

Dh Lawrence Novel

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Overview — the story in simple English

Sons and Lovers is set in Bestwood, a poor coal-mining village (কয়লা খনির গ্রাম) in the English Midlands. Gertrude Morel is a refined, educated woman (রুচিশীল, শিক্ষিত নারী) who marries Walter Morel, a rough but lively coal miner. At first she loves him, but he drinks (মদ্যপান করে), wastes money, and becomes violent, so their marriage turns cold and full of quarrels. Unhappy with her husband, Mrs Morel pours all her love into her sons. Her first favourite is William, the eldest; he goes to London, gets engaged to a shallow girl, and then dies young of illness. After William's death, Mrs Morel gives her whole heart to Paul, the second son, who is the main character (প্রধান চরিত্র). Paul grows into a young painter and works as a clerk in a factory in Nottingham. He falls in love with Miriam Leivers, a shy, deeply religious farm girl, but their love is too "spiritual" (আত্মিক), and his mother is jealous of her. Paul then has a passionate physical affair with Clara Dawes, a married woman separated from her husband, but this too cannot satisfy him. The truth is that Paul cannot fully love any woman, because his strongest bond is with his mother — this is the famous "mother-fixation" or Oedipus complex (মাতৃ-আসক্তি). When Mrs Morel slowly dies of cancer, Paul and his sister give her an overdose of medicine to end her pain. After she dies Paul is broken and almost wishes to die too, but at the very end he turns away from the darkness and walks toward the town — choosing life.

 **One-line meaning: A mother's too-strong, possessive love — born out of a failed marriage — cripples her son's power to love other women, and *Sons and Lovers* traces the deep emotional damage this leaves behind.**

Quick Facts	
Published	1913
Genre	Modern psychological novel; autobiographical <i>Bildungsroman</i> (a novel about growing up)
Setting	Bestwood, a coal-mining district in Nottinghamshire, England, late 19th–early 20th century
Narration / Form	Third-person narrator, mostly seen through Paul's mind; uses free indirect style and close psychological realism
Author's remark	In a 1912 letter to his editor Edward Garnett, Lawrence explained that the mother, unsatisfied in marriage, turns to her sons as "lovers," and their deep love for her later stops them from loving other women fully

Themes & Technique

- Mother-son bond / Oedipus complex.** This is the central theme. Mrs Morel's love for Paul is so possessive and jealous that it becomes almost like the love of a wife. Because his deepest loyalty belongs to his mother, Paul cannot give himself completely to Miriam or Clara. His emotional growth is blocked by this bond, which critics read through Freud's idea of the Oedipus complex.
- Love and marriage / the war of the sexes.** Lawrence shows a failed marriage in painful detail. Gertrude and Walter clash in class, education and temperament (স্বভাব), and their love turns into a long battle. This broken marriage is the root cause of everything else: it drives the mother toward her sons and shapes the children's fear of their father.

3. **Class and industrialism.** The novel contrasts the hard, dirty world of the coal pit with Mrs Morel's middle-class refinement. Industrial work slowly deadens Walter, while the family struggles with poverty. Lawrence exposes how industrial society damages both the body and the human spirit.
4. **Body versus soul (the divided self).** Paul is torn between two kinds of love. Miriam offers a spiritual, soul-based love that frightens him because it seems to want to swallow his very being; Clara offers physical passion but no lasting union. Lawrence, who believed strongly in instinct and the "blood," dramatizes a self split between mind, soul and body.
5. **Modern psychology and the unconscious.** *Sons and Lovers* is one of the first English novels to take the hidden, unconscious life of desire seriously. It shows jealousy, repression and buried longing at work in ordinary family life. This is why the exam links it with Freud, modern psychology and "stream of consciousness."
6. **Growth of the artist (coming of age).** As a *Bildungsroman*, the book follows Paul from childhood to young manhood, tracing his education, his work, his painting, and his slow, painful struggle for independence and identity (আত্মপরিচয়).
7. **Death and the drift toward life.** Death shadows the whole novel — William's death, and above all Mrs Morel's long dying. After she dies Paul drifts toward death himself ("derelict"), yet the final page turns him back toward life. The book ends on a fragile note of survival and rebirth.

Narrative technique

- **Autobiographical novel** — closely based on Lawrence's own boyhood in Eastwood; Walter Morel is drawn from Lawrence's miner father, Mrs Morel from his mother.
- **Bildungsroman** — the shape of a young person's growth and self-discovery.
- **Free indirect discourse / free indirect style** — the narrator slides into a character's own thoughts and feelings without quotation marks.
- **Psychological realism** and the **Oedipus complex** as an organising pattern.
- **Symbolism** — flowers, the moon, light and darkness, the coal mine.
- **Omniscient third-person narrator** who mostly follows Paul's point of view.
- Note carefully: some exam questions call this "**stream of consciousness**," but Lawrence uses interior, free-indirect presentation rather than the pure, unbroken inner monologue of Joyce or Woolf. Say this honestly in the exam.

Key Quotations — memorize

Only two lines below are given inside quotation marks, because those are the ones certain to be word-for-word. The rest are safe *paraphrases* (in your own words) — do **not** write them inside quotation marks in the exam.

"The Bottoms' succeeded to 'Hell Row.'"

- Verbatim (Lawrence himself puts both place-names in inverted commas). The **opening sentence** of the novel. "Hell Row" was an old block of miners' cottages; "the Bottoms" is the newer housing where the Morels live. The harsh names set the grim industrial world at once.

"He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly."

- Verbatim. The **last sentence** of the novel (closing chapter, "Derelict"). After his mother's death Paul turns away from darkness and death and moves toward the town — that is, toward life.
- (*Paraphrase*) Mrs Morel, locked out at night by her drunken husband while pregnant with Paul, stands in the moonlit garden among the tall white lilies — a famous flower-and-moon scene linking the unborn son to nature and to his

mother.

- (Paraphrase) Paul feels that Miriam's spiritual love wants to absorb his very soul, and this frightens him; he cannot give himself to her freely.
- (Paraphrase) Mrs Morel's jealousy of Miriam is open and fierce; she feels Miriam is trying to take her son away from her.
- (Paraphrase) Walter Morel is warm, alive and sensual when he is happy at home — mending things, singing — but drink and his wife's contempt slowly cast him out of his family's affection.
- (Paraphrase) After giving his dying mother the fatal dose of morphia, Paul is left "derelict" — emptied of everything and drifting toward death — before he finally chooses to live.
- (Paraphrase) In his 1912 letter to Edward Garnett, Lawrence said the sons are urged into life by their love for their mother, yet all the sons hate and are jealous of the father, and when the sons grow up they cannot love because the mother remains the strongest power in their lives.

Critics' Views (safe to cite)

Critic	View	Use for
Mark Schorer ("Technique as Discovery", 1948)	Argues Lawrence's raw autobiographical material is not fully controlled by his technique, so the novel's real sympathies (e.g. toward the father's vitality) sometimes escape his conscious intention	Technique/form questions; showing the novel's inner tension
Alfred Kazin	Reads the book as a powerful psychological and autobiographical study of the mother-son bond and the making of an artist	Oedipus complex; growth of Paul; psychology
Kate Millett (<i>Sexual Politics</i> , 1970)	Feminist critique of Lawrence: his fiction is male-centred and the women are used or blamed while the men's needs come first	Treatment of women; feminist angle on Miriam and Clara
Simone de Beauvoir (<i>The Second Sex</i> , 1949)	In her chapter on Lawrence, argues he makes woman find her fulfilment only in surrender to the male	Gender criticism; balancing the Oedipal reading
F. R. Leavis (<i>D. H. Lawrence: Novelist</i> , 1955)	Champions Lawrence as a major English novelist of moral seriousness and vital life-energy, though he ranks the later novels higher	Lawrence's stature; "life" and vitality
Graham Hough (<i>The Dark Sun</i> , 1956)	A major study reading Lawrence's fiction through his belief in instinct, the body and the "dark" life-forces	Body-versus-soul theme; Lawrence's philosophy of life

Exam Q&A Bank

Part A — Reference to Context (5 marks)

RTC 1 — "The Bottoms succeeded to Hell Row." — Very likely

These words are the very first sentence of *Sons and Lovers* (1913) by **D. H. Lawrence**. The line begins the narrator's description of Bestwood, the coal-mining village where the story is set. "Hell Row" was an old, crumbling block of miners' cottages; it was pulled down and replaced by the newer dwellings the people call "the Bottoms," where the Morel family lives. With their harsh, hellish names, both places at once fix the grim, poor, industrial world of the colliers (কয়লা শ্রমিক) in our minds. The significance is large: this setting shapes the whole novel. It is Walter Morel's working world; it is the source of the family's

poverty; and it deepens Mrs Morel's bitter feeling that she — a refined woman — has married beneath her. The industrial background is the very ground on which the marriage conflict and the mother-son drama grow. (~150 words)

RTC 2 — "He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly." — 🔥 Very likely

This is the final sentence of *Sons and Lovers* by **D. H. Lawrence**, describing the hero, **Paul Morel**. The context is the closing chapter, after Mrs Morel's death. Paul is emotionally "derelict" — hollow, lost, and tempted to give up on life and follow his mother into darkness and death. In this last moment he turns away from that darkness. The "glowing town" is a symbol of life, of human society and of the future; the surrounding darkness stands for death and for the pull of his dead mother. By walking quickly toward the light, Paul chooses to live. The significance is that this open, forward-looking ending partly resolves the Oedipal struggle of the novel: freed at last of his mother's hold, Paul steps toward independent life — though critics still debate whether this affirmation is fully earned. (~150 words)

Part B — Short Notes (5 marks)

Note 1 — Comment on the character of Walter Morel. — 🔥 Very likely

Walter Morel is the miner father and the husband of Gertrude Morel. When young he is handsome, warm, full of life, a fine dancer with a glowing, sensual body (দেহজ প্রাণশক্তি) — and this vitality is what first attracts his refined wife. But he is uneducated, rough, and fond of drink. As the marriage sours, he drinks more, wastes money, and sometimes turns violent, so his wife withdraws her love and turns to her children. Slowly Walter is cast out of his own family's affection: the sons fear and despise him, and he becomes a lonely stranger in his own house, worn down by the pit. Yet Lawrence does **not** make him a simple villain. He is drawn with real sympathy and animal warmth, and he is also a victim — of industrial labour and of his wife's cold superiority. Some critics feel Lawrence's deepest sympathy secretly leans toward the father's living energy. (~185 words)

Note 2 — How does Lawrence use "stream of consciousness" / modern psychology in *Sons and Lovers*? — 🔥 Very likely

Stream of consciousness (চৈতন্য-প্রবাহ) is a technique that tries to show the continuous, unbroken flow of a character's inner thoughts and feelings, often without normal order or logic. In the exam this question is really asking how Lawrence presents the **inner mental life** of his people. Lawrence does this mainly through **free indirect style** and deep **psychological realism**: the narrator moves quietly inside Paul's mind, showing his jealousy, guilt, desire and buried longing. The novel takes the unconscious seriously, dramatizing the hidden mother-fixation that Paul himself barely understands — which is why critics link the book with Freud's Oedipus complex and with "modern psychology." Be honest, though: Lawrence is **not** a pure stream-of-consciousness novelist like James Joyce or Virginia Woolf. He does not use long, unpunctuated inner monologue; instead he uses a controlled psychological narration. So the safe exam answer is: Lawrence explores the unconscious and inner life richly, using free indirect style rather than strict stream of consciousness. (~190 words)

Part C — Essays (15 marks)

Essay 1 — "Discuss father son relationship in *Sons and Lovers*." — 🔥 Very likely (in both 2019 and 2020 lists)

In *Sons and Lovers* (1913), D. H. Lawrence paints a father-son relationship built on distance, fear and hostility. Against the fierce warmth of the mother-son bond, the tie between Walter Morel and his sons — William and, above all, Paul — is one of estrangement and lost love. Lawrence's thesis is that an unhappy marriage, a wide class gap, and the mother's powerful influence together turn the sons against their father, and that this broken bond becomes part of the deeper tragedy of the whole family.

The relationship must first be placed in its world. The novel opens, "*The Bottoms succeeded to Hell Row*," fixing us at once in a rough coal-mining village. Walter Morel belongs body and soul to this world of the pit: he is a collier, physical, warm and alive, but uneducated and coarse. To his refined wife he becomes a disappointment, and the home turns into a battlefield of quarrels, drink and sometimes violence.

Because Mrs Morel withdraws her love from her husband and pours it into her children, the sons grow up on their mother's side of the war. They dread their father's drunken return; young Paul even prays that his father may not come home, or may

be hurt at the pit. The boys inherit their mother's contempt, and the natural love a son might feel for a father is poisoned before it can grow. Lawrence himself described this pattern in his 1912 letter to Edward Garnett, where he wrote that all the sons hate and are jealous of the father while they love the mother — the classic Oedipal shape.

Yet Lawrence refuses to make Walter a mere villain, and here the tragedy deepens. Walter is slowly cast out and diminished: he loses authority, is injured at the pit, and ends as a lonely stranger in his own house. But the narrative keeps giving him life and warmth — his singing, his mending, his glowing physical presence. The critic **Mark Schorer**, in "Technique as Discovery," argues that Lawrence's autobiographical material is not fully controlled, so that the book's real sympathy sometimes leans toward the vital father even while its surface condemns him. In this reading the father-son estrangement is also the loss of something valuable — living, instinctive energy.

The cost of the broken father-bond falls on Paul. With no strong father to pull him into the wider world of men, Paul is left over-attached to his mother, unable to love Miriam or Clara freely. The failed father-son relationship thus feeds directly into the mother-fixation that cripples him. **F. R. Leavis** praised exactly this unflinching honesty about family life as a mark of Lawrence's greatness as a novelist. Only at the very end, after both parents' hold is gone, can Paul begin to be his own man, as he "*walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly.*"

In conclusion, the father-son relationship in *Sons and Lovers* is one of alienation rooted in a failed marriage and a class divide. It is neither warm nor simple: Walter is both guilty and pitiable, both rejected and quietly mourned. By tying this broken bond to Paul's later inability to love, Lawrence makes the father-son estrangement not a side issue but a key part of his tragic study of how a family's loves and hatreds shape a single human life. (~560 words)

Essay 2 — "Illustrate the term Oedipus complex in the context of *Sons and Lovers*." — ★ Likely (in the 2019 list; marked a high-probability question)

The "Oedipus complex" is a term from Sigmund Freud's psychology. It describes a son's unconscious, excessive attachment to his mother, joined with jealousy or rivalry toward his father. Freud named it after the Greek myth of Oedipus, who unknowingly killed his father and married his mother. *Sons and Lovers* (1913) is often called the clearest illustration of this idea in English fiction, because Paul Morel's crippling love for his mother blocks his power to love any other woman.

The root of the complex is the failed marriage. From the opening world of "*The Bottoms succeeded to Hell Row*," Mrs Morel is trapped with a drunken, rough husband who cannot satisfy her mind or heart. Starved of married love, she turns her whole passion onto her sons, treating them almost as substitute lovers — first William, then Paul. Lawrence described this design directly in his 1912 letter to Edward Garnett: the mother selects her sons as lovers, and their love for her later stops them loving other women.

William is the first "lover-son." He becomes engaged to a shallow, showy girl, but he is torn between her and his mother, and he dies young — a foreshadowing (পূর্বাভাস) of the destructive pattern. After his death Mrs Morel fixes her entire heart on Paul, and the bond between them grows so close that it takes on the jealousy and possessiveness of a marriage. As Lawrence's letter notes, the son loves the mother while hating and envying the father — the Oedipal triangle is complete.

The complex shows most clearly in Paul's love affairs. With **Miriam**, the spiritual farm girl, Paul feels a soul-love that seems to want to swallow him, and his mother is openly jealous of her; caught between the two women, Paul cannot give himself and cruelly blames Miriam, though the real barrier is his mother. With **Clara Dawes**, a married woman, he finds physical passion, but even this cannot fill him, and he keeps returning to his mother. The critic **Alfred Kazin** reads the whole novel as this psychological drama of a son who cannot break free of the mother who made him. Feminist critics such as **Kate Millett** (*Sexual Politics*) and **Simone de Beauvoir** (*The Second Sex*) add a warning: the two young women are idealized or blamed while the mother is worshipped, so the "Oedipus" reading also exposes Lawrence's male-centred view of women.

The complex reaches its terrible climax at the mother's death. Paul nurses her through her long dying and, with his sister, gives her an overdose of morphia to end her pain — an act of love so total it borders on the unnatural. After she is gone, Paul is "derelict," emptied of everything and drifting toward death, almost longing to follow her into darkness. Only in the final line does he pull back and choose life, as he "*walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly.*" This last turn is his fragile attempt to break the Oedipal chain.

One honest point wins marks: Lawrence claimed he wrote much of the book before he had read Freud, so it is the *critics* who apply the Oedipus complex to the novel. Still, few books dramatize that complex so vividly. In conclusion, *Sons and Lovers*

illustrates the Oedipus complex through Paul's possessive mother-love, his hatred of his father, and his failure with Miriam and Clara — a tragedy in which the price of a mother's love is her son's crippled heart. (~600 words)

⚡ One-Page Revision Sheet

Item	Quick Revision
Story in 3 lines	A refined woman marries a drinking miner and, hating the marriage, turns her love onto her sons. When the eldest dies, she binds her whole heart to Paul, whose mother-love then blocks him from loving Miriam or Clara. She dies of cancer; Paul, broken, finally turns from death toward life.
2 must-quotes (verbatim)	(1) "The Bottoms succeeded to Hell Row." (opening) — (2) "He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly." (last line)
2 backup quotes (paraphrase — no quote marks)	(1) Mrs Morel stands among the moonlit white lilies while pregnant with Paul. (2) After the mother's death Paul is "derelict," drifting toward death before choosing life.
2 critics	Mark Schorer (technique not fully controlling autobiography); Alfred Kazin (psychological mother-son study). Backup: Kate Millett (feminist critique).
Technique words	Autobiographical <i>Bildungsroman</i> ; free indirect style; psychological realism; Oedipus complex; symbolism (flowers, moon, light/darkness, the mine); NOT pure stream of consciousness.
Top 3 likely essays	(1) Father-son relationship in <i>Sons and Lovers</i> (🔥 both years). (2) Oedipus complex / mother-fixation (★). (3) Love and marriage in the novel (🔥 Part B, can grow into an essay).

Exam-timing tip: In a 4-hour paper, give a 15-mark essay about 45 minutes — spend 5 minutes planning (thesis + 4 point-headings + your 2 verbatim quotes + 1 critic), then write; never leave an essay half-finished to polish another.