

READING & TRAINING

George Eliot

# Silas Marner



AUDIO CD





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an imprint of Cideb Editrice, Genoa, Canterbury

First edition: April 2003

Picture credits:  
Mary Evans Picture Library: 4, 6, 50, 103

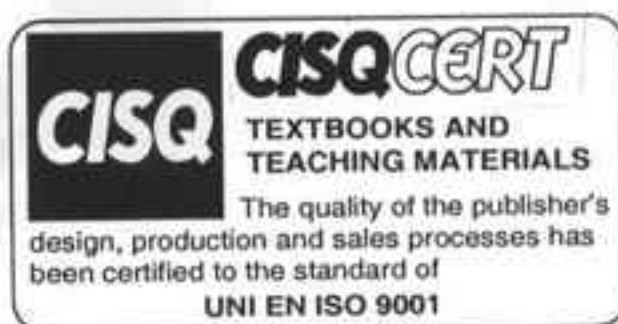
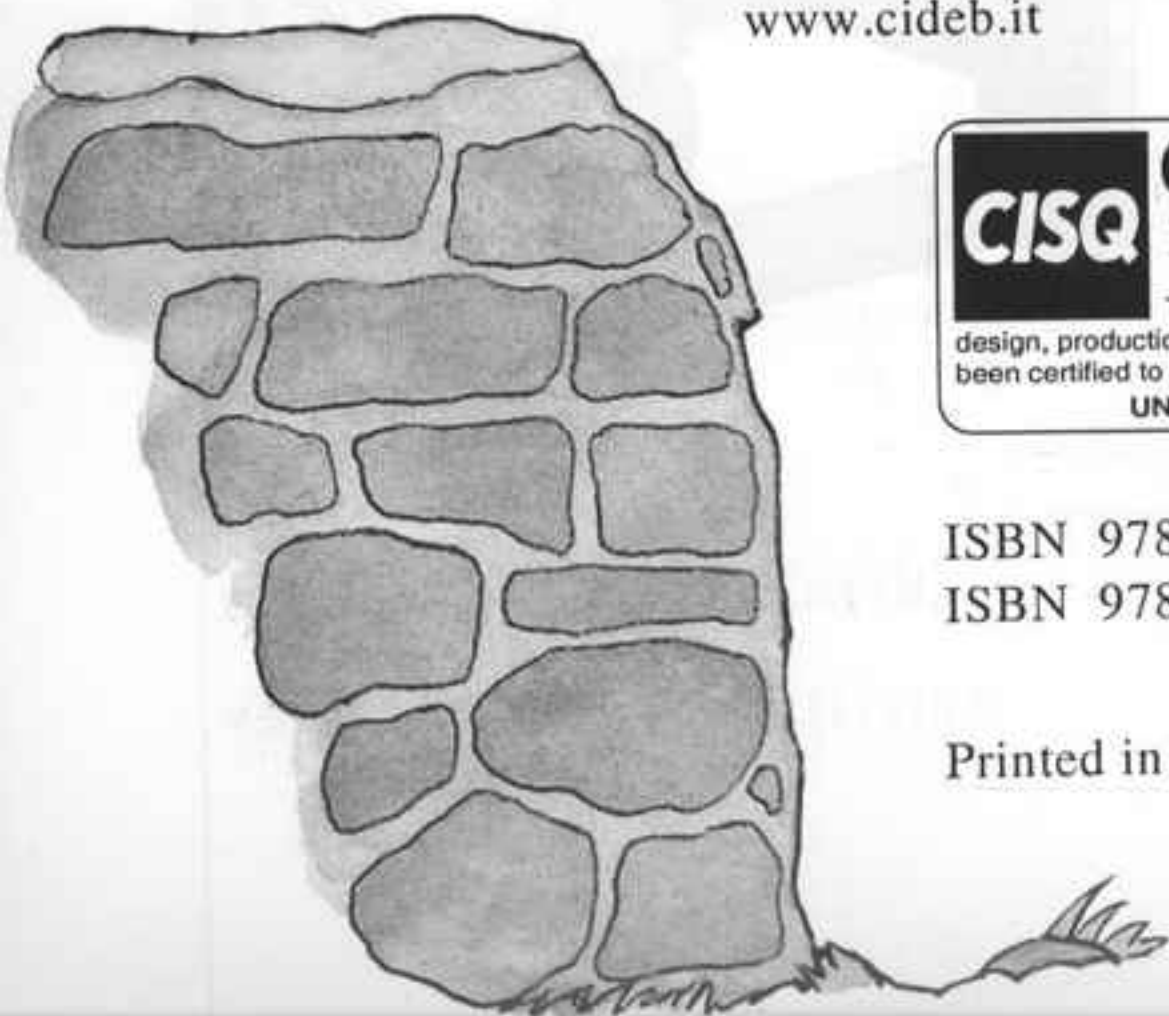
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ISBN 978-88-7754-934-1 Book + CD  
ISBN 978-88-7754-875-7 Book

Printed in Italy by Litoprint, Genoa

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END These signs mark the sections related to the listening exercises.



# George Eliot and *Silas Marner*



*George Eliot* (1849), from the portrait by Francois D'Albert Durade.



[1] **T**he woman who became known as George Eliot was born Mary Ann Evans in 1819. Her father was a farm manager and her mother ran a dairy. No one else in her family was well educated or interested in books, though they were all shrewd<sup>1</sup> and intelligent. They were simple respectable country people. It is rather surprising, then, that their daughter grew up to be a leading London intellectual and the greatest novelist of her generation.

[2] George Eliot's third novel *Silas Marner* was published in 1861. Like her first two novels *Adam Bede* (1859) and *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), it is set in the English countryside she knew so well as a girl. However, unlike them, it has elements that resemble fairy story and legend. A short magical tale of mysterious appearances and disappearances, *Silas Marner* relies heavily on<sup>2</sup> village folklore and superstition. Like a fairy tale, it opens by telling us that these events happened long ago and ends with the protagonists living happily ever after. George Eliot said that she first thought of writing the story as a narrative poem, because it was inspired by the Romantic poet William Wordsworth and indeed many Wordsworthian elements are recognisable in it: the lonely male protagonist, the love of nature, the rural setting. But *Silas Marner* also has elements in common with George Eliot's other novels: a deep interest in characters who are rejected by their communities; a close attention to psychology and social class; and the conviction that love is more important than money.

1. **shrewd** : quick to understand and use this understanding to their advantage.

2. **relies heavily on** : (here) uses, bases itself on.



- 3 The story is set in the first years of the nineteenth century in the village of Raveloe. The protagonist Silas Marner is a weaver<sup>1</sup> who moved to Raveloe after a traumatic experience in the city, in which he lost his faith in God and his fellow man.<sup>2</sup> The villagers view Silas with suspicion, because he is an outsider and because he makes no effort to be friendly with them. Silas does nothing but work at his weaving and prepare medicinal herbs. He saves most of the money he earns and stores away the gold and silver coins in a hiding place under the floor of his cottage. But one day his money is stolen...



George Eliot's birthplace. South Farm at Arbury.

1. **weaver** : person who makes cloth crossing threads over and under each other using a machine called a loom.
2. **his fellow man** : (here) other people, people like him.



- [4] On one level, the story after that point is about how a person who has been cut off<sup>1</sup> from the human community can slowly rejoin it. When Silas's gold is stolen, he goes to the village pub – the Rainbow – to announce the robbery and ask for help. This is the first time he has made contact with other human beings for anything except his work since his disillusionment in the city fifteen years before. The theft of Silas's gold, then, has a positive result: it causes him to take the first step towards rejoining the human community. Shortly after the robbery, a baby girl with golden hair mysteriously appears in Silas's cottage and through the child the man's redemption is completed.
- [5] This beautiful little story marks a turning point in George Eliot's career. Her work up to and including *Silas Marner* deals with English village life. Her later novels are considerably more ambitious: they explore issues of national and international significance and describe the larger world she only came to know as an adult. *Silas Marner*, then, is George Eliot's good-bye to the rural England of her childhood. Appropriately enough, the story is centred on a child and has many affinities with children's literature. It is also pervaded with a sense of nostalgia and is more simply emotional and structurally perfect than any other George Eliot novel.

1. cut off : stranded, removed.



**1** The article has five paragraphs. Match the heading or title for each paragraph from the list below. There is one title you will not need.

- a. ☐ An unfriendly outsider
- b. ☐ Simple beginnings
- c. ☐ The star of London
- d. ☐ A move to greater complexity
- e. ☐ *Silas Marner*: typical but different
- f. ☐ A story of loss and redemption

**2** Which paragraph:

		Paragraph number
1.	Mentions fairy tale elements in the story?	
2.	Gives a brief description of Eliot's family background?	
3.	Gives reasons for the unpopularity of Silas Marner amongst the inhabitants of Raveloe?	
4.	Links a negative event with positive consequences?	
5.	Views <i>Silas Marner</i> as the last of a certain type of novel by the author?	
6.	Describes Silas Marner's unhappy life?	

**3** What similarities exist between *Silas Marner* and the previous two novels, *Adam Bede* and *The Mill on the Floss*?

**4** What Romantic traits does the story have?

**5** How did Eliot's novels change after *Silas Marner*?



## Before you read

**1** The novelist's task has been described as 'creating characters' and 'creating worlds' (F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (1948)). In order to activate these characters and worlds, the reader has certain tasks to perform; these could be summarised as follows:

- Memorising the names of characters
- Understanding relationships existing between these characters
- Clarifying time and location
- Inferring relations of cause and effect
- Picturing physical appearances

These tasks are all part of the reader's creation of an imaginary world. We do it every time we read. As we do this, we also learn about other 'worlds'.

The novel transports us into imaginary worlds created by the writer that give us an insight into the historical setting of the novel. We can learn as much about 19th century Britain by reading its fiction as we can by reading a book of its history. Which novels in the literature of your language give an insight to the social conditions of the past? Discuss your ideas with other students. The activities in this edition of *Silas Marner* are ideally to be done working with other students, in pairs or in groups.

**2** In English, the name Silas Marner is, like Charles Dickens' Scrooge from *A Christmas Carol*, closely associated with being a miser. Check the definition of 'miser' in an English dictionary.

**3** '... the narrator has to start somewhere'. This 'somewhere' is often called 'Chapter One'. What are the typical functions of an opening chapter? With a partner, make a list. Think about the tasks, discussed in exercise one, which a reader faces when starting to read a narrative. Compare your ideas with other students. Bear these ideas in mind when you read Chapter One.

## PART 1



### Chapter One

TRACK 2

In the days when the spinning wheels <sup>1</sup> hummed <sup>2</sup> busily in the farmhouses, one often saw certain small pale men in the countryside. Among the big strong farm workers, these men looked like the remains of a disinherited race. The shepherd's dog barked fiercely when one of them walked by, bent under the weight of a heavy pack and the shepherd himself looked at the pack suspiciously, even though he knew that it only contained linen cloth. 'I don't trust weavers!' thought the shepherd. 'Who knows? Perhaps the Devil helps them with their work!'

In that far off time, the country people were very superstitious. They did not like anything strange or new and strange men who passed through the village were always viewed with suspicion.

1. **spinning wheels** : manual devices used to spin thread before the development of spinning machines.
2. **hummed** : made a low continuous sound.



## PART 1

### Chapter One

The villagers knew nothing of these men's origins. Where were their homes? Who were their fathers and mothers? And how can you trust someone if you do not know who his father and mother were?

To the peasants of old times, the world outside their own direct experience was a region of mystery. Even if someone from distant parts settled in the village and lived there for many years, he was still viewed with distrust.<sup>1</sup> The villagers would not have been surprised if, after years of living peacefully among them, he had committed some terrible crime. The linen-weavers, who were emigrants from the town to the country, were distrusted even more than ordinary strangers because of their skill. Any kind of cleverness seemed to the villagers to be like witchcraft.<sup>2</sup> They believed that honest people were not very clever. Whenever a linen-weaver settled in a village, the local people regarded him as an alien not to be trusted and so he lived in a state of loneliness.

In the early years of this century,<sup>3</sup> a linen-weaver named Silas Marner lived and worked in a stone cottage close to an abandoned quarry<sup>4</sup> near the village of Raveloe. The village boys were fascinated by the sound of Silas's loom. They would often look through the windows of his cottage and watch him working. They were a little afraid of him and so – to cover up their fear – they laughed at him, imitating the strange sound of the loom and the bent shape of his body as he worked. When he heard them laughing, Silas came to the door and the boys ran away. They thought perhaps he could harm them by magic, just by looking at

1. **viewed ... distrust** : viewed with suspicion.

2. **witchcraft** : skill of using magic powers especially evil ones.

3. **in ... century** : in the years just after 1800.

4. **quarry** : place from which stone or other minerals are extracted.



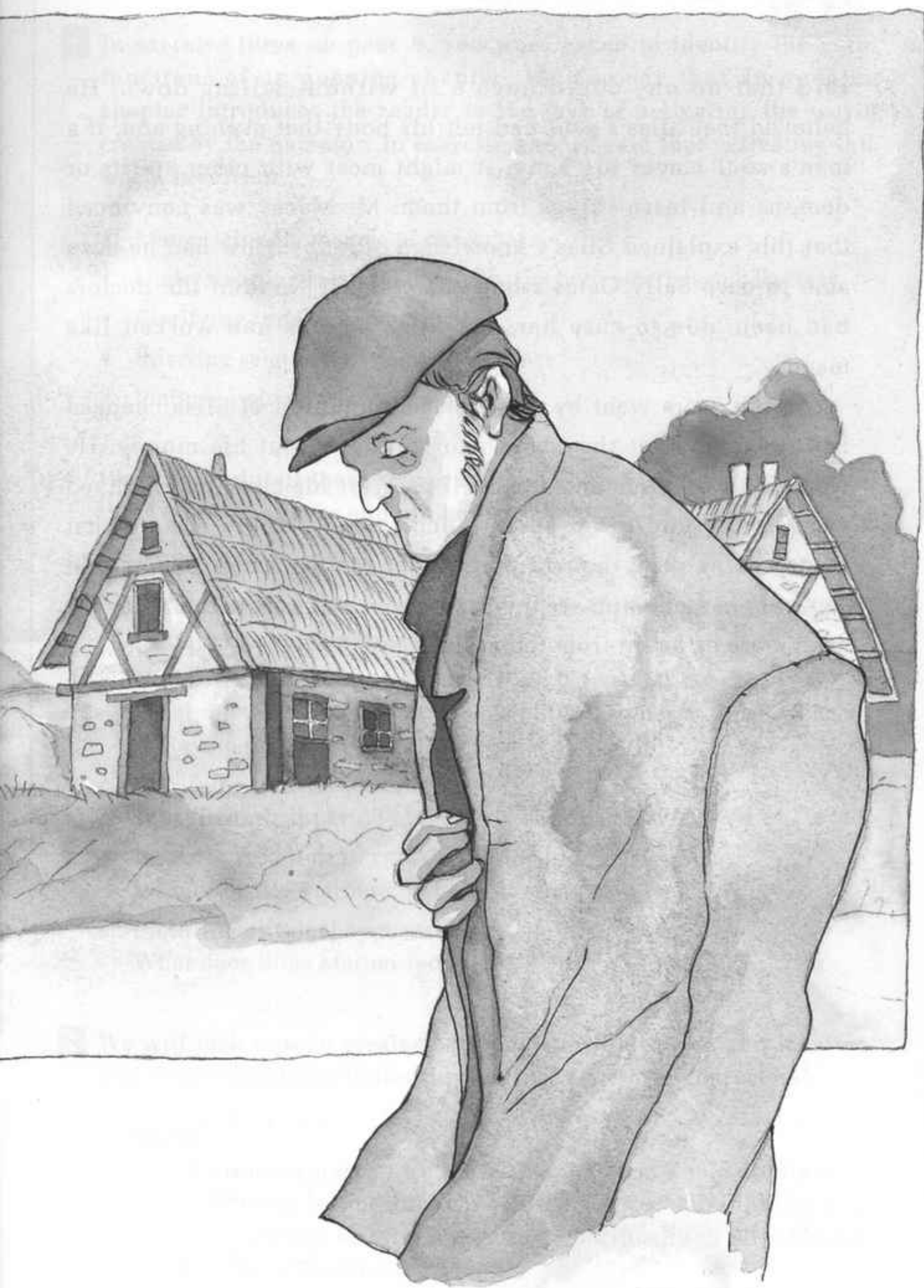
them with his large brown short-sighted <sup>1</sup> eyes. They had heard their parents say that Silas could cure illnesses with herbs and they thought that, if he could heal <sup>2</sup> by magic, he could probably do harm by magic too.

Silas had lived in Raveloe for fifteen years. The villagers all thought that he was very strange: he never came to the Rainbow <sup>3</sup> for a pint of beer; he never stopped to gossip <sup>4</sup> in the village square; his only contact with men and women was that necessary for his work. At first the village girls thought he would want to find a wife and they declared that they would never marry a dead man come back to life again. They said this because Jem Rodney the mole-catcher <sup>5</sup> had told them a strange tale. One evening, as he was walking home from Squire <sup>6</sup> Cass's woods, where he had been shooting birds, he saw Silas Marner standing still in a field, staring <sup>7</sup> before him with the eyes of a dead man. Jem spoke to him and shook his arm, but the weaver did not reply or move: he stood there rigid, as if he had died standing up. Then suddenly he was normal again; he looked at Jem, said 'Good-night' and walked off.

When the villagers heard Jem's story, some of them said that Silas must have had a fit. <sup>8</sup> But old Mr Macey shook his head and

1. **short-sighted** : only being able to see clearly things that are close to you.
2. **heal** : cure.
3. **the Rainbow** : name of the public house in Raveloe; a public house – or pub – is a bar where beer and spirits are served.
4. **gossip** : talk about other people and their private affairs in a negative or judgmental way.
5. **mole-catcher** : man employed by farmers to kill the moles (small dark animals with very small eyes that live underground) that were damaging their crops.
6. **Squire** : titled land-owner.
7. **staring** : looking at something or someone for a long time with wide open eyes.
8. **had a fit** : (here) lost consciousness.







# Silas Marner

said that no one could have a fit without falling down. He believed that Silas's soul had left his body that evening and, if a man's soul leaves his body, it might meet with other spirits or demons and learn things from them. Mr Macey was convinced that this explained Silas's knowledge of herbs. How had he been able to cure Sally Oates when she was ill? None of the doctors had been able to cure her, but Silas's herbs had worked like magic.

As the years went by, the villagers' opinion of Silas changed little, except that they began to wonder about his money. He worked all the time and was well paid for his cloth, yet he lived very simply and never spent much money. Where was all that money going? The thought that Master Marner had a pile of gold somewhere made him seem even more mysterious to the villagers, even more different from themselves.





**1** In exercise three on page 9, you were asked to identify the main functions of an opening chapter. We can say that an opening chapter introduces the reader to the task of activating the world created by the narrator. In exercise one we said that activating this world involved:

- Memorising the names of characters
- Understanding relationships existing between these characters
- Clarifying time and location
- Inferring relations of cause and effect
- Picturing physical appearances

We start to do all these things in Chapter One. Can you answer *all* these questions at the end of Chapter One?

- a. Memorising the names of characters  
What characters are introduced? Which of them do you think will be important to the story?
- b. Understanding relationships existing between these characters  
What relationship is there between Silas Marner and the villagers of Raveloe?
- c. Clarifying time and location  
What historical period is the story set in, and where?
- d. Inferring relations of cause and effect  
Why did Silas Marner come to Raveloe?
- e. Picturing physical appearances  
What does Silas Marner look like?

**2** We will look now in greater detail at 'Clarifying time and location' and 'Understanding relationships existing between characters'.

### A. Time

List the time expressions used in Chapter One. There are six in total. They can be put into two distinct groups: those that fix a historical setting, and those that refer specifically to Silas Marner and his life in Raveloe.

Phrases fixing a historical setting	Phrases referring to Silas Marner and his life in Raveloe


In a small group discuss the effect the first group of expressions has.

**B. Characters and relationships**

Silas Marner is an outsider. Read this definition of the noun ‘outsider’: *An outsider is a person who is not involved with a particular group of people or organisation or who does not live in a particular place...someone who is not liked or accepted as a member of a particular group, organisation or society...* (Cambridge International Dictionary of English).

- a. Why are the villagers suspicious of outsiders?
- b. What is Eliot’s position with regards to the villagers (critical, sympathetic)?
- c. Eliot uses four direct questions in Chapter One.
  - i What are they?
  - ii What function do these questions have? Remember the ideas discussed in exercise one.
  - iii Which questions refer specifically to Silas Marner?

Looking ahead

- 
3
- 1** In exercise one, you were asked several questions relating to the characters, the time, location, etc. At this early stage in the story we could not answer the question: ‘Why did Silas Marner come to Raveloe?’ In Chapter Two we discover the reason. Listen to this short extract from Chapter Two. What do you think happened to Silas? What relationship do you think he had with William and Sarah? Make a note of your ideas and compare them with other students. Bear these ideas in mind as you read Chapter Two.



## Chapter Two



**A**CK 3 Although his daily habits – and his neighbours' opinion of him – had changed very little over the years, Silas's inner life had been a history and a metamorphosis. Before he came to Raveloe, his life had been full of companionship and mental activity. He had lived in the city and attended <sup>1</sup> chapel at Lantern Yard. <sup>2</sup>

The community at Lantern Yard was part of a narrow religious sect in which even the poorest member could distinguish himself if he could speak well.

The people at Lantern Yard had always considered Silas a very

1. **attended** : went to on a regular basis.
2. **chapel at Lantern Yard** : the religious sect George Eliot is describing here was known as Dissent, which derived from Calvinism. Dissenters called their place of worship a 'chapel'. They believed that no church or priest stands between God and the individual worshipper. They were strongly opposed to paganism and Catholicism. They believed that the soul is only saved by divine grace. This idea is known as 'election': the 'elect' are those whom God has chosen to save. They believed in hard work, a virtuous life and simplicity. They considered ornamentation, either in the church or in one's home or clothing, sinful. Dissenters have been described as ascetic, self-righteous and emotionally repressive.



pious and virtuous young man. Like many honest and fervent men, Silas had a strong sense of mystery. If he had been better educated, he might have found the explanations he sought <sup>1</sup> in inquiry and knowledge, but, since he had had little schooling, he turned to religion for explanations. His mother had taught him to recognise and prepare medicinal herbs, but, during his years at Lantern Yard, he began to think that practising his mother's skill might be sinful. He believed that the herbs would do no good without prayer and that prayer might suffice without the herbs. Therefore the pleasure of wandering <sup>2</sup> through the fields in search of dandelion <sup>3</sup> and foxglove <sup>4</sup> began to seem like a temptation.

Silas had a close friend at Lantern Yard called William Dane. He too was considered a pious and virtuous young man. However, the community thought him too severe with those who were not as virtuous as himself and too proud of his own virtue, so that he considered himself wiser than his teachers. But Silas could see no faults in William. He looked at his friend with innocent admiration in his eyes. The expression of trusting simplicity on Marner's face was very different from the complacent expression in Dane's narrow slanting <sup>5</sup> eyes and thin lips.

Silas and William often discussed salvation. Silas said that he hoped he was among those chosen by God, but he could never feel sure. William, by contrast, declared that he was absolutely certain that he would be saved, because he had once had a dream in which he saw the words 'election sure' <sup>6</sup> standing alone on the

1. **sought** : looked for.

2. **wandering** : walking in a relaxed way.

3. **dandelion** : small bright yellow wild flower.

4. **foxglove** : tall thin wild plant with white, yellow, pink red or purple bell-shaped flowers.

5. **slanting** : diagonally positioned.

6. **election sure** : see footnote chapel at Lantern Yard (p. 17).



## PART 1

### Chapter Two

white page of an open Bible.

Silas was engaged to a young woman named Sarah, who worked as a servant. She and Silas were saving their money so that they could get married. But one evening, something happened that changed Silas's future. In the middle of a prayer meeting, Silas became suddenly still, rigid and unconscious. At first, the people at the prayer meeting thought that he was dead, but after more than an hour, he returned to normal. The people were then convinced that his mysterious suspended state had a spiritual meaning. They thought that Silas had been chosen by God and they asked him if he had had a vision during the trance.<sup>1</sup> A less truthful man might have invented a vision to please them and a less sane man might have believed his own invention, but Silas was both honest and sane, so he told them the truth: he had not had a vision.

William Dane said that Silas's trance seemed more like a visitation of Satan than a sign of God's favour. He told Silas to examine his soul and to confess any sin he had kept secret. Silas felt hurt that his friend doubted him and he noticed that Sarah too seemed to withdraw from him now.

A short time after these events, the senior deacon<sup>2</sup> of the chapel fell ill. Silas and William took turns watching the old man by night. Silas would sit by the deacon's bed until two in the morning, then William would take over until six. One night, Silas noticed that the old man had stopped breathing. He touched his arm and found that it was rigid: the deacon must have been dead for some time. Silas looked at the clock: it was four in the morning. Did I fall asleep? Silas asked himself. And why did William not come as usual at two o'clock? Silas went to tell the others what had happened, then he

1. **trance** : temporary mental condition in which someone is not in control of themselves.

2. **deacon** : member of the congregation who handles the financial accounts of the chapel.



went to work, but at six o'clock William and the minister of the church came to Silas's house.

'William!' said Silas. 'Why did you not come at two o'clock this morning as usual?'

'I felt ill,' said William. 'But we came here to talk about something more important. There was a bag of money in a locked drawer in the deacon's bedside table. The bag has been stolen, Silas, and your knife was found in the drawer.'

'I swear before God that I am innocent!' cried Silas. 'I must have been asleep, or perhaps I had another trance like the one you witnessed <sup>1</sup> at the prayer meeting and the thief must have come in while I was in the trance.'

They searched Silas's house and William found the empty bag which had contained the money hidden behind the wardrobe in Silas's bedroom! 'Confess, Silas!' cried William in a stern <sup>2</sup> voice.

Silas looked at him with reproach <sup>3</sup> in his eyes and said, 'William, you have been my friend for nine years. When have you known me to lie? But God will prove my innocence.'

The people of Lantern Yard never called the police when a crime was committed in their community. They had their own ways of discovering innocence or guilt. They decided to draw lots: that way God could show them who was the guilty one. <sup>4</sup> The lots declared that Silas Marner was guilty. The minister told Silas that he must confess, repent his sin and give the money back, otherwise he

1. **witnessed** : saw.

2. **stern** : severe.

3. **reproach** : criticism.

4. **draw ... one** : this was common practice among Dissenters in the 19-century. Pieces of straw – known as lots – were cut all the same length, one for each member of the

community. Then one of the lots was cut short and the lots were put into a bag. Each member of the community had to reach into the bag and draw out one of the lots. The person who drew the short straw was considered to have been identified by God as the guilty one.







# Silas Marner



would be expelled from the community. Silas walked up to William Dane and said in an agitated voice, 'Now I remember! My knife was not in my pocket. You borrowed <sup>1</sup> it. You stole the money and now you are trying to blame me! But your sin will not be discovered, because there is no just God who governs the earth; there is only a God of lies, who bears witness against <sup>2</sup> the innocent!'

The community was shocked by these blasphemous words. William said, 'I leave our brothers and sisters to judge whether or not this is the voice of Satan. Silas, I will pray for you.'

Silas looked at Sarah, but she turned away from him with a look of disgust on her face. One month later, Sarah married William Dane and Silas left Lantern Yard.

It was in this unhappy state that Silas had come to Raveloe. He had lost his faith in God and his fellow man. All that remained for him was work. So he worked all day, every day, mindlessly, <sup>3</sup> like a spider spinning its web. His customers paid him in coins of gold and silver and he kept them in an iron pot. As time went on, Silas began to love those coins. Every day he worked for sixteen hours, but at night he took his coins out of the pot and counted them. Their shapes and colours became familiar to him. He loved to look at them and touch them. He removed some bricks from the floor of his cottage, underneath the loom, and dug a hole <sup>4</sup> there in which to hide the iron pot.

So, year after year, Silas lived in this solitude, with no human companionship and the only love in his life was the love he felt for the gold and silver coins in his iron pot.

1. **borrowed** : took with the intention of giving it back after some time.
2. **bears witness against** : (here) goes against.
3. **mindlessly** : without a purpose.
4. **dug a hole** : made a hole by removing the earth.





- 2** Silas is the victim of William Dane's dishonesty. Eliot prepares us for this in her comparison of the two. Complete the table below. They are very different.

	<b>Silas</b>	<b>William Dane</b>
Character	Honest and innocent	
Facial expression	Trusting simplicity	
Position regarding salvation	Hopeful but unsure	

- 3** In Chapter One we saw how the villagers of Raveloe misinterpreted Silas' fit. This was not the first time Silas had been a victim of misunderstanding. What did the community of Lantern Yard think when Silas 'became suddenly still, rigid and unconscious'? (p. 19) What was William Dane's role in helping to create this misunderstanding?

### The theft

- 4** Eliot does not tell us explicitly what happened but we understand that Silas has been unjustly accused.

<b>The accusation</b>	<b>What really happened</b>
Realising the deacon was dead, sometime between 2am and 4am Silas stole the deacon's money	
Silas took the money home and hid it behind his wardrobe in his bedroom	

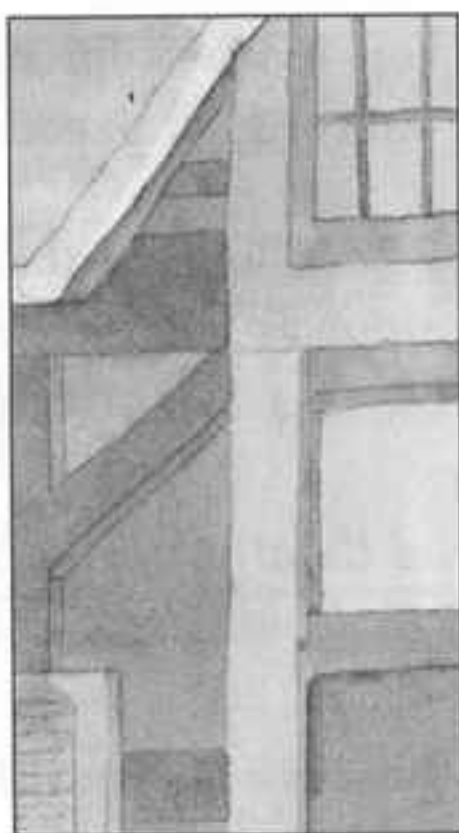


- 5 What does Silas lose as a result of this accusation?
- 6 What can you learn from the following two extracts about Eliot's opinion of the religion practised at Lantern Yard?
  - *If he had been better educated, he might have found the explanations he sought in inquiry and knowledge, but, since he had had little schooling, he turned to religion for explanations.* (p. 18)
  - *'They had their own ways of discovering innocence or guilt. They decided to draw lots: that way God could show them who was the guilty one.'* (p. 20)
- 7 Do the villagers of Raveloe and the people at Lantern Yard have anything in common?

## Looking ahead

- 1 As a result of his experiences in Lantern Yard, Silas' life in Raveloe is very different ('a metamorphosis'); his 'only love in his life was the love he felt for the gold and silver coins in his iron pot.' (p. 22) Before reading Chapter Three, what event do you think could disturb 'the daily habits (that) had changed very little over the years...?' Compare your ideas with your partner and check them as you read Chapter Three.

## Chapter Three



TRACK 4

**T**he greatest man in Raveloe was Squire Cass, who lived in the large red house by the church. Squire Cass's wife had died many years ago. He lived with his sons. The villagers thought that the eldest son Godfrey was a handsome pleasant young man. They hoped that soon he would marry Miss Nancy Lammeter, for it was well known that Godfrey and Nancy were fond of each other. But the villagers did not like Squire Cass's second son Dunstan: they considered him a spiteful <sup>1</sup> fellow <sup>2</sup> who laughed at other people's misfortunes and wasted all his money on gambling <sup>3</sup> and drink. Recently, people had noticed that Godfrey was not as healthy and happy as usual. They feared that perhaps his younger brother was

1. **spiteful** : almost evil.

2. **fellow** : man.

3. **gambling** : risking something in the hope of gaining money. For example, at cards or at the racetrack.



leading him astray,<sup>1</sup> encouraging him to drink and to gamble.

One evening, Godfrey and Dunstan were alone in the living room of the great red house. Dunstan had been drinking brandy. His plump<sup>2</sup> face was red and his eyes were bright. He looked at his brother's sad pale face with a sneering<sup>3</sup> smile.

'Dunstan, you must pay me back that money I lent you,' said Godfrey. 'It was the rent I had collected for father and now he is asking me for it.'

'But I haven't got the money,' Dunstan replied. 'Why don't you find the money to pay father back? You know, dear brother, that if I told father your secret he would cut you off without a penny.'<sup>4</sup>

'But I cannot find the money to pay him!' cried Godfrey.

'Oh, I'm sure you will. Otherwise I'll tell him that his handsome son was married in secret to Molly Farren. She was such a nice young woman until she started to drink too much and take opium!'

'Perhaps I will tell father everything. And after all he'll know some time. She has been threatening<sup>5</sup> to come to the house and tell him herself. If I tell father, at least you won't be able to torture me anymore!'

'Don't be ridiculous, Godfrey. You can sell your horse Wildfire and pay father back. I'll help you to sell the horse. Do you know Bryce, the horse dealer<sup>6</sup> in Raveloe? I know him very well and I'm sure he will pay one hundred and twenty pounds for Wildfire.'

1. **leading him astray** : corrupting him.

2. **plump** : fat.

3. **sneering** : mocking, showing a lack of respect.

4. **cut you off without a penny** : disinherit you. Stop giving you money and change his will so that you would not inherit any money after his death.

5. **threatening** : suggesting that unless a particular order or action is carried out something unpleasant will happen.

6. **horse dealer** : man who buys and sells horses.



Godfrey covered his eyes with his hands and sighed. Wildfire was the best horse he had ever owned, but he had to get the money somehow. 'All right,' he said. 'Take Wildfire and sell him, but don't spend any of the money.'

The next morning, Dunstan mounted Wildfire and set off for the village. He rode past the deep pit<sup>1</sup> of the abandoned quarry and past Silas Marner's cottage. Dunstan had often heard the villagers say that Silas had a lot of money. He thought he could probably frighten the weaver into giving him<sup>2</sup> his money, but then Godfrey would not lose Wildfire. Dunstan preferred to sell the horse, because he knew it would pain<sup>3</sup> Godfrey. Dunstan rode to the village, found Bryce, and agreed to sell Wildfire to him that afternoon. He could have sold the horse immediately and walked home with the money in his pocket, but he wanted to go riding first. He rode out to the fields to jump some fences.<sup>4</sup> He enjoyed riding and jumping for a couple of hours, but, as he was jumping one last fence, Wildfire was pierced with a hedge-stake<sup>5</sup> and fell down dead.

Dunstan staggered to his feet<sup>6</sup> and drank from the flask<sup>7</sup> of brandy he always carried with him. The horse was dead and the hundred and twenty pounds Bryce would have paid for him were lost. Now Dunstan would have to walk home and that seemed to him a humiliating thing: he always rode on horseback to and from

1. **pit** : large black hole in the ground.
2. **frighten ... giving him** : force him to give by scaring.
3. **would pain** : would hurt.
4. **fences** : structures made of wood or wire, supported with posts to divide two areas of land.
5. **pierced ... hedge-stake** : killed because one of the vertical wooden poles that support the fence went through his body.
6. **staggered ... feet** : got up from the ground unsteadily (because of the shock of the accident).
7. **flask** : container for liquids here for brandy.









the village. It was nearly four o'clock and a fog was gathering.<sup>1</sup> Dunstan started walking home along the lonely lane,<sup>2</sup> drinking his brandy and swearing at his misfortune.

The sky grew darker and the fog thicker as Dunstan walked along. Then suddenly he saw a light. Dunstan realised that it must be coming from the window of Silas Marner's cottage. He decided to knock on the door and ask the old weaver to lend him a lantern. Once he was inside the cottage, he would also ask Silas to lend him some money. He would promise to pay interest and, if Silas was still unwilling to part with<sup>3</sup> the gold, he would frighten him a little. With this plan in mind, Dunstan knocked loudly on the door of the cottage. There was no answer, so Dunstan pushed the door and it opened.

A great fire was burning in the fireplace, but the cottage was empty. Dunstan wondered why Marner had left his cottage unlocked. Perhaps he had got lost in the fog and had fallen into the abandoned quarry. If so, he would certainly drown; the pit had been full of water for many years. Dunstan thought of taking the money. If the old weaver were dead, no one would ever know that it had been stolen. He looked around the cottage, searching for a hiding place. The brick floor was sprinkled<sup>4</sup> with sand, but in one place the sand had been smoothed by a hand. Dunstan got down on his knees and pulled at the bricks. They came out easily and, in the hole beneath, he saw an iron pot full of coins. Quickly Dunstan replaced the bricks and smoothed the sand over them. He took the iron pot and left the cottage, closing the door behind him. Then he hurried out into the darkness.

1. **gathering** : becoming thicker.

2. **lane** : narrow road.

3. **part with** : separate from, (here) give Dunstan.

4. **sprinkled** : covered very lightly.



- 1 New characters are introduced into the story. Complete the table with the name from the following list. An example has been done for you.

Squire Cass    Godfrey Cass (x2)    Dunstan Cass    Miss Nancy  
Lammeter    Molly Farren    Bryce

Question	Name
Who is the most prominent person in Raveloe?	<i>Squire Cass</i>
Who is the eldest of the Cass sons?	
Who is liked by the community?	
Who is seen as a suitable bride for Godfrey?	
Who drinks and gambles?	
Who is Godfrey's secret wife?	
Who buys and sells horses?	

- 2 'Hearsay': not based on first-hand experience but on hearsay – information that is heard but which is not necessarily true. Through hearsay we learn that the Cass brothers are very different. Complete the table below with the phrases associated with Dunstan Cass on pages 26 and 27..

Vocabulary	Godfrey Cass	Dunstan Cass
Physical description	handsome, pleasant young man; (not as) healthy and happy as usual ... sad, pale face	
Other information	... soon he would marry Miss Nancy Lammeter; Godfrey and Nancy were fond of each other	

- 3** Which of these statements do you agree with? Discuss your ideas with your partner.

	AGREE	DON'T AGREE
a. Godfrey is morally superior to his brother.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Godfrey is afraid of what his brother is capable of.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Dunstan wants his brother's respect.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Both sons are afraid of their father.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Dunstan has no conscience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Godfrey dominates his brother.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 4** Godfrey and Dunstan's relationship has been described as unnatural. What evidence is there of this in Chapter Three?

- 5** Eliot reports Dunstan's thoughts, from his accident riding Wildfire to the theft of Silas' money. Below are Dunstan's exact thoughts. These thoughts confirm what we have seen about the youngest of Squire Cass's sons: he is fundamentally amoral : 'someone who does not follow any moral rules and who does not care about right and wrong'.

Read pages 28 (from *Dunstan staggered to his feet and drank from the flask of brandy he always carried with him.*) and 29 again. Put the thoughts into their correct order by matching them to their reported form in the text. The first has been done for you.

- The damned horse is dead! That's £120 gone too!
- Just let him try refusing me money! I'll change his mind.
- If he's dead, nobody will ever know the money's gone.
- It must be here somewhere. What's that on the floor?
- No horse, no money and, to makes things worse, this miserable weather.
- I'll borrow some money from him. He has lots. I'll pay him back with interest.



- Where does he keep that money everybody talks about?
- No one here. Maybe Marner's lost or better still drowned.
- No answer, I'm going in.
- You won't see me walking, Walking indeed!
- What's that light? It must be Marner's cottage.

Dunstan's thoughts	Reported form
0. The damned horse is dead! That's £120 gone too!	The horse was dead and the hundred and twenty pounds Bryce would have paid for him were lost.
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	

## Before you read

- 1 On page 9 we saw how 'we can learn as much about 19th century Britain by reading its fiction as we can by reading a book of its history.' In the next chapter, Eliot introduces us to some of the inhabitants of Raveloe. Before we meet them, what jobs or trades were typical in pre-industrial rural society and which today either no longer exist or are extremely rare? (e.g. Silas Marner was a *weaver*) Make a list. Use a dictionary to find the English equivalent.

## Chapter Four



TRACK 5

**T**hat evening, Silas had gone to take some linen to Mrs Lammeter's house. The fog was thick and it had started to rain as he was walking home. By the time he got back to his cottage, he was cold, wet and tired. Silas sat by the fire, glad of the warmth. The long hours of work were over and now was the best time of his day: the time when he ate his supper and counted his money. Silas removed the bricks from the floor, but the hole was empty! He began to tremble violently. Desperately he searched the hole again and again. He searched the entire cottage, but his gold was nowhere to be found. He ran out of his cottage and down the lane to the village in the rain. The village men would all be at the Rainbow now, drinking beer and laughing together. He would go to the Rainbow and tell them all that he had been robbed.

The company at the Rainbow that evening was very merry. A great fire was blazing in the fireplace and the air was warm and smoky. Jem Rodney was there and old Mr Macey, the tailor and



parish clerk, too, Ben Winthrop the wheelwright,<sup>1</sup> Oates the cobbler,<sup>2</sup> Bryce the horse dealer and many others. They were drinking beer, telling jokes and laughing when the door burst open<sup>3</sup> and there stood Silas Marner, soaking wet,<sup>4</sup> trembling and as white as a ghost. 'I've been robbed!' cried Silas to the astonished crowd. 'My gold is gone! Someone has taken it! I need the policeman and the judge!'

'Calm down now, Master Marner,' said Mr Snell, the landlord,<sup>5</sup> coming out from behind the bar to take Silas's arm. 'Come and sit by the fire and tell us what happened.'

Silas sat down and told his story. The company asked him many questions as the mysterious nature of the robbery became apparent. They shook their heads in sympathy at his distress. Some were of the opinion that the devil had stolen Silas's gold, but others said that it was just some stranger passing through. Finally they put on their coats and took Silas to find the policeman and to tell the judge all about it.

The next day the whole village was talking about the robbery. Everyone went up to Silas's cottage and searched the area for clues.<sup>6</sup> The rain had washed away any footprints, but they found a tinder-box<sup>7</sup> in the mud near the abandoned quarry. Mr Snell said that he had seen a travelling pedlar<sup>8</sup> with a tinder-box passing through the village the day before. The pedlar must have

1. **wheelwright** : man who makes wheels for carriages.

2. **cobbler** : person who makes and repairs shoes.

3. **burst open** : opened suddenly and with force.

4. **soaking wet** : completely wet.

5. **landlord** : (here) owner of the pub.

6. **clues** : information which helps to solve a problem or mystery.

7. **tinder-box** : 19th-century equivalent of a box lighter or box of matches.

8. **travelling pedlar** : person who travels from village to village selling household goods.



stolen Silas's gold! But Mr Macey shook his head and said no, this was much more mysterious than an ordinary robbery.

Later, in the Rainbow, two camps of opinion<sup>1</sup> formed: members of the pedlar and tinder-box camp, headed by Mr Snell, were convinced that the stranger was the thief; but members of the supernatural camp, headed by Mr Macey, argued that God had caused the gold to vanish in order to punish Silas for loving gold too much. The two camps were involved in an animated argument when Godfrey came into the Rainbow. He was worried about Dunstan and Wildfire. Dunstan had not returned home the previous night and Godfrey was afraid that his brother had sold the horse and gone off to spend the money on gambling and drink. Looking around the faces in the Rainbow, Godfrey saw Bryce the horse dealer.

'Hello Mr Bryce. Have you seen my brother Dunstan?'

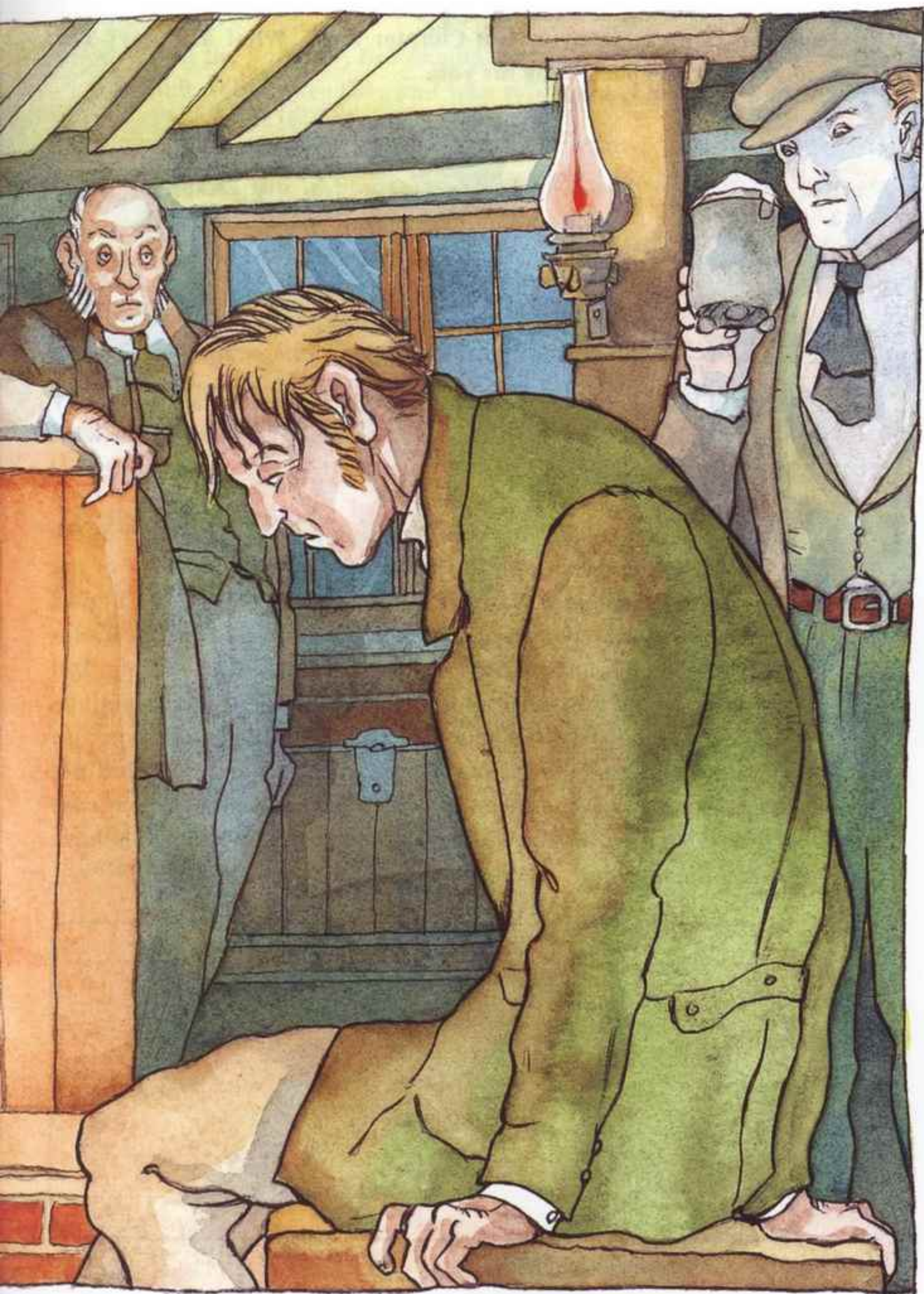
'Yes, indeed,' said Bryce. 'I saw him yesterday. What an unfortunate fellow he is!'

'What do you mean?' asked Godfrey.

'Did he not tell you?' Mr Bryce told Godfrey all about the accident and Wildfire's death. Godfrey left the Rainbow even more worried than he had been when he arrived. Now there was no way he could find a hundred pounds to pay his father. It seemed to him that he would have to confess everything. Now his father would be furious with him and Nancy Lammeter would never marry him. Before, he had hoped that one day his wife Molly would take too much opium and die, leaving him free to marry Nancy. Then no one would ever know about his secret past. But now he would have to tell his father and his father would tell Mr Lammeter and he – Godfrey – would lose everything.

1. **two camps of opinion** : a 'camp of opinion' is a group of people who hold the same opinion on something.







- 1 There are four main events in Chapter Four. What are they? The second event has been done for you.

1. ....
2. *Silas goes to the Rainbow for help.*
3. ....
4. ....

## The Rainbow

- 2 A. What is the atmosphere like in the pub when Silas arrives? Why does Eliot describe it in this way? Compare your ideas with other students.
- B. The pub serves as the principal meeting point for the men of the village; its 'regulars' (regular customers) give us an idea of the characters of Raveloe and village life at that time. In Chapter Three (exercise six) you were asked to prepare a list of old trades or professions associated with pre-industrial, rural society. Did you include the jobs mentioned in this chapter? Where possible, match the jobs with the name of the characters mentioned in Chapters One and Four. Sometimes a job is mentioned but not the name of the person who does it, and vice versa. In that case write 'not given' in the appropriate place. Two examples have been done for you.

Job	Name of character
mole-catcher	Jem Rodney
tailor	not given



C. ... in the *Rainbow*, two camps of opinion formed explaining the theft. What were they and who represented them?

**3** A. What is the immediate effect on Godfrey of his brother's disappearance?

B. We saw in Chapter Three how the secret from Godfrey's past – his marriage to an opium addict, Molly Farren – could affect his future life: *If I tell father my secret...* . According to Godfrey, what would be the best solution to his dilemma?

## Looking ahead

**1** In Chapter Five we meet another villager; this time a woman, Dolly Winthrop.

*Ever since the robbery, the villagers had felt more kindly towards Silas and, as Christmas drew near, they brought him presents of food.*

How do you think Silas will react to this? Compare your ideas with other students.

## Chapter Five



Time passed and no one wondered about Dunstan's continued absence. Once before he had disappeared after an argument with his father and had stayed away for six weeks. Godfrey had decided not to confess everything to his father. He had simply told him that he had lent the hundred pounds to Dunstan and that Dunstan had accidentally killed Wildfire. The old Squire had been furious. No one was surprised, therefore, that Dunstan had gone off somewhere to escape his father's fury.

Silas, meanwhile, mourned for his lost gold. He worked all day as before, but in the evening, instead of spending a happy hour counting his money, he sat by the fire with his head in his hands and moaned. The company at the Rainbow still debated the cause of the robbery. The police had been sent in search of the travelling pedlar, but they had not found him. Even so, Mr Snell believed that the pedlar had Silas's gold. Whenever he said so,



old Mr Macey shook his head and said that some people did not understand the mysteries of the world.

Ever since the robbery, the villagers had felt more kindly towards Silas and, as Christmas drew near, they brought him presents of food. One of these visitors was Mrs Winthrop, the wheelwright's wife. She was a very mild,<sup>1</sup> patient, hard-working woman who liked to help her neighbours, especially those in trouble. Whenever anyone in the village was ill, she went to offer her help and Dr Kimble often asked her to come and help him, especially if somebody was dying.

One Sunday, after church, she went to Silas's cottage with her little boy Aaron and a plate of cakes. Silas was working on his loom when she arrived, but he opened the door and invited her in. Before the robbery, Silas would have felt irritated at any interruption of his work, but now he felt lonely and bereft,<sup>2</sup> and he welcomed any kindness from his neighbours. Mrs Winthrop gave him the cakes and sat down by the fire. 'It's a pity you should work on Sunday,' she said. 'Everyone needs a rest from work. Why don't you come to church?'

'I've never been to church,' said Silas. 'Many years ago, when I lived in the city, I used to go to chapel.'

Dolly Winthrop had never heard the word 'chapel' before and was afraid to ask what it meant: she thought it might mean something evil. 'Well, if you've never been to church, you don't know whether you would like it or not. I think it would cheer you up.<sup>3</sup> There is music and singing. I love going to church. Especially when I have troubles, it makes me feel as if I had hope.

1. **mild** : gentle.

2. **bereft** : lacking something, feeling a great loss.

3. **cheer you up** : make you happier.



It makes me trust in God.' <sup>1</sup>

Silas did not want to go to church, but he realised that she was being kind and friendly and he felt grateful. To show his gratitude, he offered a cake to her little boy Aaron.

'Have you ever seen such a lovely child?' asked Dolly, putting her arm around the boy. 'And he has a wonderful singing voice. Aaron, why don't you sing a Christmas carol <sup>2</sup> for Master Marner?'

As soon as Aaron had finished his cake, he sang 'God rest ye, merry gentlemen' <sup>3</sup> in a clear sweet voice. Dolly glanced at Silas and smiled, convinced that this would make him want to come to church.

Silas was rather relieved when they left. He did not go to church at Christmas. He had been moved by Mrs Winthrop's concern for his welfare, but all he wanted to do was to stay at home with his sorrow. Meanwhile, in Raveloe, the Christmas season was very merry. The church bells rang and the villagers, all dressed in their best clothes, laughed and talked in the streets on the way to church, but there was frost <sup>4</sup> in the air, so after church they all hurried home to eat, drink and be merry.

There was a family party at Squire Cass's house on Christmas Day. Dunstan had still not returned, but no one missed him. 'Perhaps he'll be home for New Year's Eve,' said Godfrey. Every New Year's Eve, the Squire held a great party and invited all the ladies and gentlemen of the neighbourhood. Godfrey was longing

1. **There is music ... in God** : it seems that Mrs Winthrop's sense of the function of religion is social rather than spiritual. It also tends to link her beliefs to the pagan beliefs to which the Dissenting community so strongly objected. She sees church as a place where she can get together with her neighbours and enjoy music.
2. **Christmas carol** : traditional Christmas song.
3. **'God ... gentlemen'** : well-known Christmas carol.
4. **frost** : cold, a light covering of ice.



for<sup>1</sup> the party, so that he could sit next to Nancy at the dinner table and dance with her afterwards. It would be a fine party and perhaps Nancy would smile at him and look at him kindly. He tried to think about these pleasant things instead of worrying about money. Molly had been asking him for money for some time now and he had no money to give her. She had said that if he did not give her money she would come to the big red house and tell his father everything.

On New Year's Eve, the snow was falling as the carriages arrived outside the Red House for the party. Miss Nancy Lammeter looked very lovely as she walked up the steps to the front door. Godfrey was waiting for her. The sight of Godfrey made her nervous. She had told him quite clearly that she would not marry him, but still he sometimes looked at her with loving eyes. At other times, he hardly spoke to her and he would ignore her for weeks and weeks. How could he really love her if he acted so strangely? And then she had heard gossip about him in the village. She certainly was not going to marry a man who drank or gambled or wasted his money.

The Red House was full of music and light and conversation. Godfrey led Nancy to the dining room and seated her between himself and the old Squire. As she looked around the splendid table, she thought a little sadly what a fine thing it would have been to have married Godfrey and become the mistress of the Red House. She believed that a pure woman loved only one man in her life. She had certainly loved Godfrey before he had started acting so strangely and therefore she would never marry anyone else. But she would not marry a man she could not respect.

1. was longing for : couldn't wait for.



# Silas Marner

There was a lot of lively conversation over dinner. The older men joked with Godfrey about how pretty Nancy was and asked him if he had asked her to dance yet. Godfrey and Nancy both found these jokes embarrassing, but when Godfrey did ask her to dance, Nancy accepted quietly.

As they moved onto the dance floor, Godfrey said, 'Thank you. I thought you would refuse to dance with me. I know you are angry with me. You are quite right to be angry. I have behaved very badly. I have acted strangely towards you and I have wasted my money. But, if I changed, would you forgive me, Nancy?'

'I would be glad to see a change for the better in anyone, Mr Godfrey,' replied Nancy, 'but it would be better if no change were needed.'

'You are very cruel, Nancy,' said Godfrey. 'Why don't you encourage me to be a better man? I'm very miserable, but you have no feeling.'

'I think the person without feeling is the one who behaves badly!' said Nancy, her eyes flashing. Godfrey was delighted with those flashing eyes. They proved that she still cared for him.









**1** Choose the correct answer or phrase (a, b or c).

1. At the beginning of Chapter Five Dunstan had been missing
  - a. ☐ six weeks
  - b. ☐ one month
  - c. ☐ an unspecified period of time
2. What was the general reaction to Dunstan's disappearance?
  - a. ☐ shock
  - b. ☐ unconcern
  - c. ☐ anger
3. Dolly Winthrop helped Silas because
  - a. ☐ he was an object of curiosity
  - b. ☐ she liked to help those in trouble
  - c. ☐ she wanted Silas to find his money
4. Prior to the New Year's Eve dance, Nancy had found Godfrey's behaviour
  - a. ☐ confusing
  - b. ☐ irritating
  - c. ☐ attractive
5. During their dance together, Nancy showed Godfrey
  - a. ☐ she had no intention of continuing her relationship with him
  - b. ☐ how deeply she loved him
  - c. ☐ she could forgive him

**2** In this chapter Silas and Godfrey 'take turns' to share the narrative. What effect does this have?

**3** A. *Silas, meanwhile, mourned for his lost gold.* Check the meaning of 'to mourn' in an English learner's dictionary. What effect does this choice of verb have?

B. Which other verb in the same paragraph communicates a similar effect?



- 4 A. To tell or not to tell? How had Godfrey decided to resolve his problem?
- B. What did Godfrey tell his father?
- C. What event had helped Godfrey?
- D. What problem had Godfrey been worrying about?
- E. Why does Eliot show Nancy's thoughts? What do these thoughts tell us about Nancy?
- 5 A. Silas is still a solitary miser but he shows signs of change. Complete the table below. An example has been done for you.

Typical behaviour	Signs of change
<i>worked all day</i>	<i>he invited Mrs Winthrop into his cottage</i>

- B. In what ways is Mrs Winthrop typical of the villagers of Raveloe?

- 6 Eliot makes us wait and creates suspense. By the end of Chapter Five there are several questions waiting for answers. What are they? Work with a partner to draw up a list of questions. Think of 'loose ends' associated with the following three, main characters:

<b>Silas Marner</b>	
<b>Godfrey Cass</b>	
<b>Nancy Lammeter</b>	

One of the questions you prepared in exercise six will be answered in the next chapter.

## Looking ahead



**1** A. Listen to this extract from Chapter Six and answer these questions:

- a. What happened to Silas?
- b. What mistake did he make?
- c. Why do you think he made it?


B. We have seen how Eliot keeps the two main narratives of *Silas Marner* – Silas's and Godfrey's narrative – parallel and separate.

Silas's narrative \_\_\_\_\_

Godfrey's narrative \_\_\_\_\_

In Chapter Six, these two narratives 'intersect'.

Silas's narrative 

Godfrey's narrative 

C. On the basis of your answers to 1A, how do think this will happen? Compare your ideas with other students.



# Evolutionary Theory

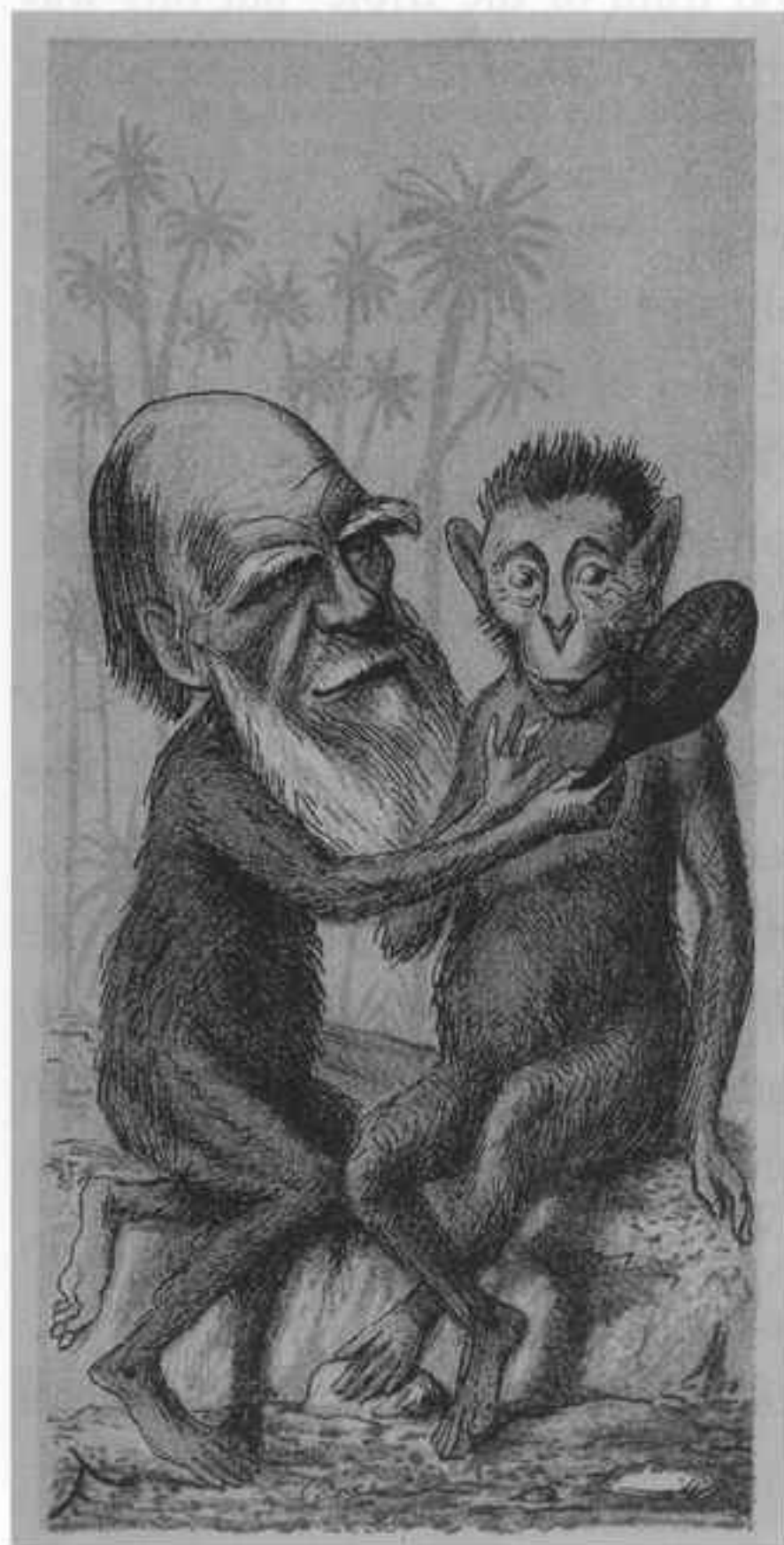
*Silas Marner* appeared in 1861, just two years after the publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. In the London intellectual world, debate about evolutionary theory was at its height.<sup>1</sup> Christians tried to maintain their faith and believe in the literal truth of the Bible, but this was difficult to do in the face of scientific evidence that contradicted the Book of Genesis.

Evolutionary theory was by no means new when Darwin published *The Origin* in 1859. Thomas Malthus's 'Essay on the Principle of Population' (1798) introduced the idea of the struggle for survival. Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1833) presented fossil evidence that some species had evolved into others, which meant that, contrary to what the Book of Genesis tells us, all the creatures on earth were not created at the same time. In 1844, Robert Chambers's *Vestiges of Creation* explained a version of 'development theory'. The English philosopher Herbert Spencer coined<sup>2</sup> the phrase 'survival of the fittest' in 1852, seven years before Darwin published. The research that resulted in *The Origin* was undertaken in the 1820s, when Darwin went to the Galapagos Islands. Darwin only published *The Origin* in 1859 because Alfred Wallace's research had led him to the same conclusions. If Darwin had not published his findings in 1859, Wallace would have published before him.

The idea of evolutionary theory, then, had been brewing<sup>3</sup> in British

1. **at its height** : at its peak, its highest point.
2. **coined** : invented, made fashionable.
3. **brewing** : (here) discussed.

intellectual circles for over half a century, but its crystallisation<sup>1</sup> in *The Origin* gave a new centrality to the debate. The issue was of fundamental importance on social and political levels, because Christian doctrine saturated<sup>2</sup> Victorian thought to such an extent that all arguments used the scriptures for support. Biblical texts were cited to



justify the subjection of women, the class system and the British Empire. In a very real sense,\* any challenge to the veracity of Christian scripture was a challenge to the foundations of British society. On personal and philosophical levels, evolutionary theory's threat to Christian belief created profound problems. If there was no God, no heaven and no hell, how could people be persuaded to be good? Were we – the human race –

*Charles Darwin showing an ape how alike the pair of them are, unnamed artist in The London Sketch Book (1874)*

1. **crystallisation** : (here) being made clear and fixed.
2. **saturated** : filled completely that there was no space for any other point of view.



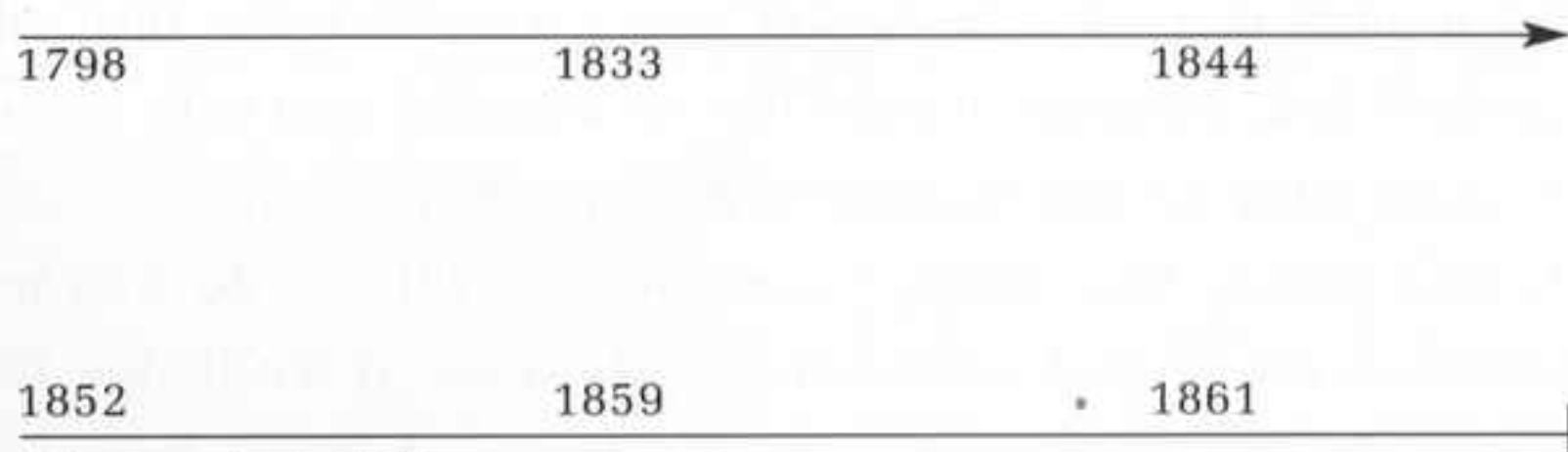
destined for extinction like so many of the species discussed in Lyell's *Principles of Geology*? If we were evolved from apes, did that mean that our nature is basically bestial, violent and immoral? Did it mean that we – the human race – were no better than other species? And, above all, if there was no immortal soul to be damned or saved, what was the meaning of this short life on earth?

At first glance, *Silas Marner* seems to have little to do with mid-Victorian intellectual controversies. However, if we look a little closer, we can see references to the debate about the origins of mankind. Silas loses his faith because what he believed to be true – that God intervenes in human matters – is proven false by empirical evidence. In this he resembles many of the thinking people in Britain at the time the novel was published. Furthermore, when Silas's gold is stolen, the company at the Rainbow pub divides into two camps of opinion: those who believe that there is a natural explanation for the robbery and those who believe it was supernatural in origin. Thus the discussion at the Rainbow – among uneducated country folk in the first decade of the nineteenth century – bears <sup>1</sup> a comic resemblance to the debates about evolution versus creation that were rocking <sup>2</sup> London in the 1860s.

1. **bears** : (here) shows signs of.

2. **rocking** : (here) creating disturbance and insecurity.

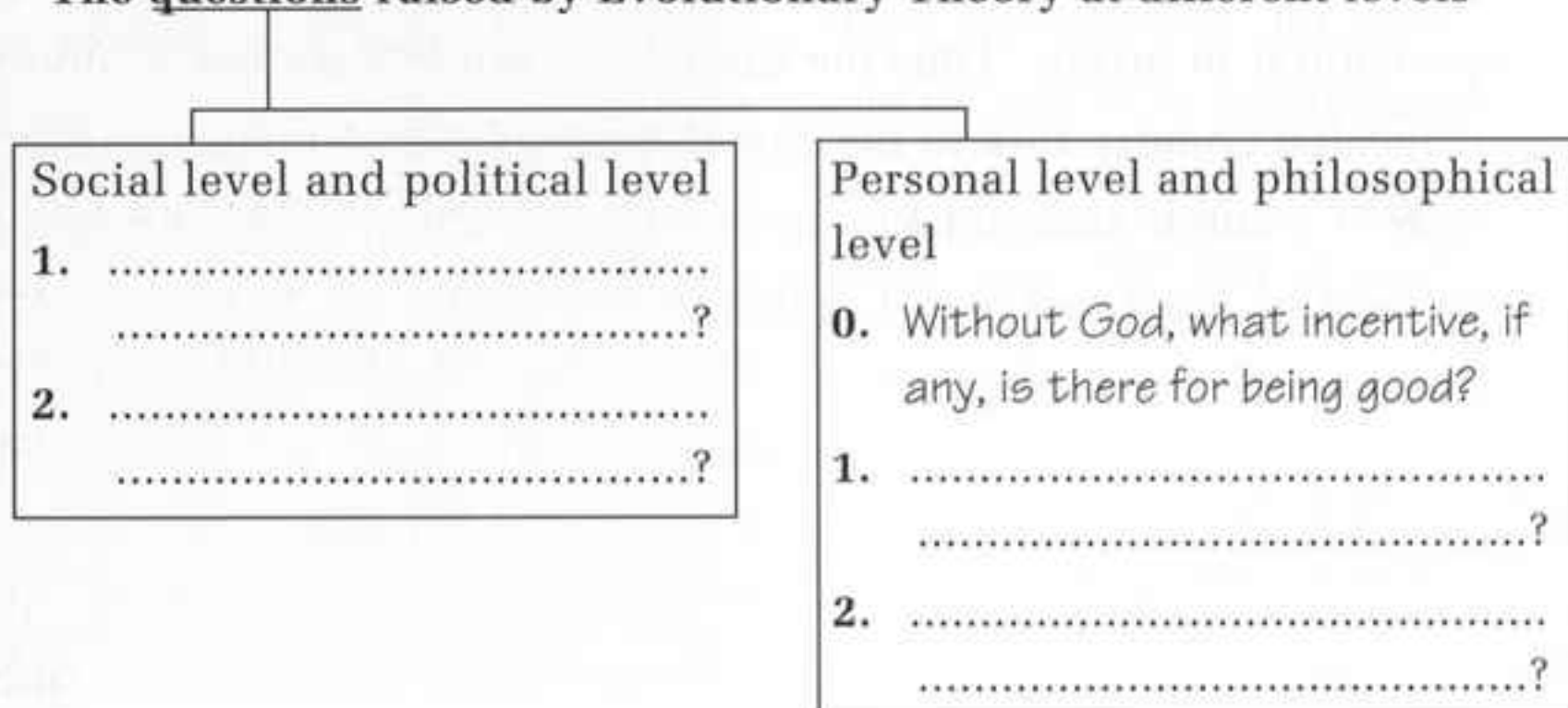
- 1** Put the publishing event mentioned in the text under its appropriate date. An example has been done for you.



*'the survival of the fittest' coined by Hubert Spencer*

- 2** Evolutionary Theory raised many questions at different levels of British society. Read pages 50 and 51 again carefully and put the four questions raised in the appropriate place. An example (0) has been done for you.

### The questions raised by Evolutionary Theory at different levels



- 3** What similarities exist between *Silas Marner* and the evolutionary debate?



## Chapter Six



CK 6

While Godfrey was forgetting the sorrows of his secret life in the sweet company of Nancy Lammeter, his wife Molly was walking with slow uncertain steps through the snow-covered Raveloe lanes, carrying her sleeping child in her arms.

She had decided to go to the red house on New Year's Eve to humiliate him in front of all his friends. Ever since he had told her that he would never acknowledge her as his wife,<sup>1</sup> she had been planning this act of revenge. He would be at the Red House, smiling and dancing. She would go there and show herself – her ragged clothes and her faded face that had once been beautiful – and, with their child in her arms, she would tell the old Squire that she was his eldest son's wife!

She knew that her poverty was not Godfrey's fault – she had

1. he ... his wife : he would never tell anyone that he was married to her.



spent all the money he had given her on opium – yet she felt bitterness towards him. He lived in a fine house and wore fine clothes, while she lived in misery.

As she walked on, the snow fell more and more thickly. She needed comfort and the only comfort she knew was the lump<sup>1</sup> of opium hidden in her dress, but she did not wish to take it, because she had to take care of her child. For a while she struggled against her desire for the opium, but finally she lost the struggle, swallowed the opium and walked on. The wind was freezing and Molly walked more and more slowly and drowsily. She longed to lie down and sleep. Finally, she lay down by a small bush on a bank<sup>2</sup> of snow. She leaned her back against the bush, as if it were a pillow. At first she held her child tightly to her bosom, but slowly her hands relaxed and the child's blue eyes opened wide in the cold starlight.

'Mammy!' called the child, but there was no answer. There was a gleam of light nearby. The child crawled away from her mother to catch the bright thing, then she looked up and saw that the light was coming from a very bright place. Slowly she got up and walked through the snow to the open door of Silas Marner's cottage. There she saw a fire blazing in the fireplace. She went up to the fire and sat in front of it on the hearth,<sup>3</sup> making little noises of pleasure. Then the warmth made her sleepy and she lay her golden head on the floor and fell asleep.

But where was Silas while this strange visitor had come to his hearth? He was in the cottage, but he did not see her. During the weeks since the robbery, he had developed the habit of opening

1. **lump** : piece of something solid.

2. **bank** : raised part of land or other substance, here snow.

3. **hearth** : area of floor in front of the fireplace.









his door and looking out, as if he thought his money might be coming back to him. On this evening he had looked out more eagerly than usual, because his neighbours had told him that it was good luck to sit up till midnight on New Year's Eve and that, if he did so, his money might come back. He had stood by the door, looking out at the wide expanse of snow and listening to the silence. Just as he was about to close the door, he fell into a trance. He stood there, still and rigid, with wide sightless eyes, holding open his door, powerless to resist either the good or the evil that might enter there.



When the trance was over, Silas continued the action of closing the door, unaware that any time had passed. He returned to his chair by the fire. The light from the fire was dim now and Silas's eyesight was poor. Looking down, he thought he saw gold on the floor. Gold! His own gold brought back to him as mysteriously as it had been taken away! His heart began to beat violently. He stretched <sup>1</sup> out his hand to touch the gold, but, instead of hard coins, his fingers touched soft warm curls. <sup>2</sup> Silas fell on his knees in amazement. It was a sleeping child! A lovely round child with golden curls all over her head.

At the touch of his fingers, the child awoke and cried out, 'Mammy!' Silas took her in his arms and rocked her <sup>3</sup> to comfort her. Then he warmed up some soup and fed it to her with a spoon. After she had eaten, the child began to pull at her boots. They were wet and uncomfortable. As he took off her boots, Silas realised that she must have been walking in the snow. So she had

1. **stretched** : put.

2. **curls** : hair.

3. **rocked her** : moved her from side to side gently.



not appeared by magic after all! She had wandered in off <sup>1</sup> the road. With the child in his arms, Silas went to the door and looked out. He could see her small footprints in the snow. Silas followed the footprints. Finally, he came to a bank of snow with a small bush and a dark shadow on it, but only when the child cried out 'Mammy! Mammy!' did Silas realise that the shadow was a human body.

'I must find the doctor!' cried Silas. He remembered that all the ladies and gentlemen of the village were dancing at Squire Cass's house that evening, so he hurried along the lane towards the big red house with the child in his arms.

By this time the party at the Red House was very merry indeed. Ladies and gentlemen were dancing and drinking wine. The air was full of conversation and laughter. Godfrey was just about to ask Nancy to dance with him again when he heard a disturbance at the door. Looking up, he saw what seemed to him an apparition from the dead. <sup>2</sup> Silas Marner stood there, wet with snow and holding Godfrey's own child in his arms. Godfrey had not seen the child for several months, but he recognised her immediately and his face turned pale.

'I need the doctor!' cried Silas. 'There's a woman out there in the snow. I think she's dead!'

Godfrey's heart leapt. There was one terror in his mind at the moment: it was that the woman might not be dead. Generally Godfrey was a kind man, but anyone whose life depends on secrecy is bound to have evil wishes. Godfrey joined the crowd of people around the weaver.

1. **wandered in off** : walked in from.

2. **apparition from the dead** : ghost.



# Silas Marner

‘Whose child is that?’ asked Nancy, appearing at his side.

‘I don’t know,’ Godfrey replied. ‘I think she belongs to some poor woman who has been found ill in the snow.’

Mrs Kimble the doctor’s wife turned to Silas and said, ‘Leave the child here. One of the servant-girls will take care of her.’

‘No!’ cried Silas. ‘She came to me! I have a right to keep her!’

‘Come on!’ said Dr Kimble, pulling on his coat. ‘There’s no time to lose.’<sup>1</sup>

‘I’ll come with you,’ said Godfrey.

Dr Kimble sent a servant into the village to find Mrs Winthrop, then he hurried out with Godfrey, Silas and the child. When they reached the cottage, Silas took the child in to warm her by the fire. Dr Kimble and Godfrey went straight to the snow bank and carried the woman’s body back to the cottage. By the time they got there, Mrs Winthrop had arrived. They put the woman’s body down on the floor, far from the fire, where Silas was rocking the child to sleep.

‘It’s too late,’ said Dr Kimble. ‘She’s dead. She’s probably been dead for hours.’

Godfrey looked down at the cold white face of his dead wife. He felt an enormous relief and he felt guilty about his evil wishes and his relief. He wished that he were a stronger man, that he could confess everything now and claim<sup>2</sup> the child as his own and provide for her. But then he would lose Nancy. He looked over at the child by the fire. She was not asleep yet and her big blue eyes looked back at Godfrey with no sign of recognition, then she looked away from him and gazed up with loving interest at

1. **there is no time to lose** : we must hurry, we must go quickly.

2. **claim** : ask for something for which you think you have a right.



the weaver's face. Again Godfrey felt relief, though mingled<sup>1</sup> with sadness, because his own child did not recognise him.

'Come on, Godfrey. There is nothing more we can do here,' said the doctor. 'Mrs Winthrop, please see that the body is prepared for burial and help Master Marner with the child. Goodbye Marner!'

Godfrey lingered<sup>2</sup> a moment by Silas's chair. 'Do you really intend to keep the child, Marner?' he asked.

'Yes!' Silas replied. 'She is alone in the world now and so am I. I will take care of her.'

'Well, allow me to give you something to help buy her clothes,' said Godfrey. He placed a gold coin in Silas's hand and hurried out after the doctor.



1. **mingled** : mixed.

2. **lingered** : waited before leaving.

- 1** In Chapter Five (exercise six) you were asked to identify the questions requiring an answer. One of them regarding Godfrey Cass is answered in Chapter Six: 'What will Godfrey's secret wife, Molly Farren, do?'

Molly's death apparently resolves once and for all 'the sorrows of (Godfrey's) secret life' and the two main problems that had been facing him: Dunstan and Molly.

Answer the questions by completing the sentences in the spaces (a, b, c, d) below.

<b>Dunstan</b>		<b>Molly</b>
What did he do after his accident on Wildfire?		What did the child do after its mother collapsed?
<b>a.</b> ..... →	Silas Marner's house	<b>b.</b> ..... ←
What would he have done if he hadn't found Silas's money?		What would Molly have done if she hadn't collapsed in the snow and died?
<b>c.</b> ..... forcing Godfrey to... →	reveal his secret	<b>d.</b> ..... forcing Godfrey to... ←

Unknowingly, Godfrey Cass owes his apparent 'rescue' to Silas Marner. The arrival of the child.

- 2** A. Silas didn't realise a young child had entered his house as he was suffering from a fit. Do you remember what had happened to Silas as a result of his fit at Lantern Yard?
- B. Silas discovered how the child had reached his house. How?



### 3 A. Silas goes for help.

This is the second time he does this. Complete the table below.

Visit	Reason for visit	Place of visit	Impact of his arrival
1st visit: Chapter Four (p. 34)			
2nd visit: Chapter Six (p. 57)			

B. What similarities and differences are there between the two visits? Think about how Silas arrives on each occasion and what each place represents. Write a short paragraph.

### 4 A. (Godfrey) felt an enormous relief and he felt guilty about his evil wishes and his relief. (p. 58)

What does Godfrey have these contrasting feelings about? Discuss your ideas with other students and then complete the table.

Relief	Guilt

B. Why does Godfrey's life continue to 'depend on secrecy' (p. 57)

### C. Role-Play

What is your opinion of Godfrey? In pairs, one of you will defend him (student A) whilst the other will be critical of his behaviour (student B). Try to find as many arguments defending your position as you can. When you have finished, work with other students who have done the same thing (A to A; B to B) and agree on a list of the most convincing arguments for your case. You will need these arguments later.



## Chapter Seven

TRACK 7

**T**hat Silas had decided to keep the child was a subject of great interest among the villagers. The sympathy they had felt for him since the robbery was now increased, especially among the women. They all wished to help him as much as possible.

The day after Molly Farren was buried, Dolly Winthrop brought some baby clothes to Silas's cottage. She laid them out by the fire to warm.


'It is all a mystery to me,' said Silas. 'One day the door was open and my gold vanished. Another day the door was open and the child came. I don't know where the child came from or where the gold went. It is all very strange.'

'Yes,' said Dolly. 'It's like the night and the morning, sleeping and waking, the rain and the harvest: <sup>1</sup> one goes and the other

1. **harvest** : time of year when crops are collected.



## Chapter Seven

 comes and we don't know how or why. I think you are right to keep the child, Master Marner, though there are some who disagree with me. I'll be glad to come and help you take care of her whenever I can.'

'Thank you,' said Silas. 'But I want to take care of her myself. I would be grateful for your advice about how to take care of her properly, but I want to do it myself, so that she will grow fond of me. I am used to cooking and cleaning the house. I can learn to take care of the child too.'

So Dolly told Silas how to dress the child and he did it himself, and the child laughed and gazed at him and pulled his hair as he dressed her.

'There! You see?' said Dolly gently. 'She's fond of you already. But what are you going to do with her while you work at your loom?'

Silas thought for a while then said, 'I'll tie her to the loom with a long strip of linen. That way she can move about and play, but she cannot go too far.'

'Well, maybe that will work,' said Dolly. She hesitated a moment then said something that had been on her mind <sup>1</sup> all day. 'And you must take her to church, Master Marner. You should do that for the poor orphan child. <sup>2</sup> She should go to church and learn to say her prayers like my little Aaron does. She probably hasn't even been christened yet.'

'What do you mean by "christened"?' asked Silas. At Lantern Yard, they had used the word 'baptism', and only grown men and women were baptised.

'Oh dear, Master Marner!' cried Dolly. 'Did you have no father

1. **had been on her mind** : she had been thinking about.

2. **orphan child** : child without parents.



# Silas Marner

and mother to teach you how to say your prayers and that there are good words and good things that will keep us from harm?' END

'Yes, yes,' replied Silas. 'I knew a lot about that once, but it was long ago and far away and our words and customs were different. But I want to do everything I can for the child. You tell me what to do and I'll do it.'

'Well, then,' began Dolly, smiling. 'I'll talk to the parson <sup>1</sup> about it and arrange to have her christened and you must think of a name for her.'

'My mother's name was Hephzibah,' said Silas.

'That's a difficult name,' said Dolly doubtfully.

'It's from the Bible.'

'Oh, well, it must be all right, then, but it is so long and difficult to remember.'

'My mother was known as Eppie,' said Silas.

So the child was christened and, for the first time, Silas went to church in his best clothes to share in <sup>2</sup> the religious observances of his neighbours. In this way, little Eppie created fresh links between the weaver and the community in which he lived. Unlike the gold, which had no needs, Eppie's needs were constantly changing. In order to satisfy them, Silas had to keep in contact with the villagers so that they could give him help and advice. The missing gold had demanded that he work more and more hours at his loom, but Eppie called him away from work, and in her company he was happy to leave his loom and wander through the woods and fields, picking flowers and listening to birdsong. She was a bright, happy, laughing child. Like the sunshine, she warmed him and brought joy into his life.

1. **parson** : village priest.

2. **share in** : participate in.



## Chapter Seven

As she grew, Eppie became more adventurous and disobedient. 'You must smack <sup>1</sup> her, Master Marner,' said Dolly, when Silas asked her advice. 'Either that or put her in the coal-hole. <sup>2</sup> That's what I did with my Aaron. When she's naughty, you must teach her a lesson.' <sup>3</sup>

Silas was horrified at the idea of punishing Eppie. Not only did he hate the thought of causing her pain or distress but he feared that, if he did so, she would stop loving him.

A few days after this conversation, Silas was working at his loom, and Eppie was sitting on the floor, tied to the loom by a long strip of linen. Through the open door, she could see the flowers dancing in the wind. She reached up to the shelf, took Silas's scissors, cut the strip of linen and ran out into the sunshine. The loom made so much noise that Silas heard nothing. He only realised what had happened when he reached for his scissors and found them gone. 'Eppie!' he cried, rushing out of the cottage and up to the abandoned quarry. He was afraid she might have fallen in. Silas looked down into the deep pit of the quarry at the smooth red surface of the water that filled it. His heart was beating violently and cold sweat stood on his brow. <sup>4</sup> 'Eppie! Eppie!' he cried, then he heard her laughter and, turning round, he saw her sitting on the ground, playing in the mud. Silas ran up to her and took her in his arms. He kissed her and held her tight all the way back to the cottage. But then he remembered Mrs Winthrop's advice. Eppie must be taught a lesson. She must be taught never to run away again. 'Naughty

1. **smack** : hit.

2. **coal-hole** : small dark closet where the coal for the fire is kept.

3. **teach ... lesson** : discipline her.

4. **brow** : forehead.



Eppie!’ said Silas sternly. ‘You must never run away again! I must punish you! I must put you in the coal-hole, a nasty dark place!’

Silas had thought that the threat alone would frighten Eppie and perhaps make her cry, but Eppie just laughed, as if she thought going in the coal-hole would be fun. Clearly the threat was not enough. Silas put Eppie in the coal-hole and held the door shut. For a moment there was silence, then he heard a little voice crying, ‘Open! Open!’

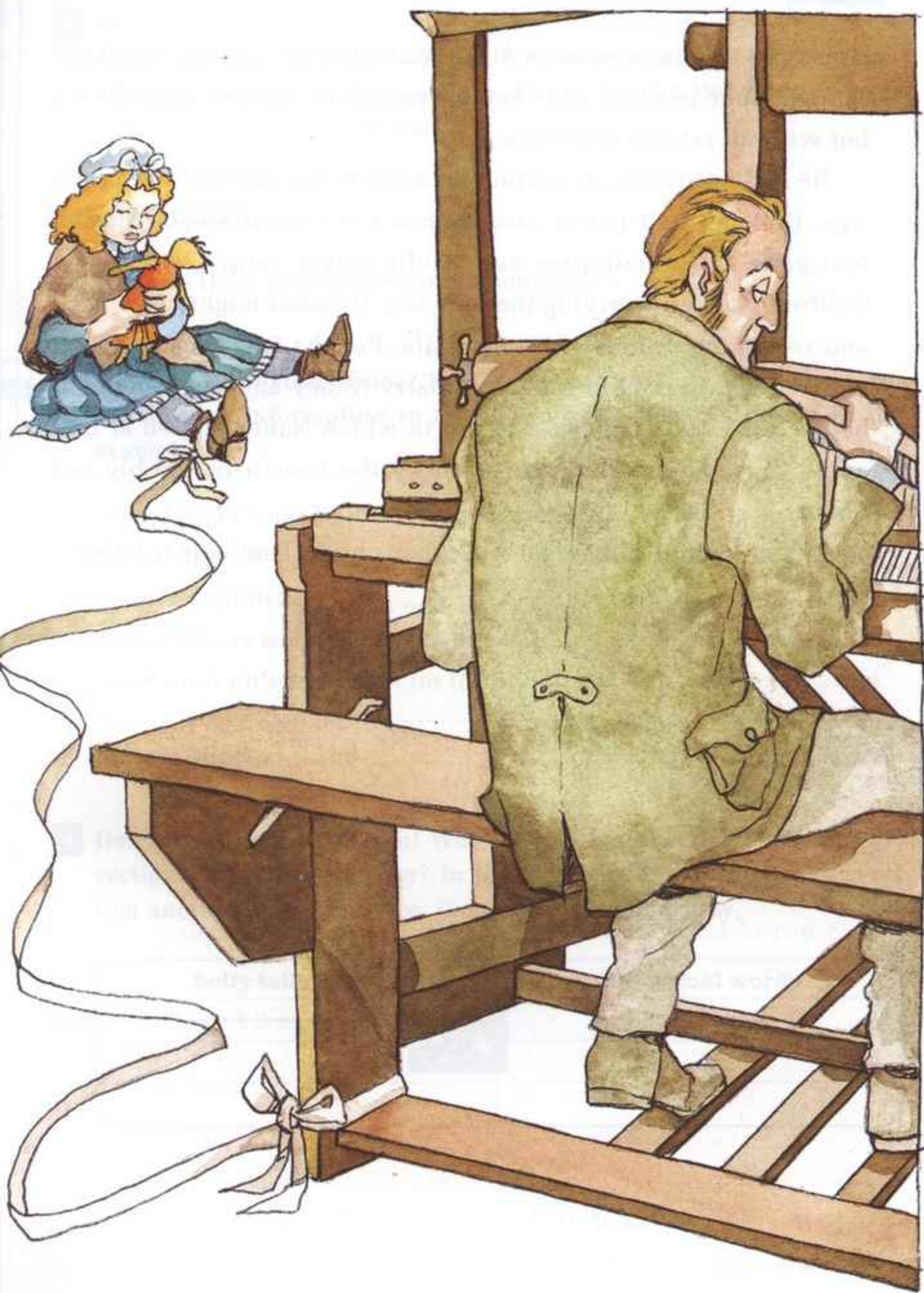
Silas immediately opened the door and took Eppie out. She was covered in black dust from the coal. Silas sat her on the table, washed her and changed her clothes, saying, ‘Now Eppie will be a good girl. Now you’ve learnt your lesson and you will never run away again, or else I will have to put you in the coal-hole!’

As soon as she was clean, Silas put her down so that she could play. But Eppie ran back to the coal hole and shut herself in, laughing and shouting, ‘Eppie in the coal-hole!’

This total failure to discipline Eppie discouraged Silas, so Eppie was raised without punishment and Silas was patient with her naughtiness. In the village, he became known as the kindest of fathers and none of the village children was afraid of him now. Whenever Silas and Eppie went into the village, people would stop and talk to them. The weaver would answer their questions and smile. He was holding Eppie’s little hand and she was gradually leading him back from the narrow lonely life he had lived to a new life of joy and companionship.

One person watched Eppie’s growth with particular interest. Godfrey took care not to show more interest than was natural: no one was surprised that the kind young Squire occasionally gave









# Silas Marner

presents to the weaver's little adopted daughter. Godfrey thought that perhaps one day he would be able to provide for her without raising suspicion.

He had been a much happier man since that fateful New Year's Eve. Dunstan had never come home. Everyone thought that he had gone to the colonies and would never return. Gradually Godfrey stopped worrying that any day Dunstan might come back and reveal the secrets of his past life. For the first time in years, he felt free again. Now he could marry Nancy and his life would be paradise. He imagined a future in which Nancy smiled at him as he played with their children by the hearth in the big red house.

But he would not forget his other child. That was a father's duty.





- 1 This chapter can be divided into three sections on the basis of the three following characters: Dolly Winthrop; Eppie; Godfrey. Where do the sections ‘Eppie’ and ‘Godfrey’ begin? Work with your partner. How did you decide?

Dolly Winthrop

- 2 What do Dolly and Silas have in common?
- 3 Listen to this extract from Chapter Seven. Complete the spaces with the missing information in the appropriate form as shown in the example (0).

Silas doesn't want Dolly 0. *to take care of the child.*

Silas is used to 1. .... but he isn't used to 2. ....

When Silas is working the child will 3. ....

Dolly thinks it's important for the child to 4. .... and 5. ....

Dolly is shocked that 6. ....

- 4 Dolly is a practical person! What advice has she given Silas in this section? What does she say? In the next section – Eppie – she gives him another piece of advice. Complete the table below.

Dolly tells Silas ...	Her actual words
How to dress the child	not reported

## Eppie

**5** Put the following events from this section in their correct order.

- a. ☐ Eppie runs outside.
- b. ☐ Eppie was christened.
- c. ☐ Eppie is washed and changed.
- d. ☐ Silas finds the girl and holds her in his arms.
- e. ☐ Dolly tells Silas that Eppie must be smacked.
- f. ☐ Eppie manages to cut the strip of linen tying her to the loom.
- g. ☐ Eppie is put in the coal-hole.
- h. ☐ Eppie goes to the coal-hole for a joke.
- i. ☐ Silas runs to the quarry.
- j. ☐ Eppie cries asking to be let out of the coal-hole.

**6** How did Eppie create *fresh links between the weaver and the community in which he lived*. (p. 64)?

**7** Why did Eliot create Eppie as a disobedient and sometimes naughty child? Discuss your ideas with other students.

## Godfrey Cass

**8** A. In Chapter Six we saw how Godfrey's life depended on secrecy. At the end of Chapter Seven, Godfrey is 'a much happier man'. Why?

B. What ideal future does Godfrey want for himself?



PART 1

**1** Try and give the first seven chapters of *Silas Marner* a title. Compare your ideas with other students. Vote the class best!

**2** Here are seven answers. Write the appropriate question. There is one answer for each of the first seven chapters (answer 1 refers to Chapter One; answer 2 to Chapter Two, etc.).

1. Because their cleverness was regarded as witchcraft.
2. They decided to draw lots.
3. £120
4. Those who thought the theft was a supernatural event and those who believed a pedlar was responsible.
5. Because there is music and singing.
6. Dr Kimble and Godfrey.
7. Because Eppie ignored punishment.

**3** *Godfrey Cass is a prisoner of his weakness and his good luck. Do you agree?*

Using the ideas you collected in Chapter Six, write an essay of around 150 words. Before you write your essay, prepare a plan and show it to your partner. Is it clear? Make any necessary changes.

**4** Which word, phrase or name is different in the following lists. There could be more than one possibility in some cases. Explain your answers to your partner.

1. a. ☐ horse-dealer
- b. ☐ linen-weaver
- c. ☐ mole-catcher
- d. ☐ cobbler

2. a. ☐ pious  
b. ☐ virtuous  
c. ☐ honest  
d. ☐ severe
3. a. ☐ Mr Snell  
b. ☐ Jem Rodney  
c. ☐ Ben Winthrop  
d. ☐ Mr Oates
4. a. ☐ Nancy  
b. ☐ Molly  
c. ☐ Sarah  
d. ☐ Dolly
5. a. ☐ spiteful  
b. ☐ handsome  
c. ☐ healthy  
d. ☐ happy

**5 Work in pairs:**

- Student A: write a short summary of the Silas narrative up to Chapter Seven.
- Student B: write a short summary of the Godfrey narrative up to Chapter Seven.

Compare your completed summaries.

- 6** In Chapter Six we saw how the two narratives that make up *Silas Marner* intersect. At the beginning of Part 2, the two narratives appear to return to their previous 'parallel and separate' course. We as readers know that the coming together or intersection of the narratives is inevitable. Why?



## PART 2



## Chapter Eight

**I**t was a bright autumn Sunday, sixteen years after Silas Marner found his new treasure on the hearth. The church bells were ringing. Morning service had just finished and the villagers were coming out of the church. Among them were Silas Marner and Eppie. Silas's hair was white now and his shoulders were bent. He looked like a very old man, though in fact he was just fifty-five. Eppie, walking beside him, was the freshest blossom of youth, a blonde dimpled <sup>1</sup> girl of eighteen. A handsome young man was walking behind her.

'I wish we had a garden, father,' said Eppie, as they went out into the lane. 'But to make a garden, first you must do a lot of digging and you couldn't do that, could you, father?'

'Yes, I could do it, child, if you like. Why didn't you tell me before that you wanted a garden?'

'I'll dig the garden for you, Master Marner,' said the young man.

1. **dimpled** : when she smiled she had hollows in her cheeks which were very attractive.



‘And I’ll bring you some good soil from Mr Cass’s garden. He’d be glad to let you have some.’

‘Ah! Thank you Aaron! That will make it much easier,’ said Silas.

Eppie blushed <sup>1</sup> and smiled. ‘Mrs Winthrop told me that Aaron would be happy to help, otherwise I would not have asked. It will be so nice to have flowers and sweet-smelling herbs. I would love to have lavender too, but only fine ladies have lavender in their gardens.’

‘I can get you some lavender,’ said Aaron eagerly. ‘I can bring you anything you want from Mr Cass’s garden. When I’m working there, I trim <sup>2</sup> the plants and usually I just throw the trimmings away. But if you put them in water, they grow roots and then you can plant them in your garden.’

‘Well, be careful not to take anything that they would miss at the red house,’ said Silas. ‘Mr Cass has been very good to us. I wouldn’t want to impose on him.’ <sup>3</sup>

‘You wouldn’t be imposing on him. There’s so much waste in any garden. Why not give it to someone who could use it? I often think of that when I’m working. If the land were used properly, no one would go hungry. I must go home now, though. Mother will be waiting for me. I’ll come to your cottage this afternoon and we can plan the garden, if you like.’

‘Oh yes,’ said Eppie, ‘and bring Mrs Winthrop with you. I’m sure she would like to help us decide where the garden should be.’

‘Yes,’ said Silas. ‘She’s a very wise woman. With her there to advise us, we will have a wonderful garden.’

Aaron turned back to the village, while Silas and Eppie walked up the lane.

‘Oh daddy!’ cried Eppie, kissing Silas on the cheek. ‘I’ll be so

1. **blushed** : turned slightly red in the face from embarrassment.

2. **trim** : cut slightly to make something tidier or more level.

3. **impose on him** : take unfair advantage of him.









happy when we have a little garden. I knew Aaron would dig it for us – I knew that very well.'

'Oh did you indeed?' said Silas, smiling affectionately. 'Well, you'll owe<sup>1</sup> Aaron a favour if he does all that work for you.'

'No I won't,' replied Eppie, laughing. 'He wants to do it.'

When they reached the cottage and Eppie unlocked the door, a small brown dog leapt up to greet them. A kitten was sleeping under the loom, while the mother cat lay in the sunshine by the window. This happy animal life was not the only change in Silas's cottage. Many improvements had been made. Once in a while Mr Godfrey Cass had sent fine pieces of furniture from the red house. The villagers thought it was very kind of him, but, after all, it was only right that he – a rich man – should help the poor weaver who was raising an orphan child.

After lunch, Silas and Eppie went out to walk around and plan the garden. As they passed the small bush where her mother had died, Eppie said, 'I would like to move the bush into our garden, daddy.'

Silas had told Eppie all about her mother and how he had found Eppie on the hearth and how her mother had died in the snow. Silas had given her the gold wedding ring her mother had worn. Eppie kept it in a box and looked at it often.

'That's a good idea,' Silas replied. 'That bush is very pretty in the spring, when it's covered with yellow flowers. We'll need a wall around the garden too. Otherwise the donkeys will get in and eat all your plants.'

'There are lots of big stones by the pit,' said Eppie, leading Silas towards the abandoned quarry. 'We can use those to build a wall.'

When they reached the edge of the pit, Eppie looked into it and cried, 'Look how much lower the water is than usual!'

1. **owe** : need to give or pay something in return for what someone has done for you.



## Chapter Eight

'Ah, yes,' said Silas. That's the drainage.<sup>1</sup> Mr Cass is draining this whole area so that he can plant in the fields beyond the pit.'

'How strange it will seem to have the old quarry all dried up,' said Eppie.

She lifted a large stone from the ground. 'This is the kind of stone we need to build our wall,' she said.

'Put it down, Eppie. It's too heavy for you,' said Silas. 'You need someone strong to help you and I'm not strong enough now.'

He sat down on the grassy bank and looked thoughtful. Eppie dropped the stone and sat down beside him. 'Father,' she said, very gently, 'if I got married, would I wear my mother's ring?'

Silas looked surprised at her question. 'Why, Eppie, are you thinking of getting married?'

Eppie smiled and blushed. 'Yes, I have been, this past week,' she said. 'Ever since Aaron asked me to marry him.'

'And will you marry him, Eppie?' asked Silas a little sadly.

'Yes, some time,' said Eppie. 'I don't know when. But, if we do get married, we will all live together – you and Aaron and I – and you won't need to work any more. It is getting difficult to find weaving work these days. Besides, you deserve a rest. Aaron says he will be as good as a son to you.\*'

'And would you like that, Eppie?' asked Silas, looking at her.

'Yes, but only if you would like it too, father.'

'Well, you're very young to be married. We'll ask Mrs Winthrop what she thinks. I'm getting old now and I like to think you will have someone to take care of you when I'm gone.'

'Then you would like me to get married, father?' asked Eppie in a trembling voice.

'I think I would,' said Silas.

1. **drainage** : process of removing water from the land.

- 1 Silas’s new life with his Eppie is a picture of bliss. (*bliss: extreme happiness; joy*). What features help to evoke this blissful state?
- 2 The narrative moves forward 16 years. What changes have occurred since Eppie’s arrival? Fill in the missing information in the table below.

New Year’s Eve, 16 years earlier	A bright Autumn Sunday, 16 years later
Silas was in his thirties	
	His hair is white
Eppie was a young child	
	They have a dog and two cats
His cottage was simply furnished	
	The water level in the quarry has dropped

- 3 A. What do we learn about Aaron?  
B. What do we learn about Godfrey Cass?  
C. *If the land were used properly, no one would go hungry. (p. 74)*  
What do you think Aaron means by this?
- 4 Eppie has many plans for the future. Put them into their chronological order.

Short-term plans

.....  
.....  
.....

Medium/Long-term plans

.....  
.....  
.....



- 5** *Silas had told Eppie all about her mother and how he had found Eppie on the hearth and how her mother had died in the snow. Do you agree with Silas's decision? Discuss your views with your partner.*

## Looking ahead



- 1** Listen to this extract from Chapter Nine and choose the appropriate answer (a, b, or c.).

1. Godfrey had gone to the quarry because
  - a. ☐ he had been called there by the police
  - b. ☐ he wanted to go for a walk
  - c. ☐ he wanted to check work at the quarry
2. Dunstan was recognised because of
  - a. ☐ the clothes he was wearing
  - b. ☐ he had Silas's money
  - c. ☐ his watch and ring
3. What were Nancy's immediate feelings on receiving the news?
  - a. ☐ she felt humiliated
  - b. ☐ she was angry
  - c. ☐ she was understanding

- 2** ... Nancy knew that he had something to say. What do you think it is? Compare your ideas with your partner.

## Chapter Nine



TRACK 9

**G**odfrey Cass was now a handsome man of forty. His hair was still blond and his skin smooth, but he was heavier than he had been in his youth. His wife Nancy was still a good-looking woman, though a little pale. Her clear brown eyes expressed the patience and quiet strength of a woman who has had troubles in her life but has born them bravely.<sup>1</sup>

Fifteen years ago, soon after their marriage, the old Squire had died and Godfrey had inherited the Red House. At first, Nancy had assumed that she and Godfrey would have children. She made the red house as clean and bright as possible, hoping that soon it would be filled with the sound of children's laughter. But the years passed and no children came. Slowly Nancy gave up hope of becoming a mother. It was a terrible disappointment to her, but she thought that it was God's will and that her duty, as a

1. **born them bravely** : endured them with courage.




## Chapter Nine

good Christian, was to accept it. Godfrey, however, could not accept it and this caused Nancy further pain and sadness. He felt that a life without children was empty and he could not resign himself to it as she could.

When, after ten years of marriage, it became clear that they would have no children of their own, Godfrey told Nancy that he would like to adopt a child. He said that they should adopt Eppie, because Eppie was an orphan and she was a very pretty, pleasing little girl. Godfrey was sure the weaver would not mind. Silas Marner would want what was best for the child and clearly Eppie's life would be better if she grew up in the red house and became a lady. Godfrey never imagined that Silas would rather die than part with Eppie.

Nancy, however, had refused to adopt a child. She said that it would be wrong to go against God's will. This disagreement had caused a lot of pain between Godfrey and Nancy. Two years later, he had raised the subject again, but Nancy still refused and there was more bitterness between them. But Godfrey had not mentioned the idea of adopting Eppie for four years now and Nancy hoped that he had finally resigned himself to their childless life.



One afternoon, Godfrey went to the abandoned quarry to see what progress was being made in the drainage. He said he would be home by tea-time. At four o'clock, Nancy was sitting by the fire, reading a book. Godfrey rushed into the room, pale and trembling.

'Why, Godfrey, what is the matter?' <sup>1</sup> asked Nancy in surprise.

'I have had a terrible shock,' he replied. 'It's Dunstan – my

1. **what is the matter** : what is troubling you? What is wrong?



brother Dunstan who disappeared sixteen years ago. They have found him – found his body – his skeleton. The drainage is finished and all the water is gone from the abandoned quarry. And there he is! He has been lying there for sixteen years at the bottom of the pit! They found his watch and his ring. There's no doubt that it is Dunstan.'

'Do you think he drowned himself?' asked Nancy.

'No. He fell in. Nancy, I'm sorry to have to tell you this. Dunstan was the man who robbed Silas Marner. All the weaver's money was there in the pit.'

Nancy blushed red. She felt it was a terrible disgrace to have a criminal in the family. Godfrey was silent. He was staring at the floor and Nancy knew that he had something more to say.

Finally he looked up at her and said, 'All our bad deeds come to light in the end. When God wills it, our secrets are revealed. I have had a secret for many years, but now I want to tell you, Nancy. You remember the woman Marner found in the snow? That wretched woman – Eppie's mother – was my wife. Eppie is my child.'

He paused, afraid of her reaction to his confession. Nancy was pale and still as a statue.

'Nancy? Can you still love me?'

She was silent.

'I know I should have confessed then, but I was afraid of losing you. It was a great mistake to marry her and I suffered for it.'

When Nancy finally spoke, there was no anger in her voice, only regret. 'Godfrey, if you had told me this sixteen years ago, we could have adopted Eppie. Do you think I would have refused to adopt her if I had known that she was yours? And, if you had told me sixteen years ago, we could have had her from the

END









beginning and she would have loved me as her mother. Our lives would have been more like what we hoped for when we married.'

Nancy began to weep.<sup>1</sup>

'But you wouldn't have married me if I had told you,' said Godfrey.

'I don't know what I would have done, Godfrey. But nothing is worth doing wrong for – nothing in the world. Nothing is as good as it seems beforehand.<sup>2</sup> Even our marriage has not been as good as we thought it was going to be.'

'Can you ever forgive me?' asked Godfrey.

'Yes, I forgive you, but the person you really wronged was Eppie.'

'We can take Eppie now,' said Godfrey. 'I don't mind everyone knowing the truth now.'

'She's grown up now,' said Nancy. 'But it's your duty to acknowledge her and provide for her. I will do my best for her and I hope that God will make her love me.'

'Then we'll go to Silas Marner's house tonight'



1. **weep** : cry.

2. **beforehand** : previously.



1 Did you predict that Godfrey would tell Nancy his secret?

2 A. We saw how life for Silas changed after Eppie's arrival. How had Godfrey and Nancy Cass changed during the same period? Complete the table below. There are two examples.

	'positive'	'negative'
Godfrey	<i>a handsome man</i>	
Nancy		<i>a little pale</i>

B. In the text notice the function of 'but'. It links two ideas: one 'positive' with another 'negative'. Another linking word is used in the first paragraph to express this contrast. What is it?

3 A. What events concerning Godfrey and Nancy Cass's life occurred over these 16 years? Complete the time phrases with the events.

- 16 years ago *Dunstan disappeared and Molly Farren died*
- 15 years ago, soon after their marriage .....
- After 10 years of marriage .....
- Two years later .....
- For four years now .....

B. What were the differences in opinion between Godfrey and Nancy regarding adoption?

- 4** On the basis of your understanding of the chapter, what is your reaction to the following statements? If the statement is clearly supported by the text, write 'yes', if it isn't, write 'no', If the statement is not stated explicitly in the text, write 'not given'. Refer to the text to justify your answers. Compare your ideas with your partner.

Statement	Your reaction (‘yes’, ‘no’ ‘not given’)
a. Nancy wanted only her own children.	
b. Nancy resigned herself to not having children almost immediately.	
c. Godfrey would not have wanted to adopt any other child but Eppie.	
d. Nancy was saddened by her husband's insistence on adopting Eppie.	
e. Godfrey in time accepted life without children.	
f. Godfrey didn't understand the strength of Silas's feelings for Eppie.	
g. Nancy uses her religion to justify her opposition to adoption.	
h. Nancy's views on adoption are inconsistent.	
i. Nancy has a easy-going approach to life.	
j. Nancy believes she is the main victim of Godfrey's lies.	

## Looking ahead

- 1** *Then, we'll go to Silas Marner's house tonight.* What do you think Silas's reaction will be to the news? Keep a record of your ideas and check them after you have read Chapter Ten.





## Chapter Ten

**T**<sup>10</sup>hat evening, Silas and Eppie sat alone in the cottage. On the table in front of them were the piles of gold – Silas's old gold come home at last.

'Sometimes,' said Silas, 'when you were first here, I used to think that you might turn back into the gold by magic. The gold had gone, you see, and you had come in its place. At first I thought that you might go and the gold come back. But after a little time, I knew I loved you more than the gold. I needed your voice and the touch of your little fingers. You were little then. You didn't know how much your old father loved you.'

'But I know now, father,' said Eppie. 'If you had not taken care of me, I would have been sent to the workhouse,<sup>1</sup> and there would have been no one to love me.'

'The blessing was mine, my precious child. If you hadn't been

1. **workhouse** : institution where the poor were housed and fed. The living conditions in workhouses were very harsh, and people of the lower social classes were afraid of being sent the workhouse.



sent to save me, I would have lived the rest of my life in misery. The money was taken away from me to help save me and now it has come back just when it is needed for you. Our life is wonderful.'

At that moment there was a knock on the door.

'Why, good evening Mr and Mrs Cass,' said Eppie in surprise, as she let them in.<sup>1</sup>

'We are disturbing you very late, my dear,' said Nancy, taking Eppie's hand and looking at her with interest and admiration.

'Good evening, Marner,' said Godfrey, as Eppie placed two chairs for them then went and sat beside Silas. 'I'm glad to hear you got your gold back after all these years. I am very sorry that it was one of my family who robbed you and I want to compensate you for it in any way I can. Whatever I can do for you will be nothing but paying a debt. And I owe you for more than the robbery.'

Godfrey hesitated. He and Nancy had agreed not to tell them that he was Eppie's father yet. He wanted to wait until Eppie knew him better.

Silas was always nervous when speaking to gentlemen like Mr Cass: big, powerful, red-faced men, usually seen on horseback. 'I have a lot to thank you for already, sir, and the robbery was not your fault,' he replied shyly.<sup>2</sup>

'That may be the way you see it, Marner, but I see it differently. You have been working hard all your life. Now it's time for you to rest. How old are you?'

'I'm fifty-five,' said Silas.

'Well, you may live another thirty years, like old Mr Macey.'

1. **let them in** : opened the door for them.

2. **shyly** : nervously.



## PART 2

### Chapter Ten

That gold on the table will not be enough to keep you comfortably for all that time.'

'For working people, that gold seems a lot of money – almost too much. And Eppie and I don't need very much.'

Godfrey was finding it surprisingly difficult to come to the point.<sup>1</sup> It had all seemed so simple when he had thought about it at home. 'You have been very kind to Eppie for the past sixteen years. I'm sure you would like to see her well provided for. Mrs Cass and I have no children of our own. We would like to take care of Eppie and make her a lady. We would treat her in every way as if she were our own daughter. I'm sure you would be glad to see her fortune made in that way.'

As Godfrey spoke, Eppie put her arm around Silas. She could feel him trembling violently.

'Eppie, my child,' said Silas. 'What do you think? I won't stand in your way.'<sup>2</sup> Thank Mr and Mrs Cass.'

Eppie's cheeks were flushed<sup>3</sup> with distress. She knew that her father was suffering. 'Thank you very much, madam, and you, sir. But I can't leave my father. I don't want to be a lady. I just want to stay with the people I know.'

Silas grasped<sup>4</sup> her hand and sobbed with relief.

There were tears in Nancy's eyes. She felt sympathy for Eppie, but she also felt sadness for Godfrey.

Godfrey felt irritated at this unexpected opposition. It had taken him so long to do the right thing. He had been so eager to come to the cottage and make his offer. Now he found it difficult

1. to come ... point : to tell Silas that he wished to adopt Eppie.

2. stand in your way : stop you.

3. flushed : red and hot.

4. grasped : took hold of tightly.



# Silas Marner

to understand other people's feelings. 'It is my duty to tell you, Marner, that Eppie is my own child,' he said. 'Her mother was my wife. I have a natural claim on her.'

Eppie went pale, but Silas flushed with anger. 'If you are her father, sir, why didn't you say so sixteen years ago, before I began to love her? If you take her from me now, it will be like taking the heart out of my body. God gave her to me because you did not want her and now He looks upon her as mine. You have no right to her! She has been calling me father for sixteen years!'

'I thought you would be glad that we could give Eppie a better life,' said Godfrey, growing angry. 'She is now old enough to marry. If she stays with you, she will marry some low working man. I know I should have done my duty before and I am grateful for what you have done for Eppie. But now I want to do my duty. I insist on taking care of my own daughter.'

Silas was afraid that what Godfrey said was true. He certainly did not want to stand in Eppie's way, to deny her the chance of a better life. Eppie held his hand tightly in her own and said, 'Thank you, sir and madam, for your offers. But I would be miserable if I left my father. He has loved me and taken care of me all my life and I will love and take care of him for the rest of his life. No one shall ever come between us!'

'But Eppie,' said Silas. 'Perhaps one day you will be sorry if you choose to stay among poor people with small houses and poor clothes when you could have had the best of everything.'

'No, I won't be sorry,' Eppie replied. 'I don't want fine clothes or a carriage or a big house. I want a little home where my father can sit in the corner and I can do everything for him. I like working people and their way of life. And I've promised to marry a working man who will come and live with my father and help









me take care of him.' At this point, Eppie burst into tears.

Nancy looked at Godfrey. His face was flushed and his lips were trembling.

'Let's go, Nancy,' he said.

Nancy took Eppie's hand and said, 'We'll come back and talk about it another time. Remember that we wish you well, my dear, and you too, Marner.' Then she followed her husband out of the door.

As they rode home in the carriage, Nancy held Godfrey's hand.

'Well, that's over!' he said after a while.

'Yes,' said Nancy. 'We can't force her to come to us if she doesn't want to.'

'I'll do all I can for her in the life she has chosen. We won't tell anyone that I am her real father. It can't do any good now. She's a pretty girl, isn't she?'

'Yes. Her hair and eyes are just like yours. I'm surprised I never noticed it before. Will you be very sad, Godfrey, because she won't come to us?'

'Perhaps, for a little while. But Marner was right. I didn't want her when she was little and now it's too late. But I have no right to be unhappy. I've got you.'

'If you could resign yourself to our childless state,' said Nancy, 'I think we could be happier than we have been.'

'Then I will. At least it is not too late to change that.'





**1** Chapter Ten can be divided into the following four sections:

1. from the beginning of the chapter to *At that moment there was a knock on the door.* (p. 88)
2. from *Why, good evening Mr and Mrs Cass, said Eppie...* (p. 88) to *She felt sympathy for Eppie, but also felt sadness for Godfrey.* (p. 89);
3. from *Godfrey felt irritated...* (p. 89) to *His face was flushed and his lips were trembling.* (p. 92);
4. from *Let's go, Nancy, he said.* (p. 92) to the end of the chapter.

We could give these sections titles. Choose the most appropriate title for each section from the list below. There is one title you will not need.

- a. ☐ Anger
- b. ☐ The truth comes later
- c. ☐ Accepting defeat
- d. ☐ The gold, at last!
- e. ☐ The calm before the storm

**2** What interpretation does Silas give to the loss of his gold 16 years ago?**3** *The money was taken away from me to help save me and now it has come back just when it is needed for you.* What does Silas mean by this?**4** What two arguments does Godfrey use to try and convince Silas to let Eppie go?**5** Why is Silas nervous and shy?**6** Why does Eppie reject the Cass's offer?

- 7** Why do you think Godfrey becomes ‘irritated’ by Eppie and Silas’s reaction to his offer? What does this reaction tell us about him?
- 8** Godfrey finally reveals his secret. This is the final, and in his opinion, decisive argument to convince Eppie to join him and his wife at the Red House. In exercise three you identified the two arguments Godfrey used in his first attempt to convince Eppie. Complete the table showing the two arguments Godfrey uses with Silas’s and Eppie’s replies.

Argument	Silas’s or Eppie’s reply

- 9** How do Godfrey and Nancy decide to rebuild their lives?
- 10** Silas Marner is drawing to its conclusion. The ‘loose-ends’ or unresolved questions have been answered. In particular:
- How will Godfrey’s secret be revealed?  
and
  - What will 

Silas’s  
Eppie’s  
Nancy’s

 reaction be to this news?
  - but also  
What happened to Dunstan?

Working with your partner, answer these questions.

- 11** However, one mystery about Silas’s life remains. What is it?



## Chapter Eleven



CK 11

**T**he next morning, as Silas and Eppie were having breakfast, he said, 'Eppie, there's something I would like to do. I have been thinking about it for two years. Now that the gold has come back, we can do it.'

'Do what, father?' asked Eppie.

'Go and see the place where I used to live. I want to go to Lantern Yard and see Mr Paston the minister. Something may have happened to show them that I was innocent of the robbery. Mr Paston is a very pious man. I want to ask him about the drawing of the lots. And I want to tell him about the religion of the people here and ask him what he thinks of it.'

Long ago, Silas had told Dolly Winthrop the story of his time at Lantern Yard and Eppie had often heard Mrs Winthrop and her father discussing it. It had been a great relief to Silas to tell somebody, after all his years of silent sorrow. Dolly had listened with sympathy, but the religion of Lantern Yard was so different from the religion of Raveloe that Dolly found it all very strange



indeed. She had asked him to explain about the drawing of the lots several times, but even then she did not fully understand.

Eppie was delighted with the idea of going on a journey with her father. When she came home, she would be able to tell Aaron all about it. Aaron seemed to know so much more than she did about many things. It would be pleasant to be able to tell him something for a change.

So the next day Silas and Eppie set out on their journey. When they arrived at the great industrial town, Silas was amazed at how different it was from the town he remembered.<sup>\*</sup> Many changes had taken place in thirty years.

'I don't think I can find my way to Lantern Yard, Eppie,' said Silas. 'It's all so changed.' Both of them felt ill at ease,<sup>1</sup> standing in the busy noisy street, surrounded by strange indifferent faces.

'Well, ask someone the way, father,' said Eppie. 'Ask that gentleman over there.'

'He won't know,' Silas replied. 'Gentlemen never went to Lantern Yard. It was a place for simple working people. But I could ask him the way to Prison Street. I'm sure I'll be able to find Lantern Yard once I get to Prison Street.'

The gentleman told them how to get to Prison Street and Silas and Eppie set off in the direction he had indicated. They got lost several times and had to ask other people for directions before they found Prison Street. The dark walls of the great jail<sup>2</sup> cheered Silas up: at least the jail had not changed and Silas now felt confident that he could find the Yard.

'What a dark ugly place!' cried Eppie. 'It hides the sky! It's worse than the workhouse. I am glad that you don't live here now,

1. **ill at ease** : uncomfortable.

2. **jail** : prison.



## Chapter Eleven

father. Is Lantern Yard like this street?’

‘My precious child,’ said Silas, smiling, ‘it isn’t a big street like this. I never liked this street, but I was fond of<sup>1</sup> Lantern Yard. Don’t worry. We’re nearly there.’

They turned onto a dark narrow road. ‘Oh, father!’ cried Eppie. ‘I feel as if I were suffocating! I never imagined that people lived like this, so close together. How pretty Raveloe will look, when we get home!’

‘You are right, Eppie. Now it looks strange to me too and it smells bad. I don’t think it used to smell this bad.’

Here and there a pale dirty face looked out from a doorway. They made Eppie even more uncomfortable, so she felt relieved when they got to Shoe Lane, where she could see a little more of the sky.

‘There it is!’ said Silas. ‘There’s Lantern Yard. But how strange! People are coming out of the Yard, as if they had been to chapel. We never went to chapel at noon on a weekday.’

Suddenly he stopped walking and stared with a look of distressed amazement. They were standing in front of a large factory and men and women were coming out for their mid-day meal.

‘Father,’ said Eppie in alarm. ‘What’s the matter?’

‘It’s gone, child,’ said Silas. ‘Lantern Yard is gone! I know this is the right place, because I recognise that house across the road. That big factory is where Lantern Yard was! It’s all gone – even the chapel and the little graveyard!’

‘Come into that brush shop, father,’ said Eppie. She was worried that he might have one of his attacks. ‘Then you can sit

1. was fond of : had a great liking for.



down and rest and perhaps the people there can tell you what happened.'

But the man in the brush shop had only been in Shoe Lane for ten years. The factory was already there when he arrived. Neither he nor any of the other people in the shop knew anything about Silas's old friends at Lantern Yard. They had never heard of Mr Paston the minister.

'The old place has been swept away!' <sup>1</sup> said Silas to Dolly Winthrop on the night of his return to Raveloe. 'My old home has gone. I've no home but this now. I will never know whether they discovered the truth about that robbery.'

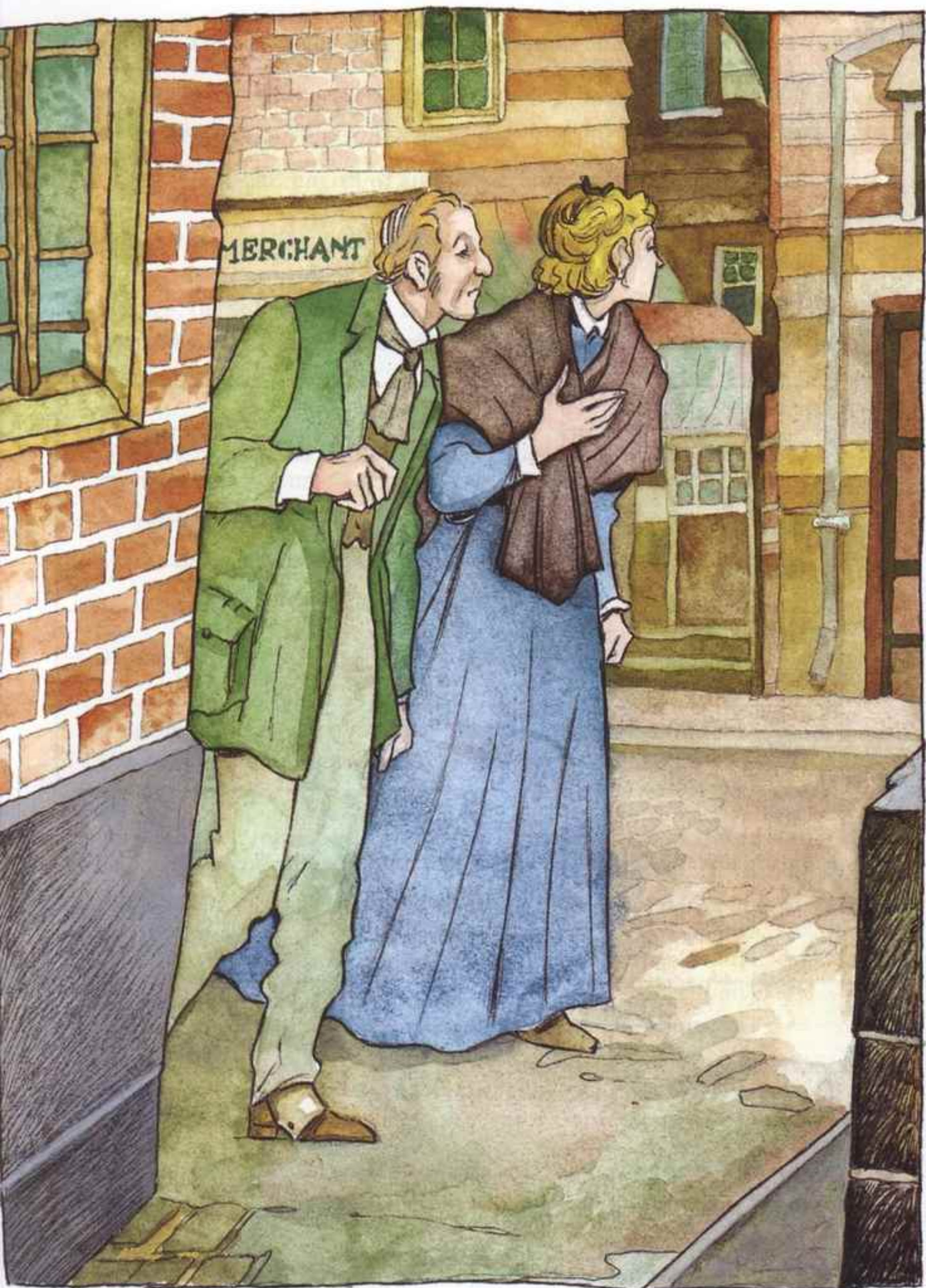
'No, you won't, Master Marner,' said Dolly. 'There are many things we'll never know. It's God's will. We'll never know what happened, but He knows and we must trust Him.'

'Yes,' said Silas. 'Ever since the child was sent to me, I have been learning to trust. Now she says she will never leave me, so I think I will trust until I die.'



1. **swept away** : (here) taken away.







- 1** Put these events from Chapter Eleven into their correct order. One event should not be used!
- They ask people in the brush shop about the chapel.
  - They ask a gentleman for directions to Prison Street.
  - They return to Raveloe.
  - The gentleman takes them to Lantern yard.
  - They find Lantern Yard.
  - They discover that the site where the chapel was is now a factory.

Order	Event
1.	Silas and Eppie decide to return to Lantern yard.
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	Silas resigns himself to never knowing the truth about what happened 30 years previously.

- 2** A. How are the following features of the town described?

- The streets: .....
- The faces of the people: .....
- The prison: .....
- The smell: .....

B. What effect does the vocabulary have?

- 3** What had happened to the chapel? How do you interpret this change? Discuss your ideas with other students.



**4** ... the man in the brush shop had only been in Shoe Lane for ten years. The factory was already there when he arrived. (p. 98). What does this news tell us about the chapel and its world? How does Silas react to the news?

**5** When she (Eppie) came home, she would be able to tell Aaron all about it... it would be pleasant to be able tell him something for a change. (p. 96). What does Eppie tell Aaron when she returns from the town. Write her description of her journey to Aaron. Cover the following points:

- what her father had decided to do and why
- her impressions on arriving in the town
- getting to Lantern Yard
- the changes there have been
- the people at the brush shop

**Begin:**

'The day after Mr and Mrs Cass's visit, father told me ...'

**Use between 150-180 words.**

**6** Two themes (class and the social system, and religion faith and ignorance) present in *Silas Marner* are re-stated in this chapter. Each one is represented by a character present in this chapter. Who are the characters?

Character	Theme
1.	
2.	

# Looking ahead

**1** *Silas Marner* has a happy ending. What do you think it will be?

# Weaving and the Industrial Revolution

At the beginning of *Silas Marner*, we are told that the small pale weavers looked like 'the remains of a disinherited race' (p. 10). On a surface level, this is simply because they are not as healthy and robust as their farm-working neighbours in the countryside, but there is also a historical reason for the simile.

The period of British history from about 1740 to 1850 is known as the Industrial Revolution. The most important aspect of the Industrial Revolution was a change from production in homes by independent artisans (like Silas's production of linen cloth in his

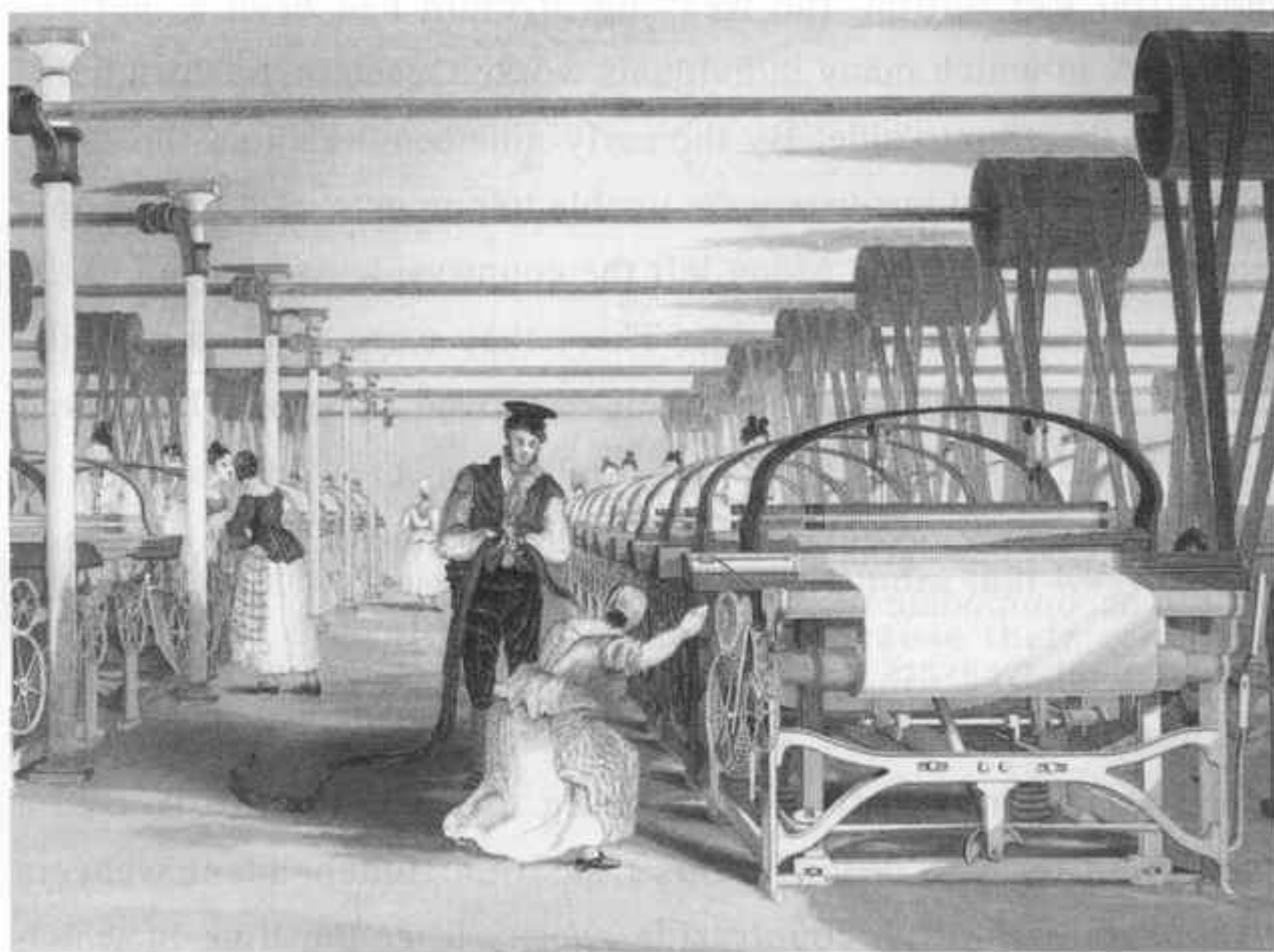


*Spinning and weaving at home (end of the 19th century).*



cottage) to mass production in factories under capitalist control. This was facilitated by the invention of machines to do work which had previously been done by hand.

The weaving of cloth was an important part of the British economy. From around the year 1500, the British produced cloth for export. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, there was a long period of political stability and a constitution that emphasised individualism; a strong banking system developed and the austere Protestant religious beliefs common at the time laid great emphasis on hard work, individualism and enterprise. At the same time, the British Empire was growing, extending the markets for British cloth and other manufactured products. All these elements contributed to



*Interior of a cotton mill: power loom weaving, (1835).*

the rise of the Industrial Revolution.

The textile industry was rapidly transformed by the invention of a series of machines that facilitated the mass-production of cloth. In 1733, John Kay invented the 'flying shuttle', a mechanical loom. James Hargreaves invented a machine known as the 'spinning jenny' around 1770: the original model could do the work of eight people spinning cotton thread by hand on conventional spinning-wheels and later models could do even more. Each technological advance in spinning required a similar advance in weaving. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, cloth could be produced in factories much more quickly and cheaply than by individual weavers in their own homes. This caused enormous changes in British society. Before the Industrial Revolution, the weaving of cloth had been a 'cottage industry', in which many individuals worked, each on his own in his home in the countryside. By the early nineteenth century, however, those independent weavers were unable to compete with the cheaper factory-produced cloth. Many left the countryside and moved to the cities to find work in factories. There they were employed by the factory owner, rather than being self-employed as before. They lived and worked in harsh unpleasant conditions, crowded together in cities in the new neighbourhoods of cheap housing that had been built to accommodate them.

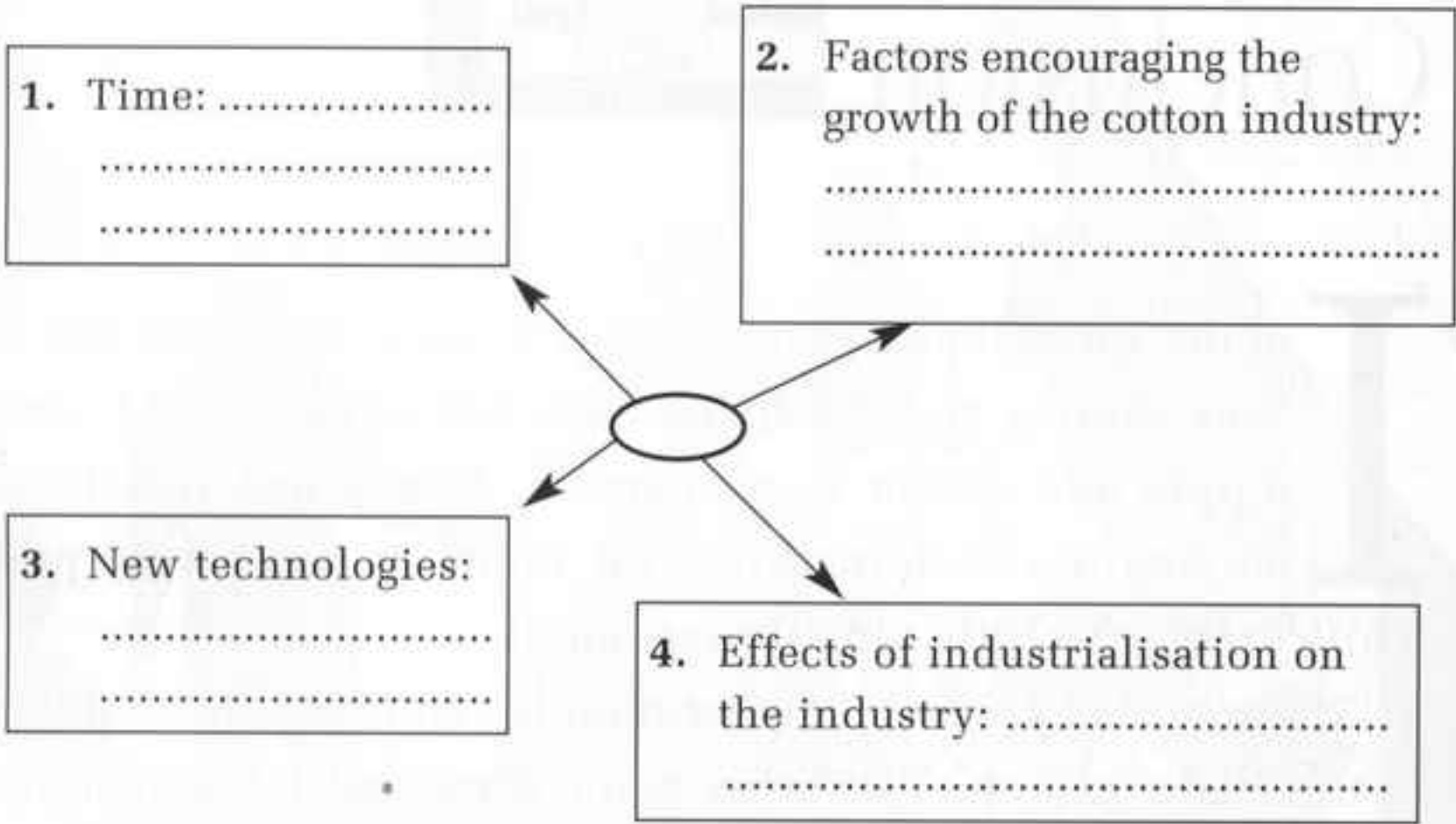
Independent weavers like Silas, then, really were on the verge of extinction: they were about to become, almost literally, a 'disinherited race'. It is interesting that George Eliot uses a Darwinian term to describe this transition. Independent weavers disappeared from the countryside shortly after the time in which *Silas Marner* is set, not because they died but because they were



forced to seek <sup>1</sup> work in the city. However, from the point of view of the countryside, it was as if an entire ‘race’ – a whole category of rural inhabitants – had suddenly gone extinct.

- 1** Complete the table below summarising the main points of the text with the information required. Fill in the information in the numbered order 1 to 4.

The Industrial Revolution and the British Textile Industry



- 2** At the very beginning of the novel Eliot alludes that weavers are weak and unhealthy in appearance because their craft has become extinct as a result of industrialisation. Which phrase from the text exemplifies this?

1. seek : look for.

## Conclusion



TRACK 12

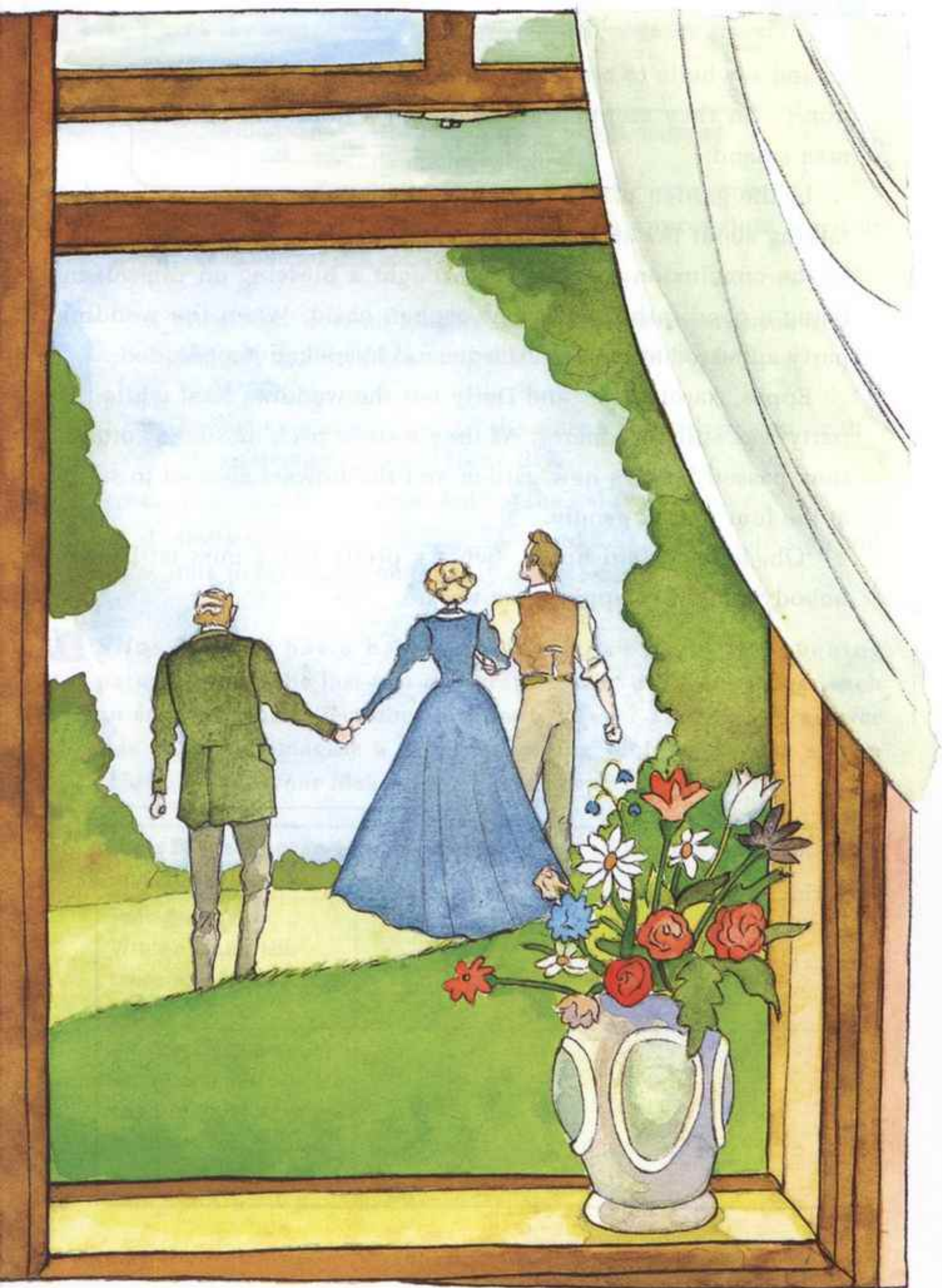
**I**n the springtime, when the flowers were blooming, the sun was shining and the fields were full of calves and lambs, Eppie and Aaron were married. Nancy had insisted on buying the wedding dress for Eppie. It was a very pretty white dress with little pink flowers on it.

The wedding procession went from the church to the Rainbow. In the lead was Eppie, with her white dress and her golden hair, looking like a lily. One of Eppie's hands was on her husband's arm and the other held the hand of her father Silas. After them came Ben and Dolly Winthrop.

Nancy saw them passing by as she stood at the window of the red house. Godfrey had gone away for the day, otherwise people would have expected him to go to the wedding feast he had ordered at the Rainbow.

Dolly Winthrop saw old Mr Macey sitting in his doorway as they passed. He was too old to go to the wedding feast. Dolly guessed that he would like them to stop and talk to him. 'We must









# Silas Marner

go and say hello to Mr Macey,' said Dolly. 'He'll be offended if we don't'. So they stopped at Mr Macey's door and shook the old man's hand.

In the garden of the Rainbow, all the guests were gathered,<sup>1</sup> talking about the strange history of Silas Marner. They had come to the conclusion that he had brought a blessing on himself by being a good father to a poor orphan child. When the wedding party appeared at the gate, the guests cheered and applauded.

Eppie, Aaron, Silas and Dolly left the wedding feast while the party was still very merry. As they walked back to Silas's cottage, they passed Eppie's new garden and the flowers seemed to smile at the four united people.

'Oh, father!' said Eppie, 'what a pretty home ours is! I think nobody could be happier than we are.'



1. gathered : (here) in a group.



- 1 A. Check the meanings of these words and phrases associated with marriage in your dictionary.

bridegroom    white wedding    to get engaged  
reception    bride

- B. Complete the sentences below with the appropriate word or phrase. You can use each one only once.

- One bright autumn Sunday morning on their way back from church, Eppie told her father that she wanted ..... to Aaron.
- Eppie had a .....: she wore a white dress and, with her golden hair, looked like a lily.
- The ..... was held at the Rainbow.
- Dolly wanted the ..... and ..... to stop and talk to Mr Macey on the way to the feast.

- 2 *Silas Marner* has a happy ending. Read again the opening paragraph and the last two paragraphs. Why did Eliot choose such an ending? What effect does this ending have? To help you answer this question, imagine a different ending such as the one shown below. Discuss your ideas with other students.

<b><i>Silas Marner</i> doesn't end like this...</b>	<b>...but ends like this</b>	<b>and the effect is...</b>
Paragraph 1: Winter, rain, the trees are bare, a cold day.		
Closing paragraphs: Eppie and Aaron left the Rainbow to move to their own house, leaving Silas alone.		

PART 2

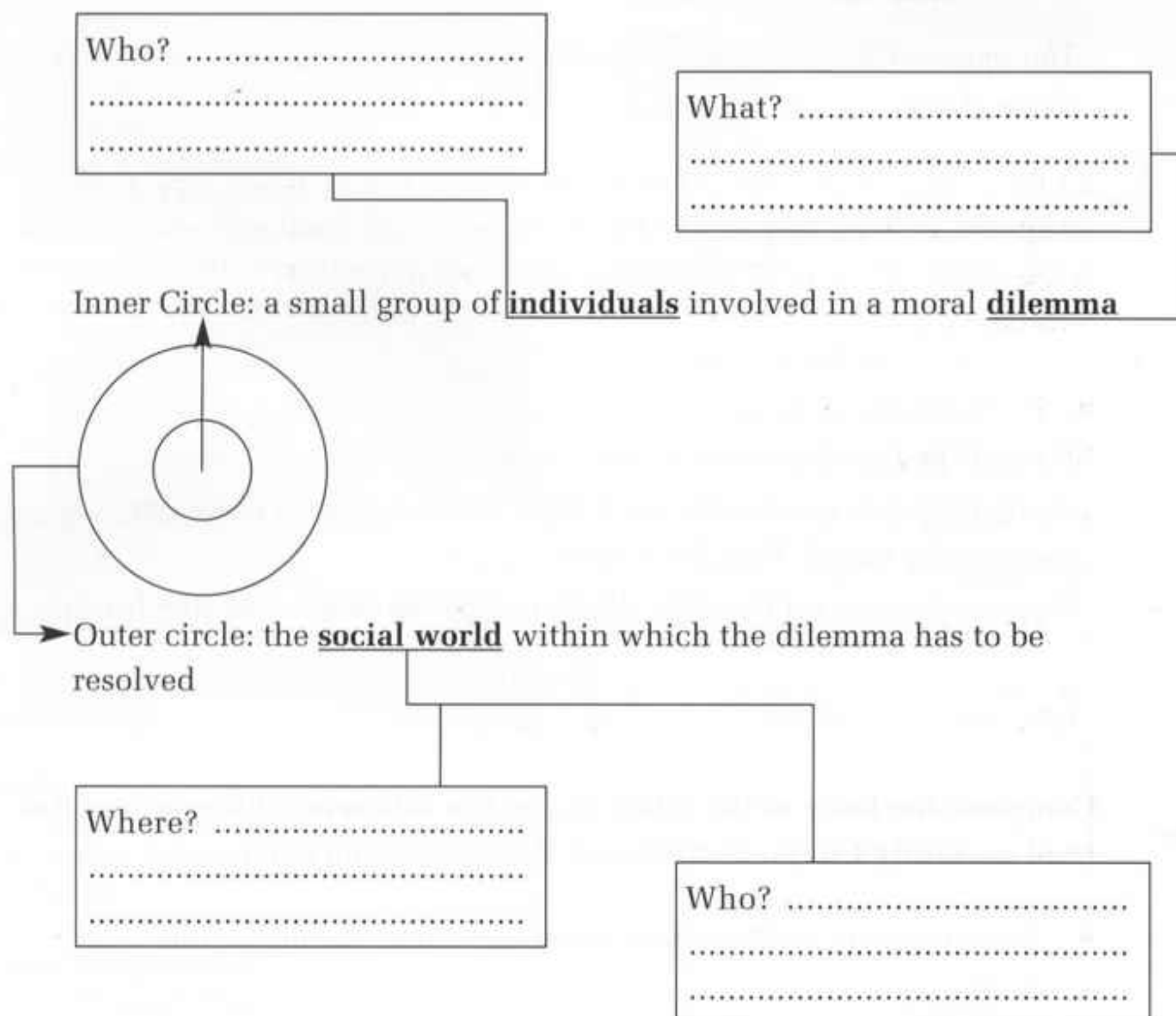
**1** In Part One Extension Exercises you were asked to give each of the chapters in Part 1 a title. The five chapters that make up Part 2 have been given a title. Choose the appropriate title from the list below:

- a. No return to the past
- b. Godfrey's offer
- c. Godfrey's revelation
- d. Eppie's plans
- e. Happiness

Chapter	Title	Alternative
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
Conclusion		

**2** Joan Bennet in *George Eliot: Her Mind and Art* (cited in Walter Allen: *The English Novel* p. 221) stated that Eliot's novels have an 'organic form of an inner circle – a small group of individuals involved in a moral dilemma – and an outer circle – the social world within which the dilemma has to be resolved'. These circles are illustrated on the opposite page.  
Answer the questions in the spaces provided.





- 3 Nancy Lammeter, like many people of the time, maintained regular correspondence. She has written to a close friend to tell her about Godfrey's admission and its consequences. Below is the beginning and the end of the letter.

*My dearest Emma,*

*So much has happened since my last letter. My life has been subjected to a blow which I never thought possible. You know that the absence of children has been a severe test for our marriage. You also, dear Emma, know my views on adoption, about which Godfrey was so keen. It seemed, however, that in recent years he had resigned himself to the childless existence that our Lord has given us.*

*This apparent new-found peace was shattered one afternoon when Godfrey returned home in a state of shock.*

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

*We must find goodness even in events such as these I have recounted. I dearly hope that now Godfrey and I can find that serenity which our marriage has lacked. Pray for us both.*

*You are always in my thoughts. My love as always to you and your family.*

*Nancy*

**Complete the body of the letter giving the following information. Re-read carefully Chapters Nine and Ten before you start.**

- The discovery of Dunstan's body and Silas Marner's gold
- Godfrey's secret
- The decision to visit Eppie and Silas Marner and the attempt to adopt Eppie
- Eppie's rejection of their offer
- Eppie's marriage to Aaron



This reader uses the **EXPANSIVE READING** approach, where the text becomes a springboard to improve language skills and to explore historical background, cultural connections and other topics suggested by the text.

The new structures introduced in this step of our **READING & TRAINING** series are listed below. Naturally, structures from lower steps are included too. For a complete list of structures used over all the six steps, see *The Black Cat Guide to Graded Readers*, which is also downloadable at no cost from our website, [www.blackcat-cideb.com](http://www.blackcat-cideb.com) or [www.cideb.it](http://www.cideb.it).

The vocabulary used at each step is carefully checked against vocabulary lists used for internationally recognised examinations.

## Step Six C1

All the structures used in the previous levels, plus the following:

### Verb tenses

Present Continuous: criticism

Future reference: Future Continuous;

Future Perfect

### Verb forms and patterns

Passive in continuous forms

*Wish* and *if only* + Past Perfect; + *would*

### Modal verbs

*Will* to describe characteristic behaviour

*Would*: past habits

*Didn't need to* v. *needn't have*

### Types of clause

Inversion of *had* in 2nd and 3rd conditional sentences without *if*

Inversion of word order after initial negative adverbs (*No sooner ...*; *Hardly ...*; etc.)

Non-finite *-ing* clauses

Complex sentences with no restriction on number of subordinate clauses

## Available at Step Six:

- **The Mill on the Floss**  
George Eliot
- **Silas Marner**  
George Eliot
- **Wuthering Heights**  
Emily Brontë

# Silas Marner

Set in the English countryside in the first years of the nineteenth century, *Silas Marner* is a magical story of redemption through human relationships. Silas, a weaver, is betrayed by his best friend and the woman he loves. He loses all faith in humanity and moves to the village of Raveloe. There he lives a solitary life, working and hoarding his gold coins, until one day his gold is stolen.

- Wide range of activities practising the four skills
- Dossiers: *George Eliot and 'Silas Marner'*, *Evolutionary Theory and Weaving and the Industrial Revolution*
- Recording of parts of the text
- Extension exercises



Step One	■	CEFR <b>A2</b>	Exam Level KET
Step Two	■	CEFR <b>B1.1</b>	Exam Preparation PET
Step Three	■	CEFR <b>B1.2</b>	Exam Level PET
Step Four	■	CEFR <b>B2.1</b>	Exam Preparation FCE
Step Five	■	CEFR <b>B2.2</b>	Exam Level FCE
Step Six	■	CEFR <b>C1</b>	Exam Preparation CAE

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