



Colorado Book Club Resource

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR MIDDLEMARCH BY GEORGE ELIOT

1. Marriage is a central concern in the novel. Does it portray marriage as a source of happiness in life? Or does it suggest that personal happiness comes from some other source?
2. Compare the various couplings with one another: Dorothea's failed marriage with that of her sister. Or the Lydgate and the Garth marriages. In what way do they suggest differing approaches to marriage? Does Eliot offer a model union?
3. Dorothea at one point says of marriage...

I mean, marriage drinks up all of our power of giving or getting any blessedness in that sort of love. I know it may be very dear—but it murders our marriage—and then the marriage stays with us like a murder—and everything else is gone.

What is she suggesting about romantic love and marriage? Is there any truth in her remark, or is this simply the rambling of a distraught woman?

4. How does the novel portray Dorothea Brooke and Tertius Lydgate as the heroes in this work? In what ways do they differ from the others in the cultural milieu of Middlemarch? What drives each of them? Are they similar?
5. Others in the novel also serve as models for virtue: members of the Garth family and Camden Farebrother, for instance? In what way can they be seen as secondary heroes of Middlemarch? Any others?
6. Does Rosamond elicit sympathy from you? She is vain, of course, but might her upbringing be somewhat responsible for her faults? In what way does she represent the prevalent societal norms?
7. The narrator is a very funny and wry satirist. Dorothea, for example, is passionate about horseback riding yet eager to renounce it, because in sacrificing her pleasure, she will prove her devotion to Christianity. What or who else do you find humorous in the novel? And what is she satirizing?
8. What do you think of Camden Farebrother, especially his gambling? Is it wrong? What makes him successful at gambling, as compared to Fred Vincy?
9. What about Mary Garth's refusal to burn the second will after Featherstone's death. What would you have done?
10. Talk about how social conventions, based on money and class, affect the behavior and relationships in this novel. In what way does this novel challenge those conventions? What does the novel champion...and what does it condemn?



This discussion sheet is property of the Colorado State Library's Book Club Resource. Please return this sheet along with all of the books in the book bag to the Colorado State Library – Courier Code C912. Contact bookclub@coloradovirtuallibrary.org with questions or concerns.



Colorado Book Club Resource

11. What symbolic (as well as literal) role does the portrait of Ladislav's grandmother play in the novel? Why does Dorothea offer it to Ladislav as a parting gift...why does he refuse the offer...and what does his refusal suggest?
12. What do the main characters learn by the novel's end? Do either Dorothea or Lydgate get the life they deserve?
13. What roles do Raffles and Nicholas Bulstrode play? Look at Raffles as representing the past...as well as chance or coincidence.
14. Middlemarch, the town, is almost a character in itself. In what sense does Eliot use the idea of community? Does she portray it as antithetical to human freedom—in that it judges, restricts, or interferes in its inhabitants lives? Or is it presented as a positive force—in that it offers moral guidance, friendship, and solace?

Questions by LitLovers



This discussion sheet is property of the Colorado State Library's Book Club Resource. Please return this sheet along with all of the books in the book bag to the Colorado State Library – Courier Code C912. Contact bookclub@coloradovirtuallibrary.org with questions or concerns.