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Middlemarch And Other Novels (Illustrated)

ELIOT



Synopsis

Illustrated with 10 unique illustrationsA collection (with active table of contents) of works by George Eliot, pen name of Mary Ann Evans, English Victorian novelist:MiddlemarchSilas MarnerThe Mill on the FlossDaniel DerondaBrother JacobThe Lifted VeilRomolaThe Mill on the Floss

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Customer Reviews

Yes, that is a strong statement, but I believe *Middlemarch* to be the best novel written in English. And English is a rich language, overflowing with worthy works from both sides of the Atlantic, India and beyond. The only novel as a close contender on my list is *Jane Eyre*, with its fearsome symmetry and romantic passion. George Eliot has been the bane of students everywhere who suffer reading *Silas Marner* in high school. But later on, you, like me, may develop a taste for the classics and this book will reward you richly. The story is about Dorothea, a young, idealist woman, born to a good family with a modest fortune of her own. She is a prime catch on the wife market--money, family name, good looks. Her parents are deceased and her friends and uncle seek to pair her up with a local baron as the ideal mate. But Dorothea, bookish, religious and dreamy, has other ideas.

She chooses, instead, a superannuated cleric who finally decides to marry as he feels mortality and ill health upon him. Casaubon, the vicar of a nearby rural church is a good match except....he's old, ugly and what the heck is he doing marrying such a young beauty. But Dorothea, who's imagining a sort of superior father figure who could "teach you even Hebrew, if you wished it" wakes up to far less than a reality of marital bliss. And there's an added complication created by her unworthy husband that has dire consequences for the young Dorothea. The subsequent examination of marriage as a partnership in hell is written with stunning modernity. Eliot not only creates the disastrous marriage of Dorothea to Casaubon, but also pairs, as a comparison, Lydgate, a doctor and his frivolous, vain, uncaring wife.

I have had a copy of this book on my shelf for years without reading it. It was so very thick, the print so small, the pages so thin! It looked dauntingly long and dull. But when I finally picked it up out of a sense of obligation (after all, I majored in English, and it is a highly acclaimed classic) I was amazed to find myself laughing out loud on the very first page! Dorothea, Eliot's heroine, is SO very earnest, SO idealistic and ardent! She would never be so tawdry as to fuss with her hair and dress, or wear (gasp!) jewelry in public! She is interested only in bettering the lives of the poor in their neighborhood (you could visualize her at the fore of a modern anti-war protest). But when her sister draws her into trying on their mother's old jewelry, the pure beauty of an emerald ring inspires her to decisively choose it as her own. And she stubbornly ignores any inconsistency between that decision and her ideals. But her idealism traps her into marriage with a man who is not at all what she believes. She sees him as a paragon of learning, questing the seas of knowledge with fearless curiosity. In actuality, he turns out to be a cautious and small-minded scholar, drily obsessed with minor points of criticism on others works. Poor Dorothea strives to find ways to hold constant in her love in the face of ugly truth. And when she meets young Will Ladislav, a man of similar idealism and energy, she fights to stay on her moral high ground. Thank goodness the dry old scholar dies! But even after death, he manages to poison the possibility of Dorothea and Will ever making a life together. Around this couple swarm their relatives and acquaintances, and others quests for their best lives.

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