

# An ode to miscommunication

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Filial ties are meant to be the strongest bonds of trust and kinship.

One's family provides protection, support and comfort in a manner unhindered by ulterior motives or hidden interests. Communication is especially key for children who depend on their kin for not only sustenance but also emotional and spiritual guidance. These interactions shape the present and future of growing children. Consequently, the disruptive influence of a flawed family life can scar and destroy the joys of youth and replace them with dismay and stress. In "the Rocking Horse Winner" by D. H. Lawrence, Paul yearns for love and approval, but flawed communication with his materialistic family denies him these simple pleasures. Paul suffers from a strained relationship with his mother who is too full of perpetual bitterness over her financial conditions to love her children. She is at once obsessed with acquiring more wealth and depressed at her perceived penury. The mother's cupidity is a poison that envelops the entire household in gloom and anger.

She is constantly dissatisfied with her family's status and she openly shows her unhappiness to her children. When Paul asks her about why they don't have a car, she replies bitterly: "Because we're the poor members of the family" (Lawrence). By blatantly displaying her anger, she indirectly implies that the children are responsible for her unhappiness. They are left feeling intimidated by this insinuation. Paul's mother ignores his need for maternal love and attention in favor of greed and anger over her ill fortune. She fails to provide Paul the love that he needs to grow as a normal child.

In the introduction paragraph, the author describes her attitude: “ Only she herself knew that at the center of her heart was a hard little place that could not feel love” (Lawrence). The mother does not directly reveal her lack of affection. Her hollow love may deceive outsiders, but her children cannot be fooled. This lack of communication and affection creates a rift in the family. Thus, Paul perseveres through a childhood of depressing superficiality and constant loneliness.

By denigrating her husband in front of her children, the mother further demonstrates her terrible parenting skills. She engages in self-pity and blames the father for their misfortune. Blatantly, she declares to Paul that his father “ has no luck” without knowing that such a statement causes crippling uncertainty within the developing mind of the child (Lawrence). She undermines the respect and devotion of the boy towards his father. Paul reacts with confusion and trepidation because the accusation comes from such an intimate and authoritative source. Her perpetual unhappiness with life and her derisive attitude towards the man of the house imply to Paul that his father is an incompetent and uncaring individual.

Unfortunately, this allegation may hold a grain of truth because the father rarely appears throughout the narrative. He plays a peripheral role in family matters and appears indifferent to their concerns. His lack of caring and responsibility is shown in his callous reaction to the impending death of his son. When his son is delusional with fever, the father can only muster a “ stony” response rather than one of fear or concern (Lawrence). This reveals that Paul is estranged from both his parents and privy to the undercurrent of discord and tension present within the household.

The flawed communication leaves its mark on Paul and even on the house itself. The constant desire for wealth and the bitterness caused by the lack of it enshrouds the house in a cloud of negativity which even permeates into inanimate objects. Within his home, Paul constantly hears voices of greed. He is forced to endure the “trills and screams of ecstasy” which demand that “there must be more money!” as his mother became more addicted to wealth (Lawrence). Paul grows up with a constant sense of rejection which is exacerbated by his mother and his surroundings.

From his mother, Paul learns that money is everything a person needs and luck is the best way to get it. By giving her money, he believes that he can earn the love of his mother. Paul furiously rides his rocking horse, hoping to get to where there is luck” (Lawrence). At a very young age, Paul begins to gamble while the mother remains ignorant due to her lack of communication with her son and her willingness to spend constantly. The vice of gambling is yet another consequence of the faulty communication between Paul and his materialistic mother.

Unfortunately, the stress and fatigue from such exertions prove too much for the young boy. Despite his best efforts, Paul fails to attain his mother’s love and succumbs to overexertion. The cold-hearted mother even denies him affection at his death bed when he asks: “Mother did I ever tell you? I am lucky!” to which his mother responds by saying, “No you never did!” (Lawrence). Paul is denied love even at his death, after he has helped his mother become rich. In D. W.

Lawrence's "The Rocking Horse Winner", Paul is foiled in his attempt to be loved by a malfunctioning family which values wealth and status over affection and happiness. From an early age, Paul is exposed to the vices of his family which lead to the destruction of his childhood and his eventual death. His life lacks the stability which can only stem from healthy relations and communications with family. Paul may have accumulated a large fortune but the greed of his family proves to be the instrument of his downfall.