Your notes

GCSE English Literature: revision notes

Silas Marner

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Plot

- Silas Marner, a weaver, is falsely accused of theft by his friend William Dane in Lantern Yard and loses his faith. He moves to the village of Raveloe, lives alone and **hoards** gold.
- Dunstan Cass, the squire's son, steals the gold and disappears. His brother Godfrey is secretly married to Molly, who is addicted to opium.
- On New Year's Eve, Molly dies in the snow, and her toddler wanders into Silas's cottage. Silas brings her up as Eppie, with help from Dolly Winthrop, and finds new love and faith.
- Sixteen years later, Dunstan's skeleton and the gold are found in a drained pit. Godfrey admits Eppie is his daughter, but she chooses to stay with Silas, and marries Aaron Winthrop.

Themes and context

- Love versus greed, community, faith, **redemption**, family and class.
- Published in 1861 and set in the early 1800s, as the Industrial Revolution changed rural life. George Eliot was the **pen name** of Mary Ann Evans.

Form

- A moral fable-like novel with an all-knowing narrator who comments on characters.

How to get top marks

- Use the shape of a fable: Silas loses one treasure, gold, and gains a better one, Eppie.
- Compare Lantern Yard with Raveloe to write about community and faith.
- Write about Eliot's narrator, who comments on her characters and asks us to feel for them.

Key terms

Redemption	Being saved or restored, as Silas is through Eppie.
Hoard	To collect and keep, as Silas does with gold.
Pen name	A name an author writes under.
Omniscient narrator	A narrator who knows everything about all the characters.

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. Who falsely accuses Silas of theft?
2. Where does Silas move to?
3. Who steals Silas's gold?
4. Who is Eppie's real father?
5. How does Eppie arrive at Silas's cottage?
6. Who helps Silas bring up Eppie?
7. What happens to Silas's gold?
8. Who does Eppie choose to stay with?

Answers

1. William Dane
2. Raveloe
3. Dunstan Cass
4. Godfrey Cass
5. As a toddler, after her mother dies in the snow
6. Dolly Winthrop
7. It is found with Dunstan's skeleton in a drained pit
8. Silas

What to do next

Practise 10 questions on this topic

Try 3 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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