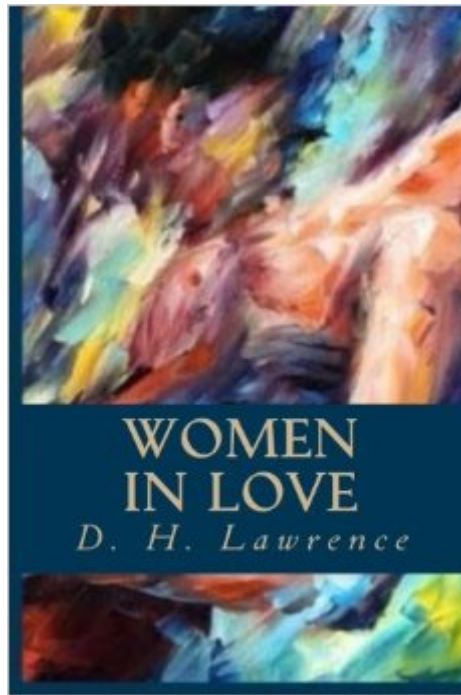


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Women In Love



Synopsis

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Paperback

Publisher: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1535429143

ISBN-13: 978-1535429146

Product Dimensions: 0.9 x 6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (131 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #4,014,083 in Books (See Top 100 in Books)

Customer Reviews

Written in 1920 and often regarded as D. H. Lawrence's greatest novel, *Women in Love* is the complex story of two women and two men who scrutinize their lives and personal needs in an effort to discover something that makes the future worth living. The personal and social traumas of post-World War I, combined with the rise of industry and urbanization, have affected all four main characters, often at cross purposes as they explore love and its role in their lives. Intensely introspective and self-conscious, each character shares his/her thoughts with the reader, allowing the reader to participate in the inner conflicts and crises that each faces. Ursula Brangwen, a teacher in a mining town in the Midlands, is attracted to Rupert Birkin, a school supervisor; her sister Gudrun, an artist whose sculptures have drawn some attention in London, is drawn to Gerald Crich, whose father is a mine owner. As the two women earn their living and consider the issue of marriage, which they regard as an impediment to their independence, the men deal with issues of sexuality and power, and whether the love of a woman is enough. Both men have homosexual urges which compete with their feelings for women. Gerald is the most conflicted of the four. Taking over the mines upon the death of his father, he is fiercely committed to making them successful, even if that means hardening his heart toward his workers. He feels no sense of responsibility

toward them, dedicating his efforts toward success and power, an attitude he conveys also toward Gudrun, who finds him self-centered but physically attractive.

Women in Love by D. H. Lawrence is a sequel, but knowledge of *The Rainbow* is not necessary to appreciate the second novel. The title is somewhat misleading, as it is really about women and men, men and women, and men and men-and it's not always clear with what they are in love. It is the tale of two teachers, sisters Gudrun and Ursula Brangwen, the son of the local mine owner, Gerald Crich, and school inspector Rupert Birkin. Their complex relationships start to take shape the day of Gerald's sister's wedding, as Gudrun and Gerald and Ursula and Rupert are drawn together, often despite themselves. The Gudrun/Gerald relationship becomes a series of conflicts that are won only temporarily and that lead to more conflicts and then temporary reprieves of tenderness and sex. His emotional conflicts with Gudrun are mirrored in Gerald's dealings with animals; he brutally forces his mare to stay at a railroad crossing despite her terror until blood is drawn and until the cars have passed. Later, when his sister's rabbit resists being picked up so he can be sketched, Gerald punches him in the head so he will submit instantly. His blind will must triumph in all. The only time that he and Gudrun seem to find an equilibrium is when they balance each other by accepting but not gravitating toward each other. It becomes a tenuous relationship at best and a dangerous one at worst. Gerald is incapable of love, as is his brooding mother. Meanwhile, Ursula finds herself in a different kind of battle, with Rupert and his self-contemptuous philosophies about relationships, death, and the will. His vision of love, if he even believes it exists, is of two planets circling one another in perfect equilibrium.

A sequel to "*The Rainbow*," "*Women in Love*" seems to be a more personal novel for its author, as D.H. Lawrence introduces a character to echo his own feelings about love and the world. This character is Rupert Birkin, a misanthrope who thumbs his nose defiantly at any and all social conventions and has few, if any, likeable qualities. It is this man with whom Ursula Brangwen, the individualistic heroine from "*The Rainbow*," falls in love, but even she is not blind to his disagreeableness. Ursula, now 26 years old, teaches in the school of her coalmining hometown, Beldover. In the first scene in the novel where she and Rupert, a school inspector, reveal their mutual acquaintance, they are standing in front of her class, transforming her botanical lecture into a wellspring of sexual innuendo in what appears to be Lawrence's playful attempt at provoking the censors who prudishly criticized his prior work. Also participating in this scene is Hermione Roddice, a haughty aristocratic woman who harbors a secret desire to humiliate and control men, specifically

the headstrong Rupert. Meanwhile, Ursula's prettier and more vivacious younger sister Gudrun, an artist, is attracted to Gerald Crich, heir to the seemingly cursed Crich coal dynasty. Almost the opposite of Rupert, Gerald is a proud, practical, and conscientious businessman who lays down the law with his coal miners and is cruel to his animals, feeling he deserves nothing less than unconditional obedience. The provocative nature of this novel is that Gerald is attracted to Rupert -- socially, physically, sexually -- possibly because he considers Rupert a symbol of liberation from the workaday world he is secretly tired of; and this feeling is readily reciprocated.

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