

Riders to the Sea Characters

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Maurya: She is an old, poor mother. She is the tragic character of the play *Riders to the Sea*. She is a broken but strong old woman. She has lost almost everyone to the sea. She is a deeply superstitious woman. She believes in visions (like seeing dead Michael riding). At first, she appeared full of fear. Her hands shake when she's nervous. She begs her last son, Bartley, not to go to sea, but he doesn't listen. After losing everything, she finds a strange peace. She speaks in old Irish sayings and prayers. She represents all mothers who lose children to dangerous work. Maurya's six sons are Stephen, Shawn, Sheamus, Patch, Michael, and Bartley.

Maurya is a tragic character. Her hamartia is her deep love for her sons. She cannot fight against fate. Maurya faces peripeteia when all her sons die. She has anagnorisis and realizes she is helpless. The audience feels catharsis as they pity her pain.

Bartley: Maurya's youngest son. He is a very responsible person. He knows he must support his mother and sisters. He is a realistic and uncompromising man. He won't listen to his mother's warnings. He is Brave but too careless about danger. He is always thinking of practical things. His red mare and gray pony become symbols of death. After Michael disappears, he becomes the family's only hope. He rides horses to sell at the Galway fair but drowns on the way. His mother's warning and vision of his death came true. He reminds us that young men must risk their lives to feed their families.

Cathleen: The older sister (20 years old). She is a practical woman. She doesn't believe in her mother's superstitions. She takes charge when things go wrong.

Nora: She is the more thoughtful, more patient, and younger sister of Cathleen. She is very kind to her mother. She brings the terrible news about Michael's clothes. She respects old traditions more than Cathleen. She helps care for her broken mother. She is more emotional than Cathleen (she cries when counting stitches).

The Priest: The priest is a symbol of a modern thinker. He has never seen, but his words matter. He tells Nora that God won't let all Maurya's sons die—but he's wrong. He represents hope that fails. He shows that religion can't always protect people.

Michael: Michael is missing son of Maurya. He is missing for nine days before the play begins. It is believed Michael drowned at sea. Though he never appears alive in the play. His death is

confirmed when his shirt and stockings are found on a drowned man's body. His loss haunts the family, especially when Maurya sees his ghost riding behind Bartley. It foreshadowed another tragedy. Michael's death shows how the sea keeps taking Maurya's sons, one by one.

LxNotes