Love among the Haystacks

D. H. Lawrence

Introduction

The story

It is high summer, and Geoffrey and Maurice Wookey are building haystacks. Maurice is in love with Paula, a German governess at the nearby vicarage. Geoffrey met her first, but she was attracted to his brother. Now, she and Maurice sometimes meet in the hayfield at night.

Maurice’s success with Paula, and his boasting, make Geoffrey angry. When the two of them are at work on top of a haystack, a scuffle develops, and Maurice falls to the ground. Farmer Wookey comes at once: so does Paula, who witnessed the fall. Maurice recovers, and doesn’t say anything about the fight, even though Paula insists that it was Geoffrey’s fault.

Mr Wookey, his sons and the workers have lunch out in the field. Paula brings some chicken specially for Maurice. Mr Wookey likes the girl and talks to her. She says she is unhappy at the vicarage, but would love to work at the farm. Just then a tramp comes into the field asking for work. Mr Wookey can’t help, but gives him some food. Soon a woman comes to find the tramp. He claims that he has only had some water: when she finds he is lying, she leaves angrily. Later he follows her.

That night, Paula comes to meet Maurice, and they go for an exciting horse ride. It starts to rain, and Maurice needs to put a cover on the haystack. Paula helps him. When they are on top of the stack, the ladder falls: they are trapped. Hearing the rain, Geoffrey has come to the field. He realises what has happened, and overhears the couple as they decide to stay on the haystack all night. Lonely and miserable, he goes into the tool shed.

In the shed, Geoffrey discovers Lydia, the young woman who was in the field earlier. She explains that she has been looking for the tramp, who is her husband. She is cold and wet, and Geoffrey offers her a blanket and some food. She is distant at first, but as they talk about her unhappy marriage and the death of her baby she starts weeping, and embraces Geoffrey passionately. He feels intense tenderness for her.

In the morning, Geoffrey asks her if she will emigrate to Canada with him: she promises nothing, but does not refuse. Geoffrey goes to the haystack and puts the ladder back. Soon Maurice discovers it and is puzzled. Paula is furious, thinking that Maurice tricked her into staying overnight.

Lydia makes breakfast for the four of them. Paula and Maurice, who have learnt that the ladder really did fall down, are subdued after their argument. Geoffrey and Lydia are relaxed and happy. In the end, Paula and Maurice marry; Geoffrey and Lydia stay together.

Background to the story

This deceptively simple love story contains many of the themes that run throughout D H Lawrence’s work: an emphasis on intense, powerful relationships, both those between men and women and others, for example between brothers; the dominance of emotions and unconscious forces; the depiction of conflict and life-changing events; a strong awareness of the deeper, symbolic significance of objects and events (such as the horse ride); and directness and simplicity of language.

Speaking of his own beliefs, Lawrence said: ‘My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true.’
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Pre-reading activity

Match the pictures with the words and chapter titles

Write the letters in the boxes.

WORDs

a When Maurice returned, Paula was warming her hands at the fire.
b Geoffrey leant on his fork and stared out over the fields.
c Geoffrey shone the light on her.
d Maurice ran after her, but he could not catch her easily.
e ‘Have you got some work?’ the young woman asked.
f Maurice lay, smiling happily in the girl’s arms.

CHAPTER TITLES

g The German girl
h A meeting in the dark
i The tramp and the woman
j At night in the hayfield
k Two brothers
l Breakfast in the hayfield

To the teacher

Aim: To introduce the story, its setting and its principal characters
Time: 15–20 minutes
Organization: Give one copy of the worksheet to each student or group of students. Ask them to match captions and chapter titles with the pictures. Check their answers. Then, ask students to identify the characters in each picture (by name where possible), and ask for ideas about what they might be doing or feeling. Finally, ask students to suggest what order the pictures occur in the story, and to outline the story from the sequence of pictures.
Key: 1dj, 2al, 3fg, 4ch, 5ei, 6bk.
Order: 6, 3, 5, 1, 4, 2
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While reading activity

What next?

Look at these possibilities for what will happen before the end of the story. Mark the appropriate answer with a tick (√). Then add three more of your own suggestions and mark these as well.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CERTAINLY HAPPEN</th>
<th>PERHAPS HAPPEN</th>
<th>PROBABLY NOT HAPPEN</th>
<th>CERTAINLY NOT HAPPEN</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thetramp will find work at the farm.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Geoffrey will marry Paula.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Maurice will marry Paula.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The woman in the sailor hat will come back.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Maurice will have a terrible accident.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Paula will go to London.</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Geoffrey will fall in love.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Geoffrey and Maurice will fight.</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Maurice will meet Paula again.</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Mr Wookey will sell the farm.</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Paula will marry.</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Geoffrey will die.</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Paula will go back to Germany.</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Thetramp will steal something from the farm.</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Maurice will leave the farm.</td>
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To the teacher

Where: At the end of Chapter 3
Aim: To encourage students to predict the development of the story
Time: 15–20 minutes

Organization: Give each student, or group of students, a copy of the worksheet. Ask them to predict whether these things will happen or not. Once they have filled in their charts, they should keep them and see how accurate their predictions were as the story develops.
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After reading activity

Character crosswords

Make crosswords for these characters.

............................
DOESN’T TALK VERY MUCH
............................
............................
............................
............................
............................
............................
............................
............................
GOLDEN-BROWN EYES
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............................
FELL FROM THE HAYSTACK
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............................
............................
............................
LOOKS AFTER CHILDREN
............................
............................
............................
............................

To the teacher

Aim: To revise some of the characters, events and vocabulary in the stories
Time: 15–30 minutes

Organization: Give each student, or group of students, a copy of the worksheet. Ask them to make character crosswords following the examples provided.