

Women in Love

D.H. Lawrence



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Women in Love is a novel by British author D. H. Lawrence published in 1920. It is a sequel to his earlier novel The Rainbow (1915), and follows the continuing loves and lives of the Brangwen sisters, Gudrun and Ursula, Gudrun Brangwen, an artist, pursues a destructive relationship with Gerald Crich, an industrialist. Lawrence contrasts this pair with the love that develops between Ursula and Rupert Birkin, an alienated intellectual who articulates many opinions associated with the author. The emotional relationships thus established are given further depth and tension by an intense psychological and physical attraction between Gerald and Rupert. The novel ranges over the whole of British society before the time of the First World War and eventually ends high up in the snows of the Tyrolean Alps. Ursula's character draws on Lawrence's wife Frieda, and Gudrun on Katherine Mansfield, while Rupert Birkin has elements of Lawrence himself, and Gerald Crich of Mansfield's husband, John Middleton Murry. Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen are two sisters living in the Midlands of England in the 1910s. Ursula is a teacher, Gudrun an artist. They meet two men who live nearby, school inspector Rupert Birkin and coal-mine heir Gerald Crich. The four become friends. Ursula and Birkin become involved, and Gudrun eventually begins a love affair with Gerald. All four are deeply concerned with questions of society, politics, and the relationship between men and women. At a party at Gerald's estate, Gerald's sister Diana drowns. Gudrun becomes the teacher and mentor of his youngest sister. Soon Gerald's coal-mine-owning father dies as well, after a long illness. After the funeral, Gerald goes to Gudrun's house and spends the night with her, while her parents are asleep in another room. Birkin asks Ursula to marry him, and she agrees. Gerald and Gudrun's relationship, however, becomes stormy. The four holiday in the Alps. Gudrun begins an intense friendship with Loerke, a physically puny but emotionally commanding artist from Dresden. Gerald, enraged by Loerke and most of all by Gudrun's verbal abuse and rejection of his manhood, and driven by the internal violence of his own self, tries to strangle Gudrun. Before he has killed her, however, he realises that this is not what he wants, and he leaves Gudrun and Loerke and climbs the mountain, eventually slipping into a snowy valley where he falls asleep and freezes to death. The impact on Birkin of Gerald's death is profound; the novel ends a few weeks after Gerald's death, with Birkin trying to explain to Ursula that he needs Gerald as he needs her-her for the perfect relationship with a woman, and Gerald for the perfect relationship with a man.

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