

Literature Insights
General Editor: Charles Moseley

D. H. Lawrence

Sons and Lovers

Andrew Harrison

*'It is a great
tragedy, and
I tell you
I've written
a great book.'*

PUBLICATION DATA

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A Note on the Author

Andrew Harrison has taught at the universities of East Anglia, Nottingham and Warwick. He has published numerous articles on D. H. Lawrence, and he is the author of *D. H. Lawrence and Italian Futurism* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2003) and co-editor (with John Worthen) of a casebook of modern critical essays on *Sons and Lovers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). He is editor of the *Journal of D. H. Lawrence Studies*.

A Note on the Text

This study guide refers readers to the Cambridge Edition of *Sons and Lovers*, edited by Helen Baron and Carl Baron (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). The Cambridge text has been subsequently reproduced (with identical pagination) in a widely available paperback edition with different editorial matter, first published by Penguin Books in 1994.

Acknowledgements

My account of the composition of *Sons and Lovers* is heavily indebted to the scholarly work of Helen and Carl Baron; their Introduction to the Cambridge Edition is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in the genesis and reception of the novel. Likewise, my understanding of Lawrence's early career as an author has been shaped by the authoritative account of it provided in John Worthen's *D. H. Lawrence: The Early Years 1885–1912* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); I strongly recommend this book to those readers who wish to understand the complex relationship between fiction and autobiography in *Sons and Lovers*. I am grateful to Charles Moseley for his very helpful and constructive comments on an early draft.

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Part 1. Introduction

Getting Started: D. H. Lawrence in 1910

D. H. Lawrence started work on the project which would produce *Sons and Lovers* in the autumn of 1910. At this time he had published just two short stories and three sequences of poems, but he had written a great deal and his career as a writer was beginning to take shape as his range of writing contacts widened. Since October 1908 he had been working as a teacher at Davidson Road School in Croydon: he hated the work, but it brought him financial independence and the location allowed him access to the publishing world of London. In June 1909 his childhood girlfriend, Jessie Chambers, had sent several of his poems to Ford Madox Hueffer (later Ford), the influential editor of a new journal called the *English Review*, which published work by (among others) Joseph Conrad, Henry James and H. G. Wells. To Lawrence's delight, Hueffer was impressed with the work he saw and asked to see Lawrence at his London offices. Through Hueffer, Lawrence published poems in the journal, together with a short story entitled 'Goose Fair'; he was also introduced to London literary circles. In December 1909 he sent the manuscript of his first novel (entitled 'Nethermere', later *The White Peacock*) to the publishing firm of William Heinemann, together with a supporting letter from Hueffer; it was accepted in January 1910 and would be published a year later, in January 1911. Between March and August 1910 he had also written the first full draft of a second novel entitled 'The Saga of Siegmund' (later *The Trespasser*), based on a diary kept by one of his teaching colleagues whose lover had committed suicide in August 1909. As he started the first draft of 'Paul Morel' (his initial title for *Sons and Lovers*), his second novel was under consideration with Heinemann.

These details underline the speed with which Lawrence's literary career was launched, but the transition from teacher to professional writer was far from easy. Before he resigned his teaching post due to ill health in February 1912, Lawrence had to fit his writing around his busy work schedule. He had no experience of dealing with publishers and had little or no understanding of literary commerce. Without