

# Money Obsession in David Herbert Lawrence's The Rocking-Horse Winner

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## Money Obsession in David Herbert Lawrence's *The Rocking-Horse Winner*

We have all heard the expression, "Money makes the world go round." But does this make it worthwhile to abandon happiness in order to gain more of it? David Herbert Lawrence reveals the folly of substituting money and luck for family and love in "[The Rocking-Horse Winner](#)," the story of a woman's insatiable need to become rich, and her son's struggle to gain her approval.

The mother, Hester, obsesses over money. She comes from a fairly rich family, seemingly, as "there was never enough money ... not nearly enough for the social position which [the family] had to keep up" (363). She grows bitter through the years of her marriage not only due to her unluckiness (for "[Luck is] what causes you to have money" (364)), but also due to the presence of three children.

These children are nothing but a burden to her. Because of this, she treats them all the more lovingly in public so as not to draw the suspicion of others. Even so, "when her

children were present, she always felt the center of her heart go hard" (363). She is unsure of the reason why she dislikes them so much, but it seems obvious: they require the spending of money that might otherwise be going toward satisfying her expensive tastes.

This bitterness seeps into the very house, and it does not escape her children. The family spends so much money to maintain their image that they become entrenched in debt, and the house constantly whispers of it: "There must be more money! There must be more money!" (363). The children hear it just as well as their mother, and it is no surprise that eventually her son, Paul, becomes curious of it.

He seeks to learn of his family's situation, but Hester...

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... mostly unconscious, lost in a "brain-fever" (373) and chanting the winning horse's name.

Paul is hospitalized, Oscar bets on the predicted winner, Paul's prediction proves correct and Hester receives the winnings, "Over eighty thousand pounds! I call that lucky, don't you, mother?" (374). Paul pleads for her acceptance a final time as he lies dying, but she can find nothing to say.

Oscar, though, realizes the inevitability of the situation. Hester's constant need for more money and inability to love her children because of it drove Paul into folly. And "poor devil ... he's best gone out of a life where he rides his rocking horse to find a winner" (374).

#### Work Cited

[Lawrence](#), David [Herbert](#). "The Rocking-Horse Winner". Literature: Reading, Reacting, Writing. Ed. Laurie G. Kirzner and Stephen R. Mandell. Forth Worth: Harcourt, Inc., 2001. 362-374.

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