

Individual Learning Packet

**Teaching Unit**

**Silas Marner**

by George Eliot

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Note: All references come from the Prestwick House Literary Classics edition of *Silas Marner*, copyright 2006.

# Silas Marner

## Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. trace the spiritual life of Silas Marner from his loss of faith in and estrangement from mankind to his eventual return.
2. discuss this critic's point about George Eliot's novel and provide examples that might support or refute the following statement by referring to *Silas Marner*: Having lost her Christian faith, Eliot would replace it with a philosophy that kindness, honesty, and courage were necessary for human survival.
3. point out the paramount role that organized religion plays in this novel's commentary on the practices of both the sect and, later, the traditional church that Silas attends.
4. write a short character analysis of the following characters:
  - Godfrey Cass
  - Dolly Winthrop
  - Nancy Lammeter Cass
  - Dunstan Cass
  - The Squire
5. discuss the extent to which the picture drawn of country life of the period seems realistic, pointing out examples that support or refute that position.
6. point out how Godfrey Cass' life depicts the theme of the story: Failure to act in a moral fashion when it is required can later be a cause of great regret.
7. point out and comment on Eliot's use of insect and flower imagery as well as her symbolic use of light and dark.
8. discuss how these various characters believe that the course of one's life is determined by luck/fate or by divine providence.
  - Dunstan Cass
  - Godfrey Cass
  - Dolly Winthrop
  - Silas Marner

# Silas Marner

## Chapter 1

### VOCABULARY

**accession** – an increase  
**ardent** – passionate, intense  
**ascertaining** – finding, identifying  
**averred** – strongly claimed  
**benignity** – kindness  
**bequest** – a gift  
**blasphemy** – impiety, heresy  
**brawny** – muscular  
**chary** – cautious  
**colloquies** – everyday conversations  
**conception** – an idea  
**conjuring** – magic  
**culpable** – guilty  
**efficacy** – effectiveness  
**exhorted** – strongly encouraged  
**fervid** – devout, earnest  
**imperativeness** – insistence  
**impetuously** – hastily, carelessly  
**impressible** – open, receptive, impressionable  
**incorporated** – mixed, combined, merged  
**indispensable** – vital, needed  
**intermittent** – irregular  
**jarred** – disagreed  
**pallid** – pale  
**perpetual** – constant  
**phantasm** – a delusion  
**protuberant** – protruding, sticking out  
**provident** – thrifty, frugal  
**queries** – questions  
**rectory** – a parish priest's house  
**render** – to give  
**repugnance** – disgust, repulsion, distaste  
**resurgent** – a reappearance  
**sanctioned** – approved  
**singularities** – differences  
**stile** – a ladder across a fence that enables people to go from one field to another  
**unexampled** – unique  
**unwonted** – exceptional  
**vestry** – a church meeting room  
**wry** – twisted

4. As he walks toward his home, what does Dunstan plan to boast about to the crowd that hangs out in the Rainbow Inn?

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5. What leads Dunstan to Silas' door?

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6. At the end of this chapter, what does Dunstan take when he leaves Silas' house?

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## Chapter 9

### VOCABULARY

**acuteness** – sharpness, clarity, insight  
**calculable** – predictable  
**deprecatd** – condemned, belittled  
**duplicity** – deception  
**eatables** – food  
**entail** – a legal inheritance to the next male heir  
**errant** – wrong  
**evasion** – avoidance  
**gentilities** – sophistication, refinement  
**homage** – to honor, show loyalty  
**inversion** – a reversal  
**lieve** – to prefer  
**mitigated** – eased, calmed  
**ostler** – a caretaker of horses  
**ponderous** – awkward, clumsy, heavy  
**presupposition** – an assumption, belief  
**prevarication** – lying  
**prudence** – practicality; wisdom  
**slovenly** – dirty, messy, sloppy  
**unmodified** – unchanged, unaffected

1. How does the Squire behave towards his sons?

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2. Why is the Squire upset that peace is talked about in the paper?

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## Chapter 16

### VOCABULARY

**cadence** – a rhythm  
**chastise** – to correct, beat down, punish  
**cogent** – forceful, strong  
**coquetries** – flirtations, teasing  
**desisting** – stopping, pausing  
**emphatically** – decisively  
**fervor** – intensity  
**fetishism** – attachment to, high regard for  
**fustian** – a cotton and linen blend  
**half-abstractedly** – preoccupied  
**ingenuously** – honestly, willingly, frankly  
**invariable** – normal, unavoidable  
**parried** – deflected, avoided  
**recurred** – came back to, returned to  
**remonstrate** – to challenge, dispute  
**reticence** – a restraint, hesitance  
**roguish** – coy, playful  
**rove** – to wander  
**rusticity** – countrified, provincial, rural  
**sages** – wise people  
**sanctioned** – approved  
**unvitiated** – pure  
**vainly** – uselessly, unsuccessfully  
**veracious** – honest, truthful  
**vexed** – angered, upset, irritated

1. Chapter 16 opens Part II of the novel sixteen years later. Why do you suppose it opens with a church scene?

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2. We are told that Godfrey has not changed much in features, but of Nancy we are told “The firm yet placid mouth, the clear, veracious glance of the brown eyes speak now of a nature that has been tested and has kept its highest qualities.” What does that sentence suggest?

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**Chapter 19**

VOCABULARY

**banished** – cast out  
**beholden** – indebted  
**cleave** – to cling  
**definiteness** – assuredness, confidence  
**florid** – ruddy, healthy-looking  
**obliged** – obligated  
**penitence** – remorse, regret  
**ponderingly** – thoughtfully  
**previsions** – guesses  
**proposition** – a plan, suggestion  
**transfiguration** – a change

1. In this chapter, as she does elsewhere, the author shows herself to be a keen observer and commentator on people and their behavior. In the first paragraph, what situation is she commenting on?

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2. What does Eppie believe would have happened to her if Silas had not taken her in as a child?

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3. Having gotten his money back, does Silas believe he will once again be a miser?

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