

The Rocking-Horse Winner Study Guide

The Rocking-Horse Winner by D. H. Lawrence

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Plot Summary

The Rocking Horse Winner by D.H Lawrence is a short story about a mother who regret marrying for love instead of money. Her oldest child Paul senses her misery and with the help of his uncle and the gardener Barrett, places and wins bets on the horses. His secret is his wooden rocking horse, which has the power to tell him the winner of each race.

This story is about a beautiful woman who marries for love, but soon finds their relationship disintegrating. Children only make matters worse. She showers them from attention and from an outsider's point of view, it looks like she loves them very much. However, she and the children know it is only a pretense.

As a young woman, the mother was used to living in luxury and she still tries to give people the impression that she and her husband are rich. She buys the children all the best toys and hires a nanny to look after them and servants to maintain the house. Unfortunately, her spending has put the family deeply in debt. At night, the children can hear the house murmur about how much it needs money.

One of the toys in the nursery is an old rocking horse. Paul, the oldest child, loves the horse and rides it so violently and so intensely, that he scares his older sisters.

One day Paul asks his mother why they don't own a car. She tells him that it is because they don't have money and wants to leave it there, but she has piqued Paul's interest. He asks her why and she says it is because his father has no luck. Paul, detecting her sadness, tells her that he has lots of luck. God, he says, gave it to him.

Paul is riding his wooden rocking horse with typical fervor when his uncle Oscar and Paul's mother enter the nursery. Oscar is impressed. He loves horse racing and sees his nephew shares his passion. More impressive however is Paul's knowledge. Questioning him further, Oscar finds out he talks about racing with the gardener Barrett. Oscar visits Barrett to find out more, but Barrett politely refuses to enlighten him. He tells him that Paul has an unusual gift when it comes to horses, but telling him more would let down the child.

Oscar invites Paul to the Lincoln races. Against his Uncle's advice, Paul bets on a horse called Daffodil and to his uncle's surprise, the horse, a rank outsider, comes in first. It is not the last time he is surprised that day. After the race he finds out Paul has not only guessed winners before, but in partnership with Barrett, has won about 1500 pounds. Upon further investigation, he finds out Paul won the money for his mother.

On Paul's wishes, his uncle gives the family lawyer 5,000 pounds of Paul's winnings with the request that the lawyer sends Paul's mother 1000 pounds every year on her birthday.



If Paul was expecting his mother to be ecstatic, when she receives the money, he is sorely disappointed. As soon as she reads the note that she will receive 1000 pounds for her birthday for the next five years, she goes straight to the lawyer to ask him to release the whole 5000 immediately.

Over the next few months, the money changes Paul's life. His mother pays a private teacher to teach him and arranges for him to go to Eton the following year. For the house, she buys new furniture and luxuries such as flowers in the winter. Yet still Paul can hear the house murmuring. "We need more money," it says. "We need more money."

With the Derby race approaching, Paul becomes ill with worry since he is still uncertain of the winner. To be certain he has to ride on his rocking horse until the winner comes into his mind, but that is not as easy as it sounds and as of yet nothing has happened. Paul's mother, worried for his health, suggests he visits the seaside. Paul refuses. He tells her he is not going anywhere until after the Derby.

One night, Paul's mother goes out to a dinner party. She tries to enjoy herself, but she can't help worrying about her son. Something is wrong with him. She phones their nanny to inquire, but the nanny is adamant that he is fine.

That calms her down until she arrives home. Going up to Paul's room, she hears him, riding passionately on his rocking horse. When she enters, he begins to scream "Malabar, Malabar!" before falling to the floor unconscious.

Paul lays in his room unconscious for days. His mother is worried sick. Eventually she calls in Barrett to see if his presence will have an effect. It does so immediately. As soon as Barrett tells Paul that Malabar won the Derby, Paul wakes up in delight. Turning to his mother, he tells her he told he was lucky since he has won her 80,000 pounds.

That same night, Paul dies in his sleep.



Pages 1-6

Pages 1-6 Summary

A beautiful woman brought up in luxury makes the mistake of marrying for love. From that moment on, her life descends into never ending bad luck. Her relationship with her husband quickly disintegrates, and she finds it difficult to give her five children the love they deserve. She tries to make it up to them by showering them attention, but it fools only people looking in from the outside. The children know she finds it difficult to love them.

Nevertheless, she tries to keep up the appearance she is rich - liking nothing more than to lord over everyone else in the town. Though they can't really afford to, the family keeps servants, a nanny and the mother buys all the best toys for her children. It is not enough. The house wants more. At night, the children can often hear it whispering that it needs money. Without money, it can't exist.

The mother's oldest child is an intense boy called Paul. One day Paul asks his mother about why they are so poor. She tells him that they are poor because his father is unlucky and to achieve success in life one needs luck. She has no answer how one gets to be lucky and only humors Paul when he tells her that God has given him the luck she has been looking for.

Paul's favorite pastime is riding his rocking horse in the nursery. His sisters hate to watch him. As soon as he climbs on its wooden back, his blue eyes glaze over and he begins to rock, faster and faster, getting to such a speed that his curly hair flares behind him.

Paul is riding the horse when his Uncle Oscar, accompanied by Paul's mother, enters the room. He is a horse racing fanatic and is immediately impressed with Paul's intensity, asking him if he is a jockey. Paul tells him he is not a jockey, but knows a lot about the horses, telling Oscar the name of a horse that had recently won Ascot. Even more impressed Oscar inquires where he learned so much about racing. At his point Paul's sister Joan butts him. She tells Oscar Paul often talks to the house gardener Barrett about the sport - in fact, she says, it is all they ever talk about.

Though Barrett and Oscar are friends from their army days, Barrett tells Oscar if he wants to know anymore about his nephew's interest in horse racing he needs to ask him. To say anything would betray what has become a close relationship between the two of them.

Fascinated by his nephew's interest in horse racing, Oscar takes Paul to the Lincoln races. His uncle laughs at him when he Paul puts a bet on the rank outsider, but that laugh turns to disbelief when the horse comes in first. The disbelief then turns to respect when Paul elaborates on his relationship with Barrett. Paul tells Oscar the two of them



have a partnership - Paul picks the winner and Barrett put on the money. If Paul is certain of the winner - he knows when he is certain - they put on a lot of money because that horse always wins. They only lose when Paul is not certain of the outcome. But then they safeguard themselves by only putting on a small amount. Currently Barrett is storing about 1500 pounds of Paul's money.

Paul invites Oscar to join their partnership.

Pages 1-6 Analysis

The beginning of the story introduces the mother's conflict. Though she is not the main character, her problems are a motivation for her son Paul. She married for love, but losing interest in her husband, she found herself, in comparison to her upbringing, in poverty. She has tried maintaining the appearance her family is well off, insisting on servants and a nanny for her children, but her expensive tastes have put the family in debt.

Even if this was the only this negative aspect about her it would still be difficult to like her. The fact that she dislikes her children makes one feel thoroughly unsympathetic towards her plight. Only her eventual connection with her son Paul makes her presence in the story bearable.

The author imbues the children with great sensitivity. Not only do they understand their mother doesn't love them, but feel her misery in the house. They can hear the house saying; "there must be money". The author, however, doesn't present the house whispering such phrases as a supernatural event, but as child's ability to sense when things aren't right.

The main character Paul embodies this sensitivity. On the second page, he enters into a conversation with his mother about why the family is so poor. The mother puts it down to bad luck. His father she says suffers greatly from bad luck. At this point the main theme of the story becomes apparent - the Oedipal Complex.

The son can see the chance of winning his mother's love from his father. The fact that he feels his mother has never given him the love he needs and deserves makes his need more desperate - "he wanted luck, he wanted, he wanted it."

This introduces the second theme; what is luck. Paul in his naivety actively goes in search of it, finding it through winning on the horses. Yet it is Paul's drive and need, and not external forces, which give him his luck. Like the old adage states - one makes one's own luck. From this point of view, Paul's mother is unlucky because she has no drive. She has given up on life.

Barrett the gardener, and Paul's betting partner, views Paul's so-called luck as mystical. As he notes to Oscar, "it is as if he had it from heaven." This raises a question that remains unanswered; is there something spiritual or supernatural about the rocking horse.



Pages 6-11

Pages 6-11 Summary

Paul tells his uncle that he started to bet on horses to raise money for his mother who is deep in debt. The house continuously whispers that it needs money and Paul has learned that he is lucky enough to raise the funds she needs. Oscar surprisingly believes his nephew's story and arranges to give the 5,000 pounds Paul won at the Lincoln races to the family lawyer. Each year on his mother's birthday, the lawyer will send Paul's mother a check for 1000 pounds.

On her birthday, Paul excitedly asks his mother if she has received anything special. Instead of responding in the way he would hopes, she leaves the house to persuade the lawyer to give her the full 5000 pounds. Of course, he can't do without Paul's permission, but Paul relents. He and his uncle decide that he will do her harm if she receives the full amount.

With the family suddenly rich, Paul's life changes dramatically. His mother hires a private tutor and starts to arrange for him to attend Eton school - the same school his father attended. The house also changes. Paul's mother completely refurnishes it and buys luxuries that she knew as a little girl such as vases of flowers during the winter months. It seems to make her happier, but still there is something wrong. Paul can still hear the house whispering for money - it is saying it wants more. And then even more after that. Paul cannot satisfy it until it is experiencing a steady flow of cash.

It presents Paul with a problem. He needs to win more money for his mother, but with the Derby in a few weeks time, he is still uncertain of a winner. Soon the Derby is all he can focus on. Nothing else feels important - he can't listen to anybody, including his teacher, and walks around with a glazed expression on his face. Worried, his mother insists that needs a trip to the seaside, but Paul refuses. He can go to the sea after the Derby he tells her, but not before.

Against her instincts' Paul mother relents, but it doesn't stop her worrying. She knows there is something wrong, but is helpless to help him.

One night, Paul's mother goes out to a party. She finds it is impossible to enjoy herself. She has a horrible feeling something bad is going to happen to Paul and the drink is the only thing stopping the urge of running back home to him. Finally, she phones the family nanny - she tells her everything is okay; Paul is in his room sound asleep.

The nanny words go some way to placate her until she gets back to the house/ She immediately goes upstairs to Paul's room. His door is closed, but from inside she can hear a noise that she knows she has heard before - a creaking sound. She swings open the door to see Paul riding his wooden rocking horse, his blues stony eyes and face full concentrated as if what he is doing is a matter of life and death. Her own heart turns to



stone and she calls out to him. Its Malabar Paul replies. It's Malabar, and then drops onto the floor, unconscious.

Paul's mother finds out from Oscar that Malabar is a horse. Paul had chosen the Derby winner and along with Barrett, Oscar puts money on the horse. Paul meanwhile is still unconscious. His mother is more frantic than ever.

In an attempt to revive her son, Paul's mother calls in Barrett. As soon as he mentions that Malabar - the horse Paul picked out as a winner - won the race Paul wakes up. He tells his mother the story of how he has won all the money by picking out the winner of the horse races - the rocking horse told him each of the winners- and that he is, as he told her from the beginning, a naturally lucky person. His latest success has won the family 80,000 pounds.

That same night Paul dies in his sleep.

Pages 6-11 Analysis

Most likely, there is something special about Paul. For a young child he is both incredibly driven and incredibly intense. When Paul is on his rocking horse for example, the author describes how he changes and most significantly, the strange glare he has in his eyes.

In fact, the reason that the reader guesses it is Paul and not the rocking horse that has the power to guess the winner of the races, is that throughout the author places so much emphasis on his blue eyes. As this section continues, his eyes become even more intense until finally they blaze with madness. It is on the edge of his madness that Paul finally connects with his mother.

She has finally found something in her child that she can connect with and strangely, that connection is horse racing. Towards the end of the book, she even states that she comes from a gambling family and gambling has done damage to her family. If she always had money as a child, this suggests gambling affected someone in her family just as it is affecting Paul. Paul is reminding her of that person and a past that she had tried to forget. As she says outside of Paul's bedroom door while listening to the strange noise from within, she knew the noise, but couldn't place it. It was like a madness that went on and on.

When she enters his room, it is interesting the author emphasizes they are both wearing green, symbolizing they have both formed a connection. Later on Paul's stone blues turns his mother's heart to stone. Every emotion her son feels on illness she takes upon herself.

Paul has won his mother's love and in many ways dies happy. His mother has lost another love. Despite the money, she remains unlucky.



Characters

Paul

Paul is a young child haunted by his family's lack of money. When his mother tells him the reason that they have such little money is that they are unlucky, particularly her husband, Paul becomes obsessed with finding luck.

He finds what he needs through his rocking horse. Wildly rocking back and forth, with a glare in his blue eyes that terrifies his sisters, he rides his horse until he claims that he gone where he had to go. No one knows the location of "where" that Paul says he is going. When Uncle Oscar, to his delight, finds out that Paul is interested in horse racing, he also quickly discovers Paul has been betting on horses and winning substantial sums money in partnership with the family gardener Barrett. Paul has a knack for guessing the winners.

Happily, Oscar takes Paul to the races where they win thousands of pounds. But Paul is about to surprise his uncle again. His aim is not to keep the money for himself, but hand it, secretly over to his mother, so she can live the life she had as a child and a young woman. Paul persuades his Uncle to arrange for the family lawyer to give his mother five thousand pounds.

The money changes Paul's life, but not for the better. While his mother can afford to pay a private tutor to teach him and is arranging for him to start at Eton, Paul feels miserable. All that he can hear is the house telling him that his mother needs more money. With the Derby approaching - a huge race in the British calendar - Paul starts to become moody and insular.

Finally' after rushing back from a party, his mother finds him on the rocking horse, rocking back and forth his eyes stone blue, screaming the name of Malabar - the horse he thinks will win the Derby. He then falls into unconsciousness.

The only person who can wake Paul is Bassett, telling him that Malabar won the Derby and more importantly won Paul, and his family 800,000 pounds. The next day however, Paul is dead.

Mother

The author describes Paul's mother as a beautiful woman who married for love. She quickly found both her husband and her new life a huge disappointment.

She tries very hard to keep up an image of success, but her efforts only put the family into debt. With no other way to explain what she sees as a disastrous life, she tells her son Paul that she is unlucky. Luck, she claims, is the one thing that people need to be successful.



It seems however, that her vanity rather than her luck has held her back. She needs the feeling that she is lording over other. When she receives 5,000 pounds from an unknown benefactor (it is the winnings her son won on the horses), she immediately uses the money to pay for a tutor for a son, his fees for Eton, and luxury items such as flowers in the winter and new furnishings.

At this point, her own son hears the house telling him that he needs to win more and more money, but it feels like it is not a supernatural force pushing him, but his mother projecting her own desires.

Unconsciously, she begins to realize she loves her son. She goes from being cold towards him at the beginning, she begins to worry obsessively. She worries with good cause. At the end of the book, her son Paul wins her 80,000 pounds, but the stress he puts himself through to get it, kills him.

Uncle Oscar

Uncle Oscar becomes part of Paul's life after he hears that Paul is interested in horseracing.

He takes him to the Lincoln races where Paul first shocks him by picking the winner - a rank outsider - and then by telling him that he is in partnership with the house gardener Barrett. As Paul guesses the winners, they have won thousands of pounds.

Oscar joins the partnership, but the author never hints that he is does it just for the money. Oscar genuinely cares for his nephew's well being. He listens intently and sensitively when Paul tells him about the voices he hears in the house, and offers words of comfort to Paul's mother at Paul's funeral.

There are suggestions that he, like other members of his family, is addicted to gambling, but, despite claims from Paul's mother that horseracing destroyed her family, his addiction does not seem to have any detrimental effect on his life.

In fact, Paul looks to Oscar as the one lucky member of his family since Oscar's shilling won him his first horse race.

Bassett

Bassett is the young gardener who in partnership with Paul, bets and wins on the horses. Like Oscar, while he enjoys the money Paul is helping him rake in, Bassett only has Paul's best interests at heart.

When Oscar approaches Bassett about his relationship with Paul, Bassett tells him that he cannot betray the trust of his young friend and he would prefer if Oscar talked to Paul himself. This loyalty is particularly impressive since the gardener was once Oscar's batman.



Bassett confirms his strong bond with Paul at the end of the story when Paul's mother, in a desperate attempt to stir her son from his coma, invites Barrett to talk to him. Immediately, Paul wakes up.

Father

Though mostly absent from the story, Paul father has a strong presence. Paul's mother married him out of love, but ever since then has experienced nothing but bad luck. She even tells Paul that his father is an unlucky man. Paul's obsession with becoming lucky is his way of replacing his father in his mother's affections.

Joan

Joan is Paul's sister. She objects to Paul riding his rocking horse in the trance-like manner that he does.

Miss Wilmot

Miss Wilmot is the childrens' nanny. She is the first to notice a big difference in Paul's behavior, but feels there is nothing that she can do to help. Paul has simply outgrown her.

The Frenchman

The Frenchman is the spectator at the Derby race standing in front of Paul, cheering on Lancelot. Lancelot comes in second, behind Daffodil - Paul's horse.



Objects/Places

The Rocking Horse

Paul rides the rocking horse to find out the winners of the horse races. The horse has a power over him. As he rides it, he looks very intense and to his sisters, very scary.

Paul's Blue Eyes

The author refers to Paul's blue eyes throughout the story. At the beginning, he calls them uncanny and towards the end, he compares them to stones.

The House

The house whispers to Paul and his sisters that it is short of money. Yet when Paul's mother uses money to refurbish the house, the house insists it needs more.

The Horse Track

Uncle Oscar takes Paul to his first race the Lincoln horse track.

The Horses

Paul predicts the following two horses as winners: Daffodil and Malabar. They win him a total of 80,000 pounds.

Richmond Park

Uncle Oscar takes Paul and Barrett to Richmond Park to talk about their potential partnership.

Money

Paul proves he is lucky by winning money by betting on horses. He gives his mother the money to help her get out of debt and buy nice things, but no matter how much he gives her, it never seems enough.



Paul's Room

As he gets older, Paul asks for his rocking horse to be taken to his bedroom. He is riding it when his mother enters his room towards the end of the book.

The Nursery

This is where Paul is first introduced to his rocking horse.

Luck

After Paul's mother tells him that she is unlucky and all that people needs in life to succeed is luck, Paul goes out his way to prove that he is lucky.



Themes

The Oedipal Complex

The story examines the Oedipal Complex of a boy's obsession with winning his mother's affection from his father. D.H Lawrence has examined this theme in his novels before such as *Sons and Lover*. Hence, a reader with previous knowledge of his work cannot help feeling the theme is very personal.

Like the main character from *Sons and Lovers*, Paul is the name of the main character of the *Rocking Horse Winner*. Paul, as well as his other siblings, suffers from a lack of affection from their mother. She has fallen out of love with her husband and hence has no connection to their children. In this regard, Paul asking his mother about why the family is so poor is indirectly and perhaps unconsciously, inquiring why his mother does not love him as she should.

From their conversation he finds out the one thing he needs to win his mother's love is luck. Something his mother claims his father has never had. He goes out of his way to find it and win the money he is told his mother needs to be happy. Unfortunately, he does it at his own expense. By the end, he has made himself so ill with worry that he dies.

Like the boy from the original story of Oedipus, his victory comes hand in hand with disaster.

One Makes their Own Luck

Paul's mother regards herself as unlucky. Fallen out of with her husband, she finds herself lumbered with very little money and five children she can't bring herself to love. Yet Paul's success on the horses raises question. Has her attitude towards life contributed to her downfall? How much has she done to prevent her down slide?

Certainly, her young son Paul searches for luck with as much vigor and intensity that it seems she has put in thinking about the tragedy of her life. From the beginning, he never doubts that he won't find what he is looking for and therefore does.

The trick the author suggests is not just to believe in luck, but to connect luck with something that has true substance. A desperate need for his mother's love drives Paul's search for luck. At the end, just before he dies, he is triumphant not because his luck has won him money, but that his luck has won him his mother's affections.

In these terms, his death is not a sign of his own bad luck, but his mother's. She has spent so much time concentrating on money and material items, she has forgotten what was most important to her. By the time she has found it, it is too late. Paul's luck is to die and be happy that he has achieved what he set out to.



If Paul had lived after having achieved his goal, he may have been sucked into the same life of material need as his mother.

Materialism

In the *Rocking Horse Winner*, D.H Lawrence, presents materialism as a destructive force. Paul's mother projects her need for money and material comfort on her children; her eldest child Paul, taking it upon himself to find a way to win her lots of money. Yet even with money, her mother's wants more. She doesn't directly state this but at this point the reader can guess the house, screaming that it wants more, and then still more, is a representation of his mother's thoughts.

At the same time the mother's is using her need for money and material items to cover up what she truly wants and perhaps is frightened to have. She alludes to this when she tells Paul that her family suffered greatly because of gambling. We know she was rich when she was younger so, in light of Paul's illness, she seems to be suggesting that the problem was a mental problem. She is worried that Paul is going the same way.

At this point it looks like she has finally opened her eyes to what she wants - the love that she has lost. However, it is too late. her vanity and greed has closed her heart and mind to her children and she has failed to notice Paul's problems - which could well be mental illness - until he is too far gone.

Paul's illness is represented by his eyes, which become increasing mad and fearful. Unfortunately his mother doesn't register this until her need for money has been partly satiated. By that point however, all that she can do is to take Paul's problems upon her self.

By the end of the story, her heart, like Paul's eyes, feels and looks like stone.



Style

Style

Point of View

The author tells the story from the third-person and omniscient point of view, meaning we get the point of view of more than one character. In the Rocking Horse Winner, the reader is privy to the point of view of both Paul and Paul's mother.

In this regard, it is interesting that the author develops Paul's mother's character far more than Paul's. From the beginning, the reader knows that she is a beautiful woman from a rich family who married for love. Unfortunately, she fell out of love and because of that found it difficult to love her children.

However, this information in context of the story, like the mother's character, is very superficial. In the beginning, the mother never lets us into her internal world and though we know she is bitter, - on page two, she consistently answers her son's question in a bitter tone of voice - the reader can only guess the reason why.

In comparison, the reader immediately gets an insight into Paul's world. We know from page two that he is angry with his mother and desperate for her attention and that is what is motivating him. The author even tells the reader Paul's secret of the rocking horse.

Yet as the story goes on and Paul becomes almost ill with stress, Paul's mother becomes increasingly worried. She drops her defenses and we learn more about her internal world. It becomes apparent that she has suffered. She finds it difficult to love her children not because she is cold-hearted, but because she has been hurt in the past and doesn't want to be hurt again.

By the end, this more developed and humanistic point of view allows her son to become a child. As the mother's heart opens up to her son, her son is able to enjoy, rather than fear the external world. He expressed his excitement at winning 80,000 pounds with a genuine childlike joy. It is his mother's turn to express her internal world where "His mother sat, feeling her heart had gone, turned actually into a stone."

Setting

The story's main setting is the house. Paul and Oscar go to the races in Lincoln and Paul, Oscar and Barrett in meet Richmond Park in London, but while the characters have conversations in these places, the author does not describe what the places look like.



The most interesting aspect about the Lincoln and Richmond Park is that Paul is far freer at these places than he is at home. At the Lincoln races, for example the author describes Paul as unusually serene. This contrasts to when Paul is at home. Here the author often uses Paul's blue eyes to show just what a strong effect the place on him - Paul's eyes blaze, look uncanny or towards the end of the story, close to madness. In fact, Paul can feel such a bond with the house he can hear it whispering that it needs money.

The author represents the house as a living and breathing entity, but this not a supernatural story. Paul is highly sensitive to his mother's needs and wants. Knowing that the way she expresses herself to the world is through the state of her house, he feels her hurt of not having money through what she think the house lacks.

When the house whispers that it wants more money, this represents his mother's greed. She is offered 1000 pounds a year for five years, but insists on having the full amount immediately, claiming she is in debt. She then spends it all on luxury items and furnishings.

Language and Meaning

Despite the story's complexity, D.H Lawrence uses simple language that not only makes the story easy to read but fits the personalities of the main characters - Paul a young child and Paul's mother, a homemaker and wannabe socialite.

D.H Lawrence expresses the complexity of the story in the language through repetition. Firstly, we know Paul's mother needs money because the house constantly whispers it to its inhabitants. We know she is unlucky and that luck is an important theme in the story because the author uses the word around 15-20 times in the first two pages.

Repetition of language particularly works well for Paul's character. The author expresses his desperation to find luck and win his mother's affections not just by simply saying he wants it, but simply saying he wants it three times, saying, "He wanted luck, he wanted it, he wanted it."

D.H Lawrence also repeats words and images that important to understanding the person's character. For Paul he constantly refers to his blue eyes, which are range from glaring to uncanny to mad. For Paul's mother he constantly refers to her heart, which gradually open up to her child until at the end story, like her child's eyes, her heart has turned to stone.

Structure

The structure of the Rocking Horse Winner like the language the author uses is relatively straightforward. In the first paragraph, the author introduces the mother's obsession with money and her idea that she suffers from bad luck. Next, the author shows how her attitude affects her children before introducing the main character in the story Paul. His conversation with his mother on the second page highlights his need to



win her affection by proving, he unlike his father has luck. The middle of the story concentrates on Paul's horse betting partnership with his Uncle and Barrett. He wins money for his mother, but it's never enough. The end of the story deals with Paul's and his mother's developing relationship.

In these terms, the structure is normal for a short story, wasting no time to get to the meat of the story. What is different is that the author uses a conventional almost fairy tale like structure so express the child like world of not only Paul, but his mother as well.

This childlike quality expressed in the structure changes subtly, according to the changes in the characters mindset. At the beginning the author represents the mother and Paul as both as childish with a structure that like a fairy tale is trying to fit all the background information at the start.

The second half slows down as Paul joins the adult world of horse betting. During the second half, we are privy to conversations about relatively adult issues between Paul ,his uncle and Barrett, including a moment when Oscar ask Paul to make a decision on his mother's money.

The end, concentrating on the relationship between Paul and his mother, adopts a faster pace like the fairytale beginning. The difference is that the language is more internal and far darker as if the child's and the adult's world have clashed. In this section, the child's world is now Paul's and the adult world is now his mothers. They have accepted their normal roles and the story at this point switches from their different points of view.



Quotes

"There was a woman who was beautiful, who started with all the advantages, yet she had no luck. She married for love, and the love turned to dust. She had bonny children, yet she felt they had been thrust upon her, and she could not love them. they looked at her coldly, as if they were finding fault with her. Yet what it was that she must cover up she never knew" (p. 1).

"Although they lived in style, they always felt an anxiety in the house. There was never enough money" (p. 1).

"And so the house became haunted with the unspoken phrase. There must be more money! There must be more money!" (p. 1).

"If you're lucky you have money. That's why it is better to be born lucky than rich. If you're rich you may lose your money. But if you're lucky, you will always get more money" (p. 2).

"Wildly the horse careered, the wavering dark hair of the boy tossed, his eyes had a strange glare in them. The girls dared not speak to him" (p. 3).

"Well - I don't want to give him away - he's a young sport, sir. Would you mind asking him himself? He sort of takes a pleasure in it, and perhaps he'd feel I was giving him away, sir, if you don't mind" (p. 4).

"We're partners. We've been partners from the first. Uncle, he lent me my first five shillings, which I lost. I promised him, honour bright, it was only between me and him; only you gave me that ten-shilling note I started winning with, so I thought you were lucky. You won't let it go any further, will you?" (p. 4).

"You know people send mother writs, don't you, Uncle?" (p. 6).

"The boy watched him with big blue eyes, that had an uncanny fire in them, and he never said a word" (p. 7).

"There were flowers in the winter, and a blossoming of the luxury Paul's mother had been used to. And yet the voices in the house, behind the sprays of mimosa and



almond-blossom, and from under the piles of iridescent cushions, simply trilled and screamed in a sort of ecstasy: "There must be more money...More than ever! More than ever" (p. 8).

"He gazed at her without speaking. He had a secret within a secret, something he had not divulged, even to Bassett or to his Uncle Oscar" (p. 8).

"His mother had sudden strange seizures of uneasiness about him, Sometimes for half an hour, she would feel a sudden anxiety about him that was almost anguish. She wanted to rush to him at once, and know he was safe" (p. 9).

"It's Malabar! he screamed in a powerful, strange voice. It's Malabar!" (p. 10).

"He never slept nor regained consciousness, and his eyes were like blue stones. His mother sat, feeling her heart had gone, turned actually into stone" (p. 10).

"I never told you, mother, that if I can ride my horse, and get there, then I'm absolutely sure - oh, absolutely. Mother, did I ever tell you? I am lucky!" (p. 11).

Topics for Discussion

What does the rocking horse symbolize in the story?

What does the story say about luck and the reasons that one is lucky? From this point of view why hasn't Paul's mother experienced much luck?

Why impact does it have on the story that the author does not develop Paul father's character?

How and why does Paul's behavior bring out his mother's mothering instincts? Why does the fact she found it so hard to love her children in the beginning say about her past?

In what way is the Oedipal Complex a major theme of the story?

How does the author use language and symbolism to express the developing and eventual connection between Paul and his mother?

What are the significance of the last lines that Paul's Uncle speaks to his mother at the end of the story? What meaning do his words give the story and the motives and thoughts of the main characters?