

Silas Marner



INTRO

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE ELIOT

Mary Anne Evans grew up on Arbury Estate in Warwickshire, England, where she grew up on one of the estate's farms. Her father was the estate's land agent, received a good education during her youth. After she finished school at age sixteen, she continued learning by reading: she had access to the library at Arbury Hall, and her knowledge of Classical literature deeply affected her later writing. Her writing was also impacted by the diverse lives and lifestyles she observed on the Arbury Estate, from those of the wealthy landowners to those of the poorer workers farming the land. When Mary Anne moved to Coventry at age twenty-one, she befriended Charles Bray at whose home she was exposed to a circle of intellectuals and freethinkers. She decided to move to London and begin a career as a writer. In London, she started working as an editorial assistant for *The Westminster Review*. She began publishing essays, writing under the pen name George Eliot in order to escape the stereotype of her day that women wrote romances. Her personal life received attention and gossip due to her relationship with a married man named George Henry Lewes with whom she lived for more than twenty years. She published her major works during Lewes's lifetime, including *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1857), *Adam Bede* (1859), *Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Middlemarch* (1872), and *Daniel Deronda* (1876). Lewes's death in 1878 left her devastated, and while she married John Cross in May of 1880, she died later that year after a brief illness.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As mentioned above, the Victorian Era, with its emphasis on Christianity, morality, and social values provides a backdrop to Eliot's novel. The setting of the novel is critical. Silas Marner, as a weaver, lives during the early years of the 19th century when individual weavers made profits in England. By the 1830s and 1840s, the Industrial Revolution and the economic changes it caused were prevalent throughout England. The Industrial Revolution is the time period in which the production of basic goods transitioned from hand production methods to production by new machines. The advancing technology allowed goods, such as woven cotton products, to be produced more quickly and on a larger scale. This transition resulted in the development of mills and manufacturing towns throughout England. At the end of *Silas Marner*, the Industrial Revolution has transformed the village of Lantern Yard into a fast-paced manufacturing hub. Silas Marner and Eppie are able to retreat from the business of Lantern Yard to the quiet, unchanged

world of Raveloe. But the change in Lantern Yard points to coming change all over England, as well as a complete change in weaving and Silas Marner's own profession.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

While individual books are not known to have directly inspired or impact George Eliot's creation of *Silas Marner*, her academic studies did influence her understanding of literature and writing. In particular, scholars have noted, Greek tragedies directed her literary choices. The novel *Silas Marner* also clearly responds to George Eliot's awareness of the religious ideology of her time period. Silas Marner's early devoted faith and subsequent questioning of this faith, allowed Eliot to explore the role faith played in Victorian Society. In the Victorian Era, many people believed Christian values and morality secured one's own happiness, a concept Eliot explores throughout the novel.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Silas Marner: The Weaver of Raveloe*
- **When Written:** 1860-1861
- **Where Written:** London
- **When Published:** 1861
- **Literary Period:** Victorian Period / Realism
- **Genre:** Novel / Realistic fiction
- **Setting:** The villages of Lantern Yard and Raveloe in England, early 1800s
- **Climax:** Eppie decides to stay with her adoptive father, Silas Marner, despite her biological father, Godfrey Cass, finally revealing his past secret marriage
- **Antagonist:** William Dane / Dunstan Cass
- **Point of View:** Third-person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Biblical Namesake. Eppie's full name is Hephzibah after Silas Marner's mother and sister. Marner notes that the name is from the Bible. In the Bible, Hephzibah refers both to the wife of a man named Hezekiah and, in one passage, to God's chosen people. The name means "my delight is in her."

Adaptations. *Silas Marner* has been adapted for radio, stage, and screen, including several movie versions, a *Wishbone* episode, and a 1961 opera version of the novel.



PLOT SUMMARY

In the early 1800s, when spinning wheels were still popular in every household, solitary men traveled from village to village in the rural English countryside seeking work as weavers. Rural villagers, fearful of any change in their lives, often made negative assumptions about anything unusual, or even infrequent, such as the visit of a farrier or a weaver. Any special skill or intelligence was particularly frowned upon as evidence of one's communion with evil forces, for how else was any unique ability to be gained?

One such rural weaver facing the suspicion and distrust of his neighbors is **Silas Marner**, a lonely figure who lives on the outskirts of **Raveloe**, in a cottage near the **Stone Pits**. The Raveloe villagers perceive Marner as strange, because of both his lonely occupation and his strange condition in which he periodically falls into a trance-like state, or fit. Marner's isolation is due to his unfortunate youth in the distant town of **Lantern Yard**. In Lantern Yard, Marner was believed to be a young man of great promise among the local congregation who had once witnessed one of his fits during a service and believed it to be the mark of God's intervention. However, Marner's happiness is interrupted when his friend **William Dane** frames him as a thief. The congregation decides to draw lots to determine Marner's fate. Marner is convinced that God will demonstrate his innocence only to find that the lots declare his guilt. Having lost his faith, Marner flees Lantern Yard.

For fifteen years, Marner lives in Raveloe, withdrawn from the community, but making a fair sum of money from his constant weaving work. He is fascinated by the **gold** he earns and begins to hoard it. He works for the gold itself and treasures a store of it under his floorboards. Every night, he takes out his gold to admire it, and the gold takes the place in his heart of any human affection.

Meanwhile, in Raveloe, the older son of **Squire Cass**, the community's most prominent man, is dealing with a dark secret. The older son, **Godfrey**, has married a woman named **Molly Farren** of lowly birth and they have a young daughter. Their marriage is a secret from everyone, including the Squire, and only the younger son, **Dunstan**, knows the truth. Godfrey regrets his foolish marriage and has long loved a respectable young woman named **Nancy Lammeter**. Dunstan uses his knowledge to bribe Godfrey into doing whatever he wants, including giving Dunstan a sum of money Godfrey collected from one of the Squire's tenants. In order to repay this money, and to keep his secret, Godfrey allows Dunstan to take his horse, **Wildfire**, and sell him at the hunt. After securing a price for the horse, Dunstan rides the hunting course only to have the horse fall and die. Embarrassed by his predicament, but unconcerned for his brother's fate, Dunstan decides to walk home through the misty evening. On this walk, he passes by the Stone Pits and Silas Marner's cottage. Remembering talk of the

weaver's wealth, Dunstan decides to speak with him and considers forcing him into making a loan. However, he finds the door of the cottage unlocked and the place deserted. He quickly deduces where the gold is hidden, and, taking both bags, stumbles off into the darkness.

Silas Marner returns home to find his gold gone and is thrown into panic and despair. He goes to the **Rainbow**, the local pub, for assistance. The men gathered there help Marner, but half of them believe that the robbery must have been committed by a supernatural force, and the other half are unable to discover anything about the thief. The villagers begin to reach out to Marner in his misfortune, and one woman in particular, **Dolly Winthrop**, is very generous. Godfrey Cass learns of Dunstan's disappearance and **Wildfire's** death and decides that he must at once confess the full story to his father. However, despite his deliberations and anxiety, he backs out of this course of action and tells his father only the problem of the loaned money. Dunstan Cass does not return home. No one connects his disappearance with Marner's robbed gold.

On New Years Eve, a large party is hosted at Squire Cass's home, the **Red House**. Nancy Lammeter and her sister, **Priscilla**, wear matching outfits, and while Nancy's beauty outshines her sister's, Priscilla is admired for her cooking, good sense, and generally pleasant acceptance of her own appearance and her lot in life. Nancy has determined to never marry Godfrey as he has behaved unusually to her, by ignoring her or by paying her close attention in a whimsical matter. Godfrey and Nancy dance together and Godfrey decides to get as much joy from the brief evening as possible. Unknown to Godfrey, his wife, **Molly**, is walking through the snowy evening to the Red House, carrying their child and bitterly intending to expose her connection to Godfrey. Molly is addicted to opium and she cannot resist taking a dose as she travels. From the cold, weariness, and the drug, Molly collapses near Silas Marner's cottage.

Molly's daughter totters away from her mother and follows the light to the open door of Silas Marner's cabin. The weaver is frozen in one of his fits at the open door, and the child moves past him and falls asleep on the warm **hearth**. Marner returns to his senses only to see what he thinks is his gold returned to him. The gold is revealed to be the hair of the sleeping child and Marner is baffled as to how she appeared there, until he finds her dead mother in the snow. Marner rushes to Squire Cass's party seeking **Dr. Kimble**, and Godfrey, in great agitation, returns with the doctor and Mrs. Winthrop to see the woman, realizing that her life or death will greatly impact his future. Molly is dead, and Marner fixes upon keeping the child himself. Godfrey returns to the party realizing that the way has been cleared for him to find happiness with Nancy.

Silas Marner's care for the child, who he names **Eppie**, reconnects him with the people and community around him. He learns much about childcare from Dolly Winthrop. He begins

attending church and has Eppie baptized. He takes her on journeys and deliveries and receives kind smiles and attention from everyone. Through seeking what is best for his daughter, Marner regains trust and faith in other humans and connections throughout Raveloe.

Sixteen years pass and Eppie grows into a lovely young woman. **Aaron Winthrop** proposes to her and the two plan to marry and to live with Silas Marner, so that Eppie need not leave her father. Godfrey and Nancy are married, though they are faced with the difficulty of having no children of their own. Godfrey has proposed adopting a child, namely Eppie, but Nancy firmly believes that to adopt a child is to disobey the fate given to one by Providence.

One Sunday afternoon, a draining project in the fields causes the Stone Pits to empty of water, and, at the bottom, Dunstan Cass's body is discovered, accompanied by Marner's stolen gold. Godfrey's horror at his brother's crime causes him to finally confess all to Nancy. Nancy's reaction is one of regret that she didn't know earlier the true reason behind his interest in adopting Eppie. The pair resolves to adopt Eppie at that point and to give her more comfort and security, as well as the life of a lady. Godfrey and Nancy visit Marner and Eppie at the cottage and make their offer of adoption. Eppie refuses, saying she could never leave her father, and Godfrey, frustrated, reveals the truth of her parentage. Eppie is unimpressed by Godfrey's insistence and his treatment of Silas Marner, as well as what she supposes about his connection with her biological mother. Again, she turns away the offer of adoption, reaffirming her commitment to the father who has raised her. Godfrey feels that it must be part of his punishment for past wrongs for his daughter to dislike him.

Eppie and Aaron are married and the villagers celebrate, happy to see someone like Silas Marner be so blessed after the good deed he did for a young orphaned girl. Godfrey Cass has helped expand the cottage for Marner's growing family, and Eppie has a beautiful garden as she desired. Eppie exclaims that she and her father must be the happiest people in the world.

commits himself fully to his weaving work. The villagers perceive him as strange due to his isolation, his fits, and his pale and quiet appearance. Marner is transformed from a miserly recluse into a loving and thoughtful father after he adopts **Eppie**, a young girl who appears on his hearth one night. He finds friends in **Dolly Winthrop** and her son **Aaron**, and regains interest in life and community through his love for Eppie.

Godfrey Cass – The eldest son of **Squire Cass**, the most prominent man in **Raveloe**. Despite Godfrey's good family, he makes poor choices and marries a lowly woman named **Molly Farren**. Together they have a daughter, **Eppie**. While Godfrey keeps his wife and child a secret from his father and the village, Godfrey's younger brother **Dunstan** uses his knowledge of the secret marriage to manipulate Godfrey. Molly also threatens to reveal the marriage in order to convince Godfrey to support her, and her opium addiction. Godfrey battles within himself about whether or not to reveal his secret. Naturally a good man, he is irresolute and indecisive. His fearful circumstances cause him to maintain silence and to keep appeasing Dunstan and Molly. After Molly's death, Godfrey is free to marry his true love, the respectable **Nancy Lammeter**. He tries to provide for his daughter, Eppie, by supporting **Silas Marner** who has adopted her. Years later, after Dunstan's drowned body is found alongside the gold Dunstan stole from Silas, Godfrey confesses all to Nancy and the two attempt to adopt Eppie. Nancy and Godfrey are unable to have children of their own, but Eppie prefers to stay with Silas Marner. Godfrey views this unhappy outcome as part of his punishment for past wrongs.

Eppie – The young daughter of **Godfrey Cass** and **Molly Farren**, Eppie wanders into **Silas Marner's** cottage during a snowstorm in which her mother perishes. Eppie is a beautiful, golden-haired child and her hair color is linked to the **gold**, which had been recently stolen from Silas Marner. She is mischievous as a young girl, primarily because Marner refuses to discipline her in any way. Eppie grows into a sweet tempered, lovely young woman who is devoted to her father. The love between Silas Marner and Eppie reestablishes Marner's interest in the village of **Raveloe**, in faith, and in community. Upon discovering that Godfrey is her true father, Eppie is unimpressed by his willful desire to take her away from the company and father she has always known. She stands up to Godfrey and refuses his offer. Eppie and the son of the Winthrops, **Aaron**, fall in love and are married at the end of the novel.

Nancy Lammeter – An elegant young woman who lives in **Raveloe**, Nancy inspires **Godfrey's** love and affection despite his unfortunate secret marriage. Nancy is a strong-minded woman who is committed to her ideals. For example, she refuses to adopt a child, although she cannot have children, because she believes such an act willfully disregards the fate given by God. She is precise, tidy, and hardworking. Her elegant appearance does not extend to her hands, which show the



CHARACTERS

Silas Marner – A weaver by occupation, Silas Marner's move from **Lantern Yard** to **Raveloe** creates the back-story for the novel. In Lantern Yard, Marner was a devoted participant in the local church. He is near sighted and prone to strange fits in which he becomes still for a portion of time, after which he can never remember what has occurred. He was seen as a young man of great promise, but after being framed for a crime of thievery actually committed by his friend **William Dane**, Marner moves to Raveloe. Marner's betrayal causes him to become withdrawn and socially awkward, focused solely on the gold he earns. He does not seek out others' company, but

marks of her labor. Once married to Godfrey, she becomes a good mistress of the Red House, although she reflects frequently on her and Godfrey's lack of children and Godfrey's unhappiness.

Dunstan Cass – **Squire Cass**'s lewd younger son, Dunstan prioritizes drinking and gambling. He is unconcerned for others' interests. He manipulates his brother, **Godfrey**, into giving him money to pursue his various pastimes. He sells Wildfire, Godfrey's horse, only to later kill the horse while riding it through a difficult jumping course. He is unconcerned with the horse's death, and Godfrey's fate, and walks home, only to pass by **Silas Marner**'s cottage. He is struck by a memory of talk of the weaver's wealth and decides to rob him. Years later, Dunstan's body, along with the stolen gold, is found at the bottom of the **stone pit** by Silas Marner's cottage.

Dolly Winthrop – A village woman who befriends **Silas Marner**, Dolly is a persistent friend to Marner, and the person to whom he turns for help and advice after he adopts **Eppie**. Dolly is overflowing with kindness and local wisdom. She frequently admits to how little she knows, and how little any human can know, of divine plans for all people. Dolly is selfless with her time and energy in helping others. She is also a formidable mother to little **Aaron** and attempts to teach Marner how best to discipline Eppie.

Squire Cass – The head of the most prominent family in **Raveloe**, Squire Cass gives himself airs in claiming the title of "Squire" in the small village. His home and management of the estate is extravagant at times, lacking the presence and guidance of his wife who passed away. He enjoys throwing dances and parties for the neighbors. He is slovenly, yet authoritative. He lords over his sons and is a brusque man who does not like to be disagreed with. **Godfrey** believes his father would disown him for his choice to marry **Molly Farren**. Unaware of the real situation, Squire Cass tries to force Godfrey into becoming engaged to **Nancy Lammeter**.

Molly Farren – **Godfrey**'s first, secret wife and the mother of **Eppie**, Molly is from a lower class family background than Godfrey. Molly is addicted to opium, and while she tries to blame her problems on her husband's neglect, she recognizes her responsibility for the control opium has over her life. She dies of an overdose during a snowstorm while traveling through the snowstorm to the Red House, where a New Years party is occurring, in order to spitefully reveal herself as Godfrey's wife in front of his family and many villagers.

William Dane – A friend of **Silas Marner**'s in **Lantern Yard**, William Dane is more confident and self-assured than Marner. The two appear to be inseparable friends, but William Dane is harsher on those who are less devoted than himself. Dane also expresses assurance of his salvation, whereas Marner only feels fearful and hopeful when the friends discuss the afterlife. William Dane frames Marner for the theft of the church's gold.

His reasons for this betrayal are unclear other than the fact that very soon after Marner's disgrace, William Dane becomes engaged to **Sarah**, who had once been engaged to Marner.

Sarah – **Silas Marner**'s fiancé in **Lantern Yard**, Sarah begins to turn away from Marner after he has one of his fits during a church service. Marner asks if she wants to break off their engagement, but they are officially engaged in the eyes of the church, and Sarah refuses. After Marner is framed as a thief, Sarah will not see him and later marries Marner's once-friend and betrayer, **William Dane**.

The Osgoods – A prominent family in the town of **Raveloe**, the Osgoods are often compared to **Squire Cass**'s family. Like the Squire, the Osgoods host parties during the winter months. Mrs. Osgood is the aunt of **Nancy** and **Priscilla Lammeter**, and Mrs. Osgood and Nancy are of similar temperaments. Mrs. Osgood hosts two young ladies, the **Miss Gunns**, at Squire Cass's New Years party.

Priscilla Lammeter – **Nancy Lammeter**'s less attractive sister, Priscilla is likeable for her good sense and strong character. She seems happily resigned to a life of caring for **Mr. Lammeter**, their father, and she encourages Nancy's marriage and happiness. Nancy wishes that Priscilla's clothes and her own always match because they are sisters, and Priscilla unselfishly has them dress in the colors that will favor Nancy, rather than herself.

Aaron – **Dolly Winthrop**'s earnest son, Aaron meets **Silas Marner** when he is very young. Dolly hopes to help Marner by visiting him after the loss of his **gold**, and she brings her son to help raise the weaver's spirits. The little boy sings and accepts cake offered by the weaver, who is unsure how else to interact with the child. Once he has grown into a young adult, Aaron falls in love with **Eppie** and the two plan to marry and to live with Marner, so that Eppie doesn't have to leave him.

Jem Rodney – **Silas Marner** accuses a young man in **Raveloe**, Jem Rodney, of stealing his gold as he once asked Marner about the money. Jem also once happened upon Marner in one of his fits and spread the story to whole village.

Sally Oates – A woman in **Raveloe** whom **Silas Marner** helps when he sees that she is suffering from heart disease and dropsy. His mother had suffered from the same diseases, and he offers Sally Oates relief with a foxglove mixture. This act of kindness occurs during Marner's troubled early years in Raveloe, but it does not reconnect him to the people around him. The villagers pester him for more natural remedies, but he turns them away from his cottage door because he does not always have a remedy and does not want to be pestered.

Mr. Macey – A **Raveloe** villager who serves both as a tailor and as the senior parish clerk. An elderly man, Mr. Macey entertains the other villagers and occupants of the Rainbow with stories from earlier days.

Mr. Tookey – Mr. Macey's young deputy clerk. Mr. Tookey and Mr. Macey squabble from time to time, when both the youthful man and the elderly man are convinced that he is in the right.

Ben Winthrop – A friendly and fun-spirited villager. He is the husband of **Mrs. Dolly Winthrop** and the father of **Aaron**.

Mr. Lammeter – An established man in **Raveloe** society, and the father of **Priscilla** and **Nancy**. Priscilla cares for Mr. Lammeter as he ages.

Mr. Snell – The levelheaded landlord of the Rainbow, **Raveloe's** local pub. Mr. Snell often settles disputes among his guests at the Rainbow.

Mr. Dowlas – A fiery man who works as the village farrier, making horseshoes and shoeing horses.

Master Lundy – Another passionate individual, Master Lundy is the local butcher. He frequently argues with **Mr. Dowlas**, the farrier.

Mr. Crackenthrop – The rector of the **Raveloe** church. He presides over the investigation of **Silas Marner's** robbery.

Dr. Kimble – The village doctor. He is a lively and social man, and **Squire Cass's** in-law.

Mrs. Kimble – The wife of the village doctor, and the aunt of **Godfrey** and **Dunstan Cass**.

The Miss Gunns – Two young ladies who attend **Squire Cass's** party, as **Mrs. Osgood's** guests.



THEMES

In LitCharts each theme gets its own color and number. Our color-coded theme boxes make it easy to track where the themes occur throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, use the numbers instead.

1 FAITH

Silas Marner describes nearly thirty years of **Silas Marner's** life, in which the protagonist loses his faith in God and in human society, and then slowly regains his faith years later when he adopts a loving orphan girl named **Eppie**. Silas Marner's early faith is distinctly different from the faith he regains in later years. As a young man, Marner lives in **Lantern Yard** and his faith depends on the community and worship there. Marner believes in an unseen, benevolent God and in following only those practices that reflect faith in this God. Marner has acquired some knowledge of herbal remedies from his mother, but he refrains from using these, believing that prayer, without medicine, is a sufficient remedy. Marner loses his faith in a benevolent God when his friend William Dane falsely accuses him of stealing church funds. Upon being accused, Marner believes God will reveal his innocence, but when the church draws lots to make a decision, the lots declare his guilt. Marner

lashes out at William Dane, accusing him of framing him, and accusing God of being a God of lies.

After this blasphemy, Marner moves to the simple village of **Raveloe** where he withdraws from his neighbors, hoarding and coveting his money, disenchanted with all human relationships. When Marner discovers Eppie, an orphan who wanders into his home, he cares for her and raises her. Through his love for her, Marner rediscovers an interest in human connection. As he seeks what is the best for Eppie, he again attends church and he makes friends in Raveloe. Marner again gathers medicinal herbs as he once enjoyed doing, and he feels light return to his life through the love Eppie has for him.

2 MORALITY

In *Silas Marner*, the author George Eliot presents a universe in which characters' personalities and actions determine their fates. This authorial morality secures justice for **Silas Marner** and for **Godfrey Cass**, as well as for several secondary characters. While Marner is initially wrongly accused of a crime in **Lantern Yard**, his later generosity toward **Eppie** determines his ultimate happiness. At the ending of the novel, the neighbors at Eppie and **Aaron's** wedding discuss Marner's choice to adopt a small orphan girl. The general consensus is that such an act of kindness will secure his future blessings.

The novel ends with Eppie's declaration of her and Marner's happiness after she refuses to live with her biological father Godfrey Cass. Cass is a morally ambiguous character. He is kind and considerate, but also makes selfish and wrong decisions when he abandons his daughter, Eppie, to another's care. Godfrey's fate is an appropriate combination of punishment and reward for his choices. While Godfrey marries the love of his life, **Nancy**, his happiness is incomplete, as he and Nancy can't have any children. Despite Godfrey's later repentance, Eppie chooses to ignore Godfrey's attempts to adopt her because he has neglected her for sixteen years. For her part, Nancy believes that divine providence determines one's fate. She strongly resists Godfrey's interest in adopting a child because adoption is an attempt to circumvent the life given by God.

In this way, moral outcomes in the novel are linked to the power of divine influence. Other secondary characters receive similar moral treatment. Godfrey's first wife, Molly, dies in a snowstorm after consuming opium. The drug had been ruining her life and her relationship with her husband for some time. Godfrey's brother, **Dunstan**, dies in the **stone pit** directly after he robs Silas Marner. His body and Marner's gold are discovered years later.

3 THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

Two societies are at the heart of *Silas Marner*: **Lantern Yard** and **Raveloe**. These societies are drastically opposed to each other.

By the end of the novel, Lantern Yard is a large town filled with factories, busy men, strangers, and travelers. It has experienced the transformative force of the Industrial Revolution. Raveloe is rural and intimate and changes very little from generation to generation. The inhabitants of Raveloe all know each other and are resistant to new or dramatic events in their small village.

The theme of society encompasses both the nature of life in these very different places and **Silas Marner's** own changing relationship to his neighbors in Raveloe. Marner's exclusion from Lantern Yard's society, his initial willful distance from Raveloe's society, and his eventual inclusion in this society cause his losing and regaining of faith. The loss of Marner's money and his finding of **Eppie** are both presented in terms of his connection with those around him. After he is robbed, Marner is more open to help from others because he feels alone and directionless. Marner is changed from a miserly, isolated weaver into a caring father as he seeks what is needed for his adopted daughter, Eppie. By caring for Eppie, Marner adjusts to Raveloe society, acquiring the customs and beliefs of his new home.

The social conventions of Raveloe dictate what the town's inhabitants perceive to be right and wrong. Social events, such as the New Years' Eve dance at **Squire Cass's** home, occur according to tradition. Such traditions define Raveloe's unique identity and society over generations. At the end of the novel, Marner and Eppie travel to Lantern Yard. The village has transformed into a great manufacturing town, made more unsettling by the strong contrast it presents to the intimate village of Raveloe. Men on the streets of Lantern Yard are too busy to stop and assist Marner and Eppie, and both characters long to return to the familiar comforts of Raveloe. Similarly, Eppie is uninterested in **Godfrey** and **Nancy's** offer to adopt her, as this would separate her from the society of those "lowly" folks who she knows and cares for. Eppie and Marner are both happy at the end of the novel because of the connections they have formed with each other and with Raveloe society.

4 FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

An irrational fear of the unknown characterizes the attitudes of the people of **Raveloe**. This fear of the unknown is a key factor in **Silas Marner's** initial separation from the society of the village. On the first page of the book, the wary perspective of these people is described. The basis of their xenophobia is their narrow circle of acquaintances and the limited travel that would occur in any individual's lifetime. The villagers of Raveloe are used to interacting with the same circle of people because the same families have lived in the village for multiple generations.

After Silas Marner is robbed, the local men discuss a peddler who carried a tinderbox like the one found by Marner near his house after the robbery. The highest element of suspicion in the peddler's appearance and character was his "foreignness,"

which is described by the villagers as evidence of his dishonesty. Marner also exhibits fear of the unknown. His return to **Lantern Yard** is marked by fear and distrust of the transition that has occurred in his old home. An anxiety with "the new" pervades the book, which ends with the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, an increase in manufacturing, which was soon to rapidly change lives throughout England.

5 THE LIMITS OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

While characters in *Silas Marner* may influence their own future through their choices and actions, certain key events depend upon inexplicable good or bad fortune appearing in characters' lives. Such events may be attributed to chance or to the will of a divine being. Regardless of chosen explanations, these events are beyond the control and rational understanding of George Eliot's characters.

While the reader is presented with the full account of **Dunstan's** theft and **Eppie's** appearance in **Silas Marner's** cottage, to Marner both the loss and gain are of a magical, mysterious nature. Upon Eppie's appearance on his heath, Marner assumes that her presence must be the result of a divine act because he cannot imagine an ordinary way by which this child might have appeared. Later, Marner can only explain this mysterious event in terms of an exchange from an unknown source: the money is gone to an unknown place and **Eppie** has arrived from an unknown place.

Similarly, Marner is never able to resolve the false accusations leveled against him in **Lantern Yard** because the town is completely replaced by new buildings and new townsfolk when he returns there thirty years later. When Marner recounts this story to **Dolly Winthrop**, she describes the reasons behind events as "dark" to human perception. Dolly Winthrop's character presents the viewpoint that human knowledge is limited and omniscience belongs to higher powers. Mrs. Winthrop's acceptance of the restricted scope of human knowledge is expressed as she discusses why Silas Marner was falsely accused in his youth at Lantern Yard. She believes that the true good behind all events is known only to some divine being. The country wisdom of the men at the Rainbow, the local pub, follows a similar pattern. While the local folks are strongly influenced by superstition, cringing from fears of ghosts or other unexplained phenomena, they don't seek answers to their questions, but instead admit that there are explanations beyond human knowledge.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **red text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

LANTERN YARD

The town of Lantern Yard symbolizes the change that **Silas Marner** undergoes when he is betrayed and loses his faith in his home community and in God. Early in the book, the parish at Lantern Yard is a tight-knit, devote community, representative of the type of faith Silas Marner exhibits. He is committed to his belief in a benevolent God and trusts his safety and innocence to this God. Once he is falsely accused, his flight from Lantern Yard symbolizes his emotional separation from others with a literal physical separation. At the end of the novel, Marner returns to Lantern Yard a changed man, only to find that Lantern Yard has changed too and is virtually unrecognizable. Marner has a new faith that is no longer centered on a God who he thinks he can understand. The church community in Lantern Yard has vanished. The advance of manufacturing in Lantern Yard represents the change that is so feared by the villagers of **Raveloe**, and serves as an ominous indication that the Industrial Revolution will cause great changes across England.

RAVELOE

The village of Raveloe is strongly contrasted to **Lantern Yard** both because of its homely appearance and because of the simple lives and perspectives of the people who live there. In Raveloe, practicality takes precedence over faith and church attendance. Community and familiarity are preferred to change and innovation. Raveloe's community represents **Silas Marner's** new faith, which he discovers through **Eppie**: a faith in humanity and love. Raveloe is a haven for Silas Marner, an unchanging world in which he and Eppie live happily together; a world that has not yet been affected by industrialization.

STONE PITS

The stone pits near **Silas Marner's** home in Raveloe appear only a few times in the novel, but they serve the key role of hiding the body of **Dunstan Cass** and Silas Marner's stolen **gold**. The stone pits are a strange geographic detail near Marner's cottage, with water filling their hidden depths. The stone pits represent the "unknown," the elements of nature and fate that cannot be understood or explained by humans. When Marner loses his gold and finds **Eppie**, he can only understand this transition in terms of an exchange from the unknown. In reality, Marner's gold has disappeared into the stone pits, and Eppie has wandered out of the wilderness from the edge of the stone pits. Only by draining the stone pits and revealing their hidden depths does the truth become clear: Marner's gold and the thief are found, and Eppie's true parentage is revealed directly afterward.

GOLD

Silas Marner becomes obsessed with the acquisition and hoarding of gold after he loses his faith in God and in other people. Gold, as an object, becomes the recipient of all the human love and affection that he once directed toward his friends and community. Marner not only saves and hides his gold, but he admires it lovingly. He gives it attention and care worthy of a child. The gold symbolizes Marner's isolation and his exclusion from human love and affection. His heart is directed toward the cold and unfeeling gold, and he appears cold and unfeeling to those around him. Only through **Eppie's** appearance does Marner begin to love and cherish other human beings again. Eppie's golden hair allows her to resemble the gold, creating a strong connection between Marner's reactions to his gold and to his adopted child. His love for gold isolates him; his love for Eppie re-connects him to the community.

THE HEARTH

Silas Marner's cottage and his hearth are the setting for several key events in the novel. Marner discovers **Eppie** on the hearth, sleeping, and at first mistakes her for his lost gold. The cottage and the hearth become the center of Eppie and Marner's relationship. Eppie refuses **Godfrey's** offer to adopt her because she wishes to stay with the father she has grown up with. When Eppie and **Aaron** marry, they move into Marner's cottage. The cottage and hearth represent the center of love and family for Eppie and Marner. It is the place where Eppie appears in Marner's life, a place of warmth and familiarity, and it remains the center of their home throughout the novel.



QUOTES

The color-coded and numbered boxes under each quote below make it easy to track the themes related to each quote. Each color and number corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1 QUOTES

Silas was both sane and honest, though, as with many honest and fervent men, culture had not defined any channels for his sense of mystery, and so it spread itself over the proper pathway of inquiry and knowledge.

- **Mentioned or related characters:** Silas Marner
- **Related themes:** Faith, The Individual and Society, The Limits of Human Knowledge

•Theme Tracker code:



“God will clear me: I know nothing about the knife being there, or the money being gone. Search me and my dwelling; you will find nothing but three pound five of my own savings, which William Dane knows I have had these six months.”

- Speaker: Silas Marner
- Mentioned or related characters: William Dane
- Related themes: Faith, The Individual and Society
- Theme Tracker code:



All cleverness, whether in the rapid use of that difficult instrument the tongue, or in some other art unfamiliar to villagers, was in itself suspicious: honest folk, born and bred in a visible manner, were mostly not overwise or clever—at least, not beyond such a matter as knowing the signs of the weather; and the process by which rapidity and dexterity of any kind were acquired was so wholly hidden, that they partook of the nature of conjuring.

- Related themes: The Individual and Society, Fear of the Unknown
- Theme Tracker code:



In that far-off time superstition clung easily round every person or thing that was at all unwonted, or even intermittent and occasional merely, like the visits of the peddler or the knife-grinder. No one knew where wandering men had their homes or their origin; and how was a man to be explained unless you at least knew somebody who knew his father and mother?

- Related themes: The Individual and Society, Fear of the Unknown
- Theme Tracker code:



“...there is no just God that governs the earth righteously, but a God of lies, that bears witness against the innocent.”

- Speaker: Silas Marner
- Related themes: Faith, The Individual and Society

•Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 2 QUOTES

It seemed to him that the Power he had vainly trusted in among the streets and at the prayer-meetings, was very far away from this land in which he had taken refuge, where men lived in careless abundance, knowing and needing nothing of that trust, which, for him, had been turned to bitterness.

- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner
- Related themes: Faith, The Individual and Society
- Theme Tracker code:



His life had reduced itself to the functions of weaving and hoarding, without any contemplation of an end towards which the functions tended. The same sort of process has perhaps been undergone by wiser men, when they have been cut off from faith and love—only, instead of a loom and a heap of guineas, they have had some erudite research, some ingenious project, or some well-knit theory.

- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner
- Related themes: Faith, The Individual and Society
- Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 3 QUOTES

The yoke a man creates for himself by wrong-doing will breed hate in the kindest nature; and the good-humoured, affectionate-hearted Godfrey Cass was fast becoming a bitter man, visited by cruel wishes, that seemed to enter, and depart, and enter again, like demons who had found in him a ready-garnished home.

- Mentioned or related characters: Godfrey Cass
- Related themes: Morality
- Theme Tracker code:



Snuff, the brown spaniel, who had placed herself in front of him, and had been watching him for some time, now jumped up in impatience for the expected caress. But Godfrey thrust her away without looking at her, and left the room, followed humbly

by the unresenting Snuff—perhaps because she saw no other career open to her.

- Mentioned or related characters: Godfrey Cass
- Related themes: Morality
- Theme Tracker code:



"I might tell the Squire how his handsome son was married to that nice young woman, Molly Farren, and was very unhappy because he couldn't live with his drunken wife, and I should slip into your place as comfortable as could be."

- Speaker: Dunstan Cass
- Mentioned or related characters: Godfrey Cass, Squire Cass
- Related themes: Morality, The Individual and Society
- Theme Tracker code:



His [Godfrey's] natural irresolution and moral cowardice were exaggerated by a position in which dreaded consequences seemed to press equally on all sides, and his irritation had no sooner provoked him to defy Dunstan and anticipate all possible betrayals, than the miseries he must bring on himself by such a step seemed more unendurable to him than the present evil.

- Mentioned or related characters: Godfrey Cass, Dunstan Cass
- Related themes: Morality
- Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 4 QUOTES

If the weaver was dead, who had a right to his money? Who would know where his money was hidden? *Who would know that anybody had come to take it away?* He [Dunstan] went no farther into the subtleties of evidence: the pressing question, "Where is the money?" now took such entire possession of him as to make him quite forget that the weaver's death was not a certainty. A dull mind, once arriving at an inference that flatters a desire, is rarely able to retain the impression that the notion from which the inference started was purely problematic. And Dunstan's mind was as dull as the mind of a possible felon usually is.

- Speaker: Dunstan Cass
- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner

- Related themes: Morality
- Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 5 QUOTES

Was it a thief who had taken the bags? Or was it a cruel power that no hands could reach, which had delighted in making him [Silas Marner] a second time desolate?

- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner
- Related themes: Faith, Morality, The Limits of Human Knowledge
- Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 6 QUOTES

"There's folks, i' my opinion, they can't see ghos'es, not if they stood as plain as a pike-staff before 'em. And there's reason i' that. For there's my wife, now, can't smell, not if she'd the strongest o' cheese under her nose. I never see'd a ghost myself; but then I says to myself, "Very like I haven't got the smell for 'em."

- Speaker: Mr. Snell
- Related themes: Fear of the Unknown, The Limits of Human Knowledge
- Theme Tracker code:



"...though there's reasons in things as nobody knows on—that's pretty much what I've made out; yet some folks are so wise, they'll find you fifty reasons straight off, and all the while the real reason's winking at 'em in the corner, and they niver see't."

- Speaker: Mr. Macey
- Related themes: Faith, The Limits of Human Knowledge
- Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 7 QUOTES

Our consciousness rarely registers the beginning of a growth within us any more than without us: there have been many circulations of the sap before we detect the smallest sign of the bud.

- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner

•Related themes: The Individual and Society, The Limits of Human Knowledge

•Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 8 QUOTES

Mr. Snell gradually recovered a vivid impression of the effect produced on him by the peddler's countenance and conversation. He had a "look with his eye" which fell unpleasantly on Mr. Snell's sensitive organism. To be sure, he didn't say anything particular—no, except that about the tinder-box—but it isn't what a man says, it's the way he says it. Moreover, he had a swarthy foreignness of complexion which boded little honesty.

•Speaker: Mr. Snell

•Related themes: Fear of the Unknown

•Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 9 QUOTES

Favourable Chance, I fancy, is the god of all men who follow their own devices instead of obeying a law they believe in. Let even a polished man of these days get into a position he is ashamed to avow, and his mind will be bent on all the possible issues that may deliver him from the calculable results of that position.

•Mentioned or related characters: Godfrey Cass

•Related themes: Faith, Morality, Fear of the Unknown, The Limits of Human Knowledge

•Theme Tracker code:



He [Godfrey Cass] was not likely to be very penetrating in his judgments, but he had always had a sense that his father's indulgence had not been kindness, and had had a vague longing for some discipline that would have checked his own errant weakness and helped his better will.

•Mentioned or related characters: Godfrey Cass, Squire Cass

•Related themes: Morality

•Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 10 QUOTES

I suppose one reason why we are seldom able to comfort our neighbours with our words is that our goodwill gets adulterated, in spite of ourselves, before it can pass our lips. We can send black puddings and pettitoes without giving them a flavour of our own egoism; but language is a stream that is almost sure to smack of a mingled soil.

•Related themes: The Individual and Society, The Limits of Human Knowledge

•Theme Tracker code:



Formerly, his [Silas Marner's] heart had been as a locked casket with its treasure inside; but now the casket was empty, and the lock was broken. Left groping in darkness, with his prop utterly gone, Silas had inevitably a sense, though a dull and half-despairing one, that if any help came to him it must come from without; and there was a slight stirring of expectation at the sight of his fellow-men, a faint consciousness of dependence on their goodwill.

•Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner

•Related themes: Faith, The Individual and Society

•Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 11 QUOTES

"I'm sure I'm willing to give way as far as is right, but who shouldn't dress alike if it isn't sisters? Would you have us go about looking as if we were no kin to one another—us that have got no mother and not another sister in the world? I'd do what was right, if I dressed in a gown dyed with cheese-colouring; and I'd rather you'd choose, and let me wear what pleases you."

•Speaker: Nancy Lammeter

•Mentioned or related characters: Priscilla Lammeter

•Related themes: The Individual and Society

•Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 12 QUOTES

[Silas Marner] was stooping to push his logs together, when, to his blurred vision, it seemed as if there were gold on the floor in front of the hearth. Gold!—his own gold—brought back to him as mysteriously as it had been taken away!

- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner
- Related themes: Morality, The Limits of Human Knowledge
- Theme Tracker code:



Molly knew that the cause of her dingy rags was not her husband's neglect, but the demon Opium to whom she was enslaved, body and soul, except in the lingering mother's tenderness that refused to give him her hungry child. She knew this well; and yet, in the moments of wretched unbenumbed consciousness, the sense of her want and degradation transformed itself continually into bitterness towards Godfrey. *He* was well off; and if she had her rights she would be well off too.

- Mentioned or related characters: Godfrey Cass, Molly Farren
- Related themes: Morality, The Individual and Society
- Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 13 QUOTES

"Is she dead?" said the voice that predominated over every other within him. "If she is, I may marry Nancy; and then I shall be a good fellow in future, and have no secrets, and the child—shall be taken care of somehow." But across that vision came the other possibility—"She may live, and then it's all up with me."

- Speaker: Godfrey Cass
- Mentioned or related characters: Nancy Lammeter, Molly Farren
- Related themes: Morality, Fear of the Unknown
- Theme Tracker code:



Godfrey felt a great throb: there was one terror in his mind at that moment: it was, that the woman might *not* be dead. That was an evil terror—an ugly inmate to have found a nestling-place in Godfrey's kindly disposition; but no disposition is a security from evil wishes to a man whose happiness hangs on duplicity.

- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner, Molly Farren
- Related themes: Morality, Fear of the Unknown, The Limits of Human Knowledge

- Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 14 QUOTES

"The money's gone I don't know where, and this [Eppie] is come from I don't know where."

- Speaker: Silas Marner
- Mentioned or related characters: Eppie
- Related themes: Morality, The Limits of Human Knowledge
- Theme Tracker code:



But the unwept death [of Molly Farren] which, to the general lot, seemed as trivial as the summer-shed leaf, was charged with the force of destiny to certain human lives that we know of, shaping their joys and sorrows even to the end.

- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner, Godfrey Cass, Molly Farren
- Related themes: Morality, The Limits of Human Knowledge
- Theme Tracker code:



In old days there were angels who came and took men by the hand and led them away from the city of destruction. We see no white-winged angels now. But yet men are led away from threatening destruction: a hand is put into theirs, which leads them forth gently towards a calm and bright land, so that they look no more backward; and the hand may be a little child's.

- Mentioned or related characters: Eppie
- Related themes: Faith, Morality, The Individual and Society
- Theme Tracker code:



Thought and feeling were so confused within him [Silas Marner], that if he had tried to give them utterance, he could only have said that the child was come instead of the gold—that the gold had turned into the child.

- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner, Eppie
- Related themes: Morality, The Limits of Human Knowledge

•Theme Tracker code:



“...the little child had come to link him [Silas Marner] once more with the whole world.”

- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner, Eppie
- Related themes: Faith, Morality, The Individual and Society
- Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 16 QUOTES

For Silas would not consent to have a grate and oven added to his conveniences: he loved the old brick hearth as he had loved his brown pot—and was it not there when he had found Eppie? The gods of the hearth exist for us still; and let all new faith be tolerant of that fetishism, lest it bruise its own roots.

- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner, Eppie
- Related themes: Faith, Morality, The Limits of Human Knowledge
- Theme Tracker code:



“...isn't there Them as was at the making on us, and knows better and has a better will? And that's all as ever I can be sure on, and everything else is a big puzzle to me when I think on it.”

- Speaker: Dolly Winthrop
- Related themes: Faith, Morality, The Limits of Human Knowledge
- Theme Tracker code:



By seeking what was needful for Eppie, by sharing the effect that everything produced on her, he [Silas Marner] had himself come to appropriate the forms of custom and belief which were the mould of Raveloe life; and as, with reawakening sensibilities, memory also reawakened, he had begun to ponder over the elements of his old faith, and blend them with his new impressions, till he recovered a consciousness of unity between his past and present.

- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner, Eppie
- Related themes: Faith, Morality, The Individual and Society

•Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 17 QUOTES

“The child may not turn out ill with the weaver. But, then, he didn't go to seek her, as we should be doing. It will be wrong: I feel sure it will....Dear Godfrey, don't ask me to do what I know is wrong: I should never be happy again. I know it's very hard for you—it's easier for me—but it's the will of Providence.”

- Speaker: Nancy Lammeter
- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner, Godfrey Cass, Eppie
- Related themes: Faith, Morality, Fear of the Unknown, The Limits of Human Knowledge
- Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 18 QUOTES

“Everything comes to light, Nancy, sooner or later. When God Almighty wills it, our secrets are found out.”

- Speaker: Godfrey Cass
- Mentioned or related characters: Nancy Lammeter
- Related themes: Faith, Morality, The Limits of Human Knowledge
- Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 19 QUOTES

“Thank you, ma'am—thank you, sir. But I can't leave my father, nor own anybody nearer than him. And I don't want to be a lady—thank you all the same” (here Eppie dropped another curtsy). “I couldn't give up the folks I've been used to.”

- Speaker: Eppie
- Mentioned or related characters: Godfrey Cass, Nancy Lammeter
- Related themes: Morality, The Individual and Society
- Theme Tracker code:



“...but repentance doesn't alter what's been going on for sixteen year.”

- Speaker: Silas Marner
- Related themes: Morality
- Theme Tracker code:



“...then, sir, why didn't you say so sixteen year ago, and claim her before I'd come to love her, i'stead o' coming to take her from me now, when you might as well take the heart out o' my body? God gave her to me because you turned your back upon her, and He looks upon her as mine: you've no right to her! When a man turns a blessing from his door, it falls to them as take it in.”

- Speaker: Silas Marner
- Mentioned or related characters: Godfrey Cass
- Related themes: Faith, Morality, The Individual and Society
- Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 20 QUOTES

“Though it is too late to mend some things, say what they will.”

- Speaker: Godfrey Cass
- Related themes: Morality
- Theme Tracker code:



“She thinks I did wrong by her mother as well as by her. She thinks me worse than I am. But she *must* think it: she can never know all. It's part of my punishment, Nancy, for my daughter to dislike me.”

- Speaker: Godfrey Cass
- Mentioned or related characters: Godfrey Cass, Eppie, Nancy Lammeter, Molly Farren
- Related themes: Morality, The Limits of Human Knowledge
- Theme Tracker code:



CHAPTER 21 QUOTES

“...I shall never know whether they got at the truth o' the robbery, nor whether Mr. Paston could ha' given me any light about the drawing o' the lots. It's dark to me, Mrs. Winthrop, that is; I doubt it'll be dark to the last.”

- Speaker: Silas Marner

- Mentioned or related characters: Dolly Winthrop
- Related themes: Faith, The Limits of Human Knowledge
- Theme Tracker code:



“Since the time the child was sent to me and I've come to love her as myself, I've had light enough to trusten by; and now she says she'll never leave me, I think I shall trusten till I die.”

- Speaker: Silas Marner
- Mentioned or related characters: Eppie
- Related themes: Faith, Morality, The Individual and Society
- Theme Tracker code:



“It's the will o' Them above as a many things should be dark to us; but there's some things as I've never felt i' the dark about, and they're mostly what comes i' the day's work. You were hard done by that once, Master Marner, and it seems as you'll never know the rights of it; but that doesn't hinder there *being* a rights, Master Marner, for all it's dark to you and me.”

- Speaker: Dolly Winthrop
- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner
- Related themes: Faith, Morality, The Limits of Human Knowledge
- Theme Tracker code:



“It's gone, child,” he [Silas Marner] said, at last, in strong agitation—“Lantern Yard's gone. It must ha' been here, because here's the house with the o'erhanging window—I know that—it's just the same; but they've made this new opening; and see that big factory! It's all gone—chapel and all.”

- Speaker: Silas Marner
- Mentioned or related characters: Eppie
- Related themes: Faith, The Individual and Society
- Theme Tracker code:



PART 2, CONCLUSION QUOTES

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

- Speaker: Eppie
- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner, Aaron
- Related themes: Morality, The Individual and Society
- Theme Tracker code:



“...he [Silas Marner had brought a blessing on himself by acting like a father to a lone motherless child.”

- Mentioned or related characters: Silas Marner
- Related themes: Faith, Morality, The Individual and Society
- Theme Tracker code:



One linen weaver, named **Silas Marner**, resides in a cottage near the village of **Raveloe**, beside a **Stone Pit**. Local boys are both fearful of and fascinated by Marner and often peek in at his windows, only to receive a gaze of disapproval from the weaver, who dislikes their intrusion. The boys had heard their fathers and mothers hint of Marner’s abilities to cure sickness, no doubt acquired through demon worship. The villagers of Raveloe, who led lives of hard work and possessed little imagination, could not suppose that the same person could possess uncommon skill and benevolence.

Silas Marner’s occupation as a weaver requires him to spend long hours in solitary employment. His already suspicious occupation is reinforced by his ability to use herbs to cure sickness, which was a “magic” different from prayer to God. Marner’s interaction with the local boys and his ability to help others with natural remedies demonstrate how the villagers misconstrue his natural goodness.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded and numbered boxes under each row of Summary and Analysis below make it easy to track the themes throughout the work. Each color and number corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

In the early 1800s, when spinning wheels were popular in farmhouses and prosperous houses alike, solitary men traveled across the English countryside, seeking work as weavers. Inhabitants of small towns were wary of strangers such as these weavers, suspicious of anyone or anything from a world not within their direct experience. Any intelligence or skill possessed by a man was seen as further evidence of his foreignness, or, worse, communion with evil forces.

The occupation of weaving is shown to be both a job and a way of life that separates the weaver from regular society. The weaver often must travel during a time period in which traveling was difficult, and, therefore, rare. Rural villagers mistake hard-earned skills for evil powers, which emphasizes the backwardness and isolation of these communities.



At the beginning of the story, **Silas Marner** has lived in **Raveloe** for fifteen years. His appearance and lifestyle, fifteen years earlier, had discouraged his neighbors from befriending him. To the young women of the village he resembled a dead man come to life again with his pallid skin and large, near-sighted eyes. He never invited callers into his home, visited no one else, and never spent time drinking at the local pub, the Rainbow. Marner's strangeness had been further confirmed when **Jem Rodney** discovered Marner leaning against a stile in a trance: unresponsive, eyes staring, limbs frozen. Suddenly Marner regained his movement and voice, said "good night," and departed. Some villagers claimed Marner had been in a "fit," while **Mr. Macey**, the parish clerk, argued that one in a fit always fell down, whereas Marner's soul had temporarily come loose from his body.

Jem Rodney's experience with Marner's fit both functions as an anecdote of how strange Marner appears to his fellow villagers and demonstrates how the villagers respond to things they don't understand. Marner's fits, while they could be explained medically or scientifically today, are given a spiritual explanation: his soul is loose from his body. Marner's characterization as a dead man returned to life, as well as his reluctance to make friends, show his dispassionate attitude, his loneliness, and his total lack of connection with other people at this point in the book. His faith and his interest in life have died.

1 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐

Despite the suspicions of his neighbors, **Marner's** weaving services continue to be popular in **Raveloe**, and little changes in public opinion of Marner, or in Marner's personal habits, over fifteen years of life near the village. Marner's inner life, however, has taken a negative turn. Before living in **Raveloe**, Marner lived in **Lantern Yard**, where he had been surrounded by the activity and fellowship of his community. In this community, Marner had been respected as a young man with great promise after he had fallen into one of his "fits" during a church service. Marner held a strong respect for mystery and for the power of prayer. He had learned the skills of healing with herbs from his mother, but he was reluctant to apply these skills because he believed prayer alone was sufficient for healing.

For fifteen years, Marner's lifestyle and actions change very little, but his inner life in Raveloe is severely reduced from the thriving spiritual life he enjoyed in Lantern Yard. The community in Lantern Yard respected and admired Marner. Like the villagers of Raveloe, those in the church community at Lantern Yard attributed Marner's fits to spiritual causes. But instead of finding these fits strange, the churchgoers felt Marner must be blessed. Marner's reluctance to use his herbal remedies demonstrates his early faith in the power of a benevolent God.

1 ☐ 3 ☐ 5 ☐

In **Lantern Yard**, young **Marner** had a close friend named **William Dane**, another promising young man who was somewhat severe with those less pious than him. The two friends frequently discussed whether or not they felt assured of their salvation after death: where William Dane was certain, Silas was only hopeful and fearful. Marner was engaged to a young woman named **Sarah**, and he was thankful that this engagement didn't interfere with his continued friendship with William Dane. After Marner's "fit" during a church service, however, William responded that such a fit might be a visitation from Satan, and Sarah started to behave oddly around Marner, exhibiting signs of dislike.

William Dane's friendship with Silas Marner helps show Marner's character clearly. William Dane, unlike Marner, is completely confident, both in his pious behavior and in his assurance of salvation. Marner's tentative nature is shown in contrast. Sarah is fearful of Marner's fits, and William Dane questions their divine nature. Sarah and William's reactions show that Marner's fits may inspire not only awe, but fear and concern.



When **the senior deacon** of **Lantern Yard** became ill, the young men and women of the community took turns sitting by his bedside. **Marner** and **William Dane** often traded off around two in the morning, splitting a night shift of sitting with the old man. On one such night, Marner realized that the deacon had died during his shift. Marner wondered if he had briefly fallen asleep, and looked at the clock to discover that it was four in the morning and William Dane had not appeared for his shift. Marner sought help. At six in the morning, William Dane and the minister arrived and summoned Marner to a meeting with the church members.

Marner and William Dane's decision to share shifts looking after the senior deacon demonstrates their close friendship, and Marner's continued perception that they function as a team. William Dane's betrayal is first evident when he doesn't appear for his shift. When the senior deacon dies, Marner worries that he may have fallen into a fit, rather than fallen asleep. Again, Marner's fits are presented as a possible source of danger or error.



At the meeting, the minister brought out **Marner's** pocketknife, which had been found in **the deacon's** bureau, where the church money was stored but was now missing. Accused of the robbery, Marner insisted, "God will clear me." He permitted a search of his dwelling, and **William Dane** discovered the bag of money behind the chest of drawers in Marner's chamber. Marner, suddenly overwhelmed, remembered that he had loaned his pocketknife to William Dane and never received it back.

To determine **Marner's** fate, the church community drew lots: an ancient practice used in The Bible of casting stones, straw, or objects to determine an outcome. While Marner relied on God to demonstrate his innocence, the lots pronounced him guilty. Shaking in anger, Marner accused **William Dane** of framing him and renounced God, accusing God of being a liar. The community was horrified by this blasphemy. Marner's trust in God and in other humans was broken.

Sarah broke off their engagement, and, in less than a month, Sarah married William Dane, and Marner left **Lantern Yard**.

William Dane frames Marner using only his borrowed pocketknife and the bag from the stolen money. Because Marner remembers loaning the pocketknife to William Dane, the real criminal could be apparent, but the church looks for divine answers to form accusations. Marner is likewise confident that divine answers will prove his innocence.



While drawing lots relies primarily on chance, the church community believes the outcome will be divinely directed. When the truth of Marner's innocence is contradicted by this practice, Marner loses his faith in any divine power. Marner's public rebuke of William Dane turns the community against him. William and Sarah's subsequent marriage makes Marner even more of an outcast in his hometown (while also indicating Dane's motive in framing Marner).



CHAPTER 2

Silas Marner discovers that his new home in **Raveloe** is vastly different than **Lantern Yard**. The familiar figures, church, minister, and doctrine of Lantern Yard had been the basis of Marner's faith and the presence of religion in his life. Raveloe seems to Marner to be a world of country abundance in which the villagers do not know of nor need the faith that Marner had relied on when he lived in Lantern Yard. Therefore, Marner feels little connection between his past life and his new present.

Marner's first response to his shock at his false accusation had been to commit himself fully to his weaving work. Once settled in **Raveloe**, he wove without thought, as if from instinct, like a spider. Upon completing his first project, Marner was paid in **gold**, and the five guineas shone brightly in his hand. Money, in the past, had been the means to an end for Marner. But now, when any end he had sought was no longer attainable, the money itself became desirable.

The physical details of Raveloe reveal the community's insular nature, as well as its relationship with faith. While details describing Lantern Yard include primarily the people and the religious practices, Raveloe is a farming society, where people prioritize work, money, and local gossip over church attendance. It is as if Marner has moved to a new world.

1 ☐ 3 ☐ ☐

Marner's commitment to weaving is described as spider-like, a comparison which emphasizes the incessant nature of Marner's weaving, and the way in which weaving is necessary to his survival. His soul has grown greedy and animalistic, and he desires only money, as a shiny object to hoard.

☐ ☐ 3 ☐ ☐

One day, **Marner** sees the cobbler's wife, **Sally Oates**, suffering from heart disease and dropsy, which had also afflicted Marner's mother. He brings her some foxglove to ease her pain, and through this act of charity, Marner feels emotions that he has not experienced since his departure from **Lantern Yard**. Soon other villagers come to Marner's cottage seeking charms and herbs to cure sicknesses. Marner turns each visitor away, disinclined to do anything false as he has limited ability to provide assistance with herbal remedies. The villagers resent his willful withholding of the skills he used to help Sally Oates, despite their dislike of skills they believe are acquired through devil worship.

Marner's stash of money grows, and, with it, his desire for more **gold**. He stashes his money beneath some loose bricks in the floor under his loom. In the evenings, when his work is done, he takes out the money to admire it. He begins to feel that it is aware of him, like a conscious being, and he would not have willingly given up those specific coins. He rarely fears robbery, as hoarding one's money was a common practice among country villagers where everyone knew everyone, and no one was inclined to run away from their village after robbing a neighbor.

Marner's generous act for Sally Oates is a solitary kindness that nearly reminds Marner of what is missing in his life since his departure from Lantern Yard. However, this kindness does not improve Marner's relationship with his neighbors. Marner is unwilling to offer other medical services, or to deceive his neighbors and take their payments by pretending he could help. Once again, his attempt to do right by others results in their increased dislike.

☐ ☐ 3 ☐ ☐

The frequent, detailed descriptions of the gold reflect Marner's obsession that has replaced his faith. His practice of taking out the coins to admire them, and the mutual awareness between him the coins, establishes their relationship as the type normally existing between two people rather than between a person and an object. The theft of Marner's money is foreshadowed.

1 ☐ 3 ☐ ☐

Marner's life has withered to the solitary practices of weaving and hoarding his gold. After twelve years in Raveloe, he is fetching water from the well one day when he stumbles and drops his earthenware pot, which breaks. The broken pot saddens Marner, and he reassembles the pieces, and stores the broken pot in his cottage as a memorial. Likewise, Marner treasures his growing pile of coins. At night, he takes them out, counts them, spreads them out in piles, and runs his hands through them. His thoughts linger on his coins when he ventures outside to deliver his woven products.

The brief story of Marner's broken pot shows that Marner's heart has not hardened beyond sympathetic feelings. However, these feelings are directed at an inanimate object. Marner's obsession with things has replaced any connections with human beings. He treats objects, primarily his gold, with the sentimentality, respect, and attention normally reserved for people.



Squire Cass's wife died years earlier, and the Red House has lacked a woman's touch. Likewise, Squire Cass's two sons appear to the people of the village to have gone astray from the properness of the Squire's family. In particular, Squire Cass's second son, Dunstan Cass, spends his time betting and drinking, having been kept at home in leisure all his life. Recently, Godfrey Cass, the elder son, has appeared troubled and perhaps is taking after his younger brother's bad ways. The village folk feel that such behavior on Godfrey's part will cost him the heart of a young woman, Nancy Lammeter, who has looked favorably upon him for the past year.

At this time period, and especially in a small village like Raveloe, one's reputation was of the utmost importance. One's social class determined whom one could marry. Godfrey Cass, as the son of the Squire, is an excellent match for Miss Lammeter, however, a bad reputation could cause Nancy to refuse any offer of marriage from him. As the second son, Dunstan will not inherit as much as Godfrey (if anything at all) and his reputation is less important to maintain.



CHAPTER 3

The most prominent family in Raveloe is that of Squire Cass. Squire Cass is one of several occupants of Raveloe who own land, but he alone possesses the title of a squire and keeps tenants on his land who work for him. During the winter months, the richer inhabitants of Raveloe have time and leisure to feast and celebrate freely and are invited to the Red House (Squire Cass's home) for long periods of time before moving to Mr. Osgood's home for further celebration.

The Cass family, the Osgoods, and the Lammeters are wealthier families with a different lifestyle than those of the lowly villagers. Their extravagance is often contrasted to Silas Marner's humble existence. Their lifestyle is not more inclined to happiness, however, as Eppie's choice at the end of the novel demonstrates.



Godfrey and Dunstan confront each other in the parlor of the Red House one November afternoon. Dunstan is drunk, but has appeared at his older brother's summons. One of Squire Cass's tenants, Fowler, paid his rent to Godfrey, and Godfrey loaned this money to Dunstan. Now their father is short of cash and demands that the tenant pay him. Godfrey insists that Dunstan should pay him back, so he can deliver the rent money to the Squire. Dunstan tells Godfrey to get the money himself or, he threatens, he'll reveal Godfrey's secret marriage to a drunken, low-class woman named Molly Farren.

Dunstan's power over Godfrey is significant in several of Godfrey's decisions and actions. Godfrey is willing to go to long lengths to keep his secret, rather than confessing the truth, and this often means appeasing Dunstan. Godfrey's inability to be honest shows his weak character. While the consequences of honesty would be great, he prefers to rely on chance and hope rather than taking responsibility for his actions. Godfrey isn't bad; he's just weak.



When **Godfrey** argues that he has no money to offer in place of the loaned rent money he gave **Dunstan**, Dunstan suggest that he sells his horse, Wildfire. The horse could be sold the next day at the hunt, but Godfrey protests that he is supposed to attend **Mrs.**

Osgood's birthday dance the next day. Dunstan teases him about **Nancy Lammeter** who will be at the dance and who doesn't know of Godfrey's secret marriage. Godfrey desperately claims he could tell the Squire himself of his secret marriage, so that Dunstan could no longer hold the secret as bargaining power.

Godfrey's naturally irresolute personality and his fear of losing **Nancy Lammeter**'s affections, should his secret become known, have stopped him from telling **Squire Cass** everything. He argues to himself that while telling the Squire would have a certain outcome, **Dunstan**'s betrayal of his secret is not certain and, if he keeps silent, he may be able to avoid losing Nancy, his claim to Squire Cass's inheritance, and the village's respect for a while longer. Godfrey agrees, therefore, to let Dunstan take Wildfire and sell the horse at the hunt the next day.

Godfrey's horse Wildfire is well cared for and a far nicer horse than Dunstan's own. Selling Wildfire and entrusting him to Dunstan is evidence of Godfrey's fear of his brother's knowledge of his secret. Wildfire demonstrates the difference between the brothers: Dunstan is careless and Godfrey is anxious, as their treatment of Wildfire reveals.



In numerous scenes and passages, Godfrey Cass debates the pros and cons of revealing the truth himself. Godfrey is irresolute and unable to commit to a strong course of action. The nature of Godfrey's mind is revealed through these internal debates, which give insight into his inner character, a unique technique in 19th century literature.



After **Dunstan**'s departure, **Godfrey** curses both his brother's careful manipulation and his own folly for having gotten himself into this situation. For four years, he has wooed and dreamt of **Nancy Lammeter**. He longs for the comfort of a domestic life with her, having grown up in a home without the comfort and orderliness he desired. He longs for the presence of Nancy Lammeter in his life to make the good and happy things he prefers, rather than the sporting, drinking, and card playing that tempt him currently.

Godfrey can only imagine one situation worse than his present one: the one he will be in when his secret marriage comes to light. By keeping the secret, and prolonging the time until the secret is revealed, Godfrey hopes that the chance he will be rescued by some outside event is increased. Despite his natural good humor and affection, Godfrey begins to hope for terrible chance outcomes that could change his situation. As Godfrey leaves the room to go to the Rainbow, he pushes aside Snuff, the patient spaniel, who waits for attention from her master. Despite his disinterest, the dog loyally follows him from the room.

Nancy Lammeter holds a powerful position in Godfrey's heart and mind. He perceives her to be entirely good and without fault. He thinks she is his only hope for changing his life and becoming a better person. Such idolization of Nancy places all his hope on her such that he doesn't realize the need to change himself through his individual choices.



Godfrey's reliance on chance is frequently referred to throughout the events of the novel. Despite many events occurring as if by fate or a divine power, Godfrey's hesitancy and indecision is always referred to as him preferring to rely on chance rather than his own actions. Godfrey's relationship with his dog demonstrates his dismissive attitude toward those he does not care for, including his secret wife and child.



CHAPTER 4

Dunstan Cass rides Wildfire to the hunt the next morning, and, on his way, he passes by **Silas Marner's** cottage.

Dunstan realizes that the weaver must have saved a large sum of money and wonders why he never thought of manipulating Godfrey into taking a loan from the old man. Such a suggestion would surely be agreeable to Godfrey, who would want the chance to preserve his secret and keep his horse. But Dunstan, eager to sell the horse and drive a bargain, continues onward.

Dunstan meets two men—**Bryce** and **Keating**—at the hunt and tells them that he has swapped his own horse with his brother's and now owns Wildfire. The two men nevertheless discern Dunstan's true purpose of selling the horse, and eventually the bargaining concludes with Bryce agreeing to buy Wildfire upon his safe delivery to Bryce's stables.

Despite a fleeting thought that he should deliver the horse and return home, **Dunstan** decides to ride Wildfire on the hunting course. He pushes the horse too hard and the horse falls. Dunstan is uninjured, but Wildfire dies. Dunstan, glad that others did not witness his mistake, decides to leave the horse and walk home so as not to encounter anyone else.

Dunstan's first noting Marner's cottage and reflecting on the weaver's supposed wealth serves as foreshadowing for his theft of Marner's money. The reader is aware that Dunstan is self-centered and spendthrift, and that he is thinking of the wealth of the weaver and hoping to manipulate Marner.



The buying and selling of Wildfire demonstrates Dunstan's underhanded character. He is not forthright about his intentions to sell the horse or about why he has his brother's horse to sell.



Dunstan's immediate concern upon Wildfire's death is that others will see what happened and think poorly of him. He is focused on his own reputation, not on the waste of a high quality horse and its needless death.



Dunstan is unconcerned by Wildfire's death as he plans to suggest his earlier idea to **Godfrey**: taking a loan from **Silas Marner**. Dunstan walks toward **Raveloe** through the misty evening, all the while tapping Godfrey's inscribed **gold** whip that he carries.

Dunstan sees light gleaming through the mist as he nears the **Stone Pits** and realizes it is the light from **Marner's** cottage. As he walks, Dunstan fantasizes about the bribing and threatening necessary to secure a loan from Silas Marner, and he decides to go speak with the weaver directly when he sees the light from his cottage. At the very least, he hopes to borrow a lantern from the weaver.

Dunstan knocks loudly at **Marner's** door only to be met with silence. He intends to shake the door, but it swings open before him to reveal a blazing fire in Marner's inviting **hearth**. Marner's dinner is cooking on the fire, and Dunstan wonders if he left for some brief errand, but slipped into the **Stone Pits**, never to return. If the weaver is dead, who has a right to his money, Dunstan ponders.

Dunstan carries Godfrey's inscribed whip, a detail that will eventually help identify his body sixteen years later. He again contemplates Marner's money.



The light from Marner's cottage is what guides Dunstan to the door. Likewise, the light encourages Eppie to follow it when her mother lies dead. Light is commonly associated with faith or goodness, and Marner's light shines into the world causing several key changes in his life.



Dunstan's assumption that the weaver may be dead is not logical or supported by evidence. However, this idea leads him to the idea of robbery. The author demonstrates the danger of assumptions and poorly founded opinions, and shows how Dunstan rationalizes his way into committing crimes.



Dunstan wonders, where is the money? He does not stop to consider that **Marner** might not, in fact, be dead, but quickly notes the one spot on the floor well covered with sand and the marks of fingers. Dunstan lifts up the loose bricks and discovers the two bags of money. Feeling a sudden dread, Dunstan hurries out of the house into the darkness. The rain and darkness thicken as he moves quickly beyond the light from the cottage.

Dunstan steals the gold and tries to hurry out of the light of the cottage, which could reveal him in the act of theft. Again light has a link to the good or the just. Dunstan's willingness to take the gold is unsurprising to the reader after the development of his underhanded, self-centered character.



CHAPTER 5

Just as **Dunstan** is leaving the cottage, **Silas Marner** is about to return. While he had left his home and his money defenseless, Marner is not uneasy. His feeling of security has become a habit, as he's never had reason before to suspect a thief might take his **gold**. Marner is looking forward to a gift of cooked pork for his supper and to pouring over his treasured gold in the evening.

Silas Marner's false sense of security in leaving his home unlocked is the result of habit. Habits and familiarity may prevent one from seeing a potential problem. This is different than the faith in benevolence that Marner held previously. He does not believe he is protected or looked after.



Marner had ventured out earlier because he recalled he needed to purchase a fine twine for the next day's weaving project and didn't want to lose time in the morning with a trip into the village. And so he set off through the mist and rain, leaving his door unlocked, the latch tied to help string up his cooking supper. Upon entering his home, Marner's poor eyesight notices no difference, and he sits down to tend his supper.

Marner's fixation with accomplishing as much weaving as possible leads to his evening outing. His obsession with the gold allows it to be stolen. Marner's poor eyesight overlooks the marks of an intruder in his home. His nearsightedness may also represent a metaphorical blindness to everything he is missing in life.



Silas Marner has lost all his faith, and his isolation has turned his power of loving onto only his **gold**. He decides to take out his gold before supper and admire it as he eats. He removes the bricks without noticing any change and sees the empty hole. Shocked and shaking, Marner at first hopes he himself moved the gold and searches every inch of his cottage until he must face the absence of the gold. He cries aloud, a desperate, desolate cry.

Marner's reaction to losing the gold transitions from disbelief and denial to incredible pain. His emotions resemble those one might experience at the loss of a loved one. He grieves for his gold, which was the object of his love and attention.



Marner wonders suddenly if he has been robbed, but it had appeared to him as if the sand and the bricks had been unmoved. Was it some cruel supernatural power, and not a human thief, who had taken his **gold**? His thoughts fix on Jem Rodney as the probable thief. Jem had once lingered too long on a visit to Marner's house, which had irritated the weaver. Marner feels he must go and proclaim his loss in the village, not so any thief can be punished, but so that he can reclaim his property.

Marner considers the possibility of a supernatural "thief" rather than a robber who entered his home. Having lost faith in a benevolent power, he is nevertheless quick to think of a divine explanation for his loss, attributing it to some evil force. He also considers Jem who he suspects because of Jem's attempted socializing, which Marner misunderstood and disliked.



Marner runs to the Rainbow, which he thinks of as a place where the most prominent people of **Raveloe**, and those most likely to help him, pass the time. The nice parlor at the Rainbow is dark that night, as the important townsfolk at all at **Mrs. Osgood's** birthday dance. The bar where the lesser townsfolk gather is well occupied and Silas Marner stumbles into that crowded room.

The Rainbow is the social center of Raveloe where conversation occurs and diverse folks gather together. In appealing to his fellow men, Marner is rejoining society and placing some trust in the power of others to help, rather than hurt, him. Need forces Marner to connect with other people.



CHAPTER 6

The conversation is lively when **Silas Marner** enters, having reached a pitch after a slow and quiet start to the evening. Earlier in the evening, **Mr. Snell**, the landlord, had started conversation by asking **the butcher** about the fine animal he'd bought the previous day. **The farrier** asks if the animal was a red Durham, a type of cow, and says he knows the only red Durhams in the area come from **Mr. Lammeter**. Quickly the discussion between butcher and farrier becomes heated.

A heated discussion between the butcher and the farrier on the subject of a cow brings to life the world of Raveloe. The simplicity and passion of the villagers is apparent. Mr. Snell, as the landlord, is also the instigator of conversation, community, and agreement. The richness of these secondary characters adds depth to the novel.



To dispel the argument between the butcher and the farrier, **Mr. Snell** appeals to the elderly **Mr. Macey** who remembers when **Mr. Lammeter's** father moved to **Raveloe**. Mr. Macey, tailor and parish clerk, says he prefers to let the young ones talk, and the young deputy, **Mr. Tookey**, taking offence, says he's not one to speak out of his place. **Mr. Winthrop** and Mr. Macey tease Mr. Tookey about his poor singing in the choir, and receive laughs from the whole group.

Mr. Macey, as an elderly figure, brings a sense of tradition and history to the Raveloe villagers gathered at the pub. The generational gap between Mr. Macey and Mr. Tookey results in several comical struggles in which both the old and the young are convinced they are each right.



The landlord settles the disagreement among the group, as **Mr. Macey** bemoans the absence of great musicians in **Raveloe**, when there used to be some in the village. Mr. Macey speaks warmly of **Mr. Lammeter's** father. He reports that the man sold his own land to move to the village and rent land after his wife died. While such a choice may seem odd to the villagers, Mr. Macey notes that there are reasons for certain things that no one knows.

Mr. Macey recounts the locally famous tale of **Mr. Lammeter** the younger's marriage to **Miss Osgood**. The elderly pastor, **Mr. Drumlow**, misspoke during the marriage vows, asking whether the bride would take this woman for her wedded husband, and the groom would take this man for his wedded wife. No one else seemed to notice the error except for Mr. Macey, the parish clerk. Mr. Macey wondered if the words themselves or the meaning behind them had more weight in securing Mr. Lammeter and Miss Osgood in marriage.

In confusion, **Mr. Macey** later, respectfully, pointed out the problem to **Mr. Drumlow**, only to be reassured that the register, and not the words or the meaning, secures a marriage officially. Mr. Macey's audience in the Rainbow has listened to this familiar tale with the air of hearing a favorite tune, and, upon its conclusion, question him further about **Mr. Lammeter's** land and stables.

Mr. Macey's account of Raveloe's past adds more depth and richness to the portrait of this quiet little village. His story of Mr. Lammeter includes the Raveloe philosophy that there are events and reasons beyond human understanding, a viewpoint also expressed by Dolly Winthrop.



The anecdote of Mr. Lammeter and Miss Osgood's wedding ceremony serves both as a humorous story and as a portrait of the small and insular Raveloe society. A story like this one has been preserved and retold. Little of note or excitement must happen in Raveloe to give this small dramatic tale the interest and humor that it has.



Raveloe villagers mean well and yet they often choose the ideas or opinions they find least troublesome. Mr. Macey is happy to accept Mr. Drumlow's reply and does not question its truth. The listeners in the Rainbow treat the tale as a local favorite.



Mr. Macey says that if you go to **Mr. Lammeter's** deserted stables at night you'll see lights and hear horses inside. The farrier, **Mr. Dowlas**, is skeptical and dares anyone else to visit the stables with him at night. **Ben Winthrop** points out that anyone else believing the ghost story would be unlikely to risk such a thing. **Mr. Snell** attempts to settle this new disagreement by pointing out that some people can probably see ghosts, while others cannot. Such ability is like the sense of smell, which his wife has lost. She cannot smell what is right in front of her, and the landlord says he's never seen a ghost because he doesn't have the smell for them.

The pub conversation moves to the topic of ghosts, further evidence of the backwardness of thought in the village. Superstition and fear of the unknown holds significant sway over the uneducated villagers. And while some scoff at the idea of ghosts, others attempt to explain their presence and who can see them. The discussion of ghosts also sets the tone for Marner's sudden and startling arrival.



CHAPTER 7

Just as the farrier is scoffing again at ghosts, **Silas Marner** appears like an apparition in the midst of the group. Everyone is startled and **Mr. Macey** feels a brief triumph at this evidence to support his theory that Marner's soul becomes loose from his body while he is in one of his fits. The landlord is the first to speak to Marner, who finally gasps that he has been robbed.

Silas Marner's appearance in the pub like an apparition causes Mr. Macey to reflect on his theory that Marner's soul can come loose for his body during a fit. A supernatural, rather than a physical or medical, explanation is given. The impressionable villagers are stunned by his appearance.



The landlord calls to Jem Rodney to calm **Marner** down, but the young man has no interest in approaching Marner, still apprehensive of his ghostly appearance. Marner whirls on Jem and accuses him of stealing his **gold**. The landlord encourages Marner to sit down and to share his full story and the others finally speak up in curiosity. At first slightly suspicious, the others are soon convinced by Marner's simple and apparent distress as his story unfolds. Marner feels, but does not recognize, the stirring of old feelings of faith and community as he sits in the circle of attentive listeners.

While Marner is perceived as a suspicious character, the villagers begin to trust him because of his obvious emotional distress. They do not suppose anyone could fake such emotions and trust they are genuine. Marner's behavior is erratic, as he wildly accuses Jem Rodney of being the robber. But he is not entirely unaware of the powerful community feeling in the Rainbow, and he responds to them.



The group at the Rainbow feels someone or something other than a human thief must have completed the crime of robbery because of its perfect timing with **Marner's** brief and unique absence from home and the appearance that nothing else had been touched or changed in the cottage. Marner is urged to not point a finger at Jem Rodney, or to accuse the innocent, and upon hearing this he is moved by the memory of his own false accusation and apologizes to Jem. The farrier believes Marner has been robbed by a passing tramp and points out that Marner's eyesight is poor and he might have overlooked footprints or other slight disturbances.

The villagers consider, as Marner did, a supernatural explanation for the robbery. The supernatural is, at this time period and in this community, considered as legitimate an explanation as a rational account of events, such as robbery by a passing tramp. Marner's realization that he has falsely accused Jem causes him to think of his own past and reflect on injustice, perhaps softening his heart a little as he realizes that he, too, can err.



The farrier proposes going with **Marner** to the constable's home, where he is ill, and asking him to appoint another man as his temporary deputy, a role the farrier hopes to fill. The landlord is also interested in going with Marner to the constable's home, and **Mr. Macey** offers himself as a fitting temporary deputy. An argument breaks out, which is once again resolved by the landlord. The farrier consents to go along, but without a specific interest in being appointed deputy, and the three set off into the rainy night.

The disagreement among the villagers as to who is best suited to serve as a deputy constable on Marner's case is ironically contrasted to Marner's distress. The villagers squabble over self-importance when they should be focusing on what is best for Marner. Their good intentions are sidetracked by a trivial concern. The villagers seem incapable of talking without arguing.



CHAPTER 8

Godfrey Cass returns home from Mrs. Osgood's party to find **Dunstan** has not returned. His thoughts are too occupied with having seen Miss **Nancy Lammeter**, and despair that he cannot free himself from his secret wife, in order to dwell on Dunstan's absence. The next day, the whole of **Raveloe** is fascinated by the story of **Silas Marner's** robbery. A close examination of the area near Marner's cottage produces a tinderbox found in the mud. Many of the villagers are convinced that the tinderbox is connected with the robbery, while others maintain that Marner is fabricating his story or partly crazy. **Mr. Macey** is convinced of supernatural intervention in Silas Marner's robbery.

Dunstan's absence indicates that something above and beyond the robbery of Marner may have occurred. The village unites around the story of Marner's loss. In a village where everyone knows each other the idea of a thief is shocking and the villagers conclude that it must be an outsider, and one who owned the found tinderbox. The villagers, like Dunstan, are not afraid to build ideas and actions upon poorly grounded assumptions.



At the Rainbow, **Mr. Crackenthorp** (the rector), **Squire Cass**, and several others carry out an investigation of the tinderbox. The landlord **Mr. Snell**, now appointed deputy constable, recalls a peddler who stopped in for a drink a month earlier and who stated that he carried a tinderbox to light his pipe. Upon further reflection, Mr. Snell recalls his foreignness and a certain look in his eye, which he had disliked.

Mr. Crackenthorp asks if the peddler wore earrings. **Mr. Snell** can't recall, but as the peddler stopped at nearly every house in town, the question is posed to the villagers of **Raveloe**. Through the power of this suggestive question being passed among the villagers, there are at least two who are quickly able to declare, with certainty, that they noticed earrings in the peddler's ears.

Silas Marner's memory of the peddler is generally disappointing: he recalls the man turning away at once and not entering his house when Marner wasn't interested in buying anything. The villagers wondered that the peddler didn't murder Marner because earring-wearing individuals have been known to resort to murder. **Godfrey Cass** treats the matter lightly. He recalls that the peddler was rather a merry fellow, but his opinion is dismissed as the talk of youth.

The peddler who is connected with the robbery exemplifies the Raveloe community's fear of the outsider. The most incriminating detail that Mr. Snell can recall about the peddler is his "foreignness." To be foreign is nearly the same as being a criminal, in the minds of the villagers.



The question over whether or not the peddler wore earrings demonstrates the impressionable nature of the uneducated villagers. The villagers are always well intentioned, however, they are strongly influenced by superstition, fear, and prejudice.



Despite Marner's innocuous memory of the peddler, fear of the individual has escalated from his foreignness to the likelihood of him being a murderer. Godfrey Cass's lighthearted response sets him apart from the superstition and gossip of the villagers.



By afternoon, **Godfrey's** concern about **Dunstan's** absence has grown and he leaves for Batherley. He worries that perhaps Dunstan has vanished with the money from selling Wildfire, only to return at the end of the month having gambled away everything. On the road, he runs into **Bryce**. Bryce reports that he'd been planning to purchase Wildfire only to have learned that he was found dead after Dunstan rode him on the hunt. Godfrey and Bryce suppose that Dunstan is unlikely to return home immediately with such a bad piece of news.

Godfrey is convinced that he must now tell his father the whole story of loaning **Dunstan** the money and why he did so, or else face Dunstan's anger if he returns to find himself blamed by their father. Godfrey thinks that he could take the blame for spending the money himself, and so secure Dunstan's continued silence, but he feels he cannot lie this much. Godfrey is familiar with the Squire's unforgiving nature, but he hopes that his confession will cause the Squire to want to hide his secret marriage rather than turn Godfrey out of his house and expose him.

Godfrey's anxiety directs him to seek out what happened to Dunstan and Wildfire. He learns the truth from Bryce. Bryce and Godfrey's assumption that Dunstan is unlikely to return home immediately with such news indicates that Dunstan may have behaved badly before, but returned home later to escape the Squire's passionate, but fleeting, wrath.



Godfrey becomes briefly convinced that he must now admit the truth of the matter to his father. He imagines the outcome of his confession in the best possible light. Godfrey can only convince himself to follow the right course of action by working himself into a state of determination and agitation. Telling the truth is more difficult for Godfrey than keeping the secret.



Despite **Godfrey's** conviction, he awakes the next morning unable to persuade himself that he should tell the Squire everything. He feels again the inclination to rely on the chance of not being betrayed rather than to betray the secret fully himself. What would be wisest, he decides, would be to try and soften his father's anger at **Dunstan** and to try to keep everything as it had been before the loss of Wildfire and the money.

When Godfrey changes his mind the next day and decides to appease his father and keep the secret, the reader fully feels the futility of Godfrey's attempts to convince himself and his weakness of character. The reader has experienced, in detail, the internal battle of the previous day.



CHAPTER 9

Godfrey rises early the next morning, and, after eating breakfast, waits for the Squire's appearance in the parlor. The Squire is a slovenly man, but one who has always been aware of his own superiority, never having interacted with men of a higher rank, and living among the villagers of **Raveloe** for his whole life. The Squire leads an idle life, but believes youth is the time of folly in a man's life. Godfrey tells his father that there's been a bad piece of luck with Wildfire. His father scoffs at his foolishness and remarks that he is short of money, and mentions that some of his tenants are not inclined to pay their rent.

The Squire is a one-dimensional character: he does not change over the course of the novel. His character, however, is detailed and reveals aspects of Godfrey's character and Raveloe society. His indulgences have contributed to his son's indecisiveness. His position at the top of Raveloe society means that he employs others and his management impacts the lives of villagers.



Godfrey tells his father that Wildfire has been killed when **Dunstan** rode him to the hunt. The result of this is that he doesn't have the money to repay his father. Fowler, their tenant, did pay his rent to Godfrey, but Godfrey loaned the money to Dunstan hoping to repay his father earlier. His father is outraged that Godfrey would let Dunstan have the money and proclaims that there must be some lie at the bottom of this situation. With sudden perception, the Squire accuses Godfrey of having been up to some trick and bribing Dunstan with the money to keep quiet. Fearfully, Godfrey claims it was only some foolishness between Dunstan and himself.

Squire Cass declares that it's time **Godfrey** outgrew any foolishness. He has been a good father, he feels, and his sons have turned into good-for-nothing fellows. Godfrey reflects that his father's indulgence has not always been helpful in guiding them, and wishes for some discipline in his life. Squire Cass mentions that he's never dissuaded his son from marrying **Nancy Lammeter** who he seemed interested in, whereas some fathers might forbid their sons from making certain matches. He questions why Godfrey hasn't proposed to her, and pressures him to do so.

Godfrey reports the true story to his father, but omits the most significant detail: his secret marriage and Dunstan's knowledge of it. When Squire Cass focuses on this omission and wonders why Godfrey would give the money to Dunstan, Godfrey is startled into lying further rather than telling the truth. His instinct is for self-preservation, which means hiding the truth, when he is caught by his father's question.



Squire Cass and Godfrey both feel as if the other is in the wrong when it comes to their father-son relationship. Squire Cass feels it is high time his sons repaid his fatherly kindness and financial support, and Godfrey wishes his father had guided him with discipline and strength of character. Squire Cass's questions about Nancy cause Godfrey to lie further.



Squire Cass says he'll ask for **Mr. Lammeter's** daughter's hand for his son himself, if only cowardice is holding **Godfrey** back. Godfrey pleads with his father to let the matter alone, to let him speak for himself, and to not say anything about it. The Squire replies that he'll do as he chooses and then sends Godfrey away to sell **Dunstan's** horse and to tell his brother that he need not bother returning home. Godfrey says he has no idea where his brother is and departs unsure if he should feel relieved by the outcome of his conversation with his father.

Favorable Chance takes over the minds of any men in unfavorable circumstances, and **Godfrey's** hopes all depend on some chance outcome that will settle everything for him. Rather than admit to his circumstances, he hopes that a chance occurrence will change his situation before his father can make any comments to **Mr. Lammeter** about a union between their children.

Squire Cass's statement that he'll do what he chooses gives a perfect portrait of his character. He is less interested in Godfrey's plea that his father allows him to manage his own affairs than he is in doing what suits himself at any given moment. The Squire's rejection of Dunstan shows that he is capable of dismissing his sons on the basis of their behavior, and with little thought or feeling. The Squire does not treat his sons with respect or love, a direct contrast to how Marner treats Eppie.



Again chance is the governing force in Godfrey's life. He hopes, rather than praying or believing, that his circumstances will change and free him from his dreadful secret in time.



CHAPTER 10

When **Justice Malam** is notified of **Silas Marner's** robbery and the tinderbox, an inquiry is sent out about the peddler in question. But as no news arrives over the next few weeks, the villagers of **Raveloe** slowly lose interest in Silas Marner's robbery. **Dunstan's** disappearance on the same day as the robbery is not seen as remarkable. Even if any villager were able to connect these two events, he or she would not be likely to share a theory that would cast an unfavorable light on the Squire's family. Furthermore, the upcoming Christmas season, complete with festivities, food, and drink, is likely to discourage any thoughts on the subject.

Silas Marner's robbery loses the interest of the villagers when it is no longer new and exciting news. Even after Dunstan's disappearance, the villagers would be unlikely to attribute any true evil to a member of Squire Cass's family because they are so used to seeing the Cass's as their superiors. The author emphasizes the power of holiday celebration to turn these villagers' minds away from any real analysis of either event. The people are distracted by the pleasures of the season.



When the villagers speak of the robbery, disagreements continue as to whether the robber was a man or a supernatural force. As interest in the case falls away, **Silas Marner's** grief continues. The basis for his continued work and existence has been removed, and often, as he sits weaving, he moans aloud, in pain and loneliness. Yet, his misfortune has changed his reputation in **Raveloe** and his neighbors become more likely to help him than to avoid him.

Silas Marner has lost his direction and purpose in life with the loss of his gold. His misfortune, however, has improved his relationship with his neighbors. Because he is no longer self-sufficient and independent, he must reach out to the villagers and the villagers, for their part, do not suspect him of any evil powers. He is pitied, rather than feared.



Neighbors share gifts of pork and black puddings with **Silas Marner**, as well as kind words. **Mr. Macey** encourages Marner to get a Sunday suit and to start attending church. Mrs. **Dolly Winthrop** also visits Marner with the purpose of asking him to come to church. While the villagers of **Raveloe** are not religious churchgoers, it is still expected that one attend church occasionally. **Mrs. Winthrop** is a patient and kind woman, who also loves to be working and taking on new tasks, and such a woman is naturally drawn to Silas Marner and his troubles.

In addition to gifts, Marner receives advice from his neighbors, and this advice is most often encouragement to attend church. Dolly Winthrop's interest in Marner and her advice that he comes to Sunday service depends on her belief in the goodness of the world and the church.



One Sunday afternoon, **Mrs. Winthrop** brings cakes and her little son **Aaron** along with her as she goes to visit **Silas Marner**. Marner receives them without impatience. Before the loss of his **gold**, any interruption would cause him to lose work time and profit, but after his loss he is left groping in the darkness of loneliness, with the vague sense that any help he might receive could come from other human beings.

Marner is more vulnerable after the loss of his gold and therefore unresisting to Mrs. Winthrop's determined charity. His vague understanding that other humans could help him hints that he will eventually discover the help, love, and assistance that he can receive from others.



Mrs. Winthrop gives **Silas Marner** the cakes, which she has inscribed with letters she's seen in church: I.H.S. Neither of them can understand the meaning of the letters, but Mrs. Winthrop says they must be good letters to appear in church. Marner is struck by her kindness and thanks her with genuine feeling. Mrs. Winthrop encourages Marner to attend church on the upcoming Christmas day. Marner says he's never been to church, only to the chapel in **Lantern Yard**.

Mrs. Winthrop's inscribed cakes demonstrate that faith and belief need not be grounded in knowledge. Dolly believes in the goodness of anything associated with church or religion even if she cannot understand it. Marner is used to a different religious community and practices than those of Raveloe.



Mrs. Winthrop tells him that it's never too late to turn over a new leaf by coming to church. Her simple **Raveloe** theology, in which she refers to the divine "They" or "Them," has little impact on **Silas Marner** because it does not resemble the faith he had known in **Lantern Yard**. Flustered by her discussion, Marner attempts to return her good will by offering **Aaron** a bit of the cakes. At his mother's bidding, Aaron sings, "God rest you merry, gentlemen" for Marner. Mrs. Winthrop hopes that hearing the Christmas music will help entice Marner to come to church.

Silas Marner tries again to respond to her kindness in the only way he knows, by offering **Aaron** more cake. **Dolly Winthrop** urges him again to stop working on Sundays and then the pair takes their leave. Marner is somewhat relieved to be alone to weave and mourn in peace. Marner spends his Christmas day alone, a very different person from the Silas Marner who had once loved and trusted other men and in an unseen goodness.

Mrs. Winthrop's use of the plural pronoun to refer to God or the divine reflects the difference between her faith and the faith Marner held in Lantern Yard. "They" implies a divine that does not need to fit the exact description of the traditional Christian God. Dolly Winthrop's God is ambiguous, not benevolent or perfect, but all knowing. Aaron's childish innocence shines through in his song.

1 2 3 4 5

Marner's confused attempt to respond to Mrs. Winthrop's kindness by offering Aaron a cake demonstrates how unfamiliar he has become with adult interactions. He is relieved to be alone and to spend Christmas in isolation. He has grown disused to human society and what it can offer him.

1 2 3 4 5

In **Raveloe**, the bells ring merrily on Christmas and the villagers celebrate. At **Squire Cass**'s family party, no one remarks on **Dunstan**'s absence. The affair is quiet with only the doctor and his wife, uncle and aunt Kimble, visiting the Red House. On New Year's Eve, however, Squire Cass always hosts a large party where all the society of Raveloe and the neighboring village of Tarley gather. **Godfrey** is looking forward to this party, half anxious that Dunstan will return and reveal his secret and half eager to see **Nancy Lammeter** and to dance with her.

Squire Cass's humble Christmas gathering sparks enthusiasm for the upcoming extravagant New Year's party. Godfrey's anticipation of seeing Nancy is only heightened by Dunstan's prolonged absence, which is mixed with his fear that his brother may return. Godfrey fears Dunstan's power, even in his absence.

1 2 3 4 5

CHAPTER 11

Miss **Nancy Lammeter** arrives at the Red House with her father on New Year's Eve. She sees **Godfrey** standing at the door, and wishes she could have her sister **Priscilla** at her side to cast Godfrey's attention onto someone else. She does not know what to make of Godfrey's strangeness, his fluctuating interest in her, and she has determined to not marry him. As Godfrey lifts her down from her carriage, Nancy hides her confusion and hurries inside.

Nancy Lammeter's interactions with Godfrey reveal her character to be both proper and strongly grounded in her moral beliefs. She has determined to not marry a man who appears so inconsistent to her, and yet she is also a young woman who cannot help but be flattered by his attention and, perhaps, to sense his inner goodness (despite his weakness of character).

1 2 3 4 5

Mrs. Kimble, the **Squire's** sister and the **doctor's** wife, greets **Nancy**. In nearly every bedroom in the house, women are getting dressed and ready for the tea and the dance. Nancy finds her way to the Blue Room where her and her sister's things were delivered earlier in the day. She meets her aunt Mrs. Osgood and her aunt's guests, the **Miss Gunns**, who are similar to her aunt in thought and opinion.

The New Year's Eve event provides a portrait of the time period, from the details of the women's preparations for the evening to the extravagant house that can accommodate many guests. The manners of Nancy, her aunt, and the Miss Gunns show the civil society author George Eliot observed.



Nancy prepares for the evening. Everything she owns is neat and pure. When she is ready, the Miss Gunns think she looks completely perfect other than her hands, which reveal the marks of labor, but Nancy is not ashamed of her hard work. Her speech, however, shows her lack of education. Otherwise, Nancy has all the delicacy, honor, and refined personal habits of a lady, in addition to a slight pride and over-commitment to her strongly held opinions.

Nancy's appearance reflects her character: her well cared for belongings demonstrate her diligence, and her work-worn hands show her humility and her active nature. Nancy's uneducated speech is the result of how little Raveloe values freethinking and education, regardless on one's place in society.



Nancy's older sister **Priscilla** arrives and comments on her and Nancy's matching gowns. Nancy wants her and her sister to match despite the fact that the color of their gowns does not flatter Priscilla. However, Priscilla cheerfully owns to being ugly, and to having no interest in marrying. Once the Miss Gunns and their aunt leave, Nancy insists that she had wanted her sister to choose the color of their gowns. Priscilla says it would be silly for them to dress to match her coloring and skin, but she does find fault with Nancy's insistence that sisters should dress alike.

Priscilla's character creates a foil for Nancy's. Where Priscilla is blunt, Nancy is shy; where Priscilla is honest, Nancy is sensitive to others' feelings. The matching outfits link the two as sisters, despite their personality differences. Priscilla's deference to her young sister's gown color highlights Nancy's uniquely beautiful appearance for a woman in Raveloe society.



Priscilla remarks that she'd rather see the men fawning over **Nancy**, and Nancy, blushing, says she won't ever marry. To which Priscilla responds that one old maid among two sisters is enough. The sisters descend to the parlor and **Godfrey** guides Nancy to a seat near himself. Surrounded by the Squire's family's wealth, Nancy is very conscious of her decision to never marry Godfrey, for she feels she could not marry a man so careless of his character. However, her love for him has caused her to vow that she will never marry another.

Nancy struggles with her vow to not marry Godfrey, in conversation with her sister and in her own heart. Her love for Godfrey, which is rarely the focus in the novel, is proven by her decision to never marry if Godfrey is not the man. Nancy's love for Godfrey often conflicts with what is right, as she later struggles with the idea of adopting a child to make her husband happy.



Nancy blushes as she takes her seat and **Mr.**

Dr. Kimble is a minor character who, nevertheless, has life and depth. George Eliot brings the world of Raveloe to life through her portraits of secondary characters. Squire Cass, Mr. Lammeter, and Dr. Kimble all note Nancy's beauty in this scene. Despite Nancy's moral resoluteness, her beauty is her most visible characteristic to the members of Raveloe society. Priscilla, lacking beauty, is noted for other abilities.

Crackenthorp teases her that he saw the roses blooming on New Year's eve. The **Squire** also compliments Nancy, and **Mr. Lammeter** is flattered, but reluctant at the thought of a union between his daughter and the Squire's son. He feels **Godfrey** would have to make some changes before he would consent to such a marriage. Dr. Kimble compliments **Priscilla's** pork pie, and then her witty responses. The cheerful doctor skips to Nancy's side and implores her for a dance. Squire Cass teases him, telling him that Godfrey must have secured the first dance with Nancy. Godfrey asks, with as little awkwardness as possible, if Nancy will dance with him.



Hearing the fiddle beginning in the hall, **Squire Cass** calls the fiddler into the dining room as the young people wish impatiently for the end of the meal and the beginning of the dance. With another lively tune, the fiddler leads a procession into the White Parlour and the dancing begins. The older folks lead the early dances before sitting down to cards, and upholding this proper tradition seems to reinforce **Raveloe's** society and quality. Those villagers sitting and watching comment upon the dancers. **Mr. Macey** and **Ben Winthrop** comment upon the figures of the dancers, and, while Mr. Macey criticizes **Godfrey's** shoulders and coat, Mr. Winthrop can find no fault in him.

In the middle of the dance, **Nancy's** skirt is caught under the **Squire's** foot and stitches are torn out at the waist of her dress. **Godfrey** leads her into the adjoining parlor until **Priscilla** can come help her fix her dress. Godfrey tells her how much dancing with her matters to him and asks if she could ever forgive him for the past. Nancy replies that she'd be happy to see any person improve his character, but that it would be better if such an improvement were not necessary. Priscilla's appearance to fix the dress interrupts their confrontation.

The fiddle playing, dancing, and card playing all follow a familiar pattern at Squire Cass's party. Onlookers feel that the very society of Raveloe is strengthened and glorified by maintaining such traditions. What is right and proper corresponds to what has always been done. The onlookers comment upon the dancing, another tradition in which the villagers take pride in their society through the beauty and skill of the dancers.



The chance event of Nancy's torn skirt allows Godfrey the opportunity to speak with her and to make his feelings more apparent to her. Chance governs Godfrey's life, both in keeping or revealing his secret, and in allowing him time with Nancy. Nancy upholds her moral conviction that Godfrey's character does not meet her standards, in large part because he is so inconstant and relies on chance rather than his own moral understanding of right and wrong.



CHAPTER 12

While **Godfrey** is caught up in spending his precious moment with **Nancy**, his wife, unknown to him, is making her way through the village to the Red House. **Molly**, his wife, has decided to appear at the **Squire's** party with her child in her arms and reveal, once and for all, the secret connection between herself and Godfrey. Molly knows that the real cause of her poverty is not Godfrey's treatment of her but her opium addiction. However, she wants to punish her husband who is well off.

As she walks through the snow, she takes a dose of opium, seeking comfort. Due to the cold, her weariness, and the drug, she is overcome by a longing to sleep. She collapses in some bushes, and relaxes her hold on her daughter. A light on the snow catches the child's eye and she follows it to the open door of **Silas Marner's** cottage. She wanders inside and falls asleep on an old sack near the warm **hearth**.

In the weeks since the loss of his money, **Silas Marner** has formed the habit of opening his door from time to time and looking out as if he thought his money might be coming back to him. On New Year's Eve, as he peered out his door, he was frozen in one of his trances, his eyes fixed and unseeing. Upon recovering from his trance, Marner felt that no time had passed and, turning to his **hearth**, he saw, with his poor vision, his **gold** on the hearth.

Molly's attempt to reveal her connection with Godfrey is the result of bitterness. She hopes to bring her unhappiness upon him too and knows that the best way to do this is to shame him in public. The power of public opinion is evident in Molly's knowledge that she could punish her husband by revealing their connection to Raveloe society.



Molly's downfall is her addiction to opium. Because she is so dependent on the drug she cannot resist taking it and losing both her life and her vengeance on Godfrey. Molly's death, which occurs as she is on her way to hurt Godfrey, is her moral punishment.



Marner's sense that his gold could come back to him prepares both the character and the reader for the link between the golden haired child and the lost gold. Marner even mistakes her for his gold at first, indicating to the reader that one thing is intended to replace the other in Marner's life.



Stretching his hand out to his returned **gold**, **Silas Marner** touches curly hair. Marner examines the sleeping child. Is this a dream? He wonders. He cannot understand how this child could have entered his house without his knowledge and he feels as if it must have appeared by some supernatural method because his imagination cannot supply a rational explanation.

The child awakens, crying, and **Silas Marner** is kept busy feeding her porridge and following her tottering steps about his house. He removes her wet boots and realizes, finally, that she must have been walking in the snow and entered his house on foot. As he opens the door, the child cries, "Mammy!" He notices footprints in the snow and follows them to discover the human body collapsed in the bush and half-covered with snow.

Marner's inclination to believe the child has appeared by supernatural means, just as he thought his gold might have disappeared through non-human intervention, demonstrates how willing he is to turn to the unexplainable to account for an event in his life.

1 2 3 4 5

The child's wet boots are a concrete piece of evidence pointing out her arrival by realistic means. The child's limited speech can identify the dead woman as her mother, but she is young enough to not understand what is happening. She is innocently trusting of the weaver.

1 2 3 4 5

CHAPTER 13

After the early suppertime at the Red House, festivities reached a stage of jolliness and freedom and the servants and villagers crowded to the doors of the white parlor to look on the dancing. **Nancy** is seated with her father, as **Godfrey** stands a little ways off, attempting to avoid his father's jokes about his and Nancy's relationship. At that moment, **Silas Marner** appears in the doorway carrying Godfrey's own child. Marner says he's looking for the doctor and that he has found a woman in the snow near the **Stone Pits**, dead, he thinks. Godfrey feels a sudden terror that the woman might not actually be dead.

The ladies encourage **Silas Marner** to leave the child there, but he finds he cannot part with it. **Godfrey** offers to get **Mrs. Winthrop** for assistance, as **Dr. Kimble** heads toward the **Stone Pits** with Marner. Dolly tells Godfrey he need not come all the way to the cottage with her, but he insists. He waits outside the cottage as Dr. Kimble inspects the body, his thoughts jumping between hope and fear about the two outcomes of the situation. Dr. Kimble leaves the cottage and pronounces her dead.

All is normal at the Red House until Marner's sudden appearance. Like his earlier appearance at the Rainbow, he interrupts a moment of joviality and startles everyone. Godfrey's reaction is clearly the strongest because, with the arrival of his child, his secret life has collided with his happiness in the Red House. Godfrey's wish that his wife be dead shows his desperation and dislike for the woman, his connection to her, and his fundamental weakness as a person who would rather evade responsibility by any means necessary.

1 2 3 4 5

Marner's inability to part with the child shows the strong bond he is already forming with the little girl. Godfrey's agitation causes him to leave the party to learn the truth about his wife. It is noteworthy that he is most preoccupied with the outcomes of life or death and how that will affect his life rather than concerned for his child, or his wife.

1 2 3 4 5

Godfrey enters the cottage to see his secret wife's body, but casts her only one glance. He asks **Silas Marner** if he'll take the child to the parish the next day. Marner says he wishes to keep the child. His money's gone and this child has appeared from the unknown. Godfrey gives Marner some money toward buying clothes for the child. Godfrey overtakes Dr. Kimble on the walk back and lies easily about his willingness to leave the party. With a sense of relief and gladness, he reappears in the White Parlor.

Godfrey feels strongly the opportunity he has from this point onward to say tender things to **Nancy** and to make promises to her. He realizes that **Dunstan** may still return and betray his secret, but he hopes to persuade Dunstan to be silent. What would the point be now of confessing the truth and losing what he has finally gained: his happiness with Nancy Lammeter?

Godfrey's gesture of giving Marner money for the child's clothes reduces his relationship with his daughter to a monetary transaction. The only responsibility he feels for her can be covered with money. Godfrey lies to deceive Dr. Kimble, Marner, and Dolly about his true interest in the situation. He is relieved and glad, as he has not been up until this point in the novel.



Now that his happiness with Nancy is achievable, Godfrey has no interest in revealing the truth. This indicates that a past interest in telling his story was created from fear and anxiety and not any inclination to integrity. He wishes to have his happiness with Nancy, finally.



CHAPTER 14

Molly's burial occurs without great notice, and without any tears, but her death has redirected the lives of several individuals in **Raveloe**. **Silas Marner's** decision to raise the child is met with surprise, and women throughout the village advise him on what he must do to care for the girl. **Dolly Winthrop** is the one whom Marner prefers to take advice from. She talks with Marner about the disappearance of his money and the appearance of the girl, saying it's like the night and the morning, or sleeping and waking...one goes only to be replaced by the other.

Molly's death is characterized as fate, not chance, that has redirected several lives in Raveloe. Marner's interest in raising the child is out of character for a man at this time period. It is only the women of Raveloe, and not other men, who give him help and advice about raising children. Dolly Winthrop's growing friendship with Marner allows the two to discuss his lost money and the found little girl.



While **Silas Marner** appreciates **Dolly's** advice, he prefers to do everything he can himself to care for the little girl. Marner decides to tie the child's leg to his loom with a long linen strip while he works, in order to keep her out of mischief. Dolly tells Marner that he must bring the girl to church and have her christened in order to raise her properly. Christening is not a religious concept Marner was exposed to in **Lantern Yard**.

Silas Marner decides to do whatever he can that is best for the girl, and to have her christened he names her Hephzibah after his mother and deceased little sister. **Dolly** says she ought to have a nickname, and Marner decides to call her **Eppie**. **Marner** finally attends church for **Eppie's** christening, but the practices and congregation are so different than what he knew in **Lantern Yard** that he cannot identify any of the experience with his old faith.

Silas Marner's **gold**, when it had been the center of his attention, needed nothing, and could be worshipped in isolation. **Eppie**, on the other hand, needs many things that carry his attention away from his solitary weaving and form ties between him and his neighbors. As he walks outside with Eppie, Marner begins to again gather the herbs for remedies that had once interested him. As the child grows, Marner's mind grows back into his memories, allowing him to think on a distant past he had tried to forget for years.

Marner's decision to tie the girl to his loom to keep her out of trouble may shock a modern audience, but is perfectly acceptable within the context of the book. Bringing her to church and christening her makes the child officially a part of Raveloe society, accepted by their religious customs.



Marner's choice of Eppie's name links him to his family and his own youth. Finally attending church, however, does not remind him of his past for the church of Raveloe is vastly different. The religious organizations in the book highlight the diversity of practices and ideas within Christianity at this time.



In growing and changing in order to help and care for Eppie, part of Marner's change is a renewal of ideas and memories from his past, such as his collection of herbs. The gold had closed off his heart, and also his memories, for it did not cause him to think about and face his past, as Eppie's presence does.



Eppie grows into a troublesome toddler, but **Marner** finds he never has the heart to punish her despite **Dolly Winthrop's** insistence that some discipline is for her own good. Because Marner will not hit or scold his daughter, Dolly suggests shutting her in the coal hole as a form of punishment. Marner fears punishing her because he worries she will love him less afterwards.

Marner cannot bear the idea of punishment because of his desperate need for Eppie's love. Marner may fear punishment because of his past, in which he was punished for something he did not do. Marner's failure to discipline Eppie recalls the Squire's failure to discipline his sons, though there is a sense that Marner refrains because of his love for Eppie while the Squire's indulgence is founded not in love but laziness.



One day, however, **Eppie** causes more mischief than usual. Using **Marner's** scissors, she cuts herself free of the linen strip and runs outside. When next Marner reaches for his scissors, he discovers Eppie is gone and instantly fears she has fallen in the **Stone Pit** or is hurt or dead. When he finds her in the field, he is so relieved that he hugs and kisses her, only remembering, after carrying her home, that he should discipline her. Feeling he is using a strong measure, he shuts her in the coal hole for just a moment. Later, after Eppie's bath, Marner turns around to find her happily back in the coal hole.

Eppie's act of cutting herself free of her tie to the loom shows not only how strongly Marner clings to her, but may remind readers that, at some point, most children are cut free from their parents. Marner is concerned primarily for her safety, rather than disciplining her, and he does not punish her immediately. The failure of the punishment portrays Marner as an inexperienced parent.



The failure of the coal hole punishment discourages **Marner** from ever again attempting to discipline **Eppie**. Marner carries the little girl with him on journeys and deliveries. Everywhere the pair goes they are met with cheerfulness, questions, and neighbors eager to talk about the child. The children of the village are no longer afraid to approach Marner when Eppie is with him. She links Marner with the community and with other people. He no longer is interested in **gold**, other than as a means to secure what Eppie needs.

In the olden days, there were stories of angels who descended to earth to save men from destruction. While such angels may no longer be seen, men may still be guided from destruction, even by the hand of a child.

Eppie receives not only Marner's unwavering kindness, but his full attention. Their bond strengthens from the time they spend together, but also through Marner's new engagement with Raveloe life and society. Eppie directs and consumes his life as much as his gold did, but this causes him to interact with others rather than withdraw.



George Eliot presents Eppie as an angel-like figure, golden-haired and innocent. Her role in Marner's life is to save him from isolation and darkness, as an angel might have done.



CHAPTER 15

From a distance, **Godfrey** watches **Eppie** grow up in **Silas Marner's** care. Occasionally he does what he can to help the weaver, but he does not want to do too much and raise suspicion. Godfrey seems determined and firm. **Dunstan** has not returned and Godfrey no longer feels the threat of his brother's presence. Everyone, including himself, thinks he has reformed and set his feet on a better course. He rides to visit **Nancy** nearly every day and feels the imminence of his own happiness with Nancy, and their future children. He promises himself, however, that when the opportunity presents itself, he will see that Eppie is well provided for.

Godfrey has transformed in spirit and in behavior. Freed from his secret and Dunstan's presence, he becomes both devoted to Nancy and confident. He consoles himself about Eppie by promising that the time will come when he'll be able to do more for her. However, now that this secret no longer threatens him, Godfrey feels no guilt about having kept the secret: it is not his conscience that has bothered him throughout the book, but a rather selfish concern for his own future.



CHAPTER 16

Sixteen years have passed since **Silas Marner** discovered **Eppie** asleep on his **hearth**. The villagers of **Raveloe** are leaving their Sunday morning church service. **Godfrey Cass** and his wife **Nancy** depart first, as their humbler neighbors watch them pass. The pair turns to wait for **Mr. Lammeter** and **Priscilla** to accompany them as they walk toward the Red House. Silas Marner is impossible to mistake in the church congregation, although his posture, white hair, and near-sightedness are marks of age beyond his actual years. Close by his side is Eppie, now a blond, polite girl of eighteen.

Aaron Winthrop, now a good-looking young fellow, follows **Marner** and **Eppie** from the church. Eppie expresses to her father how much she wishes they had a garden like **Mrs. Winthrop's**. Aaron quickly volunteers to dig the garden and to bring some soil and plants from his employer, **Godfrey Cass's**, garden. Eppie makes her father promise he won't work too hard when he and Aaron start the garden that very afternoon.

Part Two opens with a reintroduction of the major characters as they leave the church. The visual scene functions like a stage on which each character is presented by the author. The author speaks of the characters as if they are familiar to her readers as old friends might be. For example, Silas Marner is "impossible to mistake" for readers who have "seen" him before.



Aaron's enthusiasm to help Eppie create her garden shows his love for her. The author does not state that Aaron loves Eppie, however the reader can infer so through his actions and conversation. This indirect characterization brings Aaron and his earnest personality to life.



Once **Aaron** turns back to the village, **Eppie** skips in happy triumph, declaring that she knew Aaron would volunteer to help. At the cottage, their new brown terrier and tortoise shell kitten greet them, while a mother cat looks on. The cottage has been transformed in many ways, from the presence of these lively pets to the new furniture given by

Godfrey Cass. No one in the village is jealous of Mr. Cass's generosity to the poor weaver, for he is regarded as an exceptional, generous person worthy of neighborly help.

Marner watches **Eppie** as she prepares their Sunday meal at the **hearth**. He has kept the hearth and never added a grate or oven because it is the precious spot where he found Eppie. After their meal, Marner goes outside in the sunshine to smoke his pipe, a new daily habit of his. He was encouraged to smoke by Dr. Kimble, and he has acquired many such habits and beliefs which are held to be good by **Raveloe** society. By seeking out everything that could help Eppie and add to her happiness, Marner has adapted to Raveloe life.

Marner and Eppie's new pets are physical indications of the happiness and life in the small cottage. The transformation of the space from a room including only the bare necessities to the home where Marner and Eppie live together is evidence of the change Eppie has brought about in Marner's life. Godfrey Cass's generosity has been unquestioned.



The hearth is the center of Eppie and Marner's home. It remains unchanged, which shows that Eppie and Marner's familial love for each other remains unchanged. Marner's smoking habit indicates that he will pick up any practices, even personal habits, which he thinks will benefit Eppie's happiness and relationship with Raveloe society.



Marner has opened up his heart so fully that he has even been able to share the story of his early life with **Dolly Winthrop**. She is confused and

grieved by his account of the drawing of lots that falsely demonstrated Marner's guilt. Dolly recognizes that Marner must be troubled most by the betrayal of a divine power that should have caused the lots to show his innocence. Dolly is sure that the powers that be cannot be bad, but she is puzzled by Marner's tale.

One day, **Dolly** arrives at **Marner's** with the pronouncement that she has had a sudden realization about his story. She says that there are things in the world that she can't understand, but the power that created all humans knows what's best and understands all things. One must trust that there's a good and right plan bigger than what any individual can understand. Marner says that he finally believes there is good in the world, and that he again feels there's more goodness than he can understand, despite the evils and troubles that also exist.

Marner has been able to talk of his past with **Eppie** too as she has grown older. He's always been honest with her about her past, and her unknown parentage. Eppie wonders and asks about her mother as she grows up because her interactions with **Mrs. Winthrop** make her believe having a mother must be very wonderful. With Marner as her father, however, she rarely wonders about her unknown biological father.

Marner's ability to tell Dolly about his past misfortunes allows Dolly to pinpoint the most significant and painful problem: Marner's loss of faith. Dolly's belief will not let her accept that the powers that be could intend Marner any ill will.

1 2 3 4 5

Dolly is able to reconcile Marner's tale with her own belief system by accepting the fact that there are things she will never understand. She trusts that there was some greater purpose to Marner's false accusation, even if she can't see it. Marner's own faith has been restored, though it is not the same faith. Eppie's love and trust, and his neighbors' friendship, are the new sources of his faith

1 2 3 4 5

Despite Eppie's awareness of her past, it is clear neither she nor Marner ever worry about who her biological father may be. Her mother is of more interest to Eppie. The wedding ring found on her mother's finger indicates that, at some point, everyone will have to face the truth of Molly's marriage.

1 2 3 4 5

Eppie and **Marner** sit outside discussing their garden and the stones they could gather to build a wall that keeps out their donkey. As Eppie points out all the stones they could gather, she skips to edge of the **Stone Pit** only to notice the low water level. Marner says this must be because of the draining in **Mr. Osgood's** fields that **Godfrey Cass** has directed.

After the pair has been sitting a while in silence, **Eppie** asks her father whether, if she were to be married, she should be married with her mother's ring. She confesses that **Aaron Winthrop** has asked her to marry him now that he has a lot of gardening work and a steady career. Aaron told Eppie that he'd never take her away from her father, but that they could all live together, so **Marner** wouldn't need to work at all. Eppie intends to marry Aaron, someday. But at the moment she doesn't want anything to change. Marner reminds her that someday things will change and that he'll keep growing old, and that he'd like to know Eppie would be cared for her whole life.

The Stone Pit is mentioned throughout the novel, as a recurring image. The attention given to the pit, even in a brief passage, prepares the reader for the key role the location will play in the plot of the novel.

1 2 3 4 5

Eppie refers to her mother's ring, reminding the reader that Godfrey's secret marriage has never been revealed. Eppie and Aaron's plan to marry and move in with Marner is fitting considering the old man's attachment to Eppie. Marner's existence and faith depend on not just Eppie's happiness and time spent with her, but on never separating from her. Marner wants to secure Eppie's future happiness, however, despite his own attachment to her.

1 2 3 4 5

CHAPTER 17

At the Red House, **Nancy** tries to persuade her sister to stay for tea. The Red House has been changed by Nancy's presence, and all is purity and order where some rooms were once dreary or imposing.

Priscilla insists that she and their father cannot stay for tea, as there is too much to do on their family farm, which she manages. Before leaving, the two sisters walk alone in the garden and Nancy tells Priscilla that she is contented, but worried about **Godfrey** and his low spirits.

Priscilla is frustrated by men like **Godfrey** who, she believes, always want what they don't have, but **Nancy** defends her husband. It's natural and understandable that he wishes he had children because he works hard and wants to have someone he can pass his property and income to, she says. After Priscilla and **Mr. Lammeter** depart, Godfrey leaves for a walk around the draining fields near the **Stone Pits**. During Godfrey's customary Sunday afternoon walks, Nancy tries to read the Bible, but ends up reflecting. Her thoughts often focus on her own choices and character, replaying memories in her mind to make certain that she has done everything well. "I can do so little—have I done it all well?" She repeatedly asks herself.

The beauty and comfort of the Red House, which has been improved by Nancy's orderly management, contrasts the unhappiness at the edges of Godfrey and Nancy's marriage. Nancy chooses to confess her concerns over her husband's low spirits to her sister.



Nancy complains to Priscilla about her predicament, but also defends her husband, which Priscilla has little patience for. Nancy's contemplation on Sunday afternoons focuses primarily on the hole in her marriage: she and Godfrey are childless. This situation is linked to Godfrey's past and his unacknowledged biological daughter and it seems Godfrey's past actions must, in a moral sense, be linked with his present unhappiness.



Nancy is hurt by the knowledge that their lack of children has been an aspect of their lives to which Godfrey cannot reconcile himself. Nancy had once prepared a drawer of baby clothes, enthusiastically expecting a child, but only one small dress had ever been used, for a burial dress.

Nancy had resisted over the years **Godfrey's** few attempts to suggest that they adopt a child. Nancy holds strongly to her opinions and principles, and one such principle is her refusal to adopt a child. She feels such a course of action attempts to change the lot in life given by Providence, which would bring about a curse on anyone who tried to get what a high power had determined they were better without. Any child adopted by them would turn out badly.

From the first suggestion of adoption, **Godfrey** had specifically spoken of **Eppie** as a child whom they could adopt. Surely the weaver would be pleased by this Godfrey felt, to have his adopted child raised to such a high station and himself taken care of for the rest of his life. Godfrey knew nothing of the weaver's true connection with and feelings for the child. His natural kindness would not have allowed him to contemplate such a plan otherwise.

The death of a child of Nancy and Godfrey's, perhaps a stillborn death or an infant death, shows the emotional trauma Nancy and Godfrey have gone through over the years as they've hoped for a child of their own.



Nancy's conviction that adoption is wrong is one of her many strongly held, but relatively indefensible, moral beliefs. The villagers of Raveloe do not always make rational decisions or assumptions. Nancy's conviction is tied to her faith and understanding of God's role in human lives, as she believes that if God has not granted her children then she must not try to get children by other means.



Godfrey's interest in adoption focuses on his true daughter Eppie. Godfrey is unable to see the pain that separating Eppie and Marner could cause. His position in society has always been such that he supposes anyone would love the opportunity to improve their circumstances and secure their wellbeing. Godfrey is not bad—he would not try to attempt adopting Eppie if he understood the pain it would cause—but he is blind and weak.



Nancy, during her Sunday afternoon reflection, reassures herself that she was right to discourage any consideration of adoption. Nancy labors to make her life with **Godfrey** perfect in every way except the one that is unchangeable, consoling herself that a different woman may have had children, but could not otherwise have made her husband so happy. Nancy's earnest goodness makes Godfrey certain that he'll never be able to confess his past to her. He feels the confession would cause an irreparable separation between him and his beloved wife.

Nancy's natural orderliness and properness causes her to strive to create a perfect life with Godfrey, in every way that she can. If not for Nancy's deference to her husband and her desire to please him, perhaps Godfrey could not have been as happy as he is. He does know Nancy's value and importance to him, which is why he continues to hide the truth of his past.



Godfrey's conscience is never easy about **Eppie** and his lack of children with **Nancy** feels like an intentional punishment. The couple hasn't spoken of the idea of adoption in four years at the time of this Sunday afternoon, and Nancy wonders if Godfrey will mind their childless lives more or less as they grow older. Jane, their servant, enters the parlor to report that outside all the villagers are hurrying in one direction. Nancy waits at the window, overcome by a vague fear, and wishing Godfrey would return.

Godfrey himself recognizes a connection between his past wrong in not claiming Eppie and his current lack of any children. The couple's concern with their childless lives has the moralistic tone of several events in the novel. Bad choices have consequences that may be indirect or manifest years later.



CHAPTER 18

Godfrey returns, but he is trembling and pale. He tells **Nancy** to sit down and that he'd had a great shock, but has come back to tell her what has happened in order to avoid her hearing it from anyone but himself. Godfrey tells her that **Dunstan's** body, his skeleton, has been found. The **Stone Pit** has dried up from the draining and at the bottom of the pit was Dunstan Cass's body, with his watch and seals, Godfrey's hunting crop, and, most horrifyingly, all of **Silas Marner's** stolen money. Nancy is surprised and ashamed for herself and Godfrey, having been raised to consider any connection with crime a dishonor.

Dunstan's body found with the gold is a tidy resolution—narratively and morally—to the mystery of Marner's lost money and the disappearance of the younger Cass son. In Raveloe society any association with a crime of this nature is shameful and Nancy and Godfrey are embarrassed to be connected to Dunstan. Family connections last a lifetime in this novel, whether they are biological or chosen.



Godfrey's tale continues as he reflects aloud that all secrets come to light sooner or later, when God wills it. **Nancy's** feeling of dread returns. Godfrey says that when he married her he kept his past a secret: the dead woman found by **Silas Marner** was his wife and **Eppie** is his child. Nancy is silent as Godfrey tells her that he couldn't bear to give her up, that he couldn't acknowledge the child as his own. Nancy wishes regretfully that they could have had Eppie all along, to ease their childless lives and the death of their little baby.

Godfrey's admittance that everything comes to light when God wills it finally places his fate in God's hands, rather than on chance, for the first time in the novel. Directly after this statement, Godfrey takes charge of his situation and tells Nancy everything. Nancy, selfless as always and eager to do what's right, wishes that they could have adopted Eppie sooner.



Godfrey reminds **Nancy** that if she had known the secret earlier she would never have married him. Nancy insists that she wasn't worth Godfrey doing anything wrong for, as he pleads for her forgiveness. She's more troubled by the wrong he has done **Eppie** for fifteen years. Godfrey says they can still adopt the girl, although it will be different, Nancy feels, to take her in when she's already grown up. But she agrees that it is Godfrey's duty to acknowledge her and provide for her, so they decide to go that very evening to see **Marner** and Eppie.

Nancy's high moral principles are most troubled by the wrong Godfrey has done his daughter by not acknowledging her, and they seek to correct this wrong by finally adopting her. Nancy's acceptance of Godfrey's story is, Godfrey feels, different than how she would have responded sixteen years earlier, which demonstrates that even Nancy has changed over the years. Though Godfrey and Nancy's sense that Eppie has been harmed by not being adopted by them betrays a lack of understanding on their part about everything Eppie has gained by having a father as loving and devoted as Silas Marner.



CHAPTER 19

That evening, **Silas Marner** and **Eppie** are sitting alone in the cottage. Marner is exhausted by the events of the afternoon, and has been craving the quiet of being alone with only Eppie. Near them on the table is the **gold**, arranged as Marner used to arrange it. He has been telling Eppie of how he counted the gold every night. At first, he admits, he worried that Eppie might again be changed into the gold after she had appeared on his **hearth**. The gold holds no power over Marner now, but he worries aloud that if Eppie were lost he might again feel God had forsaken him.

The presence of the gold and Eppie in the same place is ominous, especially when Marner is speaking of how he once worried Eppie would be changed back into the gold. The exchange between the gold and Eppie has established in Marner's mind that, by fate or divine will, he cannot possess both at once, raising the dramatic tension as the reader knows that Godfrey and Nancy are about to appear and offer to adopt Eppie. Might Eppie agree and leave Marner?



There is a knock at the door and **Eppie** blushes when she opens the door to admit Mr. and Mrs. Cass. **Godfrey** first apologizes to **Marner** for the loss of his money, hoping that he can make it up to him, as one of his own family members was the thief. Godfrey tells Marner's it's time that he had some rest, as he's worked so hard at his weaving to survive before and after the robbery. Godfrey says to Marner that he has done his part by Eppie and he's sure it would be a comfort to the weaver to see her taken care of by folks who could make her into a lady.

Godfrey points out that he and Mrs. Cass have no children and, therefore, they would like to adopt **Eppie** as their own. As Godfrey speaks, Eppie puts her arm around **Marner** and feels him trembling. Marner is clearly distressed, but says only that he will not stand in Eppie's way if this is what she wishes. Eppie steps forward and she thanks Mr. and Mrs. Cass, but she refuses their offer, unwilling to leave her father, and to give up the folks she's familiar with by becoming a lady. With a sob, Marner takes her hand.

Godfrey presents his offer to adopt Eppie in terms of an attempt to apologize for his brother's crime and to help the weaver rest and not be occupied supporting a daughter. From the first, Godfrey stresses his social position and the fact that he could make Eppie into a lady by adopting her. What's missing from his offer is any hint of love toward his biological daughter.



Marner's response is a true act of selflessness, as numerous details have established that Marner's entire life and happiness revolves around Eppie's presence. However, he feels he cannot stand in her way because he wants only what's best for her. Despite his words, Marner is overwhelmed by Eppie's declaration of commitment to her adoptive father.



Godfrey, irritated, exclaims that he has a claim on **Eppie** because she is his child and her mother was his wife. Eppie is startled. **Marner** speaks with new fierceness, asking Godfrey why he didn't claim his daughter sixteen years earlier. Godfrey turned a blessing away, Marner points out, and so God gave the child to him. Godfrey no longer has any right to the child. Godfrey claims he has repented for this past choice, but Marner insists, "repentance doesn't alter what's been going on for sixteen year."

Godfrey attempts to claim Eppie on the basis of her parentage and Marner raises the point that Godfrey has not been in her life for the past sixteen years. Through this exchange, the novel asks: who has claim over a child? Who is a true parent? Christian children at the time firmly believed they had a duty to honor and obey their parents.



Godfrey urges rationality. Such a change wouldn't tear **Marner** and **Eppie** apart forever, he argues. He says that he feels it's his duty to care for his own daughter, and that Marner ought to be happy to see her elevated to better circumstances rather than marrying a lowly man. Eppie's initial decision to refuse the offer of adoption was determined by her love for Marner, but Godfrey's insistence and his treatment of Marner cause repulsion toward her biological father to grown in her heart. Marner, on the other hand, is struck by a fear of raising his own desires in the way of what's best for Eppie and he again defers to her decision.

Godfrey mentions his duty to his daughter, but ultimately the decision falls to Eppie. She loves Marner, but she is also unimpressed with Godfrey. She sees that he sees himself as being superior to Marner and treats Marner with frustration and contempt when he doesn't get his way, and she wonders also about Godfrey's connection with her deceased mother whom he never publically recognized as his wife.



Eppie insists that she would never again be happy if she were forced to leave her father, **Silas Marner**. He had no one to love or care for him before she appeared in his life, and she'd again be leaving him alone. He cared for her and loved her first, and she is certain that no one will ever come between them. **Nancy** reminds Eppie that what she says is a natural way to feel, but that she also owes a duty to her true father. Eppie says she can only think of Marner as her father, that she wasn't raised to be a lady, and that she's engaged to marry a workingman.

Godfrey is frustrated that his attempt to atone for his past wrongs has been thwarted. He leaves abruptly, unable to say anything else to **Marner** and **Eppie**, and **Nancy** follows more gracefully.

Eppie chooses to see Marner as her true father, whom she loves and obeys, rather than Godfrey who is her father only by birth. For her, the behavior and attitude of a father, rather than blood, is what determines parentage. Eppie's choice demonstrates that one can choose one's family and one's community. She chooses to stay with those she loves, having faith in those around her.



Godfrey's abrupt departure shows his frustration that he cannot adopt Eppie. His haughty mannerisms are contrasted to Marner's quiet love for Eppie.



CHAPTER 20

Nancy and **Godfrey** walk home in silence and stand together in the parlor. They look at each other in mutual understanding. Nancy admits they'll have to give up hope of adopting **Eppie**. Godfrey says that Marner was right about turning away a blessing from one's door: it falls to another. Godfrey decides he won't make it known that Eppie is his daughter, but that he must still do all he can for her regardless of the life she has chosen.

Godfrey and Nancy's mutual acceptance of each other's thoughts and feelings demonstrate that they have not lost everything. They love each other, even though they have no children. It is too late for Godfrey to reclaim the blessing of having a child when he once saw the presence of his child as a burden.



Nancy is relieved that **Priscilla** and her father won't be troubled with the truth.

Godfrey realizes that **Eppie** didn't like the idea of him being her father, and that she thinks he did wrong by her mother and herself. But this is part of his punishment, he admits, for his daughter to dislike him. Nancy is silent, for she feels Eppie's response to be a bit of fair justice for Godfrey's past choices. Godfrey says that he has been unhappy wanting something else, above and beyond his lovely wife who he got, in spite of his past errors. "It is too late to mend some things," Godfrey says, but it's not too late to mend his longing for children and his unhappiness with his lot in life.

Godfrey and Nancy both believe that Eppie's dislike of Godfrey is more than chance, and is in fact a punishment given by the divine because of his past choices. The novel relies upon the power of fate and divine intervention in the lives of the Raveloe villagers. The characters can control their actions and their attitudes, but certain things occur which are beyond their control. The novel's plot relies upon these meaningfully connected events.



CHAPTER 21

The next morning, as **Silas Marner** and **Eppie** are eating breakfast, Marner tells Eppie that there's something he's been meaning to do for a while, which is achievable now that his money had reappeared. He wants to visit his old home in **Lantern Yard** and to see if anything ever came to light concerning his innocence and to ask about the ritual of drawing lots. **Dolly Winthrop** approves of the plan, telling Marner that she hopes he'll be at ease once he knows the truth.

The reappearance of the money in Marner's life, rather than reviving his interest in gold, allows him to continue his interest in his own past, by visiting Lantern Yard again and discovering what he can. Marner has changed. Eppie has changed him so that gold can never again have a claim on his heart.



Silas Marner and **Eppie** arrive in **Lantern Yard** only to find a great manufacturing town, altered to a bewildering degree within the last thirty years. They are ill at ease on the noisy, crowded streets filled with strangers. Eventually the pair finds their way to Prison Street, which Marner recognizes. The shops are all altered, but Marner knows it's the third street after the jail. Eppie is surprised by the closely proximity of the houses and remarks how pretty the **Stone Pits** will look when they return home.

There are people leaving the Yard, as if they'd gone to chapel at noon on a weekday, **Marner** exclaims, and then stops in amazement. They are in front of a large factory where workers are leaving. "**Lantern Yard** is gone," Marner cries. The large factory has replaced the chapel and everything Marner remembers. **Eppie** leads her father into a brush shop to ask about the old chapel, but no one they ask recalls the former chapel or anyone from that congregation.

The alteration of Lantern Yard is a key moment in the novel. Change, which the villagers of Raveloe so fear, has happened in Lantern Yard, and it marks the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, which will have profound impacts throughout England. Both Eppie and Marner now prefer Raveloe, its isolation, community, and its nature. Their preference for the stone pits suggests a preference for the unknown versus the bustling known of an industrial town.



Lantern Yard is gone and, with it, Marner's past and his opportunity to discover whether the truth of his case was ever revealed. Yet if the community that made him an outcast no longer exists, should he still think of himself as having been cast out? Strangers and workers have replaced human connections in Lantern Yard.



Upon their return to **Raveloe**, **Marner** reports to **Dolly Winthrop** that the old **Lantern Yard** has completely vanished. He realizes that he'll never know whether the truth of the robbery was uncovered, or why they used the practice of drawing lots. Dolly replies that there are many things in this world that are dark to humans, but there are other things that she has never felt confused about. Silas Marner was falsely accused, but that does not stop there being something good about the event, even if it's not for Marner or Dolly to see and understand what that may be. Marner says that since **Eppie** has appeared in his life he's been able to trust again in the world, and because she'll never leave him, he will trust until he dies.

Lantern Yard's strong contrast to Raveloe shows how Marner himself has changed into a man who fits into the world of Raveloe. The remaining mystery of Lantern Yard's disappearance and Marner's unresolved false accusation force Dolly and Marner to come to terms with those things in life that they will never understand. Despite this, Marner knows he can trust again, his faith having been restored by Eppie's love for and commitment to him.



PART 2, CONCLUSION

Eppie and **Aaron** are married on a beautiful sunny day. Eppie wears a dress of white cotton, which **Nancy** begged that she be allowed to provide for the young bride. Eppie tells her father that on this wedding day he won't be giving her away, but instead taking Aaron as his son. **Priscilla** and **Mr. Lammeter** stop to watch the wedding procession on their way to the Red House. Priscilla wishes Nancy could have had a child like Eppie, someone to occupy her and **Godfrey's** minds above and beyond the lambs and calves.

Like many nineteenth century novels, the book follows "the Marriage Plot": it ends with the wedding of Eppie and Aaron. While the domestic bliss of the ending cannot fully account for Marner's unresolved past, or for Godfrey and Nancy's childless home, it does show the way that bliss can coexist with the mysteries of the unknown and of moral fate.



The wedding party passes into the humbler part of **Raveloe** and stops to greet old **Mr. Macey**, seated outside his door. Mr. Macey says he always insisted that there was no harm in Master **Marner** and that he'd live to see him get his money back. Guests are already assembled early at the Rainbow, chatting about Silas Marner's strange story, and the great blessing he brought upon himself when he adopted a child. The villagers agree that they ought to wish a man joy who, like Marner, deserves all his luck and blessings. The group gives a cheer as the bridal party passes.

The wedding unites the Raveloe community in celebration. Mr. Macey reminds the wedding party that Marner wasn't always trusted and liked in Raveloe. But, after his kindness towards Eppie, all the villagers agree that he deserves all his blessings—the village sees Marner as having achieved morally appropriate happiness. The cheering villagers show that Marner and Eppie are now truly loved members of Raveloe society.



The cottage at the **Stone Pits** now has a larger garden than **Eppie** ever dreamed of. Other alterations were made by **Godfrey Cass** to accommodate **Silas Marner's** growing family in the home where they preferred to stay. As their beautiful home comes into view, Eppie exclaims that no one could be happier than they are.

Despite Marner's restored faith and connection to his community, the novel ends with the true source of blessing in the weaver's life—the mutual love between he and his daughter, the family they have built— and suggests that such things are more valuable than wealth, privilege, or even knowledge.



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