

The Fox



DAVID HERBERT LAWRENCE

Liceo Scientifico “A.Einstein”, school year 2015-2016

Credits:

Agolli Entina
Carrara Siria
Cicogna Filippo
Cisilino Francesca
Decorte Aurora
Fedrizzi Greta

Index



- About the novelist
- Characters
- About the short story
- Main themes
- Economic and cultural background
- The idea of the Great War
- The idea of women during the Great War
- Relationships during the Great War
- Message

About the novelist



David Herbert Lawrence was born in 1885 in Eastwood, England. He was an English novelist, poet, playwright, essayist and literary critic. He is regarded as one of the most influential writers of the 20th century. Fourth of the five children of Arthur John Lawrence and his wife Lydia. Arthur was a coal-miner, widely regarded as an excellent workman and cheerful companion. Lawrence's mother, Lydia, had had more education than her husband, and passed on to David an enduring love of books, a religious faith and a commitment to self-improvement, as well as a profound desire to move out of the working class in which she felt herself trapped.



Family group

Characters



- **March:** thirty-year-old lady, farm owner. March is a worker as able as a man therefore she did most of the outdoor work. She is always the man of the situation. The way she walked and worked were the ones of a man but her face was not a man's face; She had dark hair, big, wide and dark eyes and a pinched mouth. The nickname March refers to the month in which the nature awakes.
- **Bandford:** thirty-year-old lady, farm owner. Physically weaker and more gentle than March. She used to take care of the house and March. The nickname Bandford refers to something distant (to band) and strong.
- **The Fox:** the first male figure that appears in the novel and to March, it is identified in the figure of Henry. Since it touched March deeply, it becomes a focus of the lady of feelings which arise in her, placing her on a border line between exciting and dangerous unknown.
- **Henry:** a soldier that arrived in the farm. He was seen like the personification of March's repressed sexual instinct and like an obstacle by Bandford. The reader is able to create an idea of Henry thanks to many information given by the two ladies. Indeed the narrator did not describe his physical and psychological appearance.

About the short story



Set in the Berkshire district of England during World War I, *The Fox*, treats the psychological relationships of three protagonists in a triangle of love and hatred. Without the help of any male laborers, Nellie March and Jill Banford struggle to maintain a marginal livelihood at the Bailey Farm. A fox has raged through the poultry, and although the women - particularly the more nearly masculine Nellie - have tried to shoot the intruder, he seems always to elude traps or gunshot. Once Nellie confronts the fox, but his “demon” eyes hold her spellbound; she cannot fire her rifle. A symbol of masculine energy, the fox appears in Nellie’s nightmares as a dominating and sexually threatening force that both attracts and repels her. At this point of deadlock, Henry Grenfel, a soldier on leave who enlisted in the military forces in Canada, returns to the farm, which was once owned by his grandfather. Although he has no legal claim to this property, the women feel an obligation to take him in. Both are charmed by his boyish vigor, but Nellie, in particular, identifies him with the fox. In a troubled and symbolic dream, she psychologically submits to the mesmerizing willpower of the beast, to his sadistic sexual domination over her repressed instincts. Henry’s sly presence on the farm upsets the affectionate harmony that previously existed between the two women.

Main themes



- *Love and friendship*: the novel makes the reader think about interpersonal relationships, based on jealousy, loyalty, fidelity, submission and more;
- *Female emancipation*: March and Bandford do not need any male figure in their life because they are able to do what they need to survive on their own;
- *Gender*: there is a female environment. The two ladies, living without any male company, suggest particular qualities. Firstly, the reader can understand inside the female gender, there are different roles (March embodies the male figure, Bandford is the house-lady). The two ladies are representative of two aspects of character that many women find competing in themselves during and after the war. Then, when Henry goes to the farm, there is a contrast between the two genders. Indeed, Henry feels menaced by the ladies' independence.
- *Sexuality*: when March hunts the fox, she thinks she is hunting a man. This act describes once more something else than itself: March's sexuality and her manner of dealing with it. She is uncertain if she wants him to die or to live. When she is in front of the fox, she does not raise her gun till it has casually run away.

Economic and cultural background



The novel is set during the aftermath of the First World War. Great Britain took part in the conflict in 1914. It was allied with France, Russia and USA. At the end of the the war (1918) it was one of the winners. Even if Great Britain wasn't the place in which the conflict was fought, the country was highly damaged. Since it was the main investor of the war, there was inflation so people were not able to survive.

The years following the end of the war were most difficult for Great Britain. The main problem was that old heavy industries were in decline. Iron, steel and shipbuilding, which had formed the basis of England's prosperity in the nineteenth century were all in difficulty.

The "twenties" saw a complete change in the attitudes and general appearance of English society. The war had emancipated women from many social limitations.

If we consider the cultural aspects of the years following the end of the war, we can see the break with the realism and naturalism in order to reach a more complex vision of men and their world.

The idea of the Great War



The short story conveys a very specific idea of the war. Indeed war conditions made difficult poultry keeping and cultivating.

“Bandford flew into the village on her bicycle to try and buy food. She was a hospitable soul. But the year 1918 there was not much food to buy.” pag 11

“War conditions, again, were unfavorable to poultry keeping. Food was scarce and bad.” pag 2

“There’s nothing but bread and jam.” pag 8

“There’s no food. There’s nothing here.” pag 48

It also tells about who soldiers were and their conditions. Indeed they were young men

“a young soldier with his heavy kit on his back.” pag 5

“the young man-or youth, for he would not be more than twenty- now advanced and stood in the inner doorway.” pag 5

“seeing something boyish.” pag 6

“he was such a boy” pag 8

“for the youth sitting before the fire in his uniform, sent a faint but distinct odor in the room, indefinable, but something like a wild creature” pag 10

They also suffered because of lack food

“He ate largely and quickly and voraciously.” pag 8

“He was gone. The captain, upset, took a gin and bitters. Henry managed to hire a bicycle. It was twelve o’clock when he left the camp. He had sixty miles of wet and muddy crossroads to ride. But he was in the saddle and down the road without a thought of food.”

The idea of women



March and Bandford live together. Both girls embody a role: March is mainly masculine instead Bandford is a house-lady, since she cooks and takes care of the house.

The novel underlines the role of women during the war. Since men were busy in the battle, women had to substitute them to survive.

War creates the women's opportunity to become part of the society and to emancipate themselves. Indeed at the beginning of the 20th century, women became aware of their role. They didn't want to be subdued to men anymore and they wanted to have the same rights as men had. The two ladies are fearful because the society see women subdued to men.

DH Lawrence wrote the short story to prove that the two ladies tried to survive alone but at the end they didn't reach their aim. Indeed, they firstly asked Bandford's father's help to gain the farm; secondly, March reveals herself to be weaker than she appeared because she is influenced both by Bandford and Henry. At the end, March accepts Henry's proposal of wedding because she doesn't know what she really wants. Lawrence conveys the idea of different female models which are not really clear.

Relationships



Relationships are at the centre of text's investigation.

They can be analyzed from the direct reported speech or considering the characters' reactions described by the narrator.

Anyway the reader is invited to consider the consequences of love on friendship. March and Bandford are friend before Henry's communication to desire to marry March.

March is not autonomous to chose what to do because she has to decide who is minded to loose. Bandford and Henry fight to kept March, but she didn't know what to do.

This is the demonstration that relationships limit the personal autonomy.

You are not able to decide what you want or what is better for you without considering the reactions of the one you love.

Message



The novel makes the reader reflect on the First World War and on the role of women, focusing the attention on the relationship between men and women and the role of the two genders in the every-day life