



## Women in Love

**D. H. Lawrence**

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Audiobook

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*When narrated by Slack, Lawrence's philosophical conundrums are easier to follow.*

Sisters Ursula and Gudrun Brangwen struggle to balance independence, love, and marriage at the start of the twentieth century, in D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*. Controversial when first published in 1920 for its frank treatment of sexual relationships, the novel has since become a classic.

In their late twenties when the book opens, the sisters have established independent and comfortable lives. Ursula is a schoolteacher; Gudrun, a sculptor. Gudrun has recently returned to her small hometown from London and finds it stultifying. But the handsome mining heir Gerald Crich gives her pause. Ursula finds herself both captivated and challenged by Rupert Birkin.

Gerald and Rupert form a friendship as well, but cannot conceive of what an enduring love between men would mean. The scene of the two of them wrestling naked is erotically charged yet goes nowhere:

*They had not the faintest belief in deep relationship between men and men, and their disbelief prevented any development of their powerful but suppressed friendliness.*

Through the action and dialogue of the book's characters, Lawrence explores big themes: the dichotomies of humanity and nature, masculine and feminine, intellectualism and spontaneity, societal expectation and individual desire.

Narrator Paul Slack has extensive experience in British theater and speaks clearly and expressively. The sound quality is excellent. There are long sections of dialogue that Slack acts more than reads, signaling the change in characters through his inflection and style of delivery. His accent for the lower-class characters is distinctive, yet still clearly understandable. Reading some of the long philosophical sections of Lawrence can be ponderous. When spoken by Slack with the passionate questioning that the characters feel, these philosophical conundrums are easier to follow.

*Women in Love* addresses many issues that remain contemporary more than a century later. Listening to the audio version brings the characters to life such that its tragic conclusion is even more shocking.

KAREN MULVAHILL (November/December 2017)

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