The Rainbow Study Guide

The Rainbow by D. H. Lawrence

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

The Rainbow chronicles three generations of Brangwens living near Marsh Farm. Sexually stormy marriages set the stage for conflict and power struggles within the home. Tradition, passion, children, and compromise define the Brangwen clan, giving its members both happiness and sadness. Ursula Brangwen, the granddaughter of the original Brangwens, takes on the pressures of her upbringing in order to experience life and love on her own terms.

The Brangwen family has lived at Marsh Farm for many generations. The family has a long established connection with the earth. When Tom Brangwen inherits the farm, he wants to add excitement to his life by marrying Lydia, a recent widow, and a Polish exile. Lydia has a daughter, Anna, from her previous marriage. Tom and Lydia's marriage is distant and silent. They do not understand each other, but have a strong sexual connection. During Lydia's pregnancy with Tom's children, Tom and Anna bond. Tom and Anna remain extremely close throughout her childhood. When Anna grows up, Tom has a difficult time dealing with Anna's marriage to his nephew, Will. Tom objects to Will and Anna's marriage at first, but eventually agrees to help them out.

Anna and Will set up their own home in a nearby cottage. They enjoy the first weeks of their marriage but quickly return to normal routines. Their marriage is full of passion, but is often sidetracked by many pregnancies. Anna is obsessed with fertility and Will withdraws into his handicraft hobbies. The only thing that bonds them to each other is sex. They battle each other for dominance in their stormy marriage, although neither one thinks that they are capable of understanding each other on anything other than a sexual level.

Will and Anna have eight children, the oldest of which is Ursula. Ursula dislikes having to take care of her younger brothers and sisters and longs for a more meaningful life. During her schooldays, she dreams of the life of the upper classes and explores her religious faith. She is often conflicted about the role of Christianity in everyday life. She falls in love with Anton Skrebensky, the son of an old family friend. When he goes to fight in South Africa, they are unsure how their relationship will progress.

Ursula finishes school after forming a relationship with one of her female teachers, Miss Inger. She is confused by Miss Inger's sexual advances, but eventually introduces her to her homosexual uncle. Miss Inger and the uncle marry to cover their homosexual activities. Ursula accepts a teaching position in a poor neighborhood, but continues to live at home. Ursula dislikes teaching, and particularly dislikes the corporal punishment she is forced to inflict on her students. After teaching for two years, she goes to college to get her degree. She enjoys the first year of college, especially Botany. Meanwhile, her father has been promoted as an Arts and Handicrafts Instructor for the county. The whole family moves to a bigger house in a fancier neighborhood. They enjoy their new social position.

During her last year of college, Ursula reconnects with Anton Skrebensky. During his six-month leave from the army, he and Ursula begin an affair. Ursula loses interest in her classes and routinely leaves school to be with Anton. During the Easter holidays, the two of them go on holiday together, pretending to be married. Ursula fails her university exams and gets engaged to Anton. Ursula does not really want to marry Anton and calls off the engagement shortly before he leaves for India. After he leaves, Ursula realizes that she is pregnant. She tries to contact Anton, but he does not reply to her letters. She miscarries and loses her baby. She discovers a new independence and starts her life again.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

The Rainbow chronicles three generations of Brangwens living near Marsh Farm. Sexually stormy marriages set the stage for conflict and for power struggles within the home. Tradition, passion, children, and compromise define the Brangwen clan, giving its members both happiness and sadness. Ursula Brangwen, the granddaughter of the original Brangwens, takes on the pressures of her upbringing in order to experience life and love on her own terms.

The Brangwen family comes from a long line of farmers. The men of the family feel a strong bond to agriculture and nature while the women long for something more sophisticated along the lines of city life. The youngest son of the family, Tom, is sent to school but is not successful there. After graduating, he returns to run the farm and eventually takes over the farm after his parents die.

Tom is conflicted because of his ideals about love and his sexual instincts. On one short vacation, he has a romantic encounter with a woman in the countryside that leads to an interaction with a foreign man. This experience makes him long for something exotic in his life. He drowns his thoughts in bouts of binge drinking. Time passes until Mrs. Lensky, the widow of a Polish doctor, comes to town as the housekeeper to the vicar. She has a little girl, Anna, and she excites Tom with her exotic background. Tom learns more about her over time and interacts with her in many mundane transactions. Finally, he proposes to her. At first, she is unsure about accepting him and tries to convince him not to ask. They quietly agree to marry, though they both know that they will never really understand each other.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The opening of the chapter puts a great deal of emphasis on the division between men and women. The male connection to the earth is contrasted with the female connection to society. This division foreshadows a reversal of the gender roles for future generations of the Brangwen family, where the female connection to fertility is contrasted with the male connection to world events. However, the division between men and women is a theme that continues to be problematic for many characters, people whom are able to form a physical but not a mental bond.

Tom Brangwen and Lydia Lensky fulfill certain needs for each other. Tom is looking for something exotic and removed from everyday life. Lydia, on the other hand, is still overcome with depression and is looked for something stable. The two do not really know each other, and only go through the courtship routines after having agreed to marry, instead of before, as is the usual case. This separation between them will

continue as they try to bond with one another. Their inability to bond will continue to be a problem, and will be illustrated in the relationships of their children and grandchildren.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Lydia Lensky is the daughter of a Polish landowner who is married to a revolutionary Polish doctor. Much of her married life revolves around the revolution, as she follows her husband into exile. Her husband dies shortly after the birth of their daughter in London. Lydia's first job is as a nurse in Yorkshire. During this time Lydia lives in a deep depression, barely registering anything around her. After arriving in Cossethay, she feels an attraction to Tom in the midst of her depression.

After his proposal, they go through the routines of courtship, an experience that makes them extremely uncomfortable with each other. Tom dreads the wedding, and is scared of married life. Their married life begins awkwardly, with little understanding between them. They are silent as they try to learn about each other. Lydia tries to tell him about her childhood in Poland, but it only makes him feel more distant from her. This distance builds into anger, though it is broken by periods of intense sexual activity.

Lydia gets pregnant. A more open relationship develops between Tom and his four-year-old stepdaughter, Anna. Anna is very protective of her mother and has a difficult time adjusting to her new life on the farm. Tom and Anna bond the night that Lydia goes into labor, as they comfort each other outside the birthing room.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Lydia and Tom do not grow any closer after their marriage. Their attempt to explain their backgrounds just leads them to more confusion. The only way that they can bond is sexually. This pattern foreshadows the interactions between men and women throughout the next few generations of the Brangwen family. Sex remains the only point in which the male and female characters can have any meaningful bond.

While Tom cannot bond with his wife, he does bond with his stepdaughter, Anna. Anna participates in Tom's life outside the house in a way that Lydia cannot. Anna and Tom are both outsiders to Lydia, and this common feeling bonds them to each other.

The scene in the birthing room is repeated throughout the novel. Polite society during the time period that *The Rainbow* was written would have been embarrassed to even mention the word "pregnancy." The birth scenes used in *The Rainbow* are very graphic and sensual, making the experience into something natural. Nevertheless, Lydia, like other women in the novel, gives birth in the dark while her husband waits outside the room. Birth is seen as the conclusion of the sexual contact between husband and wife, yet it also serves as the moment that separates husband and wife in a fundamental way.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Lydia gives birth to a boy, Tom Junior. Tom and Anna continue bonding as the relationship between Tom and Lydia falls apart. Tom takes Anna on his business errands, including the market day trips that he makes once a week. The relationship between Tom and Lydia is tense, with each of them feeling rejected by the other but at a loss to reconnect. They do not understand each other because of their different cultures and their silent natures.

Tom visits his brother's mistress and momentarily wishes for a different life. He thinks that he has missed out on a lot of different experiences because he chose to take over the family farm. On returning home, Lydia confronts him because she wants to know why he has not been attentive to her. Tom is unable to explain how he feels. They reconnect sexually and come to the realization that this is the only thing that binds them and that they will never understand each other on any other level.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Anna takes on the emotional role in Tom's life that Lydia cannot. Their relationship grows because it is outside of the home, and therefore outside of Lydia's world. The initial division between male and female, in which the man concentrates on the farm while the woman concentrates on society, is reversed in their relationship. Lydia's world ends at her front door, while Tom does most of the interaction with the outside world. Lydia's personality and background distances her from both her husband and her children.

Tom's taste for a more upper class experience continues despite his marriage to someone he considers exotic. His admiration for his brother's mistress shows that he continues to long for something that is not provided in his life. This longing falls into a pattern that will be experienced by many of the Brangwen family. Similarly, Lydia's role as the partner not interested in anything beyond their domestic life will form a pattern in other Brangwen family members. The relationship between Tom and Lydia forms an archetype of the relationships that their children and grandchildren will experience.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Anna is sent to the girl's school in town but she does not make any friends and remains separate from the other townspeople. She looks down on everyone around her, though she does not do well in school. One person of interest is Baron Skrebensky, another Polish exile who Anna visits with her mother. The Baron has not adjusted to English life the way that Lydia has and resents Lydia and Anna for not maintaining their Polish heritage. Anna grows up as an outsider in the town and wants a more ladylike existence for herself. She is only comfortable around her family.

Her uncomplicated position is made complicated by the arrival of her cousin, Will, who has taken an apprenticeship in the nearby village. Anna is attracted to Will. The two of them go to church where Will's emotional singing makes Anna laugh out loud during the service. The two of them develop a serious romantic connection that slowly becomes physical. They discover their sexuality among the agricultural environment, using many of the farming and harvest routines to form a closer sexual relationship. Their connection is shown in the various wooden objects that Will makes for her, including a sculpture of Adam and Eve that he never finishes.

Tom sees them together in a compromising position in the barn and grows angry and jealous. He is angry that Anna has grown up and moved beyond him. A few days later, Will proposes and tells Tom and Lydia about his intentions. They object because of his lack of money and experience. Tom angrily confronts Anna about the marriage plans. Tom's own jealousy toward Anna and Will keeps him from yielding to their wishes. Finally, he accepts his place as the father rather than as the center of Anna's attention. He helps the young people set up their first home.

Chapter 4 Analysis

Tom and Anna are divided by an understanding of time. Tom does not feel that he has matured or has reached his full potential and therefore he does not understand that his stepdaughter has grown from childhood to adulthood. In seeking to keep her in a child position, what he really wants is to maintain his own youth and promise. Eventually, he comes to the realization that Anna has grown up and must begin her own life. At the same time, however, he does not feel that he has grown up and matured.

Anna and Will's relationship develops from a physical bond between them. Their sexual awakening is accompanied by symbols of agricultural fertility, including the harvest during which they work together. This simple, almost inhuman fertility further foreshadows the direction that their marriage will take. In addition, Anna's reaction to Will's singing in the church provides more clues to how their philosophical ideas about life are different. Anna does not pay much attention in church, whereas Will is deeply

moved. At this point in their relationship, they feel this difference is humorous, but later on, it will be a problem.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Anna's wedding day arrives. Tom feels uncomfortable during the ceremony in his role as the father of the bride. Many of Tom's feelings about his own maturity complicate his role. The ceremony is completed and the reception brings all the family together. Everyone enjoys the reception, and many of the men get very drunk. Tom makes a long speech about the need for marriage. This speech reveals a lot about Tom's own marriage, including the essential division between men and women. The newlyweds leave amidst the advice and well wishing of the family. The men of the group go out and serenade the newlywed couple outside their window.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The wedding day is routine. Tom is uncomfortable throughout the ceremony because he is uncomfortable with himself and his position in the ceremony. Tom's speech about the need for marriage underscores the marriages that occur throughout the novel. All the marriages follow the pattern that Tom sets out in his speech, in that they reflect a fundamental bonding of male and female, generally for sexual and fertility purposes, a bonding that has little to do with the individual men and women that enter into the marriage.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Anna and Will have a two week honeymoon period where they spend all day alone together in their new home. They sleep until noon and make love all the time. Will enjoys the disconnection from the real world and is angered when Anna wants to begin their social life again. Anna begins to feel smothered by Will's constant need for her to pay attention to him. She is afraid and full of hatred toward Will. After a brief loving period, the two of them have a stormy relationship as they learn that they do not really understand each other. Neither one understands what the other wants. Instead, they form a pattern of intense love and intense conflict. One of the conflicts is over Will's religious feelings, coming from his appreciation of religious art and architecture, which Anna continually ridicules.

Will wants Anna to respect him as a man but she only loves him as a lover. Anna finds out that she is pregnant and is unsure how to tell Will. She consults her parents in order to gain courage. When Anna tells Will that she is pregnant, he is upset that he is left out of the experience. During her pregnancy, the conflict continues, as Will and Anna pull apart into their separate interests. The two of them continue to fight. One night he sleeps in a separate bedroom. Anna feels that she is under intense pressure from Will to lose her own self. Anna gives birth to a daughter, Ursula. The birth makes Will feel even more distant from her. She grows proud of her maternal qualities. Pregnancy has given her a new way to control her life, as well as shut out her husband. Will and Anna are still strongly attracted to each other, but have little else in common. The only way that they can bond is through sex. Anna very quickly gets pregnant again.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Anna and Will begin the pattern that defines their marriage. The real bond between them is sexual; there is little else over which they can bond. Anna is much more interested in the personal, while Will is interested in the eternal, particularly religion and art. Will wants to dominate his wife because he thinks that this is the proper role for a man in marriage. Anna resents Will's attempts to control her and makes her own independence clear from the beginning. Anna and Will continue the pattern set by Anna's parents. They do not relate to each other as individuals, but as archetypes of "male" and "female." Unlike Tom and Lydia, however, Anna and Will battle for dominance.

Anna's pregnancy and the birth of their daughter, Ursula, set up the pattern for Anna's life. The connection to fertility and a domestic center take Anna above her husband's need for power. She wins the battle of male and female with her single-minded focus on children and childbirth. Will gives up his plan of dominating the house and retreats to a supporting position.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Anna's family continues its relationship with the Baron Skrebensky. His Polish wife dies and he remarries a younger English woman. They have a son. The Baron has changed significantly from the early days when he criticized Lydia and Anna for not speaking Polish. He and his new wife have embraced English life. Anna and Will visit this couple during the early days of their marriage. The visit makes Anna long for a different life than the one she shares with her husband.

After leaving the Skrebensky's, Will and Anna visit Lincoln Cathedral. Both enjoy the Cathedral, although Anna's interpretation of the artwork upsets Will. Will wants to focus on the eternal beauty of the art, while Anna wants to discuss the personal life of the artist. This interpretation disturbs Will and offends his long held religious feelings. Will continues to enjoy religious architecture but does so on his own while Anna fills her time with the new baby. Their married life continues to be stormy, although Will does give up his attempts to control Anna. Her children fulfill her while he spends time with his work and hobbies.

Chapter 7 Analysis

The Skrebensky family represents another strange assimilation by immigrants into the community. Baron Skrebensky, who prided himself in his Polish heritage and connections, has married into English society. Like Lydia before him, the Baron loses a great deal of his Polish identity in this way and settles into a very normal and comfortable life in England. His son, Anton, is therefore raised in the English tradition instead of the Polish one. This background will affect Anton in the future.

Anna and Will show the difference between themselves on a philosophical level. In Lincoln Cathedral, Will wants the art and architecture to reflect an eternal beauty while Anna wants it to reflect the real people who created it. On returning to Cossethay, Will and Anna go their separate ways, emotionally and mentally, although they continue to be physically drawn to each other. Lincoln Cathedral, therefore, is a symbol of the mental and emotional difference between them that cannot be overcome.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Will develops a strong bond with the baby, Ursula. The second daughter, Gudrun, is born. The relationship between Anna and Will settles down as they become content with their various activities. The family expands quickly with the addition of two more daughters, Catherine and Theresa. The added responsibility bears down on Will. He spends much of his time at work or in his workshop, trying to escape his family. Little Ursula tries to comfort him, but his expectations are far beyond her childish abilities. He yells at her when she cannot do something. Will teaches Ursula to swim by scaring her and then ridiculing her. He wants to control Ursula but, like her mother, Ursula is determined to be independent.

As the girls grow up, Will's attitude changes. He begins to spend a lot of time away from home, often in the company of other women. He meets many women that he could have an affair with, but he does not have sex with them. His interest in other women rekindles the passion with his wife, although they continue to be distant in all other respects.

There is an educational movement to teach vocational skills to the youth of Britain. Will is very interested in this movement and begins to develop ideas on his own. Will starts teaching night school classes in carpentry. These classes provide Will with something to be proud of outside of his home. He is interested in his new work and soon gains a good reputation in the community because of it. Ursula, at eight years old, follows her father blindly, feeling great admiration for him.

Chapter 8 Analysis

Will is unable to control Anna, and uses Ursula as a substitute. While Will's love for Ursula is strong, it is not stronger than his need for someone to be obedient to him. Many of the occasions where Ursula and her father could positively bond are ruined by her father's inability to recognize what a child her age and experience is capable of. By expecting such a small child to do so many complicated things, Will holds unfair expectations of Ursula. Will's need for dominance shapes Ursula. The early events of Ursula's life foreshadow how she will approach independence as an adult. Ursula's hunger for independence stems from her early childhood experiences, specifically from her father's criticisms and belittling of her.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Back at Marsh Farm, Anna's younger brothers have grown up. Tom (Junior) is an intelligent young man and is attached to a respected engineer. Fred, the younger brother, has a natural affinity to agriculture and will follow his father on the farm. Tom and Lydia have grown old together and become very wealthy and semi-retired. They are proud of their children but do not often speak to each other. At one point, Tom (Junior) separates from his famous engineer benefactor and travels the world.

Tom continues to drink heavily in town in order to forget his disappointment at how his life has turned out. After a night of drinking in town, Tom accidentally drowns on his way home. Lydia has a premonition that something has happened to him. His body is discovered the next morning and is taken to Anna's house. The death affects the two sons very much. Lydia withdraws further from the world, although her relationship with Ursula develops. She shares stories about her girlhood in Poland, including her courtship by her first husband. She feels that her first husband never knew her as well as Tom did.

Chapter 9 Analysis

At this point in the story, the reader does not suspect that Tom Brangwen Junior is homosexual. The short description given of him gives many clues about him, including the reference to the older man who gives Tom his first real job. This delicate handling of homosexual issues continues throughout the book, where the physical expression of homosexuality is shown more clearly through female behavior. As a male homosexual, Tom Junior is, for the most part, covered up and hidden in the background of the novel.

The end of Tom and Lydia's marriage follows the same pattern set earlier. Tom is still looking for adventure and excitement, and these longings lead to his death. Lydia, after Tom has died, explains that she felt closer to Tom than to her first husband. This is ironic because during her marriage with Tom, neither one felt very close to the other. They each believed that the other could never truly understand them.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Ursula feels the burden of responsibility toward her younger siblings. The girls form a long-standing feud with the Phillips boys, resulting in many schoolyard fights. At age twelve, Ursula and Gudrun are sent to Grammar School in Nottingham. Ursula is glad to be able to escape from her noisy and crowded family for a while. She finds another hiding place in the nearby Church. One day she accidentally leaves the door to the church unlocked, and her younger siblings mess up the church building. Her father hits her across the face as punishment.

Ursula does well in school and develops a mystical Christian religious faith. One of her most pressing religious issues is the literal interpretation of the Bible and the humanity of Christ. She wants to be a good Christian but she does not like the doctrine that Christians should give up their possessions and live in poverty. Ursula feels a huge disgust toward poverty and toward the few poor people she knows. Instead, she is attracted to beautiful ceremonies, art, and music.

Chapter 10 Analysis

The relationship between Anna and Will spills over into their children. Because Anna cares only about her own fertility, and Will cares only about his outside hobbies, Ursula is put in the position of caretaker to her younger siblings. She resents the time she must devote to them as well as the lifestyle that has taken over the house. Like her father, she finds an escape in the church. However, this same preference for the church leads to yet another humiliating physical punishment by her father. In this way, Ursula's feelings about religion are confused by the reality of her life. Not surprisingly, Ursula very strongly feels the division in church teachings.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Ursula sinks into a spiritual depression as she tries to figure out how to reconcile Christ's teachings with everyday life. During her adolescent awkwardness, she meets Anton, the son of the Skrebensky's, who is on leave from the army's engineering corps. Ursula falls in love with him because he is independent and knows his own mind. One day the two go to a carnival together and have an exciting time. They stop by a church on the way home. Ursula and Skrebensky have a conversation about relationships. Later that evening, they kiss for the first time. Their relationship continues during his many visits to her home. His leave ends and he goes away unsatisfied with their physical relationship.

He returns for Fred Brangwen's wedding, in which Ursula is a bridesmaid. After the wedding, they walk together along the canal where Ursula goes to look inside a barge. She meets the family that lives on the barge and has a conversation with them. The family has a new baby that they agree to name after Ursula. Ursula gives the baby a necklace that her father made for her. She enjoys the incident but Anton is annoyed. Anton explains why he has chosen to go to war for England. He feels that the national is bigger than the personal. However, for Ursula, there is nothing bigger than the personal. During the wedding, they dance together, but she feels burdened by him. They continue their courtship although the initial passion is gone. Anton leaves to serve in the Boer War.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Ursula and Anton represent a third phase in the relationships of the Brangwen family. Like Ursula's parents, Ursula and Anton meet during a family gathering when both of them are ready to begin dating. Unlike Ursula's parents, however, Ursula and Anton's relationship does not begin quickly. They date each other for some time without moving toward sex or marriage. While Anna and Will moved toward a passion that consumed them, Ursula and Anton are unsure and unwilling to commit themselves too far. This continues when they meet for the second time at the wedding. Ursula and Anton feel no real connection to each other, not even physically, and yet, nonetheless, they go through the motions of a relationship.

Anton's explanation of why he is leaving to fight in South Africa reflects his own upbringing and symbolizes why his relationship with Ursula is not going anywhere. He rejects the personal and thinks of himself in terms of the nation. Similarly, his relationship with Ursula rejects the personal, and concentrates on the forms and routines of courtship without the passion experienced by Ursula's parents.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Ursula is finishing up her schooling. She forms a bond with one of her teachers, Winifred Inger. Ursula's schoolgirl crush makes her excited to take classes with Miss Inger. They have a physical encounter during a swimming class. Miss Inger invites Ursula to tea. She tells her stories about prostitutes and women who die in childbirth. The two bathe naked together. Miss Inger introduces her to many new ideas, including secular humanism and feminism. Ursula is not sure what to think of her friendship. She is proud that such an interesting woman wants to spend time with her, but she is also concerned that Miss Inger will try to possess her and keep her from being independent.

Ursula begins to want some freedom from Miss Inger, so Miss Inger leaves for London to preserve the relationship. Ursula invites her to visit her at her Uncle Tom's house with the intention of pairing the two of them. When Miss Inger and Tom meet each other, they realize that they have a lot in common. On the one hand, they both are homosexual. On the other, they both enjoy scientific and mechanical things. They decide to marry because they are well suited to each other. Ursula is disgusted by how quickly they decide to marry.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Miss Inger represents an important chapter in the sexual life of Ursula Brangwen. Her homosexual advances are easily hidden within tradition and propriety. Ursula herself does not know what is going on between them. At the same time, Ursula does feel that her independence is compromised. This feeling will continue to define Ursula's romantic relationships, both male and female.

Ursula does not understand the relationship that springs up between Miss Inger and Tom Junior. The reader is given many clues about homosexuality and the need to disguise it with a traditional marriage. The narrator, however, never mentions homosexuality by name, other than the designation of "dark corruption." In a novel that focuses so heavily on heterosexual passion, these homosexual characters are looked down on and treated negatively. Ursula, in particular, erases all memory and contact with Miss Inger, as though their relationship never really happened.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Ursula returns home. She is extremely unhappy living with her mother and the seven other children who now share the house. Her mother cares only about babies and ridicules Ursula's other aspirations. Will has gone through a series of artistic phases, moving from woodwork to sculpture to painting to jewelry to metalwork. Ursula looks for a way to get out of her life. Ursula's former school headmistress advises her to take a position as an elementary school teacher. Her father is upset that Ursula has an opportunity to leave. Ursula tries to explain why she wants to go, but her parents do not listen to her. Her father tries to belittle her so that she will not go. She sends off applications and gets an interview at Kingston-on-Thames. Her parents are extremely upset and angry that she wants to leave. They forbid her from leaving and instead find her a position at a local school.

She goes to her new position at St. Phillips School and quickly learns to hate everything about it. She feels that she is better than the position while realizing that she is very bad at the job. She cannot get control of her class and is in fear of losing her job. Her boss, Mr. Harby, is very mean to her and makes her very uncomfortable. Her students are also very mean to her, and she does not know what to do to make them listen to her. One day, she snaps and beats one of her students. This helps her maintain discipline but makes her feel very depressed. Mr. Harby encourages her to continue beating her students. She makes a new friend in one of her fellow teachers, Maggie Schofield. She looks forward to finishing her two years of teaching so she can attend college.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Ursula's attempts to find work illustrate the ways that her parents have insulated themselves into their own routines. Anna cares only about domestic matters and uses the opportunity to belittle Ursula for caring about anything else. Will, thinking more of his own position as the father of a working daughter, tries to belittle and criticize Ursula into abandoning her hopes of independence. Anna and Will battle for dominance over Ursula, trying to break her independent spirit.

Ursula, on the other hand, is conflicted about how best to free herself from her parents. Her desperate need for independence puts her in many positions that she dislikes. She dislikes the whole process of applying for jobs and moving, but she knows she must do something to have her own money and her own life. She yields very quickly to her parents' demands, agreeing to take a job but still live at home. It is interesting how she takes her parents' orders to stay at home, and accepts their word as law. The period that she lives in has a lot to do with her decision, yet the reader has to wonder how a male child would have reacted differently or if he would have been given more leeway by the parents.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Ursula grows happy through her friendship with Maggie. She enjoys visiting Maggie's family at their home in Belcote. She develops a romantic relationship with Maggie's brother, Anthony, although she recognizes that she wants to be free to travel while he is settled in his life. She waits through the second year of teaching in order to go to college. She still hates her job, but she has settled into the familiar routine of it and no longer has the same level of problems that she did when she started.

At the same time, Will has accepted a position as the Arts and Handwork instructor of Nottingham County. The position is very important and brings the Brangwen family into a higher level of society. The family moves to a house in Beldover, Willet Green. The family settles into their new home and in their new social position.

Ursula leaves her teaching position at the end of the school year. She is surprised by the kindness shown to her by the students and staff. She is saddened to leave the school, but she is also very excited to move on to college. She is sure that college will be a new and wonderful experience; one that will make up for the two years she struggled teaching.

Chapter 14 Analysis

The Brangwen family has officially made the transition from agriculture to town life that was mentioned in the opening pages of the novel. Will's promotion to a higher position raises the social expectations of everyone in the family. It is ironic that Will's promotion is a direct result of his indifference to his family. His new job as Arts and Handwork Instructor has developed from the many hobbies and interests that he used in order to avoid his problems at home. Ursula, although she claims that she wants to be independent, is very pleased with the new social position of her family.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Ursula settles into her college studies. She will attend college for three years to gain her B.A. in addition to her teaching training. Her first year is full of activity. She is intimidated by her professors and has the most joy during her Botany class. She enjoys the college experience and makes a friend, Dorothy Russell. She passes her Intermediate Arts exams and goes on holiday at the seaside.

On returning to school, she is disillusioned and no longer interested in her studies or admiring of her professors. During her last term, she receives a letter from Anton and arranges to meet him. They rekindle their romance because they both see through the materialism of their lives. Anton is on a six-month leave before going to India. Over the Easter holiday, Anton and Ursula go away together, pretending to be married. First they stay in a hotel in Piccadilly, then move on to Paris, Rouen, and then back to London. They have a wonderful time, and explore their sexuality together. Anton wants to get married but Ursula insists on her freedom. Her family encourages her to marry Anton. Ursula and Anton get engaged and plan to go to India after her exams. Yet, even during the initial preparations for a wedding, Ursula is unsure that she wants to get married.

When they go to London to take her exams, she tells him she does not want to marry him. Because she has not studied, she fails her exams and does not earn her B.A. Anton hopes that this will encourage her to marry him. She has to choose between marriage and looking for another teaching position. In the meantime, her engagement continues. She and Anton go to a house party together. During an emotional encounter in the sea, she makes her final decision and leaves alone the next day. Anton quickly marries someone else and leaves for India.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Ursula's life goes through many fundamental changes. Her college experiences, although eagerly anticipated, quickly becoming boring and routine like every other chapter in her life. Her boredom at school is alleviated by the return of Anton. This time around, Ursula and Anton do make the break with conventions necessary to propel them into a relationship. Their secret holiday over Easter shows a wild side to both of them that has not been seen before. Their sexual relationship takes on the same characteristic as Anna and Will's during the first days of their marriage. The difference, of course, is that they are not married to each other.

While Ursula continues seeking independence, the wildness of their relationship begins to scare Anton. Anton takes on the pattern established by Will in trying to dominate Ursula. Anton needs the stability and security of marriage to Ursula. Ursula, on the other hand, is going through a series of rejections. She rejects her education. She rejects

Anton. All of these things seem to symbolize an attachment that compromises her independence.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Ursula discovers that she is pregnant. This makes her very nervous and she is not sure what she should do about it. Ursula begins to sympathize with her mother in the connection to pregnancy. She decides that the only thing she can do is write to Anton and tell him that she wants to marry him and wants to go to India. She writes Anton, asking to join him in India, but he does not reply.

While walking in the woods, she is surrounded by stampeding horses. The physical strain leaves her ill for many weeks and causes a miscarriage. She is sick for a long time, and therefore has a lot of time to think about her life. She comes out of the situation with new independence and begins her life again. On her recovery, she sees a rainbow that gives her confidence that she will be able to start her life again.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Ursula's independence is temporarily threatened by her pregnancy. When she thinks she is pregnant, she abandons all of her dreams and thinks that she is content to settle down with Anton in a normal life. After the miscarriage, Ursula is newly freed from her limitations and can, once again, contemplate a new life for herself.

The rainbow that Ursula sees symbolizes her overcoming her problems. It also symbolizes the happiness she can look forward to in the future, when the past has been washed away. Ursula sees the rainbow as a new beginning, where she will be strong and independent.

Characters

Tom Brangwen

Tom Brangwen is the younger son of the Brangwen family and takes over the family farm after the death of his father. Tom seeks something different from the ordinary routine, but has trouble finding it. He married Lydia Lensky, a Polish exile, because he thinks she is exotic and interesting. After their marriage, Tom and Lydia do not really understand each other because of their different backgrounds and cultures. Tom becomes attached to Anna, Lydia's daughter from a previous marriage. His bond with her is very strong throughout her childhood, although they drift apart after their marriage.

Tom spends all of his life seeking something adventurous and different. Aside from his marriage to Lydia, Tom admires all foreign people and people who travel. He is jealous of his brother's higher-class lifestyle. These factors all lead to his own death, after he has drowned his disappointment in alcohol for the last time.

Lydia Lensky Brangwen

Lydia is born in Poland to a very wealthy family. As a young woman, she married Doctor Lensky, a Polish revolutionary. The revolution was the focus of their married life. That focus remained even during the deaths of their two children. When they are exiled in London, Lydia gives birth to Anna shortly before her husband dies. Lydia relies on the charity of strangers to find her a job. She eventually ends up working in Cossethay, where she meets Tom Brangwen.

Her marriage to Tom is distant. She tries to tell him about her life in Poland, but he does not understand. They barely speak to each other throughout their marriage. When Tom dies in an accident, however, Lydia believes that he understood her better than anyone else did.

Anna Lensky Brangwen

Anna has Polish parents but is raised in England. She forms a very close relationship with her stepfather, Tom Brangwen. When Anna meets Will, she forms a passionate attachment to him. Against her mother and stepfather's wishes, she insists on marrying him.

After marriage, Anna and Will begin an intense relationship characterized by extreme sexual passion and absolute hatred and disgust. Anna fights against Will's attempts to dominate her. She finds independence from him in pregnancy. After her first baby, Ursula, is born, Anna discovers the joys of motherhood and concentrates her whole life

on that. She ignores all other things around her, including her husband. Anna devotes her life to having children, and gives birth to nine babies, eight of which survive birth.

Anna has very little connection to her children who are no longer babies. She and her daughter Ursula fight often because Anna expects Ursula to be as devoted to the babies as is she. Anna has no real interest in her children as teenagers and adults.

Will Brangwen

Will Brangwen is the son of Tom Brangwen's older brother. When he visits Tom, he meets Tom's stepdaughter, Anna. Anna and Will quickly develop a passionate relationship and quickly marry.

The early days of their relationship are the happiest for Will. Soon after, however, he worries that his wife does not respect him. Will is convinced that a husband should dominate his wife, and Will attempts to dominate Anna. This causes big problems for their marriage: problems only covered up by periods of intense sexual connection. After Anna gives birth, Will realizes that he will never be able to dominate her. He retreats into his hobbies, which include woodwork and handicrafts.

This hobby soon translates into a job for Will. First, he teaches night classes to the local community. Several years later, though, he is appointed as the Arts and Handwork Instructor of Nottingham County. This position brings him a great deal of respect and esteem in the local community. He moves his family to Nottingham in order to enjoy a higher social position.

Despite his professional success, Will continues to try to dominate his family, particularly his oldest daughter, Ursula. Will wants the social respect that comes from the fact that his children do not have to work. Ursula's struggle for independence leads her to seek work outside the home, which is potentially damaging to Will's social level. The tactics he uses on Ursula are always criticism and belittling.

Ursula Brangwen

Ursula Brangwen is the eldest child of Anna and Will Brangwen. As the eldest child, she takes on the greatest burden in the family by caring for the many children that her parents produce. Ursula has a strange relationship with her father. On one hand, they are very close and share many of the same ideals about life. On the other hand, Will's need to dominate leads him to humiliate and belittle his child, which gives her an intense need for independence from her family.

Ursula does well in school and graduates from high school, something no one else in the family manages to do. During her last year of high school, she has a short affair with one of her female teachers, Miss Inger. Ursula does not realize the homosexual nature of their relationship, but does seek independence for herself. She takes a job against

the wishes of her parents and teaches school for two years. After graduating, she goes on to college, hoping to earn a B.A.

During her youth, she establishes an on-again-off again relationship with Anton Skrebensky, the son of an old family friend. Their relationship is rekindled after Anton returns from the war in South Africa. During Ursula's last year of college, she grows tired of studying and spends most of her time with Anton. They go away on an Easter trip where they pretend to be married. Ursula, however, does not want to really marry Anton. He leaves for India without her. Ursula realizes that she is pregnant after Anton has left. She tries to get him back, but is unsuccessful, then has a miscarriage. After losing her baby, she decides to start her life again.

Anton Skrebensky

Anton Skrebensky is the son of Baron Skrebensky, a Polish exile, and his second wife, an English lady. The Skrebensky's are friends with Lydia Lensky because of their Polish background. Anton visits Lydia and her new family, the Brangwens, during a short leave from the army engineering corps. During this visit, he meets Ursula, with whom he forms an on-again-off again relationship. He leaves to serve in South Africa during the Boer War.

On returning to England for a six-month leave, Anton reconnects with Ursula. The two of them go away for a holiday pretending to be married. Anton wants to marry Ursula and settle their lives together. Ursula rejects him. Anton marries someone else and goes to India. He never writes to Ursula again, despite her letter describing her pregnancy.

Winifred Inger

Winifred Inger is one of Ursula's teachers during her last year at the high school. She is attracted to Ursula and develops a semi-sexual relationship with her. Ursula is afraid of losing her independence to Miss Inger. Ursula introduces Miss Inger to her uncle, who is also homosexual. Miss Inger and Tom Brangwen Junior agree to marry in order to hide their homosexual activities.

Maggie Schofield

Maggie Schofield is a fellow teacher at St. Phillips School, where Ursula goes for her first job. Unlike the other teachers, Maggie is kind to Ursula and helps her during her first year of teaching. The two grow very close, but Ursula moves on to go to college and experience more life.

Tom Brangwen (Junior)

Tom Brangwen Junior is the eldest son of Tom Brangwen and his wife, Lydia. Tom Junior is an engineer. Early in his professional life, he has a relationship with his mentor, a famous engineer. After breaking off that relationship, he travels abroad for several years. He settles down in Wiggiston, where he buys a large house. His niece Ursula brings her teacher, Miss Inger to meet him. Tom Junior and Miss Inger realize that they are both homosexual and decide to marry each other to hide their homosexuality.

Gudrun Brangwen

Gudrun Brangwen is the second daughter born to Anna and Will Brangwen. Unlike her sister Ursula, Gudrun is quiet and easily led. She follows Ursula through school, but never distinguishes herself. After high school, she attends Art School where she discovers she has some talent as an artist.

Objects/Places

Cossethay

Cossethay is the village in Derbyshire, England where the Brangwens live.

Marsh Farm

A farm inherited through the Brangwen family. Tom Brangwen inherits from his father. He and his wife Lydia raise their three children there. His younger son Fred inherits from Tom.

Ilkeston

Ilkeston is the town in Derbyshire, England where the Brangwens live.

Yew Cottage

Anna and Will move into this cottage after their marriage. They live there until Will's promotion to Nottingham.

The Boer War

The Second Boer War was fought between 1899 and 1902. Dutch and German settlers in South Africa, known as Boers, fought for independence from the British Empire. While the British win this war, it inspires many other British colonies to consider independence from Britain. Anton Skrebensky goes to fight in this war and is gone for several years.

Nottingham Grammar School

After graduating from the local village school, Ursula and her siblings attend Nottingham Grammar School, because it is very close to where they live. Ursula does very well in school, enabling her to go on to further studies.

Wiggiston

Tom Brangwen Junior moves to a home in this area. Ursula brings Miss Inger there to visit him. Tom Junior and Miss Inger marry to cover up their homosexuality.

Kingston on Thames

Part of Greater London, Kingston on Thames is the first school to grant Ursula an interview for a teaching job. She imagines going there, but is persuaded to take a local job instead.

St. Philips School

This is the first school where Ursula teaches. It is arranged through her father so that she can still live at home while she works.

Art and Handwork

There is increasing interest in teaching vocational skills to British youth. Will Brangwen becomes involved in the movement early on by teaching night classes. Later he is rewarded with the post of Art and Handwork Instructor of Nottingham County.

Willey Green

When Will Brangwen receives his new Instructor position, the family moves to a new and larger home in Beldover, near the town of Willey Green.

College

Because Ursula graduated from high school, she is eligible to attend College. Her studies are free. She studies at two levels, the Intermediate Arts and the Bachelor of Arts.

Intermediate Arts

Ursula takes an exam after the first year for her Intermediate Arts degree. For her, this is the equivalent of a teaching certificate. She intends to go further in her studies in order to earn a B.A.

Social Sensitivity

Many critics consider The Rainbow to be D. H. Lawrence's best novel, often citing its panoramic yet precisely sketched view of the life over three generations of an English family, the Brangwen's, who begin as farmers. Like the earlier Sons and Lovers (1913; see separate entry), this novel has as a major theme the effect on everyday human life of the rapid cultural changes caused by the Industrial Revolution.

As the book opens with a view of the Marsh Farm, overlooked by the church spire in the distance, there appears to be a sense of permanence, an Eden-like connection to the land, the Church suggesting permanent beliefs. It is not long however, before this sense begins to give way to a veiled threat. While the men turn to the land, which has always been both their livelihood and a source of purpose and dignity, the women look out "towards the activity of man in the world at large." Next to the vicar, Alfred Brangwen seems "dull and local." For her children, his wife (like Gertrude Morel in the earlier novel), wants "entry into the finer, more vivid circle of life."

Ironically, one sort of entry is begun rapidly and with little effort, for in 1840, a canal is constructed right across the Brangwen's farm to carry the coal from the Erewash Valley, followed shortly by a railway spur. While the Brangwens benefit financially both from selling their land rights and supplying the needs of the increasing population, their farm becomes an odd, doomed little oasis amid the industrial bustle.

Beginning with the first chapter, we see a hint of the terrible compromises people must make in their lives because of changes beyond their control. The oldest son runs away to sea. The second son Alfred struggles in school because he is only good at drawing. He finally submits to being a lace designer, which crushes his natural artistic bent toward "big, bold lines," and condemns him to a miserable if financially secure life. This son marries a woman slightly above him in social station, becomes a snob, and then in later life compensates for all the repression by becoming "a follower of forbidden pleasure." The third son Frank, stays on the farm, marries a factory girl, and becomes a butcher and an alcoholic. One daughter marries a coal miner; another stays home.

The last son, Tom, who becomes Anna's stepfather and Ursula's grandfather, is the progenitor of the family that the novel is mainly about. Like his brothers, he has trouble fitting into the mold at school, and frankly tells his mother who's forcing him to go that "you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear." He responds deeply to poetry, "but the fact of the print causes a prickly sensation of repulsion to go over his skin." Tom ends up going back to the life of a farmer; his deep sense of failure erupts in rages from time to time, although he is generally good-natured. Each child is seen to suffer in some major way because of the cultural changes in the community and the pressure from the mother to enter what she thinks is that "more vivid circle of life."

It is typical of Lawrence to see the onslaught of the Industrial Revolution and its aftermath in terms of the effects it has on the relations between men and women. As if to gather unto himself the qualities that his mother has wanted him to possess, Tom

marries Lydia, widow of a Polish doctor, who has been in the area to care for a dying vicar, and adopts her daughter Anna. His deep passion for Lydia is in conflict with their very different backgrounds, and his sense that his basic nature is a barrier to his moving in a wider world deepens, as is evidenced when he visits the very refined mistress of his brother Alfred. Tom and Lydia find renewal in their marriage when she admits that she needs him and is disappointed at what she perceives as his lack of interest, but really is just his fear of her. The end of the chapter about their marriage and Anna's childhood sees them as in a religious union—somewhat like an ideal Christian marriage—that presages the rainbow symbol that ends the novel, and is substituted for the broken gothic arch: When at last they had joined hands, the house was finished, and the Lord took up his abode . . . Anna's soul was put at peace between them . . .

Her father and her mother now met to the span of the heavens, and she, the child, was free to play in the space beneath, between.

The Brangwen marriage in this generation is not plagued with the economic difficulty of the Morels' in Sons and Lovers, but the reality that cultural and economic change take a deep human toll continues for Anna as she grows up and for the generations that follow. As the above passage suggests, Anna has begun to outgrow conventional Christianity and its liturgy, and combined with what other writers might see as just typical adolescent rebellion, she begins to feel confined by the conventions not just of religion but of home and society. She feels like the Bishop la Balue, imprisoned in a cell too low to stand up in and too small to stretch out in, "as if never could she stretch her length and stride her stride."

When she falls in love with and then marries her cousin Will, immense strife occurs because he's passionately involved in the church: She ridicules his beliefs and finally destroys them with her supposedly rational attack on them.

In the marriage he becomes the more dependent one, and leaves her with unfulfilled needs she does not understand.

She takes comfort in having children, but is still in some way unsatisfied. Their differences are seen to peak in the cathedral scene, where Will feels a consummation, but Anna latches onto the little faces carved in stone that seem to defy the sweep toward the altar. Her voice becomes "the voice of the serpent in his Eden." Like his Uncle, Will Brangwen feels limitations that he has no control over, and these have to do both with the religious feelings that she thwarts and with inhibitions like Tom Brangwen's about moving in the larger world controlled by men. Like Tom, Will has dark rages owing to the repressed part of his nature. Their marriage reaches some sort of compromise when they are seen to give themselves over to the pleasures of the flesh (oddly this occurs one night after Will has almost taken up with another woman). Their situation is greatly lapsed from the marriage of Tom and Lydia, as the narrator remarks that they "throw everything overboard . . . love, intimacy, responsibility."

Yet men seemingly in control in that outer world are also seen to have limitations. In the flashback scenes of Lydia's first marriage to Lensky, the young doctor seems to move

with confidence in the world, and in the marriage, he is in absolute control. But the narrator comments: "By his acceptance of her self-subordination, he exhausted the feeling in her." She soon takes up with other men, not for sex, but to discuss ideas. When the two children who have preceded Anna die, he does not have time to mourn; he seems to have been broken by overwork for his political beliefs and has not truly been fulfilled. There is a sense that he wastes away because he has narrowed his life so much. Later in the novel, the soulless Skrebensky proves an inadequate mate for Ursula for similar reasons. As Lensky has become enslaved to political beliefs, so Skrebensky subjects himself to utilitarian ideals of community—"the material, the immediate welfare of every man," that Ursula finds deadening. The relationship suffers a final setback as she balks at going to India, where Skrebensky and his cohorts, she feels, are going to "make things as dead and mean as they are here." Later in the novel, her uncle Tom's self-evasion in his role as manager of a colliery likewise falls under her, and implicitly the author's, censure.

Ursula's crush on Winifred Inger, occurring after the first rift in the Skrebensky relationship (after he leaves for the Boer War in South Africa), is in part occasioned by a sense of spiritual connection she has lacked with Skrebensky and in part by Miss Inger's command of the male world: "She was proud and free as a man, yet exquisite as a woman."

She wants the independence that Miss Inger has, and she sticks with her disastrous first teaching job to prove herself independent, while in an ironic sense selling her soul by capitulating to the brutal discipline system. While the Miss Inger relationship is at its height, the two talk of religion. Ursula benefits from the broadening of mind that Inger provides, but finally sees that Miss Inger is deadminded: She wants to reduce everything to the scientific and rational. Inger, sensing she is losing Ursula, then decides to marry Ursula's Uncle Tom, who has become the manager of a "big new colliery in Yorkshire," supervising men who "alter themselves to fit the pits" rather than the other way around. The two are seen as people who have essentially given up on life, and they share a "dark corruption." Tom points out that the men "die of consumption fairly often, but they earn good wages." Even the servant in this Tom Brangwen's house is the widow of a miner who has died of consumption.

To Ursula "There was a horrible fascination in it—human bodies and lives subjected in slavery to that symmetric monster of the colliery."

The mechanization of life in The Rainbow is not seen as just a facet of the industrial world, but pervades the domestic life of Anna, Ursula's mother, who is in her ninth pregnancy, and finally the teaching job that Ursula gets to establish her independence. Characters betray their deepest needs in order to avoid the difficulty of seeking really fulfilling lives. Anna and Will have perverted their marriage into a child-producing passion machine: "They were neither of them quite personal, quite defined as individuals, so much were they pervaded by the physical heat of breeding and rearing their young."

Yet there is hope for Will in that he has gone back to his wood carving, and then takes up a series of artistic tasks that provide some fulfillment. Ursula finds her home life more and more confining which whets her desire to get a job and live independently. The effort ironically ends with a teaching position that perverts what she sees as the whole purpose of teaching: She is forced to beat her students into submission by corporal punishment or the threat of it. Ursula's whole effort to find her place in the world and her own inner fulfillment is seen in opposition to greater forces that thwart both. What might be seen by another writer as mere adolescent or young adult rebellion is here seen as an all consuming spiritual quest.

A healthier relationship with another female occurs when Ursula meets Maggie Schofield, a fellow teacher, and the hint of a healthier relationship with a man is presented by Maggie's brother Anthony, but his pass at her is premature, and the remaining pages of the novel are taken up with the playing out of her failed relationship with Skrebensky. The famous scene with the horses appears to dramatize her fight to give birth to herself, to break away from Skrebensky and the deadness he represents; her baby by him is stillborn, and with haste that recollects William's Gyp's in Sons and Lovers, Skrebensky wires her when she mistakenly tries to patch things up that he has married another woman. Yet amid the many seeming defeats, Ursula at the end of the novel has achieved a vision of the kind of being that Lawrence sees as the basis for any healthy society: "In everything she saw she grasped and groped to find the creation of the living God, instead of the old, hard barren form of bygone living."

The rainbow, at once an actual phenomenon and a powerful symbol of Lawrence's vision of connected life, is an ideal that the action of the novel falls short of but appears obtainable or at least operative as a goal for struggling characters like Ursula.

Techniques

Citing E. M. Forster's Aspects of the Novel, Gary D. Cox reminds us of Lawrence's prophetic role and says there is a "sense of ultimacy" in Lawrence's work.

While Lawrence's message is "fundamentally at odds" with other prophetic writers like Dostoevsky, Cox finds similarity in their prophetic tone of voice, and he goes on to note their divergent, differently motivated departures from traditional Christianity, but also the intense fascination Lawrence had with the famous Russian author. While Cox finds the most Dostoevsky influence in Women in Love, certainly this prophetic tone is everywhere in The Rainbow, where all the characters are struggling toward or resisting, with varying degrees of consciousness, some ultimate important change, which as Forster points out, is not all that well defined for the reader.

The voice telling the story, while seemingly that of an omniscient narrator, changes position in relation to characters and events as the book goes along, so that at times we hear a more or less objective voice and at times a voice that seems to be coming from the consciousness of the character at hand. While this technique complicates our reading, it also allows for incredible richness of perspective on the action, and intense expression of the feelings of the characters. Other techniques, gestures, irony, dialogue, and dramatic encounters (or scenic construction) act in conjunction with the narrative so that point of view is usually clear.

The use of natural settings, not just to enhance and dramatize the inner turmoil of the characters but somehow to show them as intimately connected to a larger world, is a romantic trait not purely Lawrence's, but one which he gives his distinctly own stamp. He is not merely being realistic because he is connecting what in other novelists would be mere naturalistic detail to his deep concern for what Julian Moynahan calls the matrix of life— his view that all the characters are in some state of affirmation of or denial of life— or are conflicted between the two. Thus in the famous horses scene at the end of The Rainbow, the horses are not themselves just natural symbols, but creatures which as human ones often do, find (although less consciously than some of Lawrence's humans) their lives constricted, and they become symbolic of repressed natural life in Ursula.

Characters themselves are distinguished from one another both by the degree to which they are connected to forces beyond themselves, often depicted as natural, and the degree to which they seem aware of such connections. The scene on the beach where Ursula and Skrebensky are growing apart is a case in point: The trouble began at evening. Then a yearning for something unknown came over her, a passion for something she knew not what. She would walk the foreshore alone after dusk, expecting, expecting something, as if she had gone to a rendezvous. The salt, bitter passion of the sea, its indifference to the earth, its swinging, definite motion, its strength, its attack, and its salt burning, seemed to provoke her to a pitch of madness, tantalizing her with vast suggestions of fulfilment. And then, for personification, would come Skrebensky, Skrebensky, whom she knew, whom she was fond of, who was attractive,

but whose soul could not contain her in its waves of strength, nor his breast compel her in burning, salty passion.

The scene occurs just after Skrebensky has proposed marriage and they are supposed to go together to India where Ursula sees him as becoming a cog in the colonial wheel. Skrebensky just wants to fit in and have a predictable life; unlike Ursula, he doesn't make very many demands on life. So what connections he may have to anything beyond himself, he would seem to deny.

A similar conflict between them has occurred earlier in the microscope scene where she lingers over the microscope because what she finds there is miraculous; the reader surmises that he would not understand her intense joy in what she sees. Their sexual passion is a blind alley because Ursula has a bigger grip on life and a better understanding of it than he does. It is important to see that the view of life that Lawrence communicates is not materialistic: Ursula, who has just flunked her exams and has merely survived a teaching job is seen as connected to life while Skrebensky who has a "bright" future in India is depicted as only barely alive.

Another mark of Lawrence's style is the tendency to repeat words or phrases, sometimes slightly modified (this is a characteristic that shows up in his poetry as well). Notice above the repetition of Skrebensky's name as if to indicate the author's shared feeling of Ursula's boredom and Skrebensky's inadequacy.

Squires notices that scenes are also recurrent in Lawrence's novels, i.e. recurrent meetings between lovers will show similarities of setting but changes in the dynamic of the relationship, as in Ursula's recurrent encounters with Skrebensky, or even encounters with successive generations of lovers. Squires notes that scenic structure changes later in the novel when Ursula becomes isolated from family and society: Gestures of conciliation are absent from the scenes and the closure is usually a departure rather than a conciliatory event.

The narrative structure of The Rainbow as the saga of several generations gives it a cyclical quality that is organic and not mechanical, despite the seemingly overwhelming setbacks Ursula endures. Be cause the structure of the novel asks us to compare relationships from generation to generation, we see the characters undergo challenges different from their forbears, but face them with different flaws and strengths. At one point, for instance, Ursula begins to respect her mother Anna for submitting to the life offered by her father Tom Brangwen, even though Anna's sort of capitulation and refuge in child bearing is not a choice for Ursula.

Unlike other generational novels, such as those of the French writer Emile Zola, Lawrence is not writing to grind an ax for any particular agenda, as Zola's hereditary low-breeding and alcoholism inevitably recur through his twenty novels. A Lawrence character who has an alcoholic father may or may not occasionally take refuge in the bottle. Nor like Galsworthy, is he attaching the mores and manners of the day to characters for the superficial purpose of depicting social backsliding at a given historical period. Successive generations are seen to inherit some traits, but not others, from

previous ones in a way that allows the characters identities to be miraculously their own. For instance, we see Ursula inherit her father Will's religious nature, so that she sees eternity under a microscope, but we also see her venture beyond the bounds of formal, organized religion. She combines her mother's questioning nature without the urge to repudiate anything spiritual (which appears as the result of Anna's sense of estrangement at being a Polish Catholic child in an English, Anglican world) that has led Anna to put away her rosary forever.

Themes

Themes

As Lawrence's characters, like their author, are consciously or unconsciously on a quest to connect the various dimensions of their lives in a period of great social upheaval, themes are strongly related to social concerns. The struggle of the major characters to achieve fulfilling personal relationships, satisfying work, and a sense of connection to life which is often seen as religious whether or not connected to a formal religion, are dominant themes. In fact, those characters, like Anna at times, and Ursula's lover, Skrebensky, are seen as failing in life because they deny their spiritual dimension. Anna attacks Will's exaggerated religious sensibility; Ursula soon sees that Skrebensky's narrow-mindedness leads him to be a puppet of colonialism, though she does not pinpoint it as a religious lack. Indeed, this is a novel in which most characters have had lives shaped in some sense by the Christian liturgical year; in "The Widening Circle," the chapter on the early life of Ursula, the Christian year is called "the epic of the soul of mankind," though for Ursula it has become "a mechanical action now."

Ursula (with echoes of Swinburne) is repulsed by the "wan, bodiless afterdeath," and the risen Christ's refusal to be touched by Mary. This chapter anticipates the revitalized vision at the end of the book of the rainbow, an ancient religious symbol of unity between man and what is beyond him, that replaces conventional Christianity, yet is nevertheless religious.

On the other hand, characters who lose their grip on everyday reality in a rush to some sort of religious ecstasy are seen also to take a wrong path. Will Brangwen appears to take refuge in religion to escape the problems of the outside world and those in his marriage.

Otherworldly religion is here, as in Sons and Lovers, seen as a dangerous escape from and denial of everyday life, not only from its demands but from its own kind of fulfillment. In the marriage of Will and Anna, for instance, Anna's perverse (although understandable in terms of Lawrence's own suspicion of the overly religious, otherworldly sensibility) attack on Will's strong and very traditional religious feelings ultimately affects their marital relations.

The thwarting of Will's religious sensibility ironically leads to another falsification or imbalance, this time in a turn to sexuality for its own sake. When, after Anna has given herself over almost exclusively to motherhood and Will briefly goes after another woman, Anna counters with wholly lustful sexual advances; their sexuality becomes completely an end in itself. The other woman becomes merely their foreplay. The activity keeps them busy and somewhat happy, but "he would go all day waiting for the night to come"; the narrator describes their contact as "a passion of death," and there are strong implications that anal sex is one their indulgences, as their "lovemaking" includes "[all] the shameful, natural and unnatural acts of sensual voluptuousness."

Although their contact has made their children "mere offspring," this is not considered all bad by the narrator, for with the release made possible from it, Will is eventually able to begin a new phase of life, starting night classes in woodwork, a position which eventually leads to a higher level educational job as "Art and Handwork Instructor for the County of Nottingham." Nevertheless, the view of their sexuality as a mere compartment of their lives, disconnected from emotional intimacy, makes what they have appear to be far short of what Lawrence (along with many conservative religious thinkers) considers the ideal.

Sexuality as an end in itself, like religiosity disconnected from life, is symptomatic of the ills of modern, increasingly mechani2ed and industrialized society.

Rapid industrial change in what has been an agrarian economy creates pressures that are seen to take their toll on all the characters throughout the three generations. While the agrarian life allowed men to do their husbandry and their wives to find satisfaction in child rearing and the crafts required by the domestic economy of farming, the swift changes take a human toll. The whir of the machine rather than the rhythms of the seasons (which have lent their patterns to the liturgical year) controls both men's and women's lives. Even so-called advances, such as those in education, cause anxiety for some characters. The first Tom Brangwen's inability to adjust to school, he is most comfortable on the farm, is a case in point. Pure escapism seems to be the motive for the eldest son of Alfred Brangwen: He runs away to sea and doesn't return. This feeling at loose ends is a precursor to the many kinds of fragmented, internally worrying personalities that appear in his and later generations. In every case, the effort to deal with or escape cultural change and dehumanizing forces in the outside world compel characters to put aside or ignore their own humanity. The later Tom Brangwen, as boss of a colliery at the pinnacle of industrial and social success, has, in the author's view, lost all sense of the real purpose of being human. He is a precursor to Clifford Chatterley, and illustrates a truly pervasive theme in Lawrence that our conscious wills are only a small part of our total mental and emotional selves, and in adhering only to what we think we want, we may be betraying our deepest yearnings. The unconscious, which is of course the locus of sexuality in Lawrence's view, and not necessarily a rarefied and conscious spirituality, holds the key to fulfillment.

Lawrence's view of the human mental and emotional dynamic resembles the psychological theories of Sigmund Freud to some extent. Both men saw the subconscious as important, but Freud differs from Lawrence in that he lacks the deep seated suspicion of the conscious will possessed by Lawrence. Nor does Freud, as evidenced in works like The Future of an Illusion (1927), where he pleads for an "education to reality" that excludes religion, share both Lawrence's religious leanings, and romantic sensibility. These paradoxical traits of mind and spirit allow Lawrence to find a redeeming force in the instincts that Freud sees, in works such as Civilization and its Discontents (1929), as rather animalistic or infantile forces necessarily and desirably curtailed by social structures. Freud's famous study of the oedipal complex is crucial to an understanding of Sons and Lovers, but the novel, unlike the psychological work, appears less deterministic in its view of a person's chances of overcoming oedipal temptations. A full discussion of these differences is beyond the scope of this essay, but

comparisons and contrasts between Lawrence and Freud can be stimulating because both their points of similarity and of departure are so striking.

Relationships Between Men and Women

The relationships between men and women are at the forefront of *The Rainbow*. There is a fundamental lack of understanding between men and women. This lack of understanding is often complicated by intense sexual relationships. The men and women in the novel have a difficult time forming partnerships with each other or sharing their thoughts and feelings. Often one or both of them seeks a deeper relationship but is unable to find it.

Tom and Lydia Brangwen come from different cultures and have a difficult time uniting as a married couple. Lydia tries to explain about her childhood in Poland but Tom cannot understand any of it. Tom and Lydia's marriage is generally conducted in silence. At the same time, however, they have a very satisfying sexual relationship. They accept that this is the closest that they will come to understanding each other. At the end of their lives, however, Lydia insists that Tom understood her better than her first husband did.

Anna and Will begin their relationship tied to the natural rhythms of the earth. The beginning of their marriage is wonderful, and generally lost in sexual fulfillment. Sexuality, however, is the only thing that brings them together. Very soon, Anna is focused on her own fertility and the constant string of babies. Will retreats to his hobbies. Neither one understands the other and generally resents it when the other tries to explain their thoughts and feelings. Sexuality and physical passion are the only ways for them to connect.

Ursula and Anton have a slightly different relationship because they do not get married. In the end, they are not tied to one another. When their sexual relationship gives out, they are able to end their relationship. In this way, they avoid the same traps as their parents, but there is still no real understanding, of an emotional or mental kind, between them.

Church Doctrine and Everyday Life

Interwoven with the plot, many characters consider the awkward relationship between church doctrine and everyday life. Will and Ursula, in particular, are drawn to the mysteries of the church without being able to reconcile it with everyday life.

Will adores religious art and architecture. He enjoys visiting churches to admire the interesting artwork inside. He tries to share this with his wife, but she focuses on the human aspects of the artwork instead of on the eternal themes. Will is intensely attracted to religious actions, including singing strongly in church and trying to interpret the sermons that he hears.

Ursula also appreciates the beauty and mystery of religion but is not inclined to apply church teachings to her daily life. She rejects the idea that Christians should be poor or give away their possessions. Instead, because of her father's collection of religious artwork, she believes it is morally important to have many beautiful and expensive possessions. Her religious faith is often tested when sermons instruct her to act in a certain way during her everyday life. She draws a strict line between what she believes on Sunday in church and what she believes the rest of the week.

Fertility

Images of fertility abound in *The Rainbow*. Beginning with a physical connection with the earth, the men of Marsh Farm are deeply enmeshed with the natural world, particularly with the fertility of plants and animals. During the courtship period of Anna and Will, many symbols of agricultural fertility pass between them, as if foreshadowing the focus on fertility that defines their married life.

Anna makes fertility personal. Her obsession with childbirth and babies pulls her away from her parents and her husband. She feels little connection to the children as they grow up. She only cares about the routines of fertility. Her lifestyle revolves around her own fertility, at the expense of everything else. She feels a strong bond to her own body through its capacity to give birth and suckle children.

Ursula, as the daughter raised in this environment, absolutely rejects fertility. She is disgusted by images of women with babies. She hates her mother for imposing her own fertility on the family. Ursula seeks independence, as a way of escaping the lifestyle that she has led with her family. Ironically, during the brief period when Ursula herself is pregnant, she has a glimpse into the joys of fertility and thinks she may have misjudged her mother.

Style

Points of View

The novel is told in the third person omniscient. The narrator records the thoughts and feelings of three generations of characters, including many lengthy monologues, as they consider their religious faith. The narrator is generally neutral about many of the characters, although there are some moments in which the narrator discusses homosexual characters, and the reader feels that a negative judgment is being emphasized. For the most part, the emphasis is not on plot development. Instead, the narrator focuses on the relationships between characters and the conflicts that develop. Often the narrator offers conflicting perspectives on the same relationship. The most developed examples of conflicting perspectives include the relationship between Anna and Will, and the relationship between Will and his daughter Ursula.

The story is a family chronicle, recording the same patterns as they continue through three generations. Though the story begins with Tom Brangwen's own childhood, he is not the main focus of attention. His granddaughter, Ursula, is the focus of attention, although the events that affect her happen many years before she is born. The emphasis on relationships allows the reader to catalog how the disappointments of one generation carry over to the next. In particular, the inner monologues of many characters show how parent generations react to the budding independence of their children. Similarly, the development from child to adulthood is studied in several of the characters, allowing the reader to see from inside the character's mind and to learn how other characters view these changes.

Setting

The novel opens in Derbyshire, in the middle of England. The Brangwen family is slowly making the transition from agriculture to city life. Tom and Lydia live at Marsh Farm, an isolated agricultural home with little connection to the outside world. Anna and Will move to a cottage. While they still live in the countryside, they are removed from the physical work on a farm. Their daughter, Ursula, goes beyond this by getting an education in the town and remaining there to work. Eventually Will is able to move beyond the countryside and firmly establish his family's position in the town of Willey Green.

While the names of towns and places give clear geographical locations, there is little description of each individual place. Marsh Farm, in the opening chapter, receives the most physical description of any of the various villages and towns that are visited by the characters. The interiors of buildings, such as the various homes, schools, and churches, are highly detailed in order to give clues about the people who live and work there. The connection between character and setting is much stronger when inside a building than with the town or countryside in general. This reflects the emphasis on the inner feelings of the characters rather than on a plot-driven narrative. The narrator, as

well as the characters, is more interested in the interactions between people away from the glare of society, and therefore the emphasis is placed on the personal spaces that each character occupies instead of the overall society in which they live.

Language and Meaning

While the story takes place in Derbyshire, which has a distinct accent, there is little of the Derbyshire accent in the novel. Because of the period the book was written in, there is some archaic language used, particularly when discussing religious matters. For the most part, a reader can figure out these terms from the context. Much of the religious discussion is of well-known topics and does not make many references to specific people or acts in religious history. Similarly, the particular vocabulary for the traditional English education system described in the novel might be significantly different from modern educational experience. In this case, the readers might need to reorient themselves to this different education system.

Much of the novel's content consists of the inner monologues of the characters, often unrelated to any actions taking place in the plot. These inner monologues are very interesting regarding the development of the characters, but often interrupt the plot for an extended period. These inner monologues often involve descriptions of art or literature that the reader might be unfamiliar with. The inner monologue is essential to the narrative, while plot development takes a secondary role. Because the emphasis is on character development, the reader needs to be particularly attentive to the decisions that are made within the inner monologue as well as to the background material that is included to explain those decisions.

Structure

Written in sixteen chapters, the novel progresses chronologically. While there are hints provided throughout the novel, little direct commentary on events that will happen in the future or those that have happened in the past exists. The events unfold naturally so that the reader develops an understanding of the characters while glimpsing the significant moments of their life. The progression from generation to generation is the most important structural element, rather than the simple progression of chronological time.

The novel is structured to explore the childhood and girlhood first of Anna Brangwen, and then her daughter, Ursula. During the description of Anna's life, the lives of her parents are extremely important in defining her background and in giving some contrast between their relationship and the one that she seeks for herself. The silent nature of her parents' marriage is contrasted sharply with the stormy nature of her own. Similarly, during the much longer exploration of Ursula's development, her parents' marriage stands as the relationship against which she defines herself. By tracing these generational relationships, the reader is able to see how each generation affects the next and how each generation confronts the same issues and problems.

Quotes

"They knew the intercourse between heaven and earth, sunshine drawn into the breast and bowels, the rain sucked up in the daytime, nakedness that comes under the wind in autumn, showing the birds' nests no longer worth hiding. Their life and inter-relations were such; feeling the pulse and body of the soil, that opened to their furrow for the grain, and became smooth and supple after their ploughing, and clung to their feet with a weight that pulled like desire, lying hard and unresponsive when the crops were to be shorn away." (Chap. 1)

"The women were different. On them too was the drowse of blood - intimacy, calves sucking and hens running together in droves, and young geese palpitating in the hand whilst food was pushed down their throttle. But the women looked out from the heated, blind intercourse of farm life, to the spoken world beyond. They were aware of the lips and the mind of the world speaking and giving utterance, they heard the sound in the distance, and they strained to listen." (Chap. 1)

"In Poland, the peasantry, the people had been cattle to her, they had been her cattle that she owned and used. What were these people? Now she was coming awake, she was lost." (Chap. 2)

"She looked at him as a woman in childbirth looks at the man who begot the child in her; an impersonal look in the extreme hour, female to male. Her eyes closed again. A great, scalding peace went over him, burning his heart and his entrails, passing off into the infinite." (Chap. 2)

"He was a clod-hopper and a boor, dull, stuck in the mud. More than ever he wanted to clamber out, to this visionary polite world." (Chap. 3)

"But when he go to the Marsh, he realized how fixed everything was, how the other form of life was beyond him, and he regretted, for the first time, that he had succeeded to the farm. He felt a prisoner, sitting safe and easy and unadventurous. He might, with risk, have done more with himself. He could neither read Browning nor Herbert Spencer, nor have access to such a room as Mrs. Forbes.' All that form of life was outside him." (Chap. 3)

"Many ways she tried to escape. She became an assiduous church-goer. But the language meant nothing to her: it seemed false. She hated to hear things expressed, put into words. Whilst the religious feelings were insider her, they were passionately moving. In the mouth of the clergyman, they were false, indecent." (Chap. 4)

"She sank down again into bed, into his arms. He held her very close, kissing her. The hymn rambled on outside, all the men singing their best, having forgotten everything else under the spell of the fiddles and the tune. The firelight glowed against the darkness in the room. Anna could hear her father singing with gusto." (Chap. 5)

"But still it troubled Will Brangwen a little, in his orderly, conventional mind, that the established rule of things had gone so utterly." (Chap. 6)

"His eyes glittered evilly, and as if with malignant desire. She shrank and became blind. She was like a bird being beaten down. A sort of swoon of helplessness came over her. She was of another order than he, she had no defense against him. Against such an influence, she was only vulnerable, she was given up." (Chap. 6)

"And he trembled as if a wind blew on him in strong gusts, out of the unseen. He was afraid. He was afraid to know he was alone. For she seemed fulfilled and separate and sufficient in her half of the world. He could not bear to know that he was cut off. Why could he not be always one with her? It was he who had given her the child. Why could she not be with him, one with him? Why must he be set in this separateness, why could she not be with him, close, close, as one with him? She must be one with him." (Chap. 6)

"The altar was barren, its light gone out. God burned no more in that bush. It was dead matter lying there. She claimed the right to freedom above her, higher than the roof. She had always a sense of being roofed in." (Chap. 7)

"It was enough that she had milk and could suckle her child: Oh, Oh, the bliss of the little life sucking the milk of her body! Oh, Oh, Oh the bliss, as the infant grew stronger, of the two tiny hands clutching, catching blindly yet passionately at her breast, of the tiny mouth seeking her in blind, sure, vital knowledge, of the sudden consummate peace as the little body sank, the mouth and throat sucking, sucking, sucking, drinking life from her to make a new life, almost sobbing with passionate joy of receiving its own existence, the tiny hands clutching frantically as the nipple was drawn back, not to be gainsaid." (Chap. 8)

"In London he had been the favorite pupil of an engineer, a clever man, who became well known at the time when Tom Brangwen had just finished his studies. Through this master the youth kept acquaintance with various individual, outstanding characters. He never asserted himself." (Chap. 9)

"When she saw, later, a Rubens picture with storms of naked babies, and found this was called 'Fecundity,' she shuddered, and the word became abhorrent to her. She knew as a child what it was to live amidst storms of babies, in the heat and welter fecundity." (Chap. 10)

"Nevertheless, it was begun, now, this passion, and must go on, the passion of Ursula to know her own maximum self, limited and so defined against him. She could limit and define herself against him, the male, she could be her maximum self, female, oh female, triumphant for one moment in exquisite assertion against the male, in the supreme contradistinction to the male." (Chap. 11)

"He looked at the athletic, seemingly fearless girl, and he detected in her a kinship with his own dark corruption. Immediately, he knew they were akin." (Chap. 12)

"She put back her head, seeing a type-written letter, anticipating trouble from the outside world. There was the curious sliding motions of her eyes, as if she shut off her sentient, maternal self, and a kind of hard trance, meaningless, took its place. Thus, meaningless, she glanced over the letter, careful not to take it in. She apprehended the contents with her callous, superficial mind. Her feeling self was shut down." (Chap. 13)

"She could not help it, that she was a traveler. She knew Anthony, that he was not one. But oh, ultimately and finally, she must go on and on, seeking the goal that she knew she did draw nearer to." (Chap. 14)

"It had been decided in her long ago, when he had kissed her first. He was her lover, though good and evil should cease. Her will never relaxed, though her heart and soul must be imprisoned and silenced. He waited upon her, and she accepted him. For he had come back o her." (Chap. 15)

"She saw in the rainbow the earth's new architecture, the old, brittle corruption of houses and factories swept away, the world built up in the living fabric of Truth, fitting to the over-arching heaven." (Chap. 16)

Adaptations

Ken Russell, who adapted Women in Love into a critically acclaimed and commercially successful film, directed a 1989 feature film of The Rainbow. Sammi Davis plays the young Ursula, who falls under the mentorship and sexual desires of worldly Winifred Inger, played by Amanda Donohoe.Russell's technique here, as in Women in Love, is to create mood through striking images that give the viewer insights into the characters' emotions.

Key Questions

This outstanding novel, with its vividly drawn characters, realistic setting, and its extended time frame over several generations, invites inquiry in a number of ways.

Are social forces besetting the characters beyond or somewhat within their control? How do the various characters cope with problems in their lives, and what are their points of interconnection with the outside world? What individual qualities does the author appear to support? What is unique about Lawrence's treatment of the popular saga novel? Much critical literature has been written about Lawrence's views on social class, politics, religion, and treatment of women in fiction, and this relatively early book provides a number of instances where Lawrence seems to be testing ideas that get fuller treatment in later novels. Finally, Lawrence is famous for taking the novel further into the psychological realities of every day life than previous novelists; critical inquiry into where this originality lies, into how, exactly, Lawrence truly differs from his predecessors promises to be both fascinating and important.

1. Take the three female characters in different generations, Lydia LenskyBrangwen, Anna Brangwen, and Ursula Brangwen. Although they have very different lives, they are at times seen coping with similar problems: struggles with their religious impulses, stasis in their marriages or love relationships, or a sense of suffocation. Compare and contrast their efforts to overcome such problems and gain a sort of equilibrium.

Which of these characters shows the most destructive impulses?

2. The Rainbow has been termed an elegiac novel, one that mourns the agrarian life lost with the onset of the industrial revolution. Look at the opening pages of the novel where the Brangwen's farm life is described. What evidence is there that life on the farm is desirable?

What suggestions are there that in some sense a change from this life provides promise, at least for some of the characters?

3. Look at the life choices made by the Brangwen sons as described in the first chapter. Which appears the most unhinged? Which one appears most responsible? Who appears the happiest with his choice? What compromises does each make? Do their choices seem unusual, or typical, of young men coming of age?

What changes in their environment appear to influence or even decide their choices?

4. Why does the narrator call the Brangwens inheritors? Is the term to be taken literally, as in a sense they have all inherited, and will inherit, the farm? In what other senses can the term be taken?

5. Trace the life of the Brangwen son introduced in the first chapter who becomes the lace maker. What talents does he have? How do these talents show up in his son Will,

who marries Anna? How is Will decidedly not like his father? What stumbling block do their lives share?

6. How can the marriage between Lydia Lensky and Tom Brangwen be held as an ideal against which other marriages in the novel are measured? How do the two resolve their problems? How is the resolution described at the end of Chapter 3? Would you describe Lawrence's view of marriage as conventional or unconventional?

7. What have been the problems with Lydia's earlier marriage to Lensky? Has she loved Lensky?

8. In what ways does Ursula's relationship with Skrebensky recapitulate or at least echo Lydia's with Lensky? Which man is the least appealing? Defend your choice.

9. Characterize Ursula's relationship with Winifred Inger? Do you believe the author reveals it to be a dead end because it is a same sex relationship (and he has some sort of prejudice), or are there other factors that make it unsatisfying to Ursula? How does the author appear to view the marriage of Winifred and Tom?

10. Compare Anna's views on religion to those of her daughter Ursula. What is the significance of Ursula's looking through the microscope in Chapter 15?

How do her views differ from those of her teacher, Dr. Frankstone?

11. Lawrence entities the chapter in which Ursula tries a teaching job, "The Man's World." Do you consider this choice to mean he is sexist, or is he merely reflecting the way of the world in his day? Note that two of Ursula's female friends, Winifred and Maggie, are teachers.

12. Tom Brangwen's choice to be the manager of a colliery brings with it the knowledge that the job is actually killing the men who do it. How does he react to this knowledge? How do the other characters react? Do you believe that the industrial world in our own day has improved?

13. In what ways has the changed political, economic, and industrial world in England benefitted Brangwen characters by the end of the novel? In what ways has it compromised them?

14. Look carefully at the final chapter where Ursula climbs a tree to protect herself from the horses. What do the horses appear to represent? Is she successful in breaking free from what they represent by the end of the novel? How positive do you consider her vision of the rainbow to be?

Topics for Discussion

Consider the relationships between men and women in the novel. How does their sexuality affect it?

Anna's emotions become caught up in her fertility. Is this obsession healthy for her? For her family?

Why is this novel called *The Rainbow*?

Ursula wants to pursue a career of her own but must follow the direction of her parents. Does this situation reflect the period that she lives in or is it applicable to modern parents and children?

In a novel that focuses so much on heterosexual passion, how do the homosexual characters such as Miss Inger and Tom Brangwen (Junior) fit in?

Many of the characters have a complicated relationship with formal education. Compare and contrast the educational experiences of two characters. To what extent does this apply to the great English population during this period?

How does Lydia's Polish heritage affect the other characters? Does she assimilate into English society? Do her children?

Compare and contrast the religious feelings of two of the characters. How do these feelings run through the Brangwen family?

Literary Precedents

While Lawrence owes an undeniable debt to the great English novelists of the nineteenth century, his best work, this novel especially, stands out for his refinements upon, and notable departures from their work. His immediate predecessor, Thomas Hardy, is often cited by critics as a dominant influence; he is the one English writer on whom Lawrence wrote a full-length study. Hardy shared with Lawrence an intense interest in malefemale relationships, and it is easy to see some similarity between Ursula's struggles with the inadequate Skrebensky and Tess's with the sanctimonious Clare and the cynical, worldly D'Urberville (Tess of the D'Urbervilles, 1891; see separate entry).

But Lawrence's sensibility is different and his exploration of the human character more profound. For one thing, at least in the earlier novels, he lacks the pessimism and fatalism found in Hardy's famous, later novels, like Tess and Jude the Obscure (1895; see separate entry). Villains such as Lawrence has, those who cause suffering in the other characters, are often victims themselves, not of some impersonal fate, but of man-created mechanisms that for the very reason of their being man-made, can be avoided and even thwarted by some characters. For instance, in the relationship between Ursula and Skrebensky, both are victims of a sort of socioindustrial machine. Their differences arise because Ursula knows this and envisions a better life, and Skrebensky does not.

While their sexual passion is real, it is doomed because Skrebensky will go off to India subjecting that life-force and everything else he has to being a cog in this machine. This vision of what thwarts human fulfillment is very different from Hardy's rather old-fashioned Greek curse idea (as evidenced by Tess's fear expressed to her younger brother very early on in the novel that they live on a "blighted" planet). In fairness to Hardy, it must be pointed out that his view of the dehumanization caused by the mechanization of farming is vividly done, anticipating Lawrence's more far-reaching vision of industrial ills.

While the erotic, as a rule, is understated in the work of George Eliot, she too must be mentioned as an important predecessor because of the seriousness with which she and her characters, like Lawrence and his characters, are questing for something beyond themselves. The ardent Dorothea Brooke of Middlemarcb (1871-1872) married to the debilitating cleric Casaubon, is certainly an example of repressed life that Lawrence would have noticed.

In Daniel Deronda (1876), Eliot shows her keen observation of human destructiveness, perversity, and wickedness through Grandcourt, the cruel husband of Gwendolyn Harleth, who is vicious alike to his wife, his dogs, and other people; he finally drowns by Freudian slip, as it were, in a boating accident. The abusive sterility of the GrandcourtHarleth marriage may have anticipated the kind of abdication of their humanity evidenced in the marriage of Winifred Inger and Tom Brangwen in The Rainbow, though Winifred, unlike Gwendolyn, knows full well what she is getting into.

That some higher moral goal or state of being is in sight at the end of both of these novels is also a bond: Deronda's promise to Gwendolyn that she can redeem herself despite the horror of her marriage and her implied complicity in her husband's death resembles the promise of Ursula's rainbow. Moreover, the Gerald-Gudrun union in Women in Love evokes the marriage in the Eliot novel.

Gerald is cruel to his wife, he is cruel to the horses, and he also meets a dire end, in the snow in his case. (Lawrence's admiration for Eliot comes through in Phoenix when he reviews the work of an Italian writer, Giovanni Verga, who he feels has been underestimated: Silas Marner, Lawrence says is a "ridiculous book," but has endured.)

Lawrence, of course owes a debt not only to Hardy and Eliot, but to Thackeray, Dickens, and the Brontes for vividly sketched settings, domestic scenes, characters, attitude to animals, and of course human ordeals. The Rainbow because of its saga format is especially indebted to Wuthering Heights (Emily Bronte, 1847; see separate entry), although Lawrence's novel shares neither the gothic revenge theme nor the sort of deus ex machina redemption of the characters in the final generation. Another writer of intergenerational novels, John Galsworthy, is worth mentioning for his concern with married love. But the Forsyte saga with its focus on upper middle class people and his subjection of fictional concerns to social criticism is a very different, and most critics agree, lesser work than Lawrence's. Lawrence himself, although he praised Galsworthy for "the superb courage of his satire, "criticized his characters for being "social beings," not "really vivid human" beings (Phoenix).

Of other contemporary English novel ists, Virginia Woolf, for different reasons than Galsworthy presents a contrast, but she shared with Lawrence an intense interest in the inner consciousness. In To the Lighthouse (1927; see separate entry), the scenes where Mrs. Ramsay finally gets some time to herself can be compared to scenes in The Rainbow where Ursula is thinking about her inner aspirations.

Other English novelists often mentioned are Arnold Bennett for realistic scenes of the English countryside and life, as evidenced in The Old Wives Tale (1908) and more remotely, the eighteenth-century novelists Richardson and Fielding. Ian Watt quotes Lawrence reacting to Richardson's treatment of sexuality as "a union of 'calico purity and underclothing excitements'". Watt goes on to distinguish Richardson's treatment of erotic scenes from those of predecessors by stating that "the feelings of the actors involved are so much more real." It would seem fair to say then, that despite Lawrence's lack of a moralistic overlay like Richardson's, he found in Richardson and important early predecessor whose focus is similar to his own. Fielding is a less important influence, for as Watt implies, his interest is more in the tradition of burlesque and satire.

The chief Russian writers influencing Lawrence were Anton Chekov, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Leo Tolstoy, and to a lesser degree Ivan Turgenev, although the last is important because Fathers and Sons (1862), like The Rainbow, has an intergenerational structure. The two first authors are mentioned in many different places in Lawrence's posthumous papers, Phoenix, and whatever Lawrence's numerous comments about them may say, whether borrowing from or reacting to them he was

intensely involved in their thinking and fictional creations. Dostoevsky's The Idiot (1868) is usually mentioned by critics for its parallels to Women in Love, but Lawrence's critique of Christianity as it appears in The Rainbow is surely influenced by this Russian writer, as must be some characters in the early novel who are prototypes of characters in Women in Love, such as Tom Brangwen whose cruelty to human beings anticipates Gerald in Women in Love and bears similarity to Rogozhin in Dostoevsky's book.

Dosto-evsky's prophetic tone has been compared to Lawrence's Dostoevsky's short story "The Peasant Marey" may also be cited as a literary precedent, for it idealizes the agrarian life much as Lawrence does in the beginning of The Rainbow. Lawrence had read Chekov's short stories and various of these may have been influential in a similar way.

Leo Tolstoy's Anna Karenina (18751877) in its portrayal of psychological intensity in the illicit love affair between Anna and Vronsky, is an important precedent for Lawrence's treatment of love relationships, especially ultimately destructive ones. Of course, Lawrence came at the subject without the intense nineteenth-century concern with the public reaction to moral transgression.

He says of the great Russian novelists in general: "The certain moral scheme is what I object to. In Turgenev, and in Tolstoi, and in Dostoievsky, the moral scheme into which all the characters fit and it is nearly the same scheme is, whatever the extraordinariness of the characters themselves, dull, old, dead."

Two other non-English writers deserve mention, Emile Zola, the Frenchman whose twenty novels organized under the tide Les Rougon-MacQuart Lawrence had read at least some of, and the Italian Giovanni Verga, whose book, Cavaelleria Rusticana (1880) Lawrence reviewed (Phoenix). Zola's books trace the life of the family Les Rougon-MacQuart through several generations in order to illustrate his concept of the naturalistic novel, and his belief that characteristics, especially bad ones, keep cropping up. For instance, the grandmother, Adele, has had an affair with a drunken smuggler, and several generations later, Antoine, a descendant from the dissolute union, catches fire while in a drunken stupor and burns up.

A genealogy is given at the beginning with a case study of all the problems of each character. Lawrence agrees with the critics of Zola in his day that the characters are just "physical-functional arrangements . . . without any 'higher' nature."

Verga, he argues, is different: "Verga's people are always people in the purest sense of the word." Lawrence sees in Verga a kindred spirit, a man who sought out the unsophisticated peasant because he really had a higher nature than "the ordinary successful man of the world."

Yet Lawrence goes on to criticize Verga's playing out of his theme with "betrayed husbands killing the co-respondents" and ending up in jail. Neither of these writers is of Lawrence's caliber, but he seems to have viewed them as spring boards for his own thinking and writing.

Related Titles

No other works of Lawrence are really like The Rainbow. It can be compared to its very different predecessor, Sons and Lovers, not just for its intense exploration of love relationships between men and women, but also the characteristic vividness of natural settings and domestic scenes. An obvious point of departure is The Rainbow's emphasis, especially toward the end, on the woman's viewpoint.

Women in Love can be considered a sort of sequel to The Rainbow in that the characters Ursula and Gudrun have begun their lives in the earlier novel, and the later book does share the intense exploration of love between men and women taken up in the earlier novel. But Women in Love goes far beyond The Rainbow because of the intensity and depth of its exploration of the love relationship, often intermingled with hate, and, as hinted at in the earlier book, with such relationships as the first Tom Brangwen's attraction for his school friend and the Winifred IngerUrsula relationship, the possibility of same sex relationships and what they seem to mean to the author. As in the earlier novel, the mechanization and perversion of life by various social forces and destructive impulses within themselves hinder the characters' ability to lead satisfying lives. Women in Love, unlike The Rainbow, takes up one generation and explores the different choices characters make to love (sometimes it seems involuntarily) constructively or destructively.

Women inLove has been described as "Lawrence's most perfectly integrated study of disintegration" (Moynahan), in contrast to The Rainbow, whose ending points to some sort of redemptive action.

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