

约克文学作品辅导丛书

YORK NOTES ON

MIDDLEMARCH

米德尔马契

George Eliot



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GUIDES

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George Eliot

MIDDLEMARCH

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《约克文学作品辅导丛书》介绍

《约克文学作品辅导丛书》(York Notes)系 Longman 集团有限公司(英国)出版。本丛书覆盖了世界各国历代文学名著,原意是辅导英国中学生准备文学课的高级会考或供英国大学生自学参考。因此,它很适合我国高校英语专业学生研读文学作品时参考。

丛书由 A. N. Jeffares 和 S. Bushrui 两位教授任总编。每册的编写者大都是研究有关作家的专家学者,他们又都有在大学讲授文学的经验,比较了解学生理解上的难点。本丛书自问世以来,始终畅销不衰,被使用者普遍认为是英美出版的同类书中质量较高的一种。

丛书每一册都按统一格式对一部作品进行介绍和分析。每一册都有下列五个部分。

① 导言。主要介绍:作者生平,作品产生的社会、历史背景,有关的文学传统或文艺思潮等。

② 内容提要。一般分为两部分:a. 全书的内容概述;b. 每章的内容提要及难词、难句注释,如方言、典故、圣经或文学作品的引语、有关社会文化习俗等。注释恰到好处,对于读懂原作很有帮助。

③ 评论。结合作品的特点,对结构、人物塑造、叙述角度、语言风格、主题思想等进行分析和评论。论述深入浅出,分析力求客观,意在挖掘作品内涵和展示其艺术性。

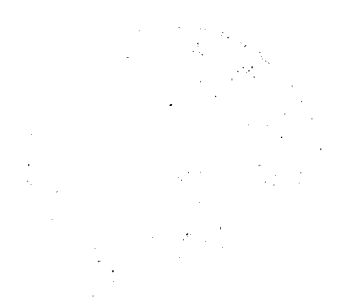
④ 学习提示。提出学习要点、重要引语和思考题(附参考答案或答案要点)。

⑤ 进一步研读指导。介绍该作品的最佳版本;版本中是否有重大改动;列出供进一步研读的参考书目(包括作者传记、研究有关作品的专著和评论文章等)。

总之,丛书既提供必要的背景知识,又注意启发学生思考;既重视在吃透作品的基础上进行分析,又对进一步研究提供具体指导;因此是一套理想的英语文学辅导材料。

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钱 瑗



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Part 1

Introduction

The life of George Eliot

George Eliot, whose real name was Mary Ann Evans, was born at Arbury Farm near Nuneaton in Warwickshire on 22 November 1819. She was the third child of Robert and Christiana Evans.

Robert Evans was a land agent and managed the estate of Francis Newdigate. When Mary Ann was four months old the family moved to another house on the estate. This was Griff House. It was situated in a very beautiful and quiet agricultural area much like the Raveloe of *Silas Marner*, yet not too far away was the beginning of an industrialised area similar to the one from which Silas Marner came. Her early life here was to play a vital role for it meant that many years later when she chose a rural setting for certain of her novels, namely *Silas Marner*, *The Mill on the Floss* and *Adam Bede*, George Eliot was able to draw on her childhood memories.

With her brother Isaac, of whom she was very fond, Mary Ann first of all attended Mrs Moore's dame school, but when she was only five she was sent to Miss Lathom's boarding school at Attleborough. Needless to say she was lonely and homesick and longed for holidays when she could be with her father and brother.

In 1828 Mary Ann changed schools. The principal of her new school was Maria Lewis, a believer in evangelical Christianity. She had a strong influence on Mary Ann, who became much more religiously fervent and conservative than the rest of her family who were conventional Anglicans.

In 1832, when she was thirteen, Mary Ann once more changed schools, for it was felt that she had learned all she could from Miss Lewis's school. This time she went to a school in Coventry run by Mary and Rebecca Franklin, daughters of Francis Franklin, the Minister of Cow Lane Baptist Chapel. Mary Ann's religious fervour was increased, she became more non-conformist and adopted the Calvinism of the the Franklins. To show that she had renounced the world she took to wearing an extremely unbecoming cap on her head to make herself ugly. This was hardly necessary, for everyone, including Mary Ann herself, knew she was already ugly. Years later it was thought by many that she would marry Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), the famous social philosopher, but Spencer declared that even

though he found Marian, as she was then called, 'the most admirable woman mentally' he had ever met, he did not want to marry her because of her lack of beauty. He was in love with her, he said, but her long nose made her difficult to kiss. George Eliot's ugliness was a point of discussion for many. Another famous writer, Henry James (1843–1916) described her as 'magnificently ugly—deliciously hideous'. Her face was often compared to that of a horse and perhaps the unkindest description of all was when she was likened to 'an elderly Jewish cab-horse with ringlets'.

In 1836 Mary Ann's mother died and she was forced to leave school and look after her father and brother. At school Mary Ann had excelled at her lessons, particularly French, German, music and English composition. She continued with her studies at home, reading Italian, Greek and Latin, as well as German and French. In matters of religion she became even more devout and narrow-minded. She looked upon any entertainment as sinful and refused to accompany her brother to the theatre when they went to London. She herself later described this period as one when she used 'to go about like an owl'.

Another move was made in 1841 when she went with her father to live in Coventry. Mary Ann had continued to read widely and deeply, especially in the new philosophy and theology. This reading, and the influence of a new group of liberal friends in Coventry, especially Charles Bray, caused her to abandon her previous religious views. The entry in Robert Evans's diary for Sunday, 2 January reads, 'Went to Trinity Church in the forenoon . . . Mary Ann did not go'. Her father refused to live with her if she would not go to church and for three weeks she stayed with her brother. Mary Ann then returned to her father's house and agreed to attend church with him, but she continued to reject all religious dogmas and remained an agnostic until her death.

Despite her rejection of traditional Christianity she retained her interest in theology and her first published work was a translation of David Friedrich Strauss's (1808–74) *Leben Jesu* (1835) (*The Life of Christ* in translated version, 1846). After the death of her father she went abroad for a certain period with the Brays, then she settled in London, where she became assistant editor of the *Westminster Review*, a liberal, intellectual periodical edited by John Chapman.

In London Marian, as she now called herself, was to meet the most brilliant writers and thinkers of the age, including Charles Dickens (1812–70), W. M. Thackeray, (1811–63), Lord Tennyson (1809–92), Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881), Charles Darwin (1809–82), and Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). Among them was George Henry Lewes (1817–78); he and Marian fell in love. Lewes was already married and although his wife had deserted him he was unable to get a divorce. Marian made up her mind that although she could not be legally

married to George Lewes she would live with him as his wife. Her decision to do so was a very brave one for such things were not done in that age.

The typical reaction to what she and George Lewes did can be found in a letter from the sculptor Thomas Woolner (1826–92) to the painter William Bell Scott (1811–90). He asks Scott if he has heard what has happened and, in case he hasn't, tells him '[that] blackguard Lewes has bolted with a — and is living in Germany with her . . . I will not further lift the mantle and display the filthy contamination of these hideous satyrs and smirking moralists . . . stink pots of humanity'. 'Stink pots of humanity'. Mary Ann knew that this was the abuse that would be hurled at her but she decided to go ahead with something she did not believe was wrong. As Lord Acton (1834–1902) remarked, 'The sanctions of religion were indifferent to her after rejecting its doctrines and also, granted sufficient cause, she was prepared to disregard the social law of England.' It is ironical that Queen Victoria (1837–1901) gave her name to an age that is renowned for its narrowness, prudery and hypocrisy, yet she did not condemn George Eliot and her relationship with George Lewes. In a letter to her daughter Queen Victoria discussed liaisons where 'the outward earthly form cannot be given by man! In God's eyes,' the Queen wrote, 'I believe, as surely as I write this, that this will be considered as holy and right.' So did George Eliot! In a letter to Vincent Holbeche, her solicitor, she wrote, 'Our marriage is not a legal one, though it is regarded by us both as a sacred bond.'

In 1854 she and George Lewes went to Germany together and on their return lived happily as husband and wife until George Lewes's death in 1878. At first they were social outcasts, except amongst their free-thinking liberal friends, but eventually their relationship was accepted by all except a few. These included Marian's brother Isaac, who did not write to her for twenty-three years, the time she lived with George Lewes. A short while after George Lewes died Marian married John Cross but only eight months after they were married she died, on 22 December 1880.

George Eliot's literary career

Marian Evans had thought of herself as a critic and translator. It was George Lewes who persuaded her that her real gift lay in writing fiction and he encouraged her to do so. In 1857 her first story was published in *Blackwood's Magazine*. Two other stories appeared in the same magazine and in 1858 the three were published in book form under the title *Scenes of Clerical Life*.

From the beginning Marian Evans wrote under the pseudonym of

George Eliot, George because it was Lewes's name and Eliot because she liked the sound, 'a good mouth-filling word,' she said, 'easily pronounced'. Why did she decide to write under another name? Several suggestions have been put forward, all of which no doubt contain some degree of truth. First of all Marian Evans had thought of herself as a critic and she feared that people might disregard her criticism if they knew she wrote novels. The second reason, and most probably the major one, was the fear that people would refuse to buy the book of a woman living with a man to whom she was not married. She had good reason to believe this. People who had praised her work condemned it when they discovered that she was the author. Finally, and this was the reason for choosing a man's name, she wanted her books judged on their own merits and 'not', George Lewes said, 'prejudged as the work of a woman'.

Whilst people could not recognise the author they could recognise the talent of the writer. Her first book was the beginning of a success story that was to reach its highest peak on the publication of *Middlemarch* in 1871. This work was described then, and still is, as a 'masterpiece'. It was considered to be George Eliot's finest novel and she in turn was regarded as England's greatest living novelist, Dickens having died in 1870.

During her lifetime she enjoyed a very high reputation, but after her death there was a decline. The post-Victorian critics, in rejecting the narrow moral codes of the Victorian period, also rejected George Eliot's novels. What they failed to realise was that when she philosophised or made a moral judgement it was not based on any particular unchanging religious or social dogma. These she regarded as instruments of torture that 'rack and stretch' the soul. 'My function,' George Eliot said, 'is that of the *aesthetic*, not the doctrinal teacher—the rousing of nobler emotions, which mankind desire the social right, not the prescribing, of special measures.' The doctrine she believed in, and preached in her novels, was that of meliorism, a belief which affirms that the world may be made better by human effort. In his book *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel*, V. C. Knoepfelmacher recounts that in 1853 Marian Evans told herself in a rare outburst of confidence: 'Heaven help us! said the old religions—the new one, from its very lack of that faith, will teach us all the more to help one another'. Nothing could be more radical than that; her religion was a socialist one of love, duty and self-sacrifice for the happiness of her fellow human beings on this earth.

It took the next generation of critics to realise this. The 1920s brought about a renewed interest in her novels. One of the persons responsible for this was another major English female novelist, Virginia Woolf (1882–1941). George Eliot's reputation has continued to

increase. She was one of the few novelists that F. R. Leavis (1895–1978) included in his major work of criticism on the novel, *The Great Tradition* (1948), and today she is still quite rightly regarded as one of the greatest of the English novelists.

A note on the text

The edition of *Middlemarch* used for these Notes is the Penguin English Library edition, edited by W. J. Harvey, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1965. This text is based upon that of the one-volume edition of *Middlemarch* published in 1874. For a discussion of the origin and composition of *Middlemarch* see Part 3 of these Notes.

Part 2

Summaries

of MIDDLEMARCH

A general summary

Book One

Dorothea and her younger sister, Celia, are orphans and live with their uncle, Mr Brooke, at his home, Tipton Grange. One evening Mr Brooke gives a dinner party to which he invites Sir James Chettam and the Reverend Mr Casaubon. Sir James hopes to marry Dorothea but Dorothea, who has intellectual ambitions, prefers the much older and more scholarly Mr Casaubon. He is looking for a wife who will tend him in his old age, believes that Dorothea will prove suitable and proposes to her. Much to everyone's horror Dorothea accepts him.

One of the people most upset about the marriage is Mrs Cadwallader, the rector's wife. She had planned that Dorothea marry Sir James but she now advises him to turn to Celia which he does though his pride is hurt. This pleases Dorothea as she has a scheme to build some cottages and hopes that as her brother-in-law Sir James will help her.

Dorothea visits Lowick, Casaubon's home. Here she meets Will Ladislaw, a second cousin of Mr Casaubon though much younger. It is obvious that neither Will nor Mr Casaubon like one another though Mr Casaubon supports Will financially.

Before the marriage Mr Brooke gives another dinner party at the Grange to which he invites all the important people from the town of Middlemarch. Among those present are the mayor, Mr Vincy, a manufacturer, his brother-in-law, Mr Bulstrode, a banker, and the new doctor, Tertius Lydgate, who is to head the new hospital and who comes from an aristocratic family.

Rosamond and Fred are the daughter and son of Mr Vincy. Rosamond is beautiful, egocentric, and socially ambitious. Fred is good-natured but irresponsible. He is in debt and he decides to go with Rosamond to visit his rich and miserly uncle, Mr Featherstone who is looked after by Mary Garth whom Fred wants to marry. Lydgate, who is Mr Featherstone's doctor, arrives when they are there. Rosamond decides that he would be a perfect husband for her. He is attracted to Rosamond but is determined not to marry for some years.

Book Two

The medical board of the new hospital meets to appoint a new

chaplain. Lydgate prefers Mr Farebrother but because he needs Mr Bulstrode's help he votes for Mr Tyke, the man whom the hypocritical Bulstrode supports.

Meanwhile Dorothea and Casaubon are spending their honeymoon in Rome. Dorothea is beginning to have doubts about Casaubon's research. In Rome she meets Will Ladislaw who confirms her fears and tells her that he is returning to England. Will and Dorothea are drawn towards one another and Mr Casaubon senses this.

Book Three

Fred loses most of the money that he got from his uncle which means he is forced to tell Caleb Garth, the honest but fairly poor father of Mary, that he is unable to pay his debt. Mary tells him that she can never marry a man who has acted as he has.

Fred falls very ill. Mr Wrench, the Vincy's doctor, makes a wrong diagnosis and Fred's condition deteriorates. Lydgate is called in, realises that Fred has typhoid fever, and manages to save him. This makes Lydgate popular with the Vincys but unpopular with the rest of the doctors in Middlemarch.

Dorothea and Casaubon return to England. Casaubon has a heart attack and Lydgate tells Dorothea that he might live another fifteen years but he might also die suddenly.

Because of a certain degree of social pressure and the persuasiveness of Rosamond's tears Lydgate asks her father's permission to marry her. Mr Vincy agrees.

Book Four

Peter Featherstone eventually dies. He surprises all his greedy relatives by leaving his estate to Joshua Rigg and his money to build almshouses for old men.

Dorothea becomes increasingly disillusioned with Casaubon. At the same time the affection between her and Will increases, so much so that Casaubon is convinced that Will is trying to ruin his marriage. Mr Brooke, who has political ambitions, has invited Will to take over the newspaper that Mr Brooke has bought. Casaubon tells Will if he accepts Mr Brooke's offer he will no longer be welcome at Lowick. Will disregards this threat.

Caleb Garth is asked to manage both Sir James Chetlam's estate, Freshitt Hall, and Tipton Grange. He suggests that Fred Vincy might like to become his apprentice instead of becoming a clergyman.

Book Five

Dorothea grows more and more disillusioned with Mr Casaubon's research, so much so that when he asks her to continue his work should he die she at first refuses. She changes her mind the next morning but Mr Casaubon has died. He has left a clause in his will stating that

should Dorothea marry Will Ladislaw she would lose all the property he has left her. Dorothea declares that she has no intention of marrying anyone and that she proposes to devote her time and money to her former plan for workers' cottages. She also offers to support Lydgate and his hospital and on his suggestion she appoints Mr Farebrother rector at Lowick. Mr Farebrother would like to marry Mary Garth but gives up this idea when she tells him that the only person she will marry is Fred.

After a disastrous campaign Mr Brooke retires from politics and dismisses Will. The latter has no knowledge of the clause in the will but he knows that any approach he might make to Dorothea would be looked upon by the others as an attempt to marry her for her money. Meanwhile Joshua Rigg's stepfather, Raffles, begins to blackmail Bulstrode.

Book Six

Dorothea continues to live at Lowick Manor. After several encounters with Will she realises that they love one another but can see no hope of their ever marrying.

She employs Caleb Garth to help her with her plans for the cottages. Fred Vincy has become Caleb's apprentice and Mary indicates that if he makes a success of the job she is willing to marry him.

Lydgate sinks deeper and deeper into debt and Rosamond refuses to help him. She also tells Will of the codicil in Casaubon's will.

We now learn why Raffles is able to blackmail Bulstrode. Raffles knew Bulstrode many years before when the latter worked for Mr Dunkirk, a receiver of stolen goods. Bulstrode knew about Mr Dunkirk's activities but his greed overcame his religious and moral scruples. It was his greed that also led him to cheat Dunkirk's daughter of the fortune that was rightly hers. Raffles reveals to Bulstrode and to Will that this woman was Will's mother. In an attempt to salve his conscience Bulstrode offers Will five hundred pounds a year but Will refuses.

Book Seven

Lydgate is now desperate for money and after several unsuccessful attempts to raise a thousand pounds he is forced to go to Bulstrode and ask him for a loan. Bulstrode refuses and at the same time informs Lydgate that he is giving up his support of the hospital.

The same day Caleb Garth goes to Bulstrode and tells him that he has found Raffles wandering by the roadside very ill and that he has taken him to Stone Court which Bulstrode now owns. Bulstrode asks Lydgate to attend Raffles and fearing what Raffles might reveal when he is delirious offers to lend Lydgate the thousand pounds. Lydgate gives Bulstrode strict instructions that Raffles must not be given

alcohol. Whilst Bulstrode does not himself give Raffles alcohol he does not prevent his housekeeper from doing so and Raffles dies. Before he died Raffles had revealed Mr Bulstrode's past to Mr Bambridge, the horse-dealer. Soon the whole town knows. Mr Bulstrode is publicly disgraced and Lydgate comes under the suspicion of having accepted a bribe from the banker.

Book Eight

Dorothea refuses to believe Lydgate guilty. She assures him of her support and offers him a thousand pounds so he can repay Bulstrode. This he does and after paying his creditors he and Rosamond leave Middlemarch. Lydgate gives up his research and becomes a successful doctor in London. He dies when comparatively young and Rosamond marries a rich and much older doctor. Will returns to Middlemarch and after one more misunderstanding he and Dorothea declare their love for one another and decide to marry. They too move to London and Will becomes a successful politician. Eventually they are reconciled with Sir James Chettam who had opposed the marriage, and Dorothea's son inherits Tipton Grange. The Bulstrodes leave Middlemarch but before they do Mr Bulstrode agrees to Fred Vincy becoming manager of Stone Court. This means that he and Mary can marry.

Detailed summaries

BOOK ONE: MISS BROOKE

Chapter 1

We meet Dorothea who is beautiful and rich. She wears plain clothes because, first, she regards fancy clothes and jewels as vulgar and, second, she has Puritanical tendencies and the Puritans frowned upon such things. She has intellectual aspirations and a desire to do great things. She tends to scorn the ordinary things in life and people are a little afraid of her. We also meet her sister Celia who is more practical and ready to act according to the customs and conventions of society. The two sisters are orphans and live with their uncle, Mr Brooke. Celia asks Dorothea if they may share their mother's jewels. Dorothea gives them all to her, keeping only an emerald bracelet and ring because she is attracted by their beauty. Celia is aware of Dorothea's weakness but says nothing to her sister.

Mr Brooke, their uncle, is an amiable man with no fixed opinions, who will always take the easy way out. Though he is kind he is inclined towards meanness.

COMMENTARY: This chapter introduces us to several of the main