

# Romance in “the horse dealer’s daughter”

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



Romance in " The Horse Dealer's Daughter" " The Horse Dealer's Daughter" by D. H. Lawrence could be described as a story in which boy meets girl. Its plot on the surface bears a resemblance to that of any number of traditionally romantic stories. This story is about a boy saving a girl from drowning, sees something in her that he's never seen before, and at the end of the story asks her for her hand in marriage. But we will soon see, there is nothing distinctive about Lawrence's story, his psychological works of his characters redeem through the emotional development of the two main. This shows specifically in the rescuer also known as Dr. Fergeson who defies all of our expectations, of how the story should work out. Lawrence cuts through the romantic characteristic in a plot line to reflect the dark and conflicting feelings of the so-called lovers, and by doing this shows just why the story is such a symbolic romance. Mabel Pervin, the protagonist in " The Horse Dealer's Daughter, " has little life left in her as the story begins. She cannot afford to live in her father's house with her brothers any longer. Her three brothers Joe, Fred Henry, and Malcolm are all interrogate to her about her plans to seek economic stability and suggest that she become a " skivvy, " or servant, but she refuses to give her brothers answers (379). After losing all sources of income, her home, her mother, and her father, Mabel has, almost in a sense, lost her identity. She is twenty-seven years old and has not yet married, and her chances of marrying someone in the future are slim. Mabel has become a victim of the society in which she lives. Even the title of the short story restates the concept of her lack of identity because " The Horse Dealer's Daughter" denies Mabel of a name, and implies that Mabel belongs to her father. The story illustrates, that Mabel has died

emotionally and spiritually. Her metaphorical death becomes evident as D. H. Lawrence uses subtle phrases to represent Mabel's bleak outlook on life. For instance, Lawrence states that her brothers have "talked...round her for so many years, " as though Mabel does not exist (379). Lawrence uses symbolism to reiterate the sense of death cast over Mabel, as she approaches her mother's grave. Doctor Jack Ferguson, another dynamic character in "The Horse Dealer's Daughter," is also spiritually dead as the story begins. Physically ill, Ferguson arrives at the Pervin residence "...croaking a cold", sounds like he almost looks like a corpse (380). He is as equally as exhausted as Mabel and cannot escape the confinement of the town he services. Socially determined and bound to his career and clients, Ferguson cannot break from his daily routine. While on one of his occupational errands, Ferguson spies Mabel attempting to kill herself by wading into a nearby pond, and he follows her. The pond symbolically in the story represents a grave. Ferguson says he, "...could not bear the smell of the death, clay water..." with the decaying smell of the pond water, at this moment he becomes slowly aware of the corruption, the cold muddy process, and the possibility of death (385). After their metaphoric deaths, both Mabel and Ferguson experience spiritual rebirths. Mabel's psychological rebirth is after her encounter with the pond. The pond also represents a womb from which Ferguson, the doctor, metaphorically delivers Mabel. Ferguson rescues Mabel from drowning, saving her from death. He wraps Mabel in a blanket when he arrives at his house. Symbolically, the blanket also represents rebirth. For example, newborns are wrapped in blankets when they are born. Before Mabel entered the water, she was spiritually

dead, and when she left the water, she was spiritually reborn, such as one would be after being baptized. In addition to a womb and the grave, the pond also represents the unconscious, in which Ferguson and Mabel discover their love for one another. Dr. Ferguson is reborn when Mabel asks him if he loves her, and although he had " never thought of loving her, " he surrenders to his subconscious feelings (Lawrence 386). He discovers the love he has always had for her and is reborn emotionally. Becoming able to be aware of Ferguson's unconscious love for Mabel near the beginning of the story made it easier to understand, when Lawrence states that Mabel's eyes " remained distinct" in Ferguson's memory and " seemed to mesmerize him" (383). Lawrence also foreshadows Ferguson's love by placing Ferguson's house and the graveyard where Mabel's mother is buried next to a church, since most weddings take place in churches. When Mabel and Ferguson make eye contact near the church, Ferguson mentally comments on the " portentous, " or important, nature of Mabel's eyes (383). His attention to the importance of Mabel's eyes also exposes his subconscious love for her. When Ferguson carries Mabel back to his house, only a fire, " burning in the grate, " awaits them (384). The empty house reflects that there is nothing left of their old lives. Now Mabel and Ferguson only have each other's love, conveyed in the fire. This fire epitomizes the newly lit " passion" between Ferguson and Mabel. Using the pond and fire as symbols, Lawrence illustrates the theme of romantic love being psychologically saving through the emotional development of Mabel and Dr. Ferguson. Lawrence combines a mythic stereotype with a realistic experience, introducing Ferguson as a mythic-hero figure who must endure the fury of the pond. The pond, in this case,

symbolizes a monster or dragon, like in many traditional myths and fairy tales. Ferguson represents the knight in shining armor or prince destined to overcome the fury of the monster or dragon. In the end, Ferguson succeeds in rescuing Mabel and defeating the metaphorical fury of the pond. Similarly, Ferguson "lifted" Mabel "out of the horror of wet, grey clay, " and tried to restore her until "he could feel her live beneath his hands" (Lawrence 384). When Mabel and Ferguson clothe themselves, they are both "shy of one another" (line 184 pg388). Their astonishment accounts for their timidity toward one another. to exemplify his theme of restorative love and the emotional growth of the two main characters, Mabel Pervin and Dr. Jack Ferguson. Lawrence begins the story by explaining Mabel's ruin. Mabel has nothing left in life and yields to the rescue of Ferguson. Ferguson saves Mabel's life physically and emotionally, while Mabel saves Ferguson spiritually from his ritualistic life.