

# The theme of relationships in silas manner



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

"Silas Marner" was written by the established and contemporary author George Eliot (alias Mary Anne Evans) in the mid 19th century. The book however, is set in the early 1800s. During the time Eliot was writing this book England was changing - there was a growing population; rapid industrialisation and many people were moving from the country to the towns in search of employment and a better lifestyle. What people found when they arrived in the towns however was a very different story.

With a vast class divide and the difference in wealth and living conditions created the underclasses which often turned to opium to escape the reality of their impoverished lives. Lack of morality and an unseen before drive to 'get rich' meant many business men took advantage of their employees, often giving them next to nothing for payment and even in some desperate cases gave them their wages in tokens - which forced them to spend them in the factory shop, frequently charging ludicrous prices for food and such.

Eliot's "Silas Marner" is one of those novels that tried to portray this new and immoral England alongside the works of Dickens and Gaskell. The novel is used to explore and delve into relationships from the opening scenes with a clever use of a intrusive narrator. This technique gives Eliot the chance to express her own views and opinions as well as giving a divided storyline.

Silas' relationships in the religious community, as well as the Cass's relationships, are developed using intrusive narration and are a crucial aspect of the storyline. Using an example, when Eliot gives her own opinions about Godfrey Cass, "If it is the way with all men and women who reach middle age without the perception that life can be thoroughly joyous".

Flashbacks are well placed to give much more depth to the characters as well as giving much needed background information on their lives.

The flashback where Silas's life his old religious community in Lantern Yard effectively provided more information on Silas and gives insight into why Silas is a social recluse in Raveloe in the first section of the book - a linen weaver from a foreign place; The structure of the book, divided into two parts, develops both the Cass's and Marner's personality and lives before and after Eppie's entrance into the novel and is divided by sixteen years. The novel is written as a fable but explores the effects of relationships on the ending of a person's life.

The reason the book is written as a fable is because at the time " Silas Marner" would have been very controversial as it challenges and exposes the Industrial Revolution for what it really was - the abuse of the underclass to create as much money as possible without thinking of the human cost. Eliot uses two depths to " Silas Marner. " The fable adds a moral to the story, that love and relationships is worth far more than material possessions (in this case Silas's love of gold), and concentrates on the life of Silas. The other side of " Silas Marner" focuses on the lives of the Cass Family, primarily Dunstan and Godfrey.

The use of foreshadowing events to come e. g " A man falling into dark water seeks a momentary footing even on sliding stones" which hints at the fate of Dunstan works well and adds to the general appeal of the book. The use of symbolism is a large aspect of the novel. For example the hearth is used to represent the state of the family's relationships. For the Cass family, the

hearth is cold and childless. Though Silas's hearth is initially portrayed as cold, it is soon warm and full of happiness when Eppie enters his life, raptured by his glowing hearth and found asleep beside the warm hearth by Marner.

This is one example that that Eliot has explored the theme of relationships. " It came to pass that those scattered linen-weavers - emigrants from the town into the country - were to the last regarded as aliens by their rustic neighbours, and usually contracted the eccentric habits which belong to a state of loneliness". This is one example that Silas Marner was aimed at an educated audience and requires more thought and understanding to read the novel properly today.

In this next paragraph I will describe how Eliot develops the main characters and the theme of relationships by introducing minor characters into the novel. By reading how the minor characters get on with the major characters you get a better insight into the kind of people the major characters are. For example when Dunstan enters the room; " The door opened, and a thick-set, heavy-looking young man entered, with the flushed face and the gratuitously elated bearing which mark the first stage of intoxication.

It was Dunsey, and at the sight of him Godfrey's face parted with some of its gloom to take on the more active expression of hatred. The handsome brown spaniel that lay on the hearth retreated under the chair in the chimney-corner. " This portrays Dunstan as a man and character that is feared. With Eliot making out Dunstan to be a generally bad person, Godfrey is mentally compared to him by the reader and made to look like a much nicer person.

The relationships between Godfrey and Dunstan Cass towards their father seem very distant and dysfunctional.

Their mother deceased, the Squire (their father) seems bitter and unloving towards his sons. Only the mysterious other son, Bob, seems favoured. With the symbolism of the hearth Eliot helps to unravel a picture of their dire family life. Even the relationship between Godfrey and Nancy Lammeter is problematic. In contrast Silas and Eppie's relationship has love and laughter as well as affection and trust. This stark contrast generates an immediate liking for Silas and his brilliant surrogate parenting.

Eliot presents a multitude of minor characters that reflect Raveloe and town life to show her Romantic view of how relationships change people into the people they eventually become. Eliot's use of language to bring her characters to life and make the theme of relationships become central to her methods. In the opening chapters of the novel Silas is described visually as 'a pallid young man, with prominent short sighted brown eyes' and his sociability reflected in 'He invited no comer to step across his door-sill, and he never strolled into the village to drink a pint at the Rainbow'.

After Eppie enters his miserable and monotonous existence, Silas feels that her coming is a "message come to him from that far-off life" and begins to feel a love for the child like his own. "thought and feeling were so confused within him, that if he had tried to give them utterance, he could have only said that the child was come instead of the gold - that the gold had turned into the child". Silas's pitiful greed and insane love for the gold before it was stolen is transferred into Eppie and bringing up the child.

The gold had kept his thoughts in an ever-repeated circle, leading to nothing beyond itself; but Eppie was an object compacted of changes and hopes that forced his thoughts onward, and carried them far away from their old eager pacing towards the same blank limit carried them away to the new things that would come with the coming years” This shows that Silas’s previously bleak and emotionless relationships centered around the love of his gold has flourished into a much deeper meaningful relationship with Eppie full of love and devotion.

Silas’s epiphany with Eppie shows how Eliot has explored the theme of relationships by incorporating Silas’s former love of gold. Silas is described after Eppie has impacted in his life as an “ exceptional person, whose claims of neighbourly help were not to be matched in Raveloe”. The hearth is now bright and symbolises the new found love and mirth to Silas’s household. Eliot has created powerful mental images in the mind of the reader.

Such have been used when Silas declares “ God gave her to me because you turned your back on her, and He looks upon her as mine; youv’e no right to her! When a man turns a blessing from his door, it falls to them as take it in”. I was captured by the imagery of Eppie lying in the snow behind a slammed door, but it Eliot has left it open to interpretation. Godfrey’s lack of interest for claiming Eppie when she first arrives in Raveloe punishes him later on in the second part of the story, when he tries to claim Eppie unsuccessfully after sixteen years of Eppie being in Marner’s care.

Godfrey says heatedly ‘ I wanted to pass for childless once, I shall pass for childless against my wish! ‘. This brings me on to my next point; how Eliot

uses a developed setting is used to show the reflection between how relationships affect how children grow up to become good or bad people. Eliot wanted to portray this Romantic idea of childhood into Silas Marner and the language she used to incorporate this includes the symbolism of the hearth as well as the technique of intrusive narration.

The main integration of Romanticism is in the novel's separation into two parts. This gave the book a span of more than twenty years and covered Eppie's life between the golden haired two year toddler and the pretty woman of eighteen. Raveloe is described well ' And what could more unlike that of Lantern Yard world than the world in Raveloe - orchards looking lazy with neglected plenty.... homesteads, where men supped heavily and slept in the light of the evening hearth.. and gives an accurate portrayal of life in an early 19th century country village. In conclusion I believe Eliot portrays Romanticism in her novel but it also has the alternative interpretation of an innocent fable (golden hair, gold, love, living happily ever after.. ) as well as portraying relationships and how they influence the lives of children in Britain during the transformation from a rural economy to the Industrial Revolution.