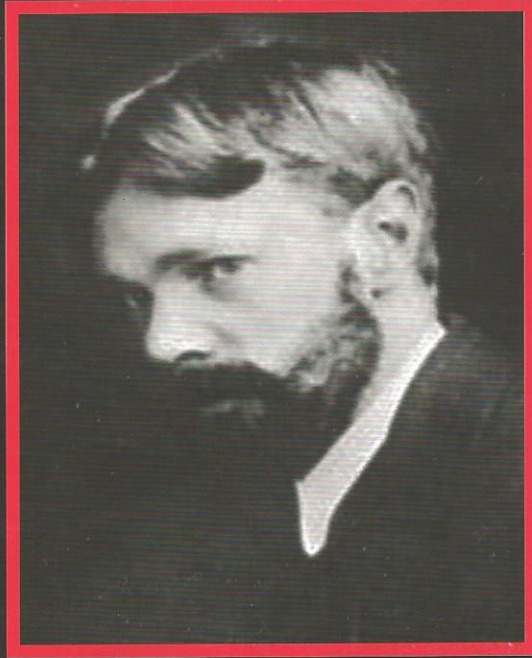


D.H. LAWRENCE AND HIS WORK



**The 11 th METU British Novelists Seminar
Proceedings
18-19 December 2003**

**Edited by
Dr. Nurten Birlik**



**British Novelists Series
Middle East Technical University
Faculty of Education
Department of Foreign Language Education**

Ankara, 2003

Preparing Pre-reading Questions via Students' Papers: "The Rocking Horse Winner" in an EFL Teaching Education Program

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"Teachers dream of finding the ideal materials... for some, the dream of ideal materials is frustrated by the lack of any *real* choice." (Savignon 131)

Background and Rationale

Connecting students' real life experiences with the stories read is a common strategy in literature teaching, but such interaction may become boring if it is not practiced carefully. That is to say, if the students are not well motivated or if they are not given interesting and engaging tasks, then a vivid and fruitful part of a profound literary experience is lost, making it impossible for the students and I to engage in a satisfactory literary expression as well as appreciation. Hence, I sense that students and I leave the classroom incomplete, as if one thousand words are pushed down into our stomachs. On my part, as an instructor of literature, I feel that I have spoiled, again, an educational opportunity that could bring a satisfactory literary learning as well as teaching experience.

During a Short Story: Analysis and Teaching course I taught in the summer session of 200-2003, I observed that even though my students were eager to use the meta-language, in other words, the literary terms, while sharing our analyses through guided activities, they were having hard time articulating their opinions other than giving factual information bridging the literary term and the short story read (such as characterization in such-and-such short story). Noticing that this mechanical classroom practice brought boredom into our classroom and barricaded our exploration of the stories in a more personal manner, despite the students' enthusiasm and eagerness to explore, I decided to search for alternative ways of teaching in order to put an end to this negative atmosphere in which we all taught and learned.

The next story in row was "The Rocking Horse Winner" by D. H. Lawrence. Both the title of the short story and the object under focus were the same: the rocking horse. It was my assumption that if the students had come to the classroom with a concrete scheme of their experiences on some significant aspects of the short story, not only they would feel their experiences were valued but also we could engage in more subtle dialogues leading to a better understanding of the text. It was my assumption that the students, by revisiting their lived experiences or ideas on the title and the object, would come to the class with valuable background information so that we would have more chances to talk about the story itself (the rationale is explained later in the Methods section). Knowing that my students were not informed which story was to be read next, I gave the task:

Brainstorm, think over, and write up your experiences related to and ideas on the rocking horse as an object.