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4th hr.

8-17-12

**“The Rocking Horse Winner”** essay

“The Rocking Horse Winner” is a short story written in **3rd person point of view** by the English **author** D. H. Lawrence. He wrote several famous novels such as *Sons and Lovers* and *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*. He was controversial for his time because he wrote about adultery and homosexuality in the 1930’s and 1940’s. The story is **set** in the suburbs of London around 1926.

The **protagonist** is a boy named Paul. He is around 9 years old. He is a static character. The **antagonist** is Hester, Paul’s mother. She is very cold hearted and only concerned with attaining more and more material things. She is very dissatisfied with her life. She does not love her children or husband. She symbolizes many things wrong with the world today, especially in capitalist societies.

The **plot conflict** is centered on Paul’s quest for love or “luck” as his mother calls it. He rides a rocking horse alone in the attic to find out the winner of horse races. His uncle and the gardener are in collusion with Paul. The **climax** comes when Paul rides to exhaustion to discover the winner of the derby. He shouts out, “Malabar” right before he dies. The **conclusion** is that Hester is rich, but her son is dead.

The **irony** of the story is that the title uses the word, “winner”, but Paul dies. It is **ironic** that after Paul gives his mother a huge sum of money, the house whispers grew louder than ever that there, “must be more money.” It’s **ironic** that Hester doesn’t love her husband or children but fakes love. The fact that his uncle and the gardener are adults but encourage Paul to gamble on horse racing when he is only a lad is rather **ironic**.

The rocking horse is a huge **symbol** in the story. Paul’s frantic rides on the horse **symbolize** people’s mad pursuit of wealth and material possessions. A rocking horse doesn’t really go anywhere. Another **symbol** in the story is Paul’s “mad blue eyes set close together.” It’s as if he is possessed by the devil, which is alluded to at the end by his uncle when he says, “My god Hester, you’re 80,000 pounds to the good, and a poor devil of a son to the bad, but poor devil, poor devil he’s best gone out of a life where he rides his rocking horse to find a winner”. The house whispers were also **symbolic** of the endless quest for wealth and status. The children could hear the whispers. They sensed that the mother did not love them; she only cared about things. Hence, the whispers of the house are also a huge **symbol** in the story.

The story hits the reader over the head with the themes of greed and materialism. Love or the lack thereof is also a theme. The children are very anxious because they don’t feel loved. D. H. Lawrence is attacking capitalist society that measures success by the size of one’s house, car, or bank account. Socio-economic class is the sole measure of success in our culture. He wrote the story to show us we do not have to live this way. We don’t have to subscribe to the status quo. Love, courage, compassion and relationships mean more that money. I believe when a person dies he will be judged by the kindness he showed toward others, yet our society is filled with obsessed workaholics much like Paul in the story. This story was like a Gothic Aesop fable or Grimm’s fairy tale. Lawrence is pleading with us to eschew a life of anxiety as we ride our rocking horses to achieve material “success” in a capitalist society.