



***READING AND WRITING SKILLS FOR STUDENTS OF
LITERATURE IN ENGLISH: THE VICTORIAN PERIOD***

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3.1. George Eliot, *Silas Marner* (1861)

Reading Skills

1. Where is the novel set?
2. When is the novel set?
3. What was happening in Europe at this time?
4. Who are the main characters in Chapters 1-7, and what are their occupations?

Part I, chapters 1 and 2

1. What are the people of Raveloe like?
2. How long has Silas Marner been living in Raveloe when the novel opens?
3. What do the people of Raveloe think of Silas?
4. What strange story about Silas does Jem Rodney, the mole-catcher, have to tell?
5. Explain the following terms from Chapter 1:
flaxen thread, linen, weaving, loom, yarn
layman, Assurance of salvation, election
6. What are the consequences for Silas Marner of the events in Chapter 1?
7. What special knowledge did Silas's mother give him, and how does he feel about this knowledge?
8. What kind of man does Silas become once he has moved to Raveloe?

Chapters 3-15

1. Who are the Cass family, what are they like, and what do the villagers think of them?
2. What is Godfrey Cass's secret, and what does his brother Dunstan do about it?
3. What happens to Dunstan Cass in chapter 4?
4. What does Silas discover in chapter 5?
5. Is the conversation in The Rainbow in chapter 6 particularly profound? Why is it included in the novel?
6. How is Silas treated by the villagers in chapter 7?
7. Who is suspected of the robbery in chapter 8, and why?
8. Who does Squire Cass want his son, Godfrey, to marry (chapter 9)?
9. How does the robbery change Silas's relationship with the rest of the village (chapter 10)?
10. Does Nancy want to marry Godfrey?
11. What are the "quality" of Raveloe like?
12. Who is Molly Cass and what is she like?
13. What does Silas at first think has appeared in his cottage?
14. How does Godfrey Cass feel about the discovery of his wife and daughter?
15. What change has come over Silas by the end of chapter 14?

Part II, chapter 16-20

1. How much later is part II set? About what year must this be?
2. What changes have occurred in the village as well as to Silas and Eppie?
3. What do we learn about Godfrey and Nancy Cass in chapter 17?
4. What might have happened if Godfrey had told his wife the truth from the beginning?
5. Why do Silas and Eppie reject the Casses' offer?
6. Is there any consolation for the Casses?

Chapter 21

1. What does Silas discover on his return to Lantern Yard?
2. How does the novel end?

Writing Skills

1. List the most important aspects of the Industrial Revolution present in the novel.
2. List the references to the Napoleonic Wars in the novel.
3. Write a paragraph linking together the aspects of the Industrial Revolution present in the novel.
4. Write a paragraph linking together the references to the Napoleonic Wars in the novel.
5. Write an essay entitled "Which has greater impact on the novel, the Industrial Revolution, or the Napoleonic Wars?". Argue your case.