

Middlemarch

George Eliot

A Before Reading

- 1 *Middlemarch* was written by George Eliot. Read the sentences below about this writer and tick those which you think are true.
- a George Eliot lived in the twentieth century.
 - b George Eliot was a woman.
 - c *Middlemarch* was the only well-known story written by George Eliot.

Now read pages 4-5 of the book to check your answers.

- 2 *Middlemarch* was written in 1871-2 and the story takes place in 1829-33. The nineteenth century was a time when life and society in Britain were starting to change. What sort of changes do you think were happening around this time?

Example: *New industrial cities started growing*

Now read pages 5 of the book to check your ideas.

- 3 *“There are many themes in Middlemarch, but the most important one is that of marriage and what men and women of that time expected from it.”* (page 6).

How do you think that marriage in nineteenth century Britain was different from today? Write a list of differences. Also write a list of words and expressions connected to marriage that you think you may see in the book.

Marriage in the nineteenth century: how was it different to now?	Marriage: words and expressions
<i>Social rules meant that you should marry someone of the same class/wealth as you.</i>	<i>fall in love with someone</i>

B While Reading

3 There are many marriages in the story. As you read, keep a record of who gets married to whom, why they marry and how successful each marriage is.

Man	Woman	Why do they marry?	A successful marriage?
<i>Casaubon</i>	<i>Dorothea</i>	<i>She wants to help him complete his work.</i>	<i>No. Both are disappointed.</i>

4 Money plays an important role in the story. As you read, look for words and expressions connected to money. Write them in the table, together with the word class (verb/noun/adjective etc) and an example sentence containing each (your own example or one from the story).

Money words/expressions	Example of use
<i>owe (verb)</i>	<i>Doctor Lydgate owes money to many people.</i>

5 “Why don’t you tell me the true story, Doctor Lydgate? Your name can be cleared I am sure’... So the young doctor told Dorothea everything. He told her about his debts, the death of Raffles and the money from Bulstrode.” (page 107)

Write the explanation that Lydgate gave to Dorothea.

C After Reading

- 6 a Choose two characters from the story who are different to each other, eg Dorothea and Celia, Will Ladislaw and Casaubon. Write a paragraph explaining how the two characters are different. Compare and contrast their personalities, looks and opinions.
- b Imagine you are a film director choosing actors for a film version of *Middlemarch*. Which actors would you choose for the two characters you wrote about in 6b?
- 7 The different characters in *Middlemarch* look for different things in their marriage partners. Look at the list below and decide if each would be important or unimportant for you when choosing a life partner. Tick (✓) the column to show your opinion.

A life partner should have...	Very important	Some/ limited importance	Not important
beauty/good looks			
honesty			
intelligence			
ability to teach you new things			
interesting conversation			
money/wealth			
patience			
ability to work hard			
a similar personality to you			
good family background			

Would you add anything else to the 'very important' column? Write a paragraph explaining your opinions shown in the table.

- 8 a Casaubon says to Dorothea, "You are only a woman, after all, with a woman's inferior mind", and Celia says to her, "Men know all about money and business. Women don't." (page 104).
How have attitudes to women and opportunities for women changed since that time? Do you think that men and women in your country have equal rights and opportunities today? Are there jobs or activities which are still more often done by men or women?
- b Write a paragraph about a successful woman who you admire. It could be someone dead or alive, famous or known to you personally. Describe what they achieved and how they achieved it.