D. H. Lawrence on Money

A theme that runs through nearly all Lawrence's works is the celebration of life—the human energy and force that express the joy of existence. Opposing this natural energy is materialism, which Lawrence believed misdirects our energies and warps the soul.

Rolf Gardiner, one of Lawrence's first admirers, managed a large farm in Dorset. In 1926, Lawrence wrote to Gardiner: "And don't be too earnest—earnest—how does one spell it?—nor overburdened by a mission: neither too self-willed. One must be simple and direct, and a bit free from oneself above all."

In another letter to Gardiner, Lawrence makes a rare, brief mention of the evils of materialism.

Villa Mirenda, Scandicci
Florence
18 Dec., 1927

Dear Rolf Gardiner,

... If I were talking to the young, I should say only one thing to them: Don't you live just to make money, either for yourself or for anybody else. Don't look on yourself as a wage slave. Try to find out what life itself is, and live. Repudiate the money idea.

And then I'd teach 'em, if I could, to dance and sing together. The togetherness is important.

But they must first overthrow in themselves the money-fear and money-lust. ...

First Thoughts
1. What did you think of the mother's treatment of her son? of her outlook on life generally?

Shaping Interpretations
2. How do you explain the ever louder voices in the house? In your opinion, why do only Paul and his sisters hear and react to the voices?

3. How would you describe what has happened to Paul by the end of the story?

4. What might the rocking horse symbolize?

5. State the theme of the story, using the words love and money.

6. How would you describe the tone of the story?

Connecting with the Text
7. Review your Quickwrite notes. Can you think of any current examples of tragedy resulting from an obsession with wealth?

Challenging the Text
8. In what ways is the story's ending a distortion of the usual fairy-tale ending? What do you think of Lawrence's decision to end it as he did?