

# The rocking horse winner

[Literature](#), [Fiction](#)



"The Rocking Horse Winner" by D. H. Lawrence was primarily about materialism, and illustrated how it can negatively impact more important aspects of life, such as love and family. The short story described a troubling relationship between a mother, who is incapable of love, and her son, who desired for his mother to love him. Lawrence created a perfect situation to showcase his theme, for the story is told very similar to a fairy tale. For example, "Rocking Horse Winner" begins with the omniscient narrator describing the mother, "THERE WAS A WOMAN who was beautiful, who started with all the advantages, yet she had no luck." The sentence assures the audience that the story is pure fiction; therefore, the reader is better able to cope with the multitude of the tragedies and evils that the story contains. Consequently, the reader can assess the story with relatively little emotional distress. The most distasteful aspect of the story is that the mother does not love her children, which in turn significantly contributed to her son's death. Paul is an ideal antihero, for his endeavor to win his mother's love lead him to pay the ultimate sacrifice. Hester, Paul's mother, was incapable of feeling love "the center of her heart was a hard little place that could not feel love." However, she was not always this way. She married her husband because she was in love, but later discovered that he was unable to maintain the social status that she demanded, which ultimately lead her to resenting him. Social position was of the utmost importance to her. This was not because she logically concluded that it was essential to having a better life. Instead, her need for wealth contained her as if she was hooked on a drug, and it affected all other aspects of her life. Hester also could not love her children, for they bound her to her husband,

and prevented her from achieving her ideal life style. Lawrence described Hester's position early in the story, " She married for love, and the love turned to dust. She had bonny children, yet she felt they had been thrust upon her, and she could not love them. " Hester's materialistic ideology was communicated throughout their home by a silent voice that whispered, " there must be more money! " The voice haunted the house, yet no one talked about it. " The whisper was everywhere, and therefore no one spoke it. Just as no one ever says: " We are breathing! "Additionally, the voice plays another essential role in the story, for every time the whisper was heard, it reminded everyone that Hester was controlled by her desire for wealth, which caused her to be unable to love them. This was particularly evident with her son Paul. One day, while talking to his mother, Paul discovered the reason why his mother did not love him. He asked her why they did not have a car of their own, Hester responded bitterly " Because we are the poor members of the family. " Furthermore, she continued to explain that they were poor because they were unlucky. It was at this time Paul concluded that his parent's bad luck was the reason his mother did not love him. He believed, in order to receive the affection from his mother that he desired, he must prove to her that he was lucky. For, if he was lucky, he could provide his mother with enough wealth that she no longer would have to stress on her social status, and would be able to love him. This marked the point where Paul began his tragic journey trying to prove to his mother that he was lucky. The narrator described Paul during the very beginning of his journey in finding luck, " He wanted luck, he wanted it, he wanted it. " Eventually, Paul became obsessed in his pursuit to find luck, which was

actually an effort to become rich, which would allow his mother to love him. Lawrence describes a scene where he looks as if he were insane “ He would sit on his big rocking horse, charging madly into space, with a frenzy that made the little girls peer at him uneasily. ” However, Paul was far from insane, and in reality the opposite was true. When he was frantically riding his horse, he was the most focused and logical, for this was when he found luck. During his rides on his rocking horse he was engrossed in very deep and complicated thoughts. If he was successful during his ride he called it “ getting there. ” Later in the story, Lawrence revealed that “ getting there” meant predicting the name of the horse that would win the next race.

Following the win of Lively Star, Paul had accumulated immense wealth. He thought that it would be enough to silence the whisper that dominated him; however, it only made the problem worse. Later, when Paul’s uncle asked him what he was going to do with the money, Paul said, “ I started it for Mother. She said she had no luck, because father is unlucky, so I thought if I was lucky, it might stop the whispering. ” However, the money only fueled his mother’s materialistic nature, and the voices grew stronger, “ The voices in the house suddenly went mad, like a chorus of frogs on a spring evening. ” In a Newtonian Clockwork Universe, Paul’s efforts would have been enough to satisfy his mother, and ultimately win her love. Unfortunately, the story more closely relates to an Einstein’s world view, which suggests that events are not predictable. Although it becomes apparent to the reader at the end of the story that Paul cannot win his mother’s love, he does not know this, and only tries harder when he is faced with obstacles. However, the harder Paul tried to “ get there” the less often he was able to, which physically and

mentally wore him down. " The Grand National had gone by; he had not " known, " and had lost a hundred pounds. Summer was at hand. He was in agony for the Lincoln. " The stress of several lost races, and that idea that he would not be able to earn enough money to satisfy his mother, drove Paul mad. " He became wild eyed and strange, as if something were going to explode in him. " Hester noticed how overwrought her son had become, and she was genuinely troubled by the idea of her son being ill. " His mother had sudden strange seizures of uneasiness about him. Sometimes, for half an hour, she would feel a sudden anxiety about him that was almost anguish. She wanted to rush to him at once, and know he was safe. " This marked a very decisive moment in the story, for Lawrence allows the mother to feel emotions towards her family. Furthermore, while the mother is opening up to her son, the reader begins to open up to Hester. Towards the end of the story, while Paul was sick, Lawrence changed the tone of the story. It transformed from having a fairy tale like feel, to being very cutting, emotional, and real. The reader started to view Paul and his mother as real people, rather than just characters in the story that he/she was reading. This ultimately made the reader much more vulnerable to being emotionally affected by the tragic ending. Lawrence described Paul frantically riding his rocking horse to a point of complete exhaustion " Then suddenly she switched on the light, and saw her son, in his green pajamas, madly surging on the rocking horse. " During his crazed ride, Paul " got there", and concluded that Malabar would win the next race. After his ride he fell to the ground and entered a state of unconsciousness, where he viscosly tossed and turned while reciting, " Malabar! It's Malabar! Basset, Bassett, I know!

It's Malabar! " Paul worked very hard to try to earn his mother's love, and for a brief period of time, it appeared he was successful. For example, Lawrence describes the mother's reaction to her son's condition " Then he fell with a crash to the ground, and she, all her tormented motherhood flooding upon her, rushed to gather him up. " However, after a few days, it became evident that his mother was only having a moment of epiphany, and soon was back to the same cold hearted person she once was, " His mother sat, feeling her heart had gone, turned actually into a stone. " Paul, as the antagonist, takes on the role of an antihero. He strived to win his mother's love, but he was unsuccessful. At the end of the story, when Paul realized that all of his efforts were pointless, he consequently could not handle the pain, and died. Right before Paul dies, he admits to his mother his efforts to prove to her that he was lucky " I never told you, Mother, that if I can ride my horse, and " get there, " then I'm absolutely sure-oh, absolutely! Mother did I ever tell you I was lucky! " This line reveals the importance, to Paul, of the conversation he and his mother had several years ago. During that conversation, he discovered that she was unable to love him because she did not have enough money and luck. That moment defined the rest of Paul's life, for at that time Paul told his mother that he was lucky, and he spent the rest of his life trying to prove it to her. While on his death bed, Hester responded to Paul's confession " No, you never did" The thought that he based his whole life off of their conversation, and she did not even remember it, is what killed Paul. Much like his rocking horse, no matter how hard Paul tried, or no matter how hard the rocking horse ran, neither Paul nor his horse gained any ground in their pursuit.