

MIDDLEMARCH - A SOCIAL DOCUMENT.

In Middlemarch, George Eliot's masterpiece, there is
① exploration of moral situations through the presentation of
characters, achieved with a sustained brilliance. The picture
is so ^{extensive} vivid and comprehensive that it has been said that
if there is any hero in the novel, it is the society of Middlemarch.
The novelist has drawn heavily on her memories of early
girlhood and this accounts for the truthfulness and
vividness of her portrait of provincial life.

The whole social picture, both of town and
country life in Middlemarch, though it is seldom cynical,
and often most sympathetic in its portraiture of true nobility
of character, is wonderfully vivid in its illustration of the
pettiness and the meanness of the אים, generally presented.
The action of the novel takes place in Middlemarch & the
neighbouring parishes of Tipton, Lovick or Freshitt. The
locale of Middlemarch has been vague and not distinct
though it is generally identified with the town of
Loventry in the Midlands. This is so because it is a
novel about people and not about places or ideas.

Both rank, class are central; Rosamond sees
Dorothea Brookes getting out of a carriage, but is not of a social
equality with them. Chettam, Cadwallader and Mr. Brooke;
for example, can recognise Mr. Vinoy as mayor, but would
not recognise his family. So rooted is Chettam, far from an
'amiable baronet' in the class sense, that he cannot
approve of Dorothea's marriage to Ladislaw, does his best
to hinder it and is only reconciled by the presence of
Lidia after Dorothea has had a baby. Rosamond
the 'Faith's friend, is a universally man. Rosamond, the
flower of Mr. Lemon's - whose as Wray is a governess and
teacher as is her mother, who also prepares his family, food?

In Middlemarch, many rules, whether it is
inherited or it is acquired. Rosamond Vinoy is a great

social climber; 'the ^{aroma} ~~aroma~~ rank' fascinates her. She is attracted to Lydgate not for any of the qualities for which he is really admirable, but for his good family connection in Northumberland.

This limited, isolated community has certain wellmarked characteristics. For one thing, it is deeply conservative. Everything new, every hint of change is looked upon with suspicion. Railways, which are still distant and far off, are regarded as a threat to the agricultural way of life.
 (b) Class privileges protect a person, even when he or she behaves in a way inappropriate for the class to which he or she belongs. It never crosses the mind of Brooke, or anybody else, that his activities in favour of the Reform Bill could work in the direction of reducing his hereditary privileges as a landowner.

There are also honest workmen whose devotion to their own trade and business, who do not hanker after social rank, to whom the aristocratic ways of life are something they neither like nor understand. It is an irony of the class system that Fred Vinny despises his middleclass father by taking work under this excellent businessman, and thus ^{to give up, to decline} renouncing upper class ambitions.

Middmarch's society is tradition bound, unchanging and conservative. But from time to time, disturbing influences appear and disturb its calm, placid day to day life. Lydgate is one such factor because his gentlemanly connections and high social origin are felt to be inconsistent with his role as a professional man. Mrs Deratha Brooke is another disturbing influence. She feels strong sympathy for Lydgate's ^{ambitions} aspirations. Belonging by birth to the highest rank of local society, she is totally oblivious of class differences.

mild gentle serene

celebrate well

Her sister is a good representative of the kind of woman who is entirely happy with the feminine, nursing world. Their uncle as usual, unconsciously expresses

the conventional view ~~to~~ with perfect exactness when he says to Casaubon, Dorothea's husband, "Ask Dorothea other to read few light things; Smollett; Foadlerick Random, Humphrey, drinker, they are little broad but she may read anything new she's read, you know!"

However, this provincial society is not static. The poor tenants are already raising better conditions of living, and passing judgement at their landlords, whom they had so far served and obeyed like slaves. Rumblings are heard of the great national events, like ^{the} Luddite's movement and machine breaking, the ^{the} advance of the railways, ^{the} dissolution of the parliament and the ^{the} Reform Bill agitation.

In the social fabric, there is a conflict between the old and the new, this decay, ^{death} dissolution of the old dispensation and transition to the new, is seen even more clearly in the field of religion. Such men were more interested in conduct than in faith; they had a respected position in the structure of society which enabled them, to some extent, ^{to soothe, to pacify} to mitigate the rigours of class differences.

Plain, old-fashioned Anglicans, like the Vincys and Fawcetts, have a feeling that Evangelicals are gaining all the time. Their fears and doubts are voiced in the novel on a number of occasions. For ex, we are told, "The Vincy had the readiness to enjoy, the rejection of all anxiety of the belief in life as a merry lot, which made the house exceptional in most country towns at that time when Evangelicalism had cast a certain suspicion over the few amusements which survived in the provinces. At the Vincy's there was always.... whist."

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In short; Middlemarch is such a great novel because of the solidity, vividness, truthfulness and comprehensiveness of the provincial society that has been presented in the novel. This makes it a valuable social document and a 'psychological novel of moral discovery'.

Important Points

Intro — moral exploration of characters, with sustained ^{comprehensiveness & vivid description} ^{childhood memories} ^{brilliance}

Country ~~city~~ & town life —

attitude of class diff.

Rank in the society = money.

Conventional Society — resists any new discoveries

Hard-working men. — Co

Tradition bound society — but now & then exceptions — Lydgate
Celia & Unwilling — Representative of misery and ^{brotherhood}
Society is ^{conventional} ^{outlook} ^{obstacle} → changes ^{of the} place

Religion awakening old — changing to new

Political awareness. Anglicans & Evangelicals