



The wood

In this extract Oliver Mellors, the gamekeeper, is all at one with the wood where he lives and where he has just met his lover, Connie, that is, Lady Chatterley.

David Herbert
Lawrence
Lady Chatterley's Lover
(1928)

He turned into the dark of the wood. All was still, the moon had set. But he was aware of the noises of the night, the engines at Stacks Gate, the traffic on the main road. Slowly he climbed the denuded knoll¹. And from the top he could see the country, bright rows² of lights at Stacks Gate, smaller lights at Tevershall **pit**, the yellow lights of Tevershall and lights everywhere, here and there, on the dark country, with the distant blush³ of furnaces, faint and rosy, since the night was clear, the **rosiness** of the outpouring⁴ of white-hot metal. Sharp, wicked electric lights at Stacks Gate! An **undefinable** quick of evil in them! And all the **unease**, the ever-shifting dread of the industrial night in the Midlands. He could hear the **winding-engines** at Stacks Gate turning down the seven-o'clock miners. The pit worked three shifts⁵.

He went down again into the darkness and seclusion of the wood. But he knew that the seclusion of the wood was illusory. The industrial noises broke the solitude, the sharp lights, though unseen, mocked⁶ it. A man could no longer be private and withdrawn⁷. The world allows no hermits. And now he had taken the woman, and brought on himself a new cycle of pain and doom⁸. For he knew by experience what it meant.

It was not woman's **fault**, not even love's fault, nor the fault of sex. The fault lay there, out there, in those evil electric lights and diabolical rattlings of engines. There, in the world of the mechanical greedy, greedy mechanism and mechanised greed⁹, sparkling with lights and gushing¹⁰ hot metal and roaring with traffic, there lay the vast evil thing, ready to destroy whatever did not conform. Soon it would destroy the wood, and the bluebells¹¹ would spring no more. All vulnerable things must perish under the rolling and running of iron.

He thought with infinite tenderness of the woman. Poor **forlorn** thing, she was nicer than she knew, and oh! so much too nice for the tough lot¹² she was in contact with. Poor thing, she too had some of the vulnerability of the wild hyacinths, she wasn't all tough rubber-goods and platinum, like the modern girl. And they would do her in¹³! As sure as life, they would do her in, as they do in all naturally tender life. Tender! Somewhere she was tender, tender with a tenderness of the growing hyacinths, something that has gone out of the celluloid women of today. But he would protect her with his heart for a little while. For a little while, before the insentient iron world and the Mammon¹⁴ of mechanised greed did them both in, her as well as him.

He went home with his gun and his dog, to the dark cottage, lit the lamp, started the fire, and ate his supper of bread and cheese, young onions and beer. He was alone, in a silence he loved. His room was clean and tidy, but rather stark¹⁵. Yet the fire was bright, the hearth¹⁶ white, the petroleum lamp hung bright over the table, with its white oil-cloth. He tried to read a book about India, but tonight he could not read. He sat by the fire in his shirt-sleeves, not smoking, but with a mug of beer in reach. And he thought about Connie.

To tell the truth, he was sorry for what had happened, perhaps most for her sake. He has a sense of foreboding¹⁷. No sense of wrong or sin; he was troubled by no conscience in that respect. He knew that conscience was chiefly fear of society, or fear of oneself. He was not afraid of himself. But he was quite consciously afraid of society, which he knew by instinct to be a malevolent, partly-insane beast.

The woman! If she could be there with him, and there were nobody else in the world! The desire rose again, his penis began to **stir** like a live bird. At the same time an oppression, a dread of exposing himself and her to that outside Thing that sparkled viciously in the electric lights, weighed down his shoulders. She, poor young thing, was just a young female creature to him; but a young female creature whom he had gone into and whom he desired again.

- 1 **knoll**. Collinetta.
- 2 **rows**. File.
- 3 **blush**. Rossore.
- 4 **outpouring**. Colata.
- 5 **shifts**. Turni (di lavoro).
- 6 **mocked**. Deridevano.
- 7 **withdrawn**. Ritirato, lontano da tutto.
- 8 **doom**. Destino tragico, sventura.
- 9 **greed**. Avidità.
- 10 **gushing**. Zampillante.
- 11 **bluebells**. Campanule.
- 12 **tough lot**. Gente dura.
- 13 **they would do her in**. L'avrebbero rovinata.
- 14 **Mammon**. Mammona (termine usato nella Bibbia per indicare la ricchezza).
- 15 **stark**. Spoglia.
- 16 **hearth**. Focolare.
- 17 **foreboding**. Cattivo presentimento.



- 50 Stretching with the curious yawn of desire, for he had been alone and apart from man or woman for four years, he rose and took his coat again, and his gun, lowered the lamp and went out into the starry night, with the dog. Driven by desire and by dread of the malevolent Thing outside, he made his round in the wood, slowly; softly. He loved the darkness and folded himself into it.

LITERARY COMPETENCE

> VOCABULARY

1 READ the text and match the highlighted words with their Italian translation.

- 1 disagio, malessere
- 2 colpa
- 3 muoversi, eccitarsi
- 4 rosa
- 5 miniera
- 6 disperata, triste
- 7 argani
- 8 si immerse
- 9 indefinibile

> COMPETENCE: READING AND UNDERSTANDING A TEXT

2 READ the passage again and find out

- the setting in time and place;
- what Mellors can see from the top of the knoll;
- how he feels at the thought of Connie;
- why he calls her 'poor young thing'.

> COMPETENCE: ANALYSING AND INTERPRETING A TEXT

3 CONCENTRATE on the narrative technique. From whose point of view is the story told? Can you detect the narrator's presence in the passage?

4 UNDERLINE all the information about the gamekeeper, Mellors, indicating

- his movements;
- his attitude to the town;
- his reaction to Connie.

Say in which lines Lawrence points out the following aspects in the description of Mellors's character.

Conscious decisions:

Actions:

Influence of the unconscious:

5 READ the first three paragraphs again: they provide a clear example of Lawrence's hostility towards industrial civilisation, which is expressed through a contrast between the wood and the village of Tevershall.

- 1 Circle all the words and phrases referring to the former and square the ones linked to the latter.
- 2 Which are the symbols of the ugliness and squalor of the village?
- 3 How is this scene described?



- 4 Complete the table below indicating which colours prevail and what their connotative meaning is.

Colour	Meaning

- 6 **FOCUS** on the theme of industrialisation. Industrialisation has been personified, since it is able to create oppression and dread in Mellors's soul. Look for the expression that justify this statement.

- 7 **MANY** words which express physical properties are used. Complete the following table with words associated to the various senses and to sensuality, and answer the question below.

Hearing	Touch	Sight	Smell	Sensuality

Focus on Constance's 'sensuality'. The text says: 'If she could be there with him, and there were nobody else in the world!' (lines 44-45). How does Mellors think of solving the problems caused by the 'Thing'?

- 8 **FIND** examples of

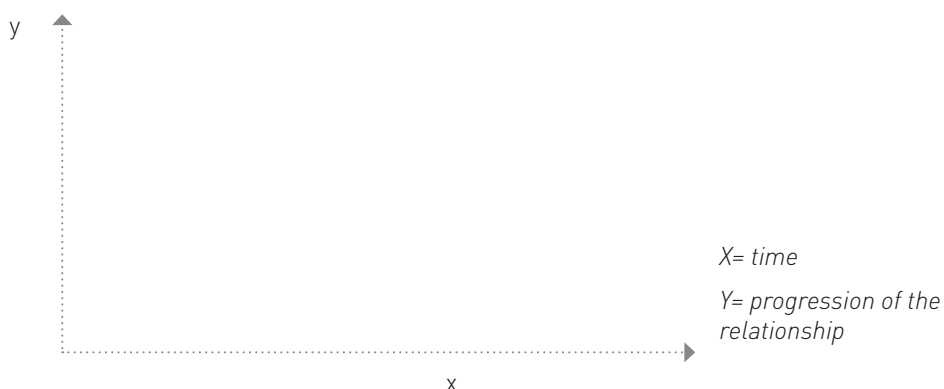
- alliteration and assonance;
- repetition of keywords;
- figures of speech.

Draw conclusions as regards the language of this extract.

COMPETENCE: ESTABLISHING LINKS AND RELATIONSHIPS

- 9 **REFER** to 6.17 and to this novel.

- 1 Complete the graph below about the relationships between Paul and Miriam, and Mellors and Connie.



- 2 Say what makes Mellors and Connie meet.

COMPETENCE: ESTABLISHING LINKS WITH THE LITERARY CONTEXT OF THE AGE

- 10 **DISCUSS.** Explain what is unusual in Lawrence's way of presenting characters and why he was dissatisfied with the traditional techniques of characterisation.