

Silas Marner – Study Guide

Background

George Eliot (a pseudonym for Mary Ann Evans) published Silas Marner in 1861. The novel drew in some ways on Eliot's personal life, as evident in Silas' loss of faith and the book being set in an English countryside that was disappearing because of industrialization.

The book features dual plots that proceed independently, but they also intertwine and support one another thematically and structurally. The story of Silas losing his faith in humanity and then regaining it through his love for an adopted child is made whole by the plot line featuring the Cass brothers. The importance of individual responsibility, both to oneself and to others, is examined, as are the respective roles of fate and the consequence of conscious choices. These issues are mingled with the contrast between materialism and human values. All these matters are set against differing social classes.

Terms

A glossary of terms in the novel can be found at: <http://www.gradesaver.com/silas-marner/study-guide/glossary-of-terms/>

Characters

A list of characters with brief descriptions can be found at: <http://www.gradesaver.com/silas-marner/study-guide/character-list/>