

NAXOS
AudioBooks

D.H. Lawrence
Sons and Lovers

Read by **Paul Slack**

**CLASSIC
FICTION**



NA487212D

1	Sons and Lovers	5:12
2	She herself was opposite.	5:00
3	The next day she went down...	4:58
4	William was only one year old...	4:55
5	One evening, late...	5:25
6	The thought of being the mother...	4:35
7	Walter Morel was, at this time...	5:56
8	On the Wednesday following...	5:11
9	During his recuperation...	5:54
10	There ended the altercation.	5:39
11	Paul would be built like his mother...	5:56
12	They were very poor that autumn...	5:00
13	Meanwhile the parents were getting...	4:43
14	About a year after William...	6:33

15	In the morning, when Annie and Arthur...	4:55
16	Suddenly they spied a big, dark archway...	5:36
17	William asked the girl...	5:05
18	He sprang off his stool...	5:03
19	Arthur Morel was growing up...	5:52
20	They had tea together...	4:51
21	At last, on December 23rd...	5:08
22	Miriam was her mother's daughter...	5:06
23	It was very still...	5:15
24	That there was any love growing...	5:01
25	One day, as Paul was going up Castle Gate...	6:05
26	There was silence in the room for a time...	5:15
27	Paul was dissatisfied with himself...	5:19
28	He hated her bitterly at that moment...	5:16

29	Paul felt life changing around him...	5:39
30	They found a cottage, where they sat...	6:55
31	She felt she could bear anything...	5:19
32	After a week of love...	6:08
33	He sat silent in bitterness...	5:01
34	He dressed at Jordan's...	5:24
35	Soon the supper was finished...	5:47
36	She could not bear the suffering...	5:10
37	It was known in Nottingham that Paul Morel...	5:02
38	Then, startled by his own unconscious...	6:06
39	So there went on a battle between them...	5:08
40	Up came the tears again.	4:28
41	'But,' she panted, 'it'll go off.'	3:52

42	In the afternoon he went...	4:57
43	Paul and she were afraid of each other...	5:09
44	Then, again, for a whole evening...	5:09
45	He followed her down the darkness...	5:24
46	He stood looking out of the window...	5:19
47	Nurse did not come...	5:47
48	Yes, he could see the houses...	5:15
49	After a while Paul went out of the house...	5:06
50	So he was always in the town...	5:01
51	Something felt sulky, as if it...	5:18
52	They scarcely spoke while they were...	4:52
53	Her brown, nervous hands...	5:37
54	It was the end then between them...	6:10

Total time: 4:48:22

Cover picture: WHD Koerner, Rural Couple, 1913
Courtesy of The Mary Evans Picture Library

D.H. Lawrence

Sons and Lovers

Sons and Lovers is in some ways so directly autobiographical as to make it almost a confession. In both the book and in the story of Lawrence's life, childhood is spent in the poorer parts of a Nottingham mining town. In both the book and Lawrence's life, the mother and father are at odds socially and intellectually. In both the book and Lawrence's life, the father drinks too much, distancing himself from his wife, whom he no longer understands. In both, the mother in turn invests all her emotional life into her children – but especially her sons. In both, an older brother dies of erysipelas after being engaged to a stenographer called Louisa. In both, the mother is overwhelmed by grief, but finds herself emotionally alive again when the younger brother becomes ill and she can focus her love on him. In both, there is a strongly sexual element behind the relationship between mother and son, and a bitter and poisoned

relationship with the father. In both, the development of a mature sexual life for the son is hampered by his affection for his mother, with two significant women being the possible means to adult freedom, yet ultimately failing because of that maternal attachment. In both, the hero works in a surgical appliance factory. In both, there is an idyllic farm where the protagonist finds intellectual and emotional respite as well as stimulus. In both, the mother's death is assisted by an overdose administered by the son. In terms of places, the only differences are in the spelling, with Lawrence's home town Eastwood being given a sarcastic recasting as Bestwood, or – slightly more disguised – Jessie Chambers from Lawrence's own life being turned into Miriam Leivers. And there is much more that speaks directly from Lawrence's own experiences with his parents, his background and his early relationships.

The book is the story of a family, the Morels; and in particular the relationship between Paul Morel and his mother Gertrude (a name deliberately recalling Hamlet's mother). She marries Walter, who at first is a vital and powerful man for whom she has a genuine passion. But she is intellectually far stronger than he, socially more ambitious; and as she retreats from him, so he becomes boorish and drunk. Instead, the mother finds solace in her children, who in turn are devoted to her. The elder, William, can hardly enjoy himself without his mother's approval. Perhaps sensing this, he goes to take up a job in London. But an infection kills him and leaves his mother bereft. Shortly afterwards, her second son Paul falls seriously ill (as Lawrence did) and is near death himself. This crisis brings the mother out of mourning, and she devotes herself to Paul. This relationship is at the heart of the novel. Paul is a sensitive, artistic, slightly effeminate child – another close echo of Lawrence, who was so weak as a child that he could not play with the other boys at school – who shares every aspect of his life with his mother.

When he becomes attached to a girl at a nearby farm, his mother's disapproval is as significant a factor in his relinquishing her as his own indecision, which is itself a product of his feelings for his mother. But Paul finds himself attracted to another woman and continues his struggle to – as Lawrence puts it – 'realise' himself as a man independent of his mother.

The friction created between the many conflicting desires of the characters is explored with Lawrence's habitual combination of candour, depth and a vigorous mysticism about the relationships between the mind and the body, sex and love, religion and the soul, industrialisation and humanity, instinct and intellect. Lawrence examines these both overtly and covertly. There are whole passages discussing the nature of a relationship; elsewhere issues are hinted at in symbolic set-pieces (Walter cutting the hair of one of his children; Paul and Miriam going to look at a rose-bush). Lawrence's philosophy can also be seen in the structure of the work as a whole – Mrs Morel cannot find deep enough satisfaction from her husband, so the children become a conduit for her

love; but this damages the growth of the child.

The immediacy of the autobiographical aspects of the book gives it the impression of having been written quickly – there are sudden, unclear shifts of time or perspective, for example – but this is misleading. Its descriptions of the scenery in the area are suffused with an almost ecstatic sense of the power of nature, allowing the characters inspired insights, or reflecting elements of their emotional state. Throughout the book, Lawrence uses the characters' responses to flowers and plants to illustrate aspects of their nature. He also uses events in ways that may be directly symbolic (such as picking cherries) or allows sensuality to seep into the descriptions of actions that are not specifically sexual. The characters themselves are painted with an honesty that early readers found unsympathetic. They did not recognise that this was a means to greater understanding of the characters than could be afforded by the over-simplification and emotional manipulation of other writers. This extends to portraying Paul – a cipher for Lawrence

himself – as pompous, misogynistic and mother-fixated; and managing to make Walter – the drunken, violent, fearful father – movingly real.

Lawrence started the book when his mother was diagnosed with cancer and died in 1910, but it went through several rewrites and revisions; and even then he had a troubled time getting it published (something Lawrence would get used to). His editor, friend and dedicatee of the novel Edward Garnett cut some eighty passages, and the book, Lawrence's third, was published in 1913. Despite these excisions, the book deals with several topics that the critics of the day found repellent – mother / son lust (however repressed), descriptions of sex (however symbolic or tangentially expressed) and an unapologetic setting of the book among the working classes, dialect and all. Lawrence may have escaped England for much of his life, but he could never find relief from the attacks on his works for their directness, their bold attempt to bring to literature what had never been examined in it before, and for their portrayal of the realities of life outside the literary,

cosmopolitan or establishment circles who were responsible for censorship.

David Herbert Richards Lawrence (known in the family as Bert) was born in 1885, and was a studious if sickly child. He became a teacher and started to write short stories and poems, several of which were accepted by Ford Maddox Hueffer for publication in *The English Review*. Hueffer also recommended Lawrence's first novel *The White Peacock* for publication, and his career as a writer could be said to have begun in 1912, when, with one novel out, another being published, a play completed and poems in print, he resigned his teaching post. His lived life – rather than his written one – also stems from that year. He had been engaged, but had fallen in love with the married mother-of-three Frieda Weekley (the wife of a professor under whom Lawrence had studied, and the cousin of Baron von Richthofen, a German air ace). They eloped, later to marry after her divorce. The marriage survived a difficult and peripatetic life, but was not without its crises. Lawrence's sexuality was not always fixed. He had a homosexual affair when he was sixteen

(something that he described as the nearest thing to perfect love in his life), and a brief affair with a farmer in Cornwall some years later. Frieda also had a long affair with Angelo Ravagli, who lived with her after Lawrence's death. But through all this, a pattern for Lawrence's life was established. They travelled, he wrote, they had very little money, he was often ill (tuberculosis haunted him and finally killed him in 1930). His books were rarely successful and sometimes only published in small, private editions because they fell foul of the censors. Their travels were seldom straightforward, and he and Frieda were twice arrested for spying: once in Germany just before the First World War, and once in Cornwall during it, when her ancestry was a cause for much suspicion (the fact that they used to sing German songs when on walks probably didn't help).

But despite this questing (sometimes enforced) wandering, Lawrence produced novels that changed the genre forever, as well as over 800 poems, several volumes of short stories, and literary, psychological and historical works. His travel writing is

so highly regarded that Sardinia offers an international prize for it in his name. Lawrence managed to become one of the greatest names in 20th-century English literature by refusing to allow himself to be cowed despite extraordinary pressure, both socially and financially. He produced works that remoulded the imaginative life of anyone who can read English, from *The Rainbow* to *Sons and Lovers* to *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. He released into fiction a kind of reality about life that had never been properly explored, and did so with an emotional fearlessness and a muscular language that occasionally belied its philosophical undertones. He became and remains notorious for the explicit nature of some of his works (*Sons and Lovers* is relatively restrained, in part thanks to Garnett, though the pulse of sexuality runs through many passages), but this prurience again overlooks the depth of his thinking about the characters, and the complex, conflicting needs of humans in their physical, emotional and spiritual lives.

Notes by Roy McMillan



Paul Slack originally trained as a bricklayer in his native Nottinghamshire. He has just completed work on the feature film *Lecture 21* written and directed by Alessandro Barecco. Paul has worked extensively in theatre most notably in the West End, at the West Yorkshire Playhouse, Bristol Old Vic, English Touring Theatre, the RSC and the Hammersmith Lyric. He is a regular contributor to radio drama. He plays guitar and hangs around Irish bars making a noise with his traditional Irish drum (Bodhrain).

D.H. Lawrence

Sons and Lovers

Read by **Paul Slack**

One of the most important novels of the 20th century, *Sons and Lovers* tells the story of the Morels, a Nottingham mining family. At its heart is the relationship between Paul and his mother, and the conflict between them as he grows towards maturity and independence.

Powerful, ground-breaking and moving, it is told with an honesty that was shocking when it was first published, and is still startling. It is Lawrence's autobiographical masterpiece of life in a working-class town, of human understanding, and of relationships – between man and woman, mother and child, sons and lovers.



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