romantics did. More frequently, characters bond deeply while in nature. Lawrence uses flowers throughout the novel to symbolize these deep connections. However, flowers are sometimes agents of division, as when Paul is

repulsed by Miriam's fawning behavior towards the daffodil.

المحاضرة العاشرة

Symbols in Sons and Lovers

Swing

The swing symbolizes the back-and-forth nature of Paul and Miriam's relationship. At times Paul feels overwhelmed with love for Miriam, and a moment later, hatred. He wants to have sex with Miriam, but as soon as he does, realizes he's not really interested in her. Although it seems the couple are destined to end up together, every time their relationship moves forward, it quickly swings back to where they started. The act of swinging symbolizes sex, with the constant reference to "back and forth" and "thrusting"—just as in their sexual relationship, Paul begs Miriam on the swing, "Won't you really go any farther?" The way Paul and Miriam approach the swing symbolizes the way they view their sexuality. Paul swings "negligently," using his entire body and thoroughly enjoying the ride, but "suddenly he [puts] on the brake and [jumps] out." This symbolizes the way Paul is willing to throw himself into a relationship with Miriam but suddenly decides the "ride" is over. In contrast, Miriam approaches the swing timidly, filled with fear each time she feels herself in Paul's arms: "She could never lose herself" on the swing, just as she could never lose herself in the relationship.

Fire

Fire often symbolizes passion. The burning passion Paul feels for Miriam is described this way: "the whole of his blood seemed to burst into flame" and "an enormous orange moon" fills the sky. After sleeping with Clara for the first time, Paul feels as if he and Clara "were licked up in an immense tongue of flame," and

after, that he "had known the baptism of fire in passion." For Clara the desire to be with Paul feels like "a drop of fire" in her chest that burns brighter when he ignores her at the factory.

Fire can also take on a negative connotation, perhaps warning of the dangers of passion. When Paul and Miriam are absorbed with each other, food regularly burns, including bread at Paul's house and potatoes at Miriam's. When William burns his love letters to appease his mother's jealousy, fire symbolizes the destructive force of Mrs. Morel's passionate love for her sons. As long as she loves him, no one else can. Finally, when Paul burns Annie's waxen doll, the fire foreshadows the way he will treat Miriam and his mother later in the novel. After breaking the doll Paul feels repulsed and must dispose of what he has broken. He burns the doll, just as he symbolically "burns" his relationship with Miriam and "snuffs out" his mother's life after breaking their hearts.

Stockings

Stockings in a sense symbolize women's confinement. In *Sons and Lovers* women are confined by many expectations. Mrs. Morel and Miriam long to get an education and pursue literary dreams but aren't considered priorities in households where boys also need an education. Although the women have some minor outlets for their curiosities—Mrs. Morel joins the women's league and Miriam studies alongside Paul—they are relegated to domestic duties like caring for the children, running the house, and tending the farm. Their roles are as traditional as the confining stockings they wear.

Although Clara appears to be more liberated than her counterparts—she is a childless, sexually liberated suffragette who leaves her husband. Clara works a menial factory job making, quite fittingly, spiral stockings. Even Paul feels the constraint when spending the night at Clara's house. He longs to sleep with Clara but

cannot because it would be unseemly. He sees a pair of stockings on the chair and "put them on himself." The act highlights his desire to feel close to Clara but also symbolizes the constraint of not being able to have her.
