Middlemarch

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF GEORGE ELIOT

George Eliot was the daughter of an estate manager in Warwickshire. She received an unusually extensive education for a girl at the time, although only up until the age of 16. After this point she continued to read widely, the results of which are palpable in her writing, which is intellectually sophisticated and filled with references to a diverse array of knowledge. As a young woman she became socially involved with a group of agnostics and political radicals. She began translating works of German theology into English and publishing short reviews in periodicals. She spent time living alone in Geneva before moving to London, where she worked as the editor of a progressive literary journal named *The Westminster Review*. Eliot met George Henry Lewes in 1851. Lewes was in an open marriage, and he and Eliot soon became a couple, traveling to Germany together as a "honeymoon" and living as husband and wife, despite the fact that Lewes never divorced his previous wife. This arrangement was the source of significant scandal at the time. Eliot published her first short story at the age of 37 and her first novel, *Adam Bede*, two years later in 1859. *Middlemarch* was published in instalments between 1871-72, and Eliot's last novel, *Daniel Deronda*, was published in 1876. Lewes died in 1878 and after this Eliot married John Walter Cross, again causing controversy because Cross was 20 years younger than she was. Eliot died of kidney disease in the same year of her marriage, 1880.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Middlemarch is set in 1829-32, forty years before it was written (and published). As a result it is considered a "historical novel," although some critics argue that the difference between when it is set and when it was published is not significant enough to warrant this term. In any case, *Middlemarch* is very attentive to the historical events of the time, which play a significant role in both the foreground and background of the narrative. The most important of these is the 1832 Reform Act, which expanded the population of eligible voters in the country and changed aspects of the parliamentary system in order to make it more democratic. Other important events include the Catholic Relief Act of 1829, which allowed Catholics to become Members of Parliament, the rapid developments in science and medicine that took place in the early nineteenth century, and the leadup to the railway boom of the 1840s.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

In many ways, *Middlemarch* resembles other sprawling realist novels of the nineteenth century, including works by Charles Dickens, Leo Tolstoy, and Fyodor Dostoevsky. Its attention to rural life, political radicalism, and the oppression of women particularly resonates with the novels of Thomas Hardy. *Middlemarch* has been hugely influential on many generations of novelists since its publication, from Henry James, Marcel Proust, and Virginia Woolf to contemporary novelists such as Hilary Mantel, Zadie Smith, and Min Jin Lee.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Middlemarch, A Study of Provincial Life
- **When Written:** 1869-71
- **Where Written:** London, England
- **When Published:** 1871-72
- **Literary Period:** Nineteenth-century English novel
- **Genre:** Realism; historical novel
- **Setting:** Middlemarch, a fictional town in the Midlands, England, in the years 1829-32
- **Climax:** When Will and Dorothea finally declare their love for one another and kiss during the thunderstorm
- **Antagonist:** There is no real antagonist; although John Raffles is the most villainous character in the book, he is more of a wayward fool than an antagonist
- **Point of View:** Third-person narrator who occasionally speaks in the first person, potentially conveying Eliot's point of view

EXTRA CREDIT

Ambitious goals. Writing *Middlemarch* featured on a list of George Eliot's New Year's resolutions at the beginning of 1869.

Superfans. *Middlemarch* inspires fervent devotion among its readers. The *New Yorker* staff writer Rebecca Mead even published a book of her own entitled *My Life in Middlemarch* (2014), which combines autobiography with an account of her attachment to the novel.

PLOT SUMMARY

Dorothea Brooke is a highly intelligent, very religious young woman from a "good family." She and her sister Celia are orphans and live under the care of their unmarried uncle, Mr. Brooke, in Tipton Grange. Sir James Chettam is courting Dorothea, and comes to dinner at Tipton along with Rev. Edward Casaubon, a 45-year-old bachelor and theological

scholar. Casaubon has spent multiple decades working on an ambitious work of religious history, **The Key to All Mythologies**.

Dorothea has been passionately at work on architectural designs for **cottages** for the tenant farmworkers in Tipton. At dinner, she takes a liking to Casaubon, whom she believes resembles John Locke and must be a "great man." She fantasizes that he will propose to her and imagines a life wherein she can fulfil her intellectual ambitions through helping him finish *The Key to All Mythologies*. Sir James is enthusiastic about seeing Dorothea's plans for the cottages come to fruition, whereas Casaubon seems uninterested in them.

Mr. Brooke tells Dorothea that Casaubon is interested in marrying; soon after, Casaubon sends Dorothea a rather stiff, awkward letter in which he proposes to her. Dorothea is so happy that she bursts into tears and drops to the floor. Mr. Brooke and their family friend Mrs. Cadwallader are both hesitant about the idea of Dorothea accepting Casaubon, but they eventually relent, saying that Dorothea can do what she wants. Sir James is also shocked and horrified at Dorothea's decision, but more out of concern for her than pity for himself. He and Dorothea remain friends and he continues to make regular visits to Tipton.

While on a premarital visit to Casaubon's house Lowick Manor, Dorothea, Celia, Mr. Brooke, and Casaubon run into Casaubon's second cousin, Will Ladislaw, who is carrying a sketchbook. Later, a dinner party is held at Tipton in advance of the wedding. The attendees include Tertius Lydgate, an ambitious young doctor who has just moved to Middlemarch and hopes to bring cutting-edge medical reform to the area. Lydgate has become entranced by Rosamond Vincy, who is known as the most beautiful young woman in Middlemarch. Rosamond's brother Fred is a lazy, irresponsible, and arrogant young man.

Fred expects to inherit the land of his uncle Mr. Featherstone, an ailing and widely disliked yet very wealthy individual. Fred has been using this anticipated fact to borrow money. Fred is in love with Mary Garth, whom he has known since they were children. Rosamond, meanwhile, is determined to marry Lydgate, believing that she can rise in wealth and status by doing so.

Bulstrode is a wealthy banker who is treated with suspicion because he is a newcomer of obscure origins, and also because he is evangelical. He is financing the **New Hospital** and asks Lydgate to serve as director. Although Fred originally borrowed money for gambling from the local horse-dealer Mr. Bambridge, after he couldn't pay it, Caleb Garth co-signed for him.

When Lydgate was living in Paris he fell in love with an actress who named Laure who killed her husband onstage. The incident left Lydgate determined to maintain a "scientific" attitude toward women from then on. He is very charmed by Rosamond, but doesn't want to marry for another five years as he first needs time to focus on his career. Lydgate develops a friendship with a vicar named Farebrother, and Lydgate feels reluctant about voting for Mr. Tyke for the chaplaincy at the New Hospital. However, Lydgate eventually gives in to pressure from Bulstrode and gives the deciding vote to Tyke.

While at the Vatican, Will Ladislaw and his friend Adolf Naumann, a German painter, catch sight of Dorothea. Dorothea is not enjoying her honeymoon; she feels disappointed by Casaubon's behavior toward her and particularly his refusal to let her help him with his scholarly work. Will comes to see her at her apartment while Casaubon is working at the Vatican library; when Casaubon finds out, he wants to ban Dorothea from seeing Will alone, but he doesn't go through with it. The next day, Naumann asks both Dorothea and Casaubon to sit for him and they agree. Will visits Dorothea alone again and reveals that *The Key to All Mythologies* is doomed to failure because Casaubon can't read German and thus doesn't know the latest developments in theological scholarship.

Fred remains troubled by his debt and at the same time fails his university exam, which makes him feel even worse. He attempts to make some money through the sale of a horse, but the horse lames itself and Fred ends up in a worse position than he was to begin with. Miserable, he confesses to Caleb that he can't come up with the money. Caleb and Mrs. Garth realize that they will have to give up their savings, which they'd been hoping to use to pay for their son Alfred's apprenticeship. They will also have to ask Mary for some of her savings.

Fred develops a fever; the Vincys' doctor Mr. Wrench tends to him but Fred's condition only deteriorates. Rosamond sees Lydgate walking past and calls him in. Lydgate observes that Wrench gave Fred the wrong medicine and diagnoses him with typhoid fever. Mrs. Vincy joyfully declares that Lydgate has saved Fred's life. Dorothea returns from her honeymoon to the news that Celia and Sir James are engaged. Casaubon is ill, and when Lydgate checks up on him he says that Casaubon has a heart condition that could prove fatal if he doesn't stop working so much.

Mrs. Bulstrode hears a rumor that Lydgate and Rosamond are engaged, and after she asks Lydgate about it he resolves to stop coming to the Vincys' house unless for professional reasons. Rosamond is distraught; once Lydgate sees how miserable she is, he realizes he loves her and proposes.

As Mr. Featherstone's death draws near, his relatives crowd around his house, hoping to ensure their inheritance. He is annoyed and tells them that he's already made his will. Mary is working as his caregiver; one night he wakes in the middle of the night and requests that she burn one of the two wills he has made. She refuses, knowing that this will make people

suspicious of her. He tries to bribe her with £200 but she remains adamant. Shortly afterward, Featherstone dies.

At the reading of Mr. Featherstone's will, it is revealed that all of his money and land will go to his illegitimate son, Joshua Rigg, whom no one in Middlemarch has ever seen before. The relatives are furious and the Vincys are especially distraught. Mr. Vincy tries to rescind his approval of Rosamond and Lydgate's engagement as Lydgate does not have enough money.

England is gripped by political tumult as the possibility of electoral reform gains momentum. Mr. Brooke buys the local progressive newspaper, *The Pioneer*, and employs Will Ladislaw as editor-in-chief. Casaubon tries to stop this happening, as he is increasingly suspicious of Will's attachment to Dorothea. However, Will defies him and accepts the position. Meanwhile, Brooke is accused of being a hypocrite for running for election on a progressive platform while he is known to be an unkind landlord.

Mr. Brooke hires Caleb to manage Freshitt (Sir James's property) and Tipton, which saves the Garths from financial ruin. Fred has returned from university where he was finally able to pass his exam and obtain his degree. However, he doesn't want to enter the church.

Joshua Rigg's stepfather John Raffles arrives in Middlemarch, seeking money from Rigg. Rigg bitterly dismisses him due to the fact that Raffles is an alcoholic who used to beat Rigg. Meanwhile, Lydgate (who has just returned from his honeymoon) discusses medical reform with Dorothea, who pledges to give £200 a year to the New Hospital. Despite this success, Lydgate continues to face opposition from most people in Middlemarch. Will and Lydgate become friends, and Will frequently spends time at Rosamond and Lydgate's house.

Casaubon, whose health continues to fail, asks Dorothea to make a promise to him that she will fulfil a request of his after he dies. Thinking that he intends to ask her to finish *The Key to All Mythologies*, Dorothea hesitates and says she will give him an answer in the morning. She decides to say yes, but when she goes to tell Casaubon her answer, she finds him dead. Mr. Brooke and Sir James learn that a stipulation in Casaubon's will states that if Dorothea marries Ladislaw she will lose all her property. Celia reveals this to Dorothea, who is shocked. For the first time she consciously considers the possibility that she has feelings for Will.

Mr. Brooke gives a speech as part of his election campaign and is pelted with eggs. Fred enlists Farebrother to help him find out if Mary would approve of him becoming a clergyman; she tells Farebrother that she will never marry Fred if he enters the church. Raffles returns to Middlemarch and this time begins harassing Bulstrode. It becomes clear that Raffles knows secrets about Bulstrode's past that he is hoping to use to blackmail him, and that these secrets somehow involve Will.

Following Casaubon's death, Dorothea has been living in Freshitt with Celia and her new baby, but she is growing bored. Will visits her and tells her he is leaving Middlemarch. While Caleb and his assistant Tom are surveying land in preparation for the construction of a **railway**, they are attacked by a mob of farmworkers who are opposed to the railway. Fred helps defend Caleb and Tom, and Caleb offers Fred a job as a kind of apprentice. Mr. Vincy is miserable about this development, as it means Fred's education was a waste of money.

Rosamond has a miscarriage after horseback riding when Lydgate told her not to. She and Lydgate are deeply in debt, forcing Lydgate to sell their silverware, which infuriates Rosamond. Rosamond tells Will about the stipulation in Casaubon's will forbidding him from marrying Dorothea.

Raffles's presence continues to trouble Bulstrode. When Bulstrode was young he befriended a man from his church named Mr. Dunkirk, who ran a pawnbroking business. Bulstrode worked as the accountant for the business, which pawned stolen goods. After Mr. Dunkirk died Bulstrode married his widow. The widow wanted to find her estranged daughter, Sarah (who was Will's mother), in order to give Sarah her inheritance. Bulstrode bribed Raffles to pretend that Sarah couldn't be found so that Bulstrode could inherit the money himself.

Back in the present, Bulstrode tries to give Will the inheritance as a form of atonement, but Will refuses to take it. Will goes to say goodbye to Dorothea again, and this time she realizes that he loves her. He leaves Middlemarch for real this time. Lydgate is now £1000 in debt and attempts to sell his house to Ned Plymdale; however, Rosamond secretly stops the sale from happening. In desperation, Lydgate asks Bulstrode for money. Bulstrode refuses and advises Lydgate to file for bankruptcy; he also says that Lydgate will need to step back from running the New Hospital.

Raffles reappears, seemingly very sick. Bulstrode takes him in and calls Lydgate, who diagnoses Bulstrode with alcohol poisoning. Changing his mind, Bulstrode gives Lydgate the £1000 he needs. Bulstrode neglects to tell the servant caring for Raffles the proper instructions for his care, and Raffles dies. However, Raffles had already told Bambridge. the local horse dealer, the secret story of Bulstrode's past and the gossip spreads around Middlemarch like wildfire. Bulstrode is thought to have bribed Lydgate to help him kill Raffles. The scandal has a catastrophic effect on both of them, forcing them to prepare to leave Middlemarch, abandoning the New Hospital.

Dorothea says that she believes Lydgate is innocent and tries to get him to stay, but Lydgate refuses. She also writes him a check for £1000 so he is no longer in debt to Bulstrode. Dorothea goes to the Lydgates' and sees Will and Rosamond holding hands while Rosamond cries; she misinterprets this sight as evidence that Will and Rosamond are in love. Later, Dorothea comes to see Rosamond and Rosamond explains the misunderstanding, adding that Will loves Dorothea.

Will and Dorothea finally admit their feelings to one another, although Will initially remains convinced that they cannot marry due to Casaubon's will. Dorothea tells him that she will forsake her fortune to marry him, despite the fact that most of her close friends and family members are against the union. Bulstrode leaves Middlemarch, agreeing to give his house to Fred.

In the "Finale," the narrator explains what happens to each of the main characters after the end of the main narrative. Fred and Mary get married and have a happy, prosperous life together. Rosamond and Lydgate's marriage remains unhappy and when Lydgate dies at 50, he considers himself a failure. Dorothea and Will live in London, where Will has a successful political career and Dorothea is a wife and mother.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Dorothea Brooke – Although in some ways *Middlemarch* does not center around a single character, Dorothea is the closest the novel gets to a protagonist. Uniquely strong-willed, passionate, and rebellious, Dorothea is a deeply religious woman "enamored of intensity and greatness." She is also committed to social reform and channels her energies into designing **cottages** for the tenant farmers on her uncle Mr. Brooke's estate and, later, planning a "colony" for workers. Ultimately these plans do not transpire, in part due to Dorothea's naivety, and in part due to the significant restrictions placed on women in the society in which she lives. Dorothea is painfully aware of the ways that she doesn't conform to the ideal of femininity, and she tries to reconcile her grand ambitions with her desire to better meet this ideal through her marriage at 18 to the 45-year-old Rev. Edward Casaubon. Dorothea's bitter disappointment in the marriage and in Casaubon as a husband leave her feeling tormented and confused, though her fiery spirit is never fully crushed. When she is 21 Casaubon dies, leaving all his property to her with the stipulation that it will be taken away if she marries his cousin Will Ladislaw, of whom Casaubon was intensely jealous. Dorothea and Will are far more suited to each other due to their shared earnest, passionate, and convention-flouting personalities. However, it takes them a while to admit that they are in love with one another, partly due to the dilemma caused by Casaubon's will. Although Dorothea eventually ends up happily married to Will and the mother of his children, the narrator comments that it is a shame that for all her ambition, Dorothea was not able to lead a "greater" life and leave a more impactful legacy.

Celia Brooke – Celia Brooke is Mr. Brooke's niece and Dorothea's sister. She is kind and cheerful, though less intelligent than her sister, whom she struggles to understand. Celia finds it easy to conform to the ideal of womanhood upheld in Middlemarch, and indeed enjoys living her life in this way. She marries Sir James Chettam after Dorothea rejects him and has a baby named Arthur.

Mr. Arthur Brooke – Mr. Brooke is Celia and Dorothea's uncle, who is charged with their education and care after their parents die young. He is a lifelong bachelor who travelled a lot in his youth. He is generally a friendly and pleasant person but also rather foolish; he changes his mind often and sometimes appears to struggle to understand complicated discussions. He is also decidedly sexist. Mr. Brooke decides to run for election as a Whig in Middlemarch and recruits Will Ladislaw to help with his political campaign, as well as to take over editing the local progressive newspaper, the *Pioneer*, which Mr. Brooke has purchased. His move into politics gets off to a rocky start, as people accuse him of hypocrisy for pushing a social reform agenda when he is known to be a terrible landlord. However, he perseveres anyway. In the finale, it is noted that Mr. Brooke lives to a very old age.

Sir James Chettam – Sir James Chettam is a wealthy and charming young man whose land borders Mr. Brooke's. He initially pursues Dorothea and seems to be deeply in love with her; however, after she rejects him he recovers quickly and marries Celia instead. Sir James and Dorothea remain close friends even though Dorothea's life choices exasperate him—particularly her decisions to marry Casaubon and later Ladislaw.

Rev. Edward Casaubon – When we are first introduced to him, Rev. Edward Casaubon is a 45-year-old bachelor. He is wealthy and high-ranking, but socially awkward and dull. He is also described as ugly and "dry;" when Sir James Chettam hears that Dorothea is engaged to him, he laments that Casaubon is "no better than a mummy." His house, Lowick Manor, is described as correspondingly dark and dreary. Casaubon has spent several decades of his life on a work of theological scholarship called **The Key to All Mythologies**. He praises patience and diligent work as the keys to success, but over the course of the novel it becomes clear that he is paralyzed by insecurity and that the project will likely never be finished. Casaubon's cousin Will Ladislaw also reveals that because Casaubon doesn't read German, he has not been able to keep abreast of the latest developments in theological scholarship and that his project will not be taken seriously (if it is ever published at all). Casaubon suffers from ill health and dies only a few years after marrying Dorothea. Toward the end of his life he becomes intensely suspicious of Will's feelings about Dorothea, and thus stipulates in his will that if Dorothea marries Will she will lose all the property she inherited from him.

Mrs. Elinor Cadwallader – Mrs. Cadwallader is a friend of the Brooke family. She is born into a noble family but "married down;" her husband, Mr. Cadwallader, is neither high-ranking

nor wealthy. She is a nosy, gossip-prone woman who involves herself in the arrangement of marriages in Middlemarch. She is also very charming and delivers some of the most memorable, cutting lines in the novel.

Will Ladislaw – Will Ladislaw is Casaubon's young cousin. A romantic and earnest idealist, he is descended from two generations of rebellious women: his paternal grandmother Julia married a poor Polish musician, causing her wealthy family to abandon her, while his mother Sarah ran away from her family after she found out their pawnbroking business was based on theft and instead pursued a career as an actress. Will inherited this rebellious spirit; however, despite his passionate nature and engagement with politics, he can be restless and struggles to commit himself to pursuits that don't "come easily." Although he is reluctant to admit it, Ladislaw comes to live in Middlemarch in order to be near Dorothea, who at the time is still married to Casaubon. Mr. Brooke hires him to edit the *Pioneer*, and Will devotes himself to pushing the issue of electoral reform. After Casaubon dies and Will and Dorothea marry, they move to London and Will pursues a successful political career as a "public figure."

Mr. Nicholas Bulstrode – Mr. Bulstrode is a wealthy banker who was not born in Middlemarch, but rather moved there as an adult. Little is known about his family background, which makes him an object of suspicion. This suspicion is heightened by the fact that he is an evangelical Methodist, which is an unusual and distrusted form of faith in Middlemarch. Bulstrode occupies a number of prominent roles in Middlemarch, including being the founder and financer of the **New Hospital**, which he hires Lydgate to direct. Bulstrode passionately believes in bringing medical reform to the area and is frustrated by the opposition he encounters. Toward the end of the novel, John Raffles shows up in Middlemarch with a secret about Bulstrode's past: as a young man Bulstrode was taken in by the Dunkirk family, who made their money from pawning stolen goods. He married the elderly widow Mrs. Dunkirk and deliberately concealed the location of her daughter Sarah so that he would inherit her wealth. Raffles's attempt to blackmail Bulstrode fails when Raffles dies of alcohol poisoning; Bulstrode accelerated Raffles's death by neglecting to tell the servant how much opium to give him and by giving in to his pleas for alcohol. However, it never becomes totally clear how guilty Bulstrode is in actually causing Raffles' death. Despite Raffles's death, Bulstrode's secret becomes public knowledge in Middlemarch anyway. Mired in scandal, Bulstrode contemplates committing suicide, but eventually settles for leaving Middlemarch. He is able to get through this terrible period in part thanks to the loyal love of his wife, Mrs. Bulstrode.

Tertius Lydgate – Tertius Lydgate is an idealistic, ambitious young doctor who arrives in Middlemarch hoping to positively reform the state of medicine in the area. Trained in London, Edinburgh, and Paris, he is passionate about the latest advances in medical research and hopes to open a medical school attached to the **New Hospital**, of which he is the director. Lydgate faces bitter opposition to his plans for reform, particularly from the other doctors in Middlemarch. Things get worse when he marries Rosamond Vincy, whom he loves, but who pressures him into spending money he doesn't have in order to impress others. Tormented by debt, Lydgate accepts a loan from Bulstrode and gets implicated in the scandal surrounding him. Following this Lydgate is forced to abandon the directorship of the New Hospital and move to London. Despite some success there he considers himself a failure because he never realized his excessive ambitions. He dies of diptheria at the age of 50.

Mrs. Lucy Vincy – Mrs. Vincy is a wealthy, somewhat obnoxious Middlemarch woman who spoils her children, claiming that her eldest two children Fred and Rosamond are the best young man and woman in Middlemarch. Her sister was married to Mr. Featherstone, and this link between her family and the Featherstones leads them to mistakenly believe that Fred will inherit Featherstone's land upon his death.

Rosamond Vincy – Rosamond is the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Vincy. She is renowned for her extraordinary beauty and practically every man in Middlemarch is in love with her. She is also a talented musician. Rosamond is haughty, shallow, and manipulative. She marries Lydgate in the hope that she will move up in rank through doing so, and she is bitterly angry when her illusions are broken and she realizes Lydgate is poor (and that he despises his high-ranking relatives). Rosamond is deceptive, rude, and uncooperative with Lydgate, repeatedly going behind his back and refusing to make financial sacrifices. She knows she can easily manipulate him and does so often. Throughout most of the novel, Rosamond is adamant that she has done nothing wrong while everyone else is to blame for the great disappointments in her life. An emotional conversation with Dorothea appears to make Rosamond see the error of her ways; however, this change of spirit doesn't last long. Throughout her marriage to Lydgate she continues to feel resentful of him; after Lydgate dies she marries a much wealthier doctor, which she claims is her "reward."

Fred Vincy – Fred is the eldest son of the Vincy family. When the novel begins he is lazy, irresponsible, and obnoxious. He has failed his university exam and has thus returned home. He expects to inherit land from Mr. Featherstone, which causes him to be overconfident and reckless with money; he gets into debt through gambling and causes the Garth family significant financial trouble after Caleb Garth cosigns his debt. Fred feels guilty about how his actions affect the Garths, but he remains self-centered, ultimately caring most about his own feelings. After Featherstone's land goes to Featherstone's illegitimate son, Joshua Rigg, Mr. Vincy forces Fred to go back to university and finish his theology degree. Fred does so but then refuses to

enter the church, mostly because his childhood sweetheart, Mary Garth, says she will never marry him if he becomes a clergyman. Fred eventually becomes an apprentice to Caleb, becoming more mature and responsible in the process. He and Mary get married, have three children, and Fred becomes a prosperous farmer.

Mary Garth – Mary Garth is the eldest daughter of Caleb and Mrs. Garth. She is plain-looking but intelligent, pragmatic, honest, and honorable. She cares for Featherstone while he is dying. Although she is continually frustrated by Fred's bad behavior (particularly after he loses her family's savings), she remains devoted to him. They eventually get married and have three children. Mary publishes a successful children's book but gives the author's credit to Fred.

Mr. Peter Featherstone – Mr. Featherstone is a very rich and widely disliked man in Middlemarch. As he dies, his family members clamor around him not because they love him but because they hope to inherit some of his fortune. Featherstone writes two wills; the second, which overrules the first, gives all his land to his illegitimate son, Joshua Rigg.

Mr. Caleb Garth – Caleb Garth is a kind, honest, hardworking, and generous man. He is passionate about "business," the word he uses to describe working in construction and the development of land. However, he has a problem with charging too little for his work or even working for free, and as a result his family is very poor. Caleb is one of the most morally upstanding characters in the novel. He helps many people, particularly Fred, even though he is exasperated by Fred's behavior. His kindness to Fred arguably emerges from his extremely close relationship with his daughter Mary, who has loved Fred since childhood. Mr. Brooke eventually makes him the manager of both Freshitt and Tipton, which greatly improves his family's financial circumstances.

Mr. Camden Farebrother – Mr. Farebrother is a local vicar and bachelor. He is kind, always trying to help those around him. He is not a very strict or "spiritual" clergyman, but nonetheless embodies Christian values of love, generosity, and acceptance. He develops a romantic interest in Mary Garth but steps aside when he realizes Fred and Mary want to be together. After Casaubon's death he takes over his post as clergyman at Lowick.

Laure – Laure is an actress Lydgate fell in love with while he lived in Paris. During a theatre performance she stabbed her husband (a fellow actor) to death onstage; there is confusion over whether it was intentional, though Lydgate maintains it was an accident. She flees to Avignon and Lydgate follows her there, only to have her to tell him that she stabbed her husband on purpose and that she doesn't like husbands. This episode gives Lydgate a lifelong fear of women.

Joshua Rigg – Joshua Rigg (who later becomes Joshua Rigg-Featherstone after inheriting his father's land) is the illegitimate son of Mr. Featherstone. His inheritance of Featherstone's entire fortune shocks everyone in Middlemarch except Rigg himself. He sells Featherstone's house, Stone Court, to Bulstrode, and leaves town to fulfill his lifelong dream of opening his own money-changing shop on a busy quay.

John Raffles – John Raffles is Joshua Rigg's stepfather. He is an alcoholic who would beat Joshua. Raffles also worked for Bulstrode in the past; Busltrode hired him to find Mrs. Dunkirk's daughter, Sarah, and then bribed him to pretend that Sarah couldn't be found. Raffles returns to Middlemarch, threatening to reveal Bulstrode's secret. Bulstrode tries to pay him off but this does not work. Raffles contracts alcohol poisoning and dies in Bulstrode's house; Bulstrode hastens his death through improperly overseeing his medical care.

Mrs. Dunkirk – Mrs. Dunkirk was the wife of Mr. Dunkirk; following her husband's death she married Bulstrode. Before her own death Mrs. Dunkirk attempted to find her estranged daughter, Sarah, so that Sarah could inherit her fortune. However, after Bulstrode pretended that Sarah could not be found, Bulstrode inherited the fortune instead.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Mr. Humphrey Cadwallader – Mr. Cadwallader is the rector at Tipton Grange and a friend of the Brooke family. He is unusually kind and non-judgmental; his highly judgmental wife Mrs. Cadwallader says that this is because all he cares about is fishing.

Mr. Tucker – Mr. Tucker is the curate at Casaubon's estate, Lowick Manor.

(Dowager) Lady Chettam – Lady Chettam, who becomes the Dowager Lady Chettam after Sir James marries Celia, is Sir James's mother.

Mr. Walter Vincy – Mr. Vincy is a wealthy manufacturer. He and his wife Mrs. Vincy spoil their children, which he comes to regret when his eldest son Fred fails to enter the church after taking a theology degree.

Mrs. Waule – Mrs. Waule is one of Featherstone's relatives.

Mr. Tyke – Mr. Tyke is an evangelical clergyman whom Bulstrode favors to be appointed chaplain at the **New Hospital**. He beats Farebrother to the position after pressure from Bulstrode makes Lydgate reluctantly vote for Tyke.

Mrs. Harriet Bulstrode – Mrs. Bulstrode is Bulstrode's wife and Mr. Vincy's sister. She is kind and deeply loyal to her husband, even after the scandal breaks out.

John Waule – John Waule is a relative of Mr. Featherstone.

Dr. Sprague – Dr. Sprague is one of the old, high-ranking doctors in Middlemarch whose medical skill is decidedly lacking.

Mrs. Plymdale – Mrs. Plymdale is a high-ranking woman and

the mother of Ned.

Mrs. Farebrother – Mrs. Farebrother is Mr. Farebrother's mother. She is a friendly but socially conservative woman.

Miss Henrietta Noble – Henrietta Noble is Mrs. Farebrother's unmarried sister.

Miss Winifred Farebrother – Winifred is Mr. Farebrother's sister.

Mr. Trawley – Mr. Trawley was Lydgate's roommate during the period he was living in Paris.

Dr. Minchin – Dr. Minchin is a local Middlemarch doctor.

Mr. Toller – Mr. Toller is a medical practitioner in Middlemarch.

Mr. Hawley (Sr.) – Mr. Hawley is a lawyer in Middlemarch.

Rev. Edward Thesiger – Rev. Edward Thesiger is Bulstrode's pastor.

Tantripp – Tantripp is a servant employed at Lowick Manor. She accompanies Dorothea and Casaubon on their honeymoon.

Mr. Bambridge – Mr. Bambridge is the local-horse dealer, who has a habit of lending money to young, hedonistic men (including Fred).

Mr. Horrock – Mr. Horrock is the veterinarian in Middlemarch.

Letty Garth – Letty Garth is one of Caleb and Mrs. Garth's daughters.

Ben Garth – Ben Garth is one of Caleb and Mrs. Garth's sons.

Alfred Garth – Alfred Garth is one of Caleb and Mrs. Garth's sons. They are forced to give away the money they were saving for Alfred's apprenticeship when Fred cannot pay his debt.

Ned Plymdale – Ned Plymdale is a young, wealthy, and high-ranking bachelor in Middlemarch. He initially courts Rosamond and later marries Sophy Toller.

Jonah Featherstone – Jonah is one of Mr. Featherstone's relatives.

Mr. Trumbull – Mr. Trumbull is the Middlemarch auctioneer.

Mr. Standish – Mr. Standish is Mr. Featherstone's lawyer.

Mr. Hackbutt – Mr. Hackbutt is a local man in Middlemarch.

Mr. Hawley (Jr.) – "Young" Hawley is the son of Mr. Hawley, Sr. He is training to be a lawyer like his father.

Julia Ladislaw – Julia was Will Ladislaw's grandmother and Casaubon's great-aunt. Born into a high-ranking and prosperous family, she married a poor Polish musician whom she loved and was subsequently abandoned by her relatives.

Mr. Dagley – Mr. Dagley is one of Mr. Brooke's tenants.

Mr. Mawmsey – Mr. Mawmsey is the Middlemarch grocer.

Sarah Ladislaw (née Dunkirk) – Sarah is Will's mother. She was born into the Dunkirk family, who made their money through pawning stolen goods. When Sarah learns this she runs away from home and becomes an actress.

Hiram – Hiram is a wagon-driver in Middlemarch.

Solomon Featherstone – Solomon is a landowner opposed to the **railway**, and one of Mr. Featherstone's relatives.

Tom – Tom is Caleb's assistant. He is attacked by local farmworkers opposed to the **railway**.

Christy Garth – Christy is one of the Garths' children. He is studying and is very passionate about education.

Captain Lydgate – Captain Lydgate is one of Tertius Lydgate's high-ranking relatives. Rosamond adores him but Tertius despises him.

Sir Godwin – Sir Godwin is Tertius's rich, high-ranking uncle. He refuses to lend Tertius and Rosamond money after Rosamond writes to him to ask.

Mr. Dover – Mr. Dover is the local silversmith.

Mr. Dunkirk – Mr. Dunkirk was a man who befriended the young Bulstrode and made Bulstrode the accountant of his pawnbroking business. The business pawned stolen goods.

Sophy Toller – Sophy Toller is a high-ranking young woman who marries Ned Plymdale.

Mrs. Toller – Mrs. Toller is Sophy's mother.

Mrs. Hackbutt – Mrs. Hackbutt is Mr. Hackbutt's wife.

Mrs. Garth The wife of Caleb Garth. She is generally kind and tolerant (perhaps too much so), though she recognizes that her husband is too generous.

Adolf Naumann A German painter, who is friends with Will and also tutors him in art and painting. Naumann is much taken with Dorothea, and regularly mocks Casaubon.

Mr. Wrench The Vincy family's doctor.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

WOMEN AND GENDER

George Eliot's *Middlemarch* is set in a fictional Midlands town in the early nineteenth century, an environment in which typical gender roles are very are strictly enforced. While men are also expected to live up to gendered ideals, *Middlemarch* mostly focuses on the way that such expectations are particularly restrictive and suffocating for women. This is explored most notably through the novel's central character, Dorothea Brooke, who dreams of a grand, intense, and meaningful life that is fundamentally incompatible with the role society has prescribed for her. As a result, she

becomes confused about what she really wants and makes some bad life decisions that only serve to further isolate her from her true self and desires. Through Dorothea, the novel implicitly critiques the oppressive expectations society places on women. At the same time, however, it also shows that any resistance is inherently limited, as alternative ways of living for women at the time simply did not exist.

As a heroine, Dorothea is deeply sympathetic. She is ambitious, idealistic, free-spirited, and kind, yet these admirable aspects of her personality make it difficult for her to conform to the gender norms of the society in which she lives.

For example, she is "enamored of intensity and greatness," fond of horse-riding, and dreams of building **cottages** for tenant farmers so that they might live in better conditions. These passions do not conform with societal expectations of women, and thus although these dreams and impulses exist very strongly within her, Dorothea feels ashamed of them and attempts to suppress them. She wants to conform to a feminine ideal, which leads her to be highly self-critical and continually make promises she doesn't keep (such as her vow to give up horse-riding).

Dorothea's half-hearted attempt to suppress her own desires and personality leads her to exist in a confused and self-contradictory state. This shows that gender roles have the effect of alienating women from themselves.

Dorothea attempts to resolve the internal conflict she feels between her desires and societal gender roles by marrying the much older Rev. Edward Casaubon. Because Casaubon is a scholar working on a highly ambitious project on religious history (**The Key to All Mythologies**), she believes that she can access the "intensity and greatness" she craves via him.

When Dorothea decides to marry Casaubon, the people around her are confused and (accurately) predict that the marriage will not bring her happiness. They can see what Dorothea herself cannot: she is both suppressing her own nature and trying to achieve the impossible by living through her future husband. Dorothea claims that she wants a husband who can be like a father to her and teach her about things; however, as Mr. Brooke points out, she is a strong-willed person attached to her own opinions. Marrying Casaubon is thus a recipe for disaster.

It is painful to witness Dorothea make such a patently bad life decision, which ends up making her miserable. At the same time, the novel's exploration of gender norms shows that Dorothea's decision to marry Casaubon is not made out of mere foolishness. Rather, Dorothea is trapped by the conflict between her own impulses and society's expectations of her as a woman. The misery of her marriage to Casaubon is only a symptom of this wider problem.

When Casaubon dies, Dorothea has a chance to reevaluate her life and, through her second marriage to Will Ladislaw, ends up choosing a path that brings her far greater happiness and fulfilment. This shows that it is better to stay true to oneself than to attempt to conform to society's restrictive ideals of how women should behave. On the other hand, Dorothea's ultimate fate as a housewife and mother reminds readers that there is only so much women can do to resist gender roles in a society that has so few rights, resources, and opportunities available to women.

Dorothea loves Will, but her own dreams—such as the cottages and "colony" she planned to build for tenant farmers—remain unrealized at the end of the novel. The narrator observes: "Many who knew her [Dorothea] thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another, and be known only in certain circles as a wife and mother. But no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done."

This captures the difficulty of the situation Dorothea and other strong-willed women of the time find themselves in. They desire a richer and more expansive life than that of a wife and mother, but the reality is that there is basically no alternative for them. Thus, even if they rebel against the gender norms of the era, there is only so much that this rebellion can achieve.

AMBITION AND DISAPPOINTMENT

The experience that unites all the characters in *Middlemarch* is disappointment. In the novel, disappointment is something that happens on both a broad scale (when one's lifelong dreams and ambitions do not come to pass) and on a more minor, everyday level. Indeed, at one point the narrator observes: "We mortals, men and women, devour many a disappointment between breakfast and dinner-time." This quotation indicates that disappointment is both a universal experience (it applies to all mortal beings, men and women) and that it is a notably frequent occurrence. Because disappointment is often inevitable, the novel suggests that it must be accepted as part of life. Doing so can even have positive side effects, such as forcing people to compromise and reconcile conflicting views.

The novel also presents ambition as an integral part of the human condition. In some ways, the book presents a positive view of ambition as something that helps society advance and that makes life meaningful.

In the case of the young doctor Tertius Lydgate, being orphaned young meant that he did not end up automatically following the vocation of his father, but instead picked a career based on "intellectual passion." When he discovered such a passion for medicine, his guardians allowed him to pursue it, and the result was that he became an enthusiastic and talented doctor. Lydgate's passionate ambitions make him a good doctor, which has a positive impact on the community: not only does he save Fred Vincy's life, but he helps open the **New Hospital**,

which brings medical advancements to Middlemarch.

Ambition is important both as a means of personal fulfilment and as a way of stimulating societal progress. Without ambition, life can seem empty and pointless, and professional roles are filled by people who are unenthusiastic and likely inept (as is the case of the doctors in Middlemarch before Lydgate's arrival).

Yet despite these positive sides of ambition, ambition can also be dangerous—not least because it virtually guarantees disappointment in some form. Lydgate's fervent ambitions mean that he sets expectations for himself (and others) that are too high. His pursuit of a medical career is arguably too single-minded, leading him to neglect other aspects of his life such as marriage. At first Lydgate refuses to even consider getting married until he has fulfilled his professional ambitions, which is shown to be an unrealistic and impractical way of approaching life. His obsessive focus on his career then leads him to make a mistake by marrying Rosamond, with whom he is fundamentally incompatible.

Lydgate's trajectory suggests that single-minded ambition will lead to disappointment because it disrupts the balance in one's life. Despite having a life that—like pretty much all lives—contains a mix of both successes and disappointments, when Lydgate dies he considers himself a failure. This suggests that if people are too ambitious in the first place, then they are setting themselves up for disappointment.

As Lydgate's story shows, one of the main ways that ambition and disappointment are explored in the novel is through marriage. Where other nineteenth-century novels often end with marriage, *Middlemarch* depicts a series of marriages across the course of the narrative that are often filled with disappointment, boredom, conflict, and misery. In doing so, the novel challenges the idea that marriage is the ultimate ambition, a "happy ever after." Instead, marriage is usually shown to be a highly disappointing experience.

In choosing to marry the much older Edward Casaubon, Dorothea attempts to reconcile her own ideals and ambitions with the role of a married woman that she is expected to play. Casaubon is a scholar who has been working on an ambitious work of theological writing, **The Key to All Mythologies**, for many years. Dorothea dreams both of submitting to Casaubon's will (as a good wife should) and of putting her intellect to use by helping him with his scholarship. Yet this dream is doomed, both by the fact that Casaubon himself is something of a fraud whose scholarly work is not actually very good, and by the fact that he doesn't respect Dorothea as his intellectual equal and thus does not want her assistance.

Dorothea's miserable union with Casaubon becomes the primary example of disappointing and disastrous marriage. At one point the marriage is described as "an enclosed basin;" several other times it is referred to as a "prison," and Casaubon's cousin Will Ladislaw even tells Dorothea that she will be "buried alive" at Casaubon's house, Lowick Manor. These descriptions highlight the extreme extent to which women lose their freedom and agency within marriage. Even worse, this imprisonment is basically permanent: the only hope of escape is if one's husband dies, as happens to both Dorothea and, later, Rosamond.

The trope of disappointment in marriage both proves the novel's point that disappointment must be accepted as part of life and shows that this acceptance can be impossibly difficult. Disappointment might be an inevitable (or at least highly likely) component of marriage, but a bad marriage can have the effect of permanently ruining a person's life. While Dorothea and Rosamond are lucky enough to get second chances, this is only possible because their first husbands die before they do.

Over the course of the novel it becomes clear that one can avoid being broken by disappointment by setting more realistic goals and ambitions. At the same time, it is impossible to avoid disappointment altogether. No one can predict the trajectory of their career or marriage, and in this sense disappointment is inevitable. Furthermore, disappointment is the necessary flip side of having ambitions in the first place, and both ambitions *and* disappointment are thus shown to be essential aspects of human existence.

COMMUNITY AND CLASS

Rather than focusing on the lives of a small group of characters, *Middlemarch* is about an entire community: the fictional town of the novel's title. Significantly, the book is also set thirty years before it was written, and is full of detail about this important, tumultuous period in English history. The novel's subtitle, "A Study of Provincial Life," indicates that the book intends to give readers a sense of what "provincial life" is like during this period, during which the class system remained both highly rigid and extremely prominent as a way of structuring pretty much every part of society. This "provincial life" is further defined by the fact that the characters are all connected to one another in a complex familial, marital, political, and professional web. While this close-knit aspect of the community has a positive dimension, overall the novel condemns the way that small communities like Middlemarch can foster small-mindedness, pettiness, and intense social hierarchies.

In *Middlemarch*, class anxiety emerges primarily through an obsession with family reputation. The obsession leads Middlemarch residents to be overly involved with and critical of other people's choices, especially women's choices of whom to marry. There is little privacy in Middlemarch, and certain characters (such as Mrs. Cadwallader) exacerbate this by being prone to gossip and judgment about marriages in the community. For example, Mrs. Cadwallader is highly judgmental of both Dorothea's marriage to Casaubon and her

relationship with Will.

Coming from a "good" family is highly valued, yet considering that no one can actually change the social status of their own family, the only way to rise in rank is through marriage. At the same time, the novel suggests that fixating on social status and improving it through marriage can have profoundly negative effects on people's lives. Rosamond eagerly marries Lydgate because he comes from a noble family: "[Lydgate] had a profession and was clever, as well as sufficiently handsome; but the piquant fact about Lydgate was his good birth, which distinguished him from all Middlemarch admirers, and presented marriage as a Prospect of rising in rank." Rosamond is fixated on improving her own social standing, so much so that she ignores the reality that Lydgate is poor. In the end, his lack of wealth makes their marriage disastrous and miserable. Family name may be important, but it cannot compensate for the material reality of not having enough money.

To make matters worse, those whose families can't be traced (either because they come from elsewhere or, as in the case of Joshua Rigg, they are "illegitimate" children born outside of marriage) are treated with suspicion. For example, the narrator notes that Middlemarch townspeople are suspicious of Bulstrode not just because he is a Methodist, but also because "five-and-twenty years ago no one had ever heard of a Bulstrode in Middlemarch." This detail shows how difficult it is for a person to gain acceptance within Middlemarch. Anyone who is different or who does not have a good (or known) family reputation is immediately subject to skeptical scrutiny.

This fixation on class and family reputation over other, more meaningful merits also makes life in the town backwards and dysfunctional. On the subject of doctors, the narrator notes that "this was one of the difficulties of moving in good Middlemarch society: it was dangerous to insist on knowledge as a qualification for any salaried office." People tend to favor certain doctors because they are popular or have simply been around for a long time, rather than because they have the best medical knowledge and skill. This reveals that people in this world care far more about a person's class and reputation than their actual ability to perform in a professional role.

This obsession with status distinguishes Middlemarch from more metropolitan parts of England (and from the rest of the world) during this era. While hardly confined to provincial areas, fixation on class and family reputation is far more pronounced in places like Middlemarch than it is in cities like London. Because there are both fewer people and fewer *kinds* of people living there than somewhere like London, everyone is keenly aware of where they exist on the same, deeply hierarchical social map.

In this sense, the obsession with hierarchy and status within the Middlemarch community keeps the community back while other parts of the country advance. There are some benefits to the intense interconnection that exists between residents of Middlemarch; there are many instances when the townspeople help one another out, such as when Caleb takes on the wayward Fred as an apprentice or when Dorothea writes Lydgate a £1000 check so he is no longer in debt to Bulstrode. However, overall the small-town aspect of life in the town forces the community and its members to remain stuck in an old-fashioned, unjust, and self-defeating way of living.

PROGRESS AND REFORM

Middlemarch is set during a highly tumultuous time in English history, when dramatic developments in politics, science, and industrialization were having a major impact on the country. In the novel, "reform" has both a specific meaning and a more general one: specifically, it refers to the push for parliamentary reform that centered around the Reform Act of 1832. "Reform" also refers to more general changes in the novel, such as Lydgate's passion for medical reform. At one point the narrator refers to the period in which the novel is set as the "ante-reform times." In Middlemarch, then, this is also an *anti*-reform era, as most residents remain at least skeptical of—and often staunchly opposed to—the reform and progress taking place. The novel emphatically shows that such closed-mindedness is misguided and dangerous, and that it will ultimately hold Middlemarch back while the rest of the world moves toward a better future.

The period in which the novel is set is so tumultuous that at one point it is described as having an apocalyptic atmosphere, with Mr. Vincy unsure of "whether it were only the general election or the end of the world that was coming on, now that George the Fourth was dead, Parliament dissolved, Wellington and Peel generally depreciated and the new King apologetic."

Mr. Vincy's thoughts show that rather than greeting change and reform with excitement, many Middlemarch residents are horrified. While it is perhaps natural to be fearful in times of great change, the invocation of "the end of the world" suggests that Vincy has an irrationally negative view of the reform sweeping the country. This is particularly true considering that the changes taking place aim to make the country more democratic, fair, affluent, and efficient, rather than having a destructive effect.

The locus of political change around which the novel revolves is the Reform Act of 1832. This parliamentary Act created change in what was previously a deeply unjust and undemocratic system of political representation. It expanded voting rights such that 1 in 5 men became eligible to vote, and it simultaneously abolished aspects of the electoral system that allowed wealthy noblemen to wield arbitrary, unearned power.

Within the novel, Mr. Brooke and Will Ladislaw are the most prominent supporters of the reform platform (although Brooke is initially reluctant to support reform and has to be persuaded by Will to do so). Both commit themselves to this agenda even

as they face ostracization and ridicule for doing so. Some of this opposition is based on legitimate concerns, such as the fact that Brooke's bad reputation as a tenant means it is hypocritical of him to be pushing a socially progressive agenda. At the same time it is also clear that most residents of Middlemarch will use any excuse to oppose reform and paint Brooke and Ladislaw's platform as dangerous and "radical."

The intense opposition that Brooke and Ladislaw encounter highlights the rather extreme extent to which Middlemarch residents are against reform. The novel itself is quite firmly on the side of progress, change, and the ideals of "liberty, freedom, [and] emancipation" that are wrapped up in the reform platform. It is critical of Middlemarch residents' resistance to change, suggesting that this resistance is ethically unfounded and makes them liable to be left behind as the rest of the country moves into the future.

Along with political reform, medical reform, scientific advancements, and industrialization are also drastically transforming the nature of life in England at the time. The question of medical progress is mostly explored through the character of Tertius Lydgate. Lydgate is a young doctor who has thrown his life into medicine, which his great passion. He is especially eager about the cause of medical reform and gets involved with the **New Hospital** being built in Middlemarch. Indeed, the narrator explains that Lydgate was attracted to medicine precisely *because* it was a field in need of reform.

The urgency with which medicine in Middlemarch needs reforming is illustrated by a quote from Mr. Bulstrode, who explains: "The standard of the profession [medicine] is low in Middlemarch…I mean in knowledge and skill; not in social status, for our medical men are most of them connected with respectable townspeople here…I am painfully aware of the backwardness under which medical treatment labors in our provincial districts." This quotation highlights the fact that Middlemarch operates according to an old system wherein "good birth" qualifies men to be doctors, rather than intelligence, knowledge, and skill.

This point links the issue of medical reform to the broader question of political reform. The implication is that in a more democratic, merit-based society, the field of medicine will advance because people will practice medicine based on their ability to do so, not simply because they are born into the right family. The connection between medical reform and political reform is explicitly made by the narrator later in the novel: "While Lydgate, safely married and with the Hospital under his command, felt himself struggling for Medical Reform against Middlemarch, Middlemarch was becoming more and more conscious of the national struggle for another kind of Reform."

The issue of medical reform is not just one of justice: it actually endangers Middlemarch residents by leading them to be treated by inept doctors. This problem is demonstrated when Fred Vincy suffers typhoid fever and is prescribed the wrong medicine by the Vincys' family doctor, Mr. Wrench. It is only when Lydgate intervenes and gives the correct diagnosis that Fred's condition improves. For obvious reasons, the question of medical reform is a life-or-death issue for residents of Middlemarch.

Despite the clear advantages of welcoming medical and scientific progress into Middlemarch, however, much of the community remains just as staunchly opposed to this progress as they are to political reform. This is best illustrated by the incident toward the end of the novel when Caleb Garth attempts to plan the construction of a **railway** through Lowick. The narrator explains that Middlemarch residents are markedly unenthusiastic about the new technology of railway travel, which women of the community deem "presumptuous and dangerous:" "In the hundred to which Middlemarch belonged railways were as exciting a topic as the Reform Bill or the imminent horrors of Cholera." Once again, the comparison of railways to the Reform Bill links the issue of political reform to that of scientific and industrial advancement.

Middlemarchers are adamantly opposed to both political and scientific reform, out of both fear of change and attachment to old, dysfunctional ways of life. This opposition intensifies the impression that they are a backwards community suspicious of change and progress—even if it might benefit them.

MONEY AND GREED

Both money and the lack of it cause many problems for the characters in *Middlemarch*. Some characters are obsessed with money, whereas others spurn it. The novel strongly indicates that it is better not to obsess over money and to focus on other forms of fulfilment. At the same time, it also becomes clear that it is impossible not to care about money at all. Not only is having some amount of money necessary to survive, but money is also a major factor in the social hierarchy of the Middlemarch community. For this reason, it cannot be ignored.

The novel presents a variety of ways in which money issues can have a damaging, even ruinous impact on a person's life. One way is through gambling and debt. Fred Vincy gambles and becomes indebted to the local horse-dealer Mr. Bambridge, a situation he at first does not take seriously because he has always been able to rely on his father's money: "Fred had always (at that time) his father's pocket as a last resource, so that his assets of hopefulness had a sort of gorgeous superfluity about them. Of what might be the capacity of his father's pocket, Fred had only a vague notion." This quotation highlights that growing up wealthy can make people foolish and reckless with money, leading them to make bad decisions that end up losing them their wealth. His father's money has always given Fred a sense of security, but that security is in fact counterproductive, firstly because he doesn't actually know how much money his father has, and secondly because it leads

him into reckless behaviors like borrowing and gambling. Fred's debt and inability to pay it ends up causing him misery. Whatever brief elation is sparked by gambling is counteracted by the difficulties that follow.

Another way in which money has a problematic impact on people's lives is through the greed stimulated by the possibility of inheritance. This is best demonstrated by the scene of Mr. Featherstone's funeral, when all his many relatives (some very distant) assemble to hear the reading of his will. This scene brings out the very worst in the assembled characters; rather than focusing on mourning Featherstone or even just maintaining dignity during the reading of the will, they greedily obsess over how much they will inherit from him. This is illustrated by the description of Fred Vincy biting his cheeks to stop himself from smiling when he learns of his inheritance. When the second version of Featherstone's will is read, stipulating that the beneficiaries will not actually receive what they were promised in the first will, the anger that ensues further shows how greed brings out the ugliest sides of people.

Yet another significant way in which money ruins people's lives is the concept of "dirty money," which becomes especially prominent toward the end of the novel. When a desperate Lydgate is forced to the brink of declaring bankruptcy, he accepts a loan offered to him by Bulstrode. It turns out that this money was acquired through deception and theft, and when this fact emerges Lydgate is implicated in the scandal that ensues, making him a pariah in Middlemarch society.

Lydgate's foolishness in accepting Bulstrode's money is further emphasized by the fact that earlier in the novel, Will Ladislaw had refused money Bulstrode offered him precisely because he knew Bulstrode had acquired it by nefarious means. Rather than being seduced by the prospect of Bulstrode's offer, Ladislaw declares: "You shall keep your ill-gotten money." This incident confirms Ladislaw's status as one of the most admirable, morally upstanding characters in the novel. Of course, it would be possible to argue that Lydgate's desperate financial situation makes it impossible for him to refuse Bulstrode's money. At the same time, the comparison between Lydgate's decision and Ladislaw's suggests that it is never worth it to accept "ill-gotten money," even if the alternative is bankruptcy. This reinforces the point that acquiring money often ultimately causes more problems than it solves.

Along with Ladislaw, Dorothea and Caleb Garth are other examples of characters who reject greed. Dorothea repeatedly says she hates her wealth, and she eventually chooses to marry Ladislaw even though the stipulation in Casaubon's will means that doing so will make her lose everything she inherited from her deceased husband. In choosing Ladislaw, she echoes the decision of Ladislaw's own grandmother Julia, who was cut off by her family after she chose to marry a poor Polish musician whom she loved.

Dorothea's fascination with Ladislaw's grandmother's story suggests that Dorothea has a rather romantic idea of choosing love over money. She explains that she would love to know how Julia "bore the change from wealth to poverty," unaware that this foreshadows her own trajectory later in the novel (although, importantly, Dorothea does not end up impoverished, only significantly less wealthy than she was before). The novel strongly indicates that it is important to stick to one's principles (be they love or honor) and in doing so choose fulfilment over money.

At the same time, there is an extent to which Dorothea's romanticization of Julia's life story is naïve. Dorothea has never had to face the reality of poverty, and thus is ignorant of how serious a sacrifice it can be to choose fulfilment over money.

The example of Caleb Garth further demonstrates that eschewing money is important in principle but can cause problems in reality. The narrator notes that in contrast to their more lavish neighbors, "the Garths were poor, and 'lived in a small way.'" Considering the novel's condemnation of greed, this is an admirable quality. At the same time, the Garths' relative poverty means that when Caleb lends Fred Vincy money, Fred's inability to pay him back becomes disastrous for the Garths. Caleb's generosity is admirable but also dangerous, due to the fact that money is necessary to survival.

Comparing Caleb Garth's and Fred Vincy's behaviour suggests that both greed *and* indifference to money can lead to foolish decisions. While the novel indicates that it is important not to be greedy, a total lack of greed is not advisable either, because money is (perhaps unfortunately) such an important part of life.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

COTTAGES

Dorothea Brooke, one of the main characters in *Middlemarch*, cares about social progress and is also fixated on the idea of making an impact on the world. As a hobby, she makes architectural drawings for cottages for the tenant farmers who live and work on her uncle Mr. Brooke's estate. Dorothea's obsession with planning the cottages marks as different from the other women in Middlemarch. Women of her class are encouraged to engage in light aesthetic pursuits such as fine art and music—although even these are not supposed to be taken very seriously. Dorothea, however, throws herself into her designs for the tenants' cottages, disregarding the social norms that prohibit women from engaging in a field like architecture and ignoring the fact that she does not have the formal education to support this work. The cottages thus symbolize Dorothea's utopian vision along with the theme of social progress; Dorothea hopes that they

will improve tenants' wellbeing and she puts a great deal of care into her designs. However, the cottages also highlight the limits of ambition, alongside Dorothea's naivety and the restrictions on what a woman can achieve in Middlemarch society. Although some characters such as Sir James Chettam support Dorothea's plans, this is largely to appease her, rather than because they actually believe in the cottages' viability. Ultimately the plans for the cottages never transpire, and as such they represent the failure of unrealized dreams.

THE KEY TO ALL MYTHOLOGIES

The Key to All Mythologies is the name of the work of theological scholarship to which the 45-year-old Rev. Edward Casaubon has dedicated several decades of his life. The grand title of the work highlights its ambitious scope, and when Dorothea first hears about it, she is captivated by the idea that the work will constitute a major contribution to knowledge. However, early on in Dorothea's marriage to Casaubon it emerges that the project is not as significant as it at first appears. Will Ladislaw informs Dorothea that because Casaubon does not read German, he has not been able to keep up with the latest developments in the field of theology, which means that *The Key to All Mythologies* is doomed to be outdated and irrelevant. Casaubon dies without finishing the project; he entrusts the notes to Dorothea and asks her to shape them into a finished product, but at this point Dorothea realizes that it will never amount to anything and considers it a "tomb" in which Casaubon has buried her. Like the **cottages**, *The Key to All Mythologies* thus symbolizes the failure of unrealized ambitions. However, because of Casaubon's show of confidence in the work, it also represents the dangers of self-delusion. Casaubon is secretly insecure about the project, but instead of admitting this he becomes secretive and cagey about it. *The Key to All Mythologies* is seemingly impressive, but ultimately insubstantial.

NEW HOSPITAL

The New Hospital is established by Nicholas Bulstrode (who finances and manages it) and Tertius Lydgate (who serves as the medical director) as a way to raise the standard of medical care in Middlemarch. They plan to conduct research there and even hope to open an affiliated medical school one day. The New Hospital is thus designed to be a cutting-edge institution in the midst of a largely backwards, provincial area that tends to be resistant to technological progress and reform. The resistance of the local people makes it difficult for the New Hospital to flourish; none of the Middlemarch doctors will work there, and Lydgate thus has to employ people from outside the area. Ultimately the financial scandal that drives both Bulstrode and Lydgate from Middlemarch dooms the hospital to failure, and after this point it is attached to the Old Infirmary. Even without the scandal, however, it is unclear whether the New Hospital would have been able to survive. It symbolizes the difficulty of progress in an area where most people are skeptical of reform. While Bulstrode, Lydgate, and Dorothea have great hopes for the hospital, most of the characters are still too attached to the old way of doing things to see the advantages a new institution could bring.

RAILWAY

Rail transport was still fairly new to England during the period in which the novel is set, which is just before the "railway boom" of the 1840s. As a result, the railway is yet another way in which the novel explores the tension between progress and resistance to change. When local people hear about plans for a railway that will cut through patches of land in Middlemarch, there is widespread fury and hysteria. Landowners and tenants alike are resistant to the idea of the land being cut up, whereas the local women adamantly oppose the railway on the grounds that traveling by rail is "presumptuous" and dangerous. These fears show that much opposition to the railway is essentially baseless. As Caleb points out after a group of anti-railway farmers attack him and his assistant with hay forks, the local people have been fed misinformation about the railway in order to ramp up opposition to it. At the same time, some of the reasons that the Middlemarchers give for opposing the railway are more valid than the reasons that they oppose other forms of technological progress (such as the **New Hospital**). One farm worker points out that the railway will only benefit rich people, which is a legitimate and prescient concern. Working-class men like him are disenfranchised and have no way to express their opposition to the railway other than through violence (hence the attack on Caleb and his assistant). The avalanche of industrial technology and the railway boom may not benefit them, but they are powerless to stop it.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the HarperCollins edition of *Middlemarch* published in 2015.

Book 1, Chapter 1 Quotes

❝ Women were expected to have weak opinions; but the great safeguard of society and of domestic life was, that opinions were not acted on. Sane people did what their neighbours did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 9

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator has explained that Dorothea's beauty and inheritance ought to make her highly desirable as a potential wife. However, her religious piety and flair for drama undercut these marriageable qualities. As this quotation shows, the fact that Dorothea has strong rather than "weak opinions" marks her as different from other women in Middlemarch and from the ideal of how women are supposed to behave. Indeed, this quotation indicates that people are actually frightened or disturbed by a woman with strong opinions, which is why there needs to be a "safeguard" against them.

The quotation also highlights how restrictions placed on women correspond to the conformity of a society like Middlemarch. When the narrator says that "sane people did what their neighbours did," they are not conveying their own opinion but rather expressing the opinion held by Middlemarch residents. Middlemarchers find safety and security in conformity, and are wary of the presence of "lunatics" in the community. The fact that the mention of lunatics comes after a discussion of women's opinions suggests that in this context, the word refers not to people who are literally insane but rather to those who break societal conventions. This includes women who—like Dorothea—violate the expectation that women's ideas should be "weak" and inconsequential.

Book 1, Chapter 4 Quotes

"It is very hard: it is your favourite fad to draw plans."

"Fad to draw plans! Do you think I only care about my fellow creatures' houses in that childish way? I may well make mistakes. How can one ever do anything nobly Christian, living among people with such petty thoughts?"

Related Characters: Celia Brooke, Dorothea Brooke (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 37

Explanation and Analysis

Sir James has been spending a lot of time at Tipton in his attempt to win over Dorothea, and he has enthusiastically agreed to build the cottages she has been designing for tenant farmers. However, when Celia tells Dorothea that Sir James clearly intends to propose to her, Dorothea is horrified. She insists that she must start being rude to Sir James and that she will have to abandon her plans for the cottages. In an attempt to comfort her, Celia calls Dorothea's architectural plans a "fad," which only enrages Dorothea further.

This quotation conveys Dorothea's frustration over having her ambitions read as "childish." She may not be an expert in architecture, but her commitment to improving the lives of the tenant workers is passionately earnest. Celia, who conforms to the ideal of femininity far more than Dorothea does, feels sympathy for her sister but clearly doesn't understand the true nature of Dorothea's interest in the cottages. By calling it a "fad," she suggests that it is an entertaining hobby for Dorothea rather than a serious endeavor.

Of course, there is a certain extent to which Celia is right in this passage. Although Dorothea is earnestly committed to the cottages, after she marries Casaubon she gives them up in order to focus on assisting her husband with his scholarship. Later, she develops and then also abandons a plan to build a "colony" for poor farmworkers after Sir James and Mr. Brooke persuade her it is not realistic. In this light, her interest in the cottages *is* something of a "fad."

Book 1, Chapter 6 Quotes

She would never have disowned any one on the ground of poverty… But her feeling towards the vulgar rich was a sort of religious hatred: they had probably made all their money out of high retail prices, and Mrs Cadwallader detested high prices for everything that was not paid in kind at the Rectory: such people were no part of God's design in making the world; and their accent was an affliction to the ears. A town where such monsters abounded was hardly more than a sort of low comedy, which could not be taken account of in a well-bred scheme of the universe.

Related Characters: Mrs. Elinor Cadwallader

Related Themes:

Page Number: 60

Explanation and Analysis

Having learned about Dorothea's engagement to Casaubon,

Mrs. Cadwallader goes immediately to find Sir James and tell him the bad news. She then suggests to him that he marry Celia instead. Following this exchange the narrator gives more insight into Mrs. Cadwallader's background and personality. She is fascinated by the gossip sent to her in letters from her aristocratic relatives. This quotation explains that while she is not remotely prejudiced toward poor people, she despises those who become rich from commerce.

This might at first seem to be a radical, progressive opinion, but it is in fact nothing of the sort. By "vulgar rich," Mrs. Cadwallader means those who are not of high birth (high-ranking in the class system) yet who have made money through work or business. Her disgust at the "accent" of these people shows that her hatred of them is a form of class prejudice. When the narrator explains that she believes there is no place for them within "God's design," this is because they have violated their "proper" place within the social hierarchy, which Mrs. Cadwallader finds unforgiveable. This is why she is kinder to poor people than to the so-called "vulgar rich" (what we also might call the middle class or bourgeoise): because poor people remain in the low hierarchical position where she thinks they belong.

❝ We mortals, men and women, devour many a disappointment between breakfast and dinner-time; keep back the tears and look a little pale about the lips, and in answer to inquiries say, 'Oh, nothing!' Pride helps us; and pride is not a bad thing when it only urges us to hide our own hurts - not to hurt others.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 62

Explanation and Analysis

Having been informed of Dorothea's engagement to Casaubon, Sir James is horrified. However, he does not linger in this horror for too long, and instead decides to go to Tipton anyway to continue their discussion about the cottages in a friendly manner. The narrator explains that disappointment is an unavoidable part of daily life, although "pride" often makes people conceal their true feelings of disappointment. This observation is central to the novel's depiction of disappointment, which is one of its major themes. *Middlemarch* shows that disappointment is an integral part of the human experience—we can never insulate ourselves against it, and thus the best thing is to accept it and learn how to deal with it.

Book 2, Chapter 13 Quotes

❝ 'The standard of that profession is low in Middlemarch, my dear sir,' said the banker. 'I mean in knowledge and skill; not in social status, for our medical men are most of them connected with respectable townspeople here. My own imperfect health has induced me to give some attention to those palliative resources which the divine mercy has placed within our reach. I have consulted eminent men in the metropolis, and I am painfully aware of the backwardness under which medical treatment labours in our provincial districts.'

Related Characters: Mr. Nicholas Bulstrode (speaker), Tertius Lydgate

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 125

Explanation and Analysis

At the bank, Lydgate and Bulstrode are discussing the New Hospital being established in Middlemarch. Lydgate hopes that the success of the hospital will allow for a medical school to be attached to it, and that this will in turn lead to many similar medical schools springing up all over the country. Bulstrode is inspired by Lydgate's ambitions, but warns him that the other doctors in Middlemarch will be viciously opposed to all this talk of medical reform.

This quotation shows some of the factors that hinder progress in the field of medicine. In particular, Bulstrode's allusion to the fact that the doctors in Middlemarch are high in "social status" and low in "knowledge and skill" shows that the field of medicine there is not based on merit, but rather on class rank. Unsurprisingly, this means that the treatment one receives from Middlemarch doctors is substandard. Note also that Bulstrode portrays himself as an exception when it comes to concern over this issue. As a wealthy man he has been able to seek better medical treatment from doctors in the city, which is obviously not an option available to most people. More importantly, many people in Middlemarch do not *want* to seek medical help from elsewhere, because they are content with a system wherein doctors' social status is their primarily qualification for the job. This status quo will make the task of medical reform very difficult.

Book 2, Chapter 16 Quotes

❝ Of course, he had a profession and was clever, as well as sufficiently handsome; but the piquant fact about Lydgate was his good birth, which distinguished him from all Middlemarch admirers, and presented marriage as a Prospect of rising in rank and getting a little nearer to that celestial condition on earth in which she would have nothing to do with vulgar people, and perhaps at last associate with relatives quite equal to the county people who looked down on the Middlemarchers. It was part of Rosamond's cleverness to discern very subtly the faintest aroma of rank.

Related Characters: Tertius Lydgate, Rosamond Vincy

Related Themes:

Page Number: 166

Explanation and Analysis

Lydgate and Rosamond have had a flirtatious conversation during a dinner party at the Vincys'. They are clearly attracted to each other, however the narrator notes that they also both remain entrenched in their own private worlds, and thus disconnected from one another. Lydgate is focused on his career and does not plan to marry for another five years, whereas—as we can see from this quotation—Rosamond is fixated on Lydgate's rank and the possibility this affords of her moving up in society by marrying him.

Rosamond's obsession with rank reflects the attitude held by most people in Middlemarch, although she is perhaps more fanatical about the issue than others. This single-mindedness means that she has developed an awareness of rank that the narrator describes almost as a specialist skill; her sensitivity to class means that she is aware of even "the faintest aroma of rank." This phrase reminds us of the highly complex nature of the class system at the time. Rather than a straightforward hierarchy made up of three or four classes, it is a sprawling map featuring many intricate levels of difference. Rosamond's ability to detect even these minute differences may be presented as a skill, yet it is of course a skill that emerges out of her own shallowness.

Book 2, Chapter 17 Quotes

❝ When I was young, Mr Lydgate, there never was any question about right and wrong. We knew our catechism, and that was enough; we learned our creed and our duty. Every respectable Church person had the same opinions. But, now if you speak out of the Prayer-book itself, you are liable to be contradicted.'

Related Characters: Mrs. Farebrother (speaker), Tertius Lydgate

Related Themes:

Page Number: 169-179

Explanation and Analysis

Lydgate has gone to visit Mr. Farebrother at the old parsonage where he lives. He is surprised to find other people there, namely Farebrother's mother Mrs. Farebrother, his aunt Miss Noble, and his sister Winifred Farebrother. Mrs. Farebrother believes that almost all sickness is caused by overeating, which leads Mr. Farebrother to lament that his mother does not believe in science. Mrs. Farebrother responds that actually, she "object[s] to what is wrong," and in the quotation above explains that when she was young, everyone had the same idea about what was right and wrong.

This passage provides important background information about the way Middlemarch society has changed in the years leading up to the time the novel is set. While Mrs. Farebrother is undoubtedly oversimplifying (and romanticizing) the social world she grew up in, it is clear that back then there was a greater sense of conformity. As science, industrialization, political change, and religious pluralism have become increasingly prominent, this sense of conformity and consensus has been disrupted. Disturbed by these changes, Middlemarchers such as Mrs. Farebrother nostalgically long for a day when everyone (or at least all "respectable" Christians) agreed with one another. It is this attitude that makes them suspicious of change and resistant to progress and reform.

Book 2, Chapter 20 Quotes

❝ The fact is unalterable, that a fellow-mortal with whose name you are acquainted solely through the brief entrances and exits of a few imaginative weeks called courtship, may, when seen in the continuity of married companionship, be disclosed as something better or worse than what you have preconceived, but will certainly not appear altogether the same.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 195

Explanation and Analysis

It has been six weeks since Dorothea and Casaubon's

wedding, and they are now on their honeymoon in Rome. Dorothea is so miserable that she is sitting in their apartment weeping, yet she doesn't understand why she feels so sad. In this passage the narrator comments that no person will see their spouse in the same way after marriage as they did during courtship. This is a key concept in the novel, and helps explain why the two most prominent marriages (between Dorothea and Casaubon and Rosamond and Lydgate) are both enormous disappointments.

In each case, the couples—and particularly the women within each couple—were filled with excitement about what marriage would bring. However, the reality of marriage ends up being extremely different from what they expected. Ultimately, "the imaginative weeks called courtship" are shown to often produce a delusion about one's partner and married life in general. Those less susceptible to this delusion tend to be couples like Mary and Fred, who have known each other for a long time and thus have no illusions about one another.

Book 4, Chapter 37 Quotes

❝ The doubt hinted by Mr. Vincy whether it were only the general election or the end of the world that was coming on, now that George the Fourth was dead, Parliament dissolved, Wellington and Peel generally depreciated and the new King apologetic, was a feeble type of the uncertainties in provincial opinion at that time.

Related Characters: Mr. Walter Vincy

Related Themes:

Page Number: 357

Explanation and Analysis

The dramatic events of Featherstone's funeral are compounded by the political tumult of this point in time. In conversation with Rosamond, Mr. Vincy suggests that the combination of these two factors makes it feel like the end of the world. This quotation at the beginning of Chapter 37 expands on this point, outlining in more detail the political drama of the time. George IV had been a pompous, extravagant, and somewhat irresponsible ruler; he was opposed to Catholic Emancipation and only agreed to approve the Catholic Relief Act after immense political pressure. His successor William IV is in many ways the opposite; he is unassuming (or even "apologetic") and over the course of his reign will preside over a wave of reforms.

Meanwhile, the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel are both Tory politicians who at different times serve as Prime Minister. At this point, the Tories have been in power since 1784, but in the leadup to the 1830 general election mentioned in this passage they are losing popularity (and, although Mr. Vincy doesn't know this yet, will lose the election to the Whigs). This dramatic shift in political power after so many years of Tory victory helps contribute to a sense of immense upheaval. Particularly in a place like Middlemarch, which is conservative and resistant to reform, the decline in Tory power is indeed felt to be apocalyptic, paving the way for enormous instability and change.

Book 4, Chapter 40 Quotes

❝ In watching effects, if only of an electric battery, it is often necessary to change our place and examine a particular mixture or group at some distance from the point where the movement we are interested in was set up. The group I am moving towards is at Caleb Garth's breakfast-table in the large parlour where the maps and desk were: father, mother, and five of the children.

Related Characters: Mrs. Garth, Mr. Caleb Garth

Related Themes:

Page Number: 399

Explanation and Analysis

These are the first sentences of Chapter 40. At the end of the previous chapter, Mr. Brooke spoke to one of his tenants, Mr. Dagley, about disciplining Dagley's son, who had killed a leveret. Mr. Dagley tells Brooke that he is a bad landlord and that, by implication, he is not qualified to be pushing the Reform agenda in Middlemarch. The beginning of this chapter shifts focus to the family of Caleb Garth. It is one of many moments in the novel when the narrator employs scientific language and metaphors in the process of narrating the story.

By comparing the observation of the Garth family to a scientific experiment, Eliot collapses the distance between scientific inquiry and ordinary social life. She suggests that science and everyday human interaction are not two separate spheres, but all part of the same system that can be observed according to the same (scientific) principles. Indeed, she suggests that applying these principles to the observation of people illuminates aspects of social life that we might not otherwise see. This is an important concept in *Middlemarch* and one of the most innovative aspects of the novel, through which Eliot ties her depiction of "provincial

life" to the latest scientific advancements of the time.

Book 4, Chapter 42 Quotes

❝ Thus his intellectual ambition which seemed to others to have absorbed and dried him, was really no security against wounds, least of all against those which came from Dorothea. And he had begun now to frame possibilities for the future which were somehow more embittering to him than anything his mind had dwelt on before.

Related Characters: Rev. Edward Casaubon, Dorothea Brooke

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 418

Explanation and Analysis

After returning from his honeymoon, Lydgate goes straight to Lowick to check on Casaubon's health. The narrator observes that all of Casaubon's hard work amounts to feelings of paranoia about what others think of him and sadness about the state of his project. At the same time, he refuses to entertain the idea that his scholarly endeavor has failed. This passage captures how tragic it is that the project to which Casaubon has devoted his life—and which has had such a draining impact on him that it has "absorbed and dried him"—has left him feeling paranoid and insecure. All the hard work he has put into it has had an "embittering" effect. Haunted by the looming threat of disappointment yet unable to concede defeat, Casaubon is left tormented by his own misery.

Book 5, Chapter 44 Quotes

❝ The immediate motive to the opposition, however, is the fact that Bulstrode has put the medical direction into my hands. Of course I am glad of that. It gives me an opportunity of doing some good work - and I am aware that I have to justify his choice of me. But the consequence is, that the whole profession in Middlemarch have set themselves tooth and nail against the Hospital, and not only refuse to co-operate themselves, but try to blacken the whole affair and hinder subscriptions.

Related Characters: Tertius Lydgate (speaker), Mr. Nicholas Bulstrode

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 439

Explanation and Analysis

Rosamond has gone to see Lydgate at the New Hospital to discuss Casaubon's health. The two of them end up discussing the social reforms that are needed in Middlemarch. Lydgate laments that many in the town are opposed to these reforms, often simply because Bulstrode is backing the reforms. Bulstrode's unpopularity means that many people mindlessly oppose everything he does. Lydgate thus finds himself in a difficult position. He has been given an opportunity that he is grateful for and that he wishes to take advantage of in order to bring medical reform to Middlemarch; however, he is also unsure how to overcome the prejudice against Bulstrode (and all the projects Bulstrode backs) in order to actually succeed in this endeavor.

This quotation illustrates how petty prejudices and disputes have a disproportionate impact on life in Middlemarch, particularly when it comes to serious issues like medicine. It also shows that alliances can prove fatal in a town where everyone is so deeply interconnected and suspicious of those they consider outsiders. Although Bulstrode has been in Middlemarch longer than Lydgate, he is still considered an outsider insofar as his family has no history there, and little is known about his background. Lydgate must therefore find a way to deal with the prejudice against him and Bulstrode simply in order to be able to practice medicine.

Book 5, Chapter 48 Quotes

❝ And here Dorothea's pity turned from her own future to her husband's past - nay, to his present hard struggle with a lot which had grown out of that past the lonely labour, the ambition breathing hardly under the pressure of self-distrust; the goal receding, and the heavier limbs; and now at last the sword visibly trembling above him! And had she not wished to marry him that she might help him in his life's labour? - But she had thought the work was to be something greater, which she could serve in devoutly for its own sake. Was it right, even to soothe his grief - would it be possible, even if she promised - to work as in a treadmill fruitlessly?

Related Characters: Dorothea Brooke, Rev. Edward Casaubon

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 479

Explanation and Analysis

After spending time working in the library together, Casaubon wraps himself in a blanket, feeling uncomfortable, and Dorothea reads to him. After she has finished reading Casaubon asks her if she will promise to carry out his wishes after his death. Hesitant to agree, Dorothea says she needs time to think about it. Casaubon falls asleep while Dorothea stays awake, troubled by her husband's request. Throughout the novel we often see Dorothea act in self-contradictory ways, and this passage contains an important insight into the internal conflict that leads to this self-contradictory behavior.

Dorothea clearly feels love, sympathy, and loyalty to Casaubon. She hates the idea that he is suffering due to the imminent disappointment and failure that await if he is unable to complete his project. At the same time, while she was initially thrilled about the idea of helping with his scholarship, she now feels reluctant and burdened by it. Her initial impression that *The Key to All Mythologies* was "something greater" than it actually is has left her feeling disappointed and hesitant to commit to finishing a project that she suspects will fundamentally prove "fruitless." As her delusions fall away, she feels both guilty and slightly resentful about how she was initially led astray.

Book 5, Chapter 53 Quotes

He had a very distinct and intense vision of his chief good, the vigorous greed which he had inherited having taken a special form by dint of circumstance: and his chief good was to be a money-changer… The one joy after which his soul thirsted was to have a money-changer's shop on a much-frequented quay, to have locks all round him of which he held the keys, and to look sublimely cool as he handled the breeding coins of all nations, while helpless Cupidity looked at him enviously from the other side of an iron lattice. The strength of that passion had been a power enabling him to master all the knowledge necessary to gratify it.

Related Characters: Joshua Rigg

Related Themes:

Page Number: 520

Explanation and Analysis

To the surprise of everyone in Middlemarch, Bulstrode has purchased Stone Court from Joshua Rigg-Featherstone, the illegitimate child of Peter Featherstone who inherited almost all of his father's property after his death. This quotation explains the reason why Rigg decided to sell Stone Court rather than staying there. In contrast to someone like Bulstrode, Rigg does not want to use his newfound wealth in order to move up in Middlemarch society and become more "respectable" than his origins would otherwise have allowed him to be. Instead, thanks to his "vigorous greed," he wants to be a moneychanger, a job he has always dreamed of having.

While the novel generally condemns greedy behavior, showing greed to be a fatal flaw that can lead to a person's downfall, in Rigg's case it is a little different. Rigg's desire for money for its own sake is straightforward, and at least does not involve cheating, deceiving, or thieving as a path to wealth. While greed may not be good, some forms of greed are at least more honest than others.

Book 6, Chapter 54 Quotes

"I never felt it a misfortune to have nothing till now," he said. "But poverty may be as bad as leprosy, if it divides us from what we most care for."

Related Characters: Will Ladislaw (speaker), Dorothea Brooke

Related Themes:

Page Number: 544

Explanation and Analysis

Will has come to Lowick to tell Dorothea that he is leaving Middlemarch and wants to say goodbye. They have a kind and polite yet restrained conversation, and at one point Will cries out, unable to suppress his emotions. Dorothea comments that Will is happier than she could be with being poor; in this quotation, he responds by saying that for the first time in his life, he regrets being poor because it prevents him from having the one thing he treasures most in the world. By this he means, of course, Dorothea—although because of Will's tortured, indirect way of speaking, this is not 100% clear to her.

Will's observation about the downsides of poverty is important. On one level, he and Dorothea are in a pretty unique position; Casaubon's decision to stipulate that Dorothea will lose the property she inherited from him if

she marries Will is not exactly a common gesture. On the other hand, Will's words here are an important reminder that money often affords people opportunities and freedoms to live the lives that they want to lead. Poorer people remain limited in their choices and are more likely to have to rely on the whims of others (such as Casaubon) than those who are rich. While overall the novel emphasizes that shallowness and greed are harmful qualities, this quotation reminds us that money cannot be dismissed as an insignificant part of life.

Book 6, Chapter 56 Quotes

In the hundred to which Middlemarch belonged railways were as exciting a topic as the Reform Bill or the imminent horrors of Cholera, and those who held the most decided views on the subject were women and landholders. Women both old and young regarded travelling by steam as presumptuous and dangerous, and argued against it by saying that nothing should induce them to get into a railway carriage.

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 553

Explanation and Analysis

Dorothea has been talking to Caleb Garth about her plans to build a "colony" for workers. Meanwhile, Caleb has also been kept busy by plans for a railway line that will run through Lowick. This quotation explains the widespread opposition to railways in Middlemarch. Rather than being excited by the economic and social opportunities provided by fast transportation from the town, Middlemarchers are strongly opposed to the railway. They are evidently frightened and alarmed by this new form of technology, which they regard as highly suspicious and even morally corrupt.

While on one level opposition to the railway reflects the general suspicion of change and technological progress tjat is rampant in Middlemarch, there are also a few key details in this quotation that are worth pausing over. First of all, the comparison between the railway, the Reform Bill, and the cholera epidemic might seem rather strange at first, as the only thing that unites them appears to be the hatred Middlemarchers feel for them. Note, however, that each of these issues represents a profound force of social change over which members of the Middlemarch community feel they have little control—which leads to a great deal of fear.

Another important detail is that those who have the most "decided views on the subject" of the railway are women and landowners. This suggests that these two groups tend to be slightly more conservative than the general population on the issue of the railway (and perhaps other issues as well).

Book 7, Chapter 64 Quotes

His troubles will perhaps appear miserably sordid, and beneath the attention of lofty persons who can know nothing of debt except on a magnificent scale. Doubtless they were sordid; and for the majority, who are not lofty, there is no escape from sordidness but by being free from money-craving, with all its base hopes and temptations, its watching for death, its hinted requests, its horsedealer's desire to make bad work pass for good, its seeking for function which ought to be another's, its compulsion often to long for Luck in the shape of a wide calamity.

Related Characters: Tertius Lydgate

Related Themes:

Page Number: 648

Explanation and Analysis

Lydgate is over £1000 in debt and has no idea how he will be able to pay it, as his income as a doctor is very low. Sensing Lydgate is troubled, Farebrother has reached out to him, but out of pride Lydgate refuses this support (which would not be much good in solving his problems anyway). In this quotation, the narrator comments that Lydgate's problems likely seem "sordid," especially to high-ranking and wealthy people who might be horrified by the miserable reality of being in debt. Yet as the narrator also explains, for most people this "sordidness" is simply a fact of life.

Indeed, the whole concept of sordidness is subjective; while Lydgate's troubles would appear "miserably sordid" to a high-ranking, wealthy person, to a very poor person Lydgate's life would likely seem luxurious and aspirational even with the debt. This quotation implies that readers may themselves be high-ranking or used to reading only about elite characters in novels, and the narrator seems to anticipate that the reader might be repulsed by Lydgate's situation. The narrator encourages us to have sympathy for Lydgate by reminding us that seemingly "sordid" problems are an unavoidable part of reality for most people.

The business was felt to be so public and important that it required dinners to feed it, and many invitations were just then issued and accepted on the strength of this scandal concerning Bulstrode and Lydgate; wives, widows, and single ladies took their work and went out to tea oftener than usual; and all public conviviality, from the Green Dragon to Dollop's, gathered a zest which could not be won from the question whether the Lords would throw out the Reform Bill.

Related Characters: Tertius Lydgate, Mr. Nicholas Bulstrode

Related Themes:

Page Number: 719-720

Explanation and Analysis

After returning to Middlemarch, Raffles has died of alcohol poisoning at Stone Court. Bulstrode is initially relieved, believing that this means the story about how he acquired his wealth will go to the grave with Raffles. However, before dying Raffles told the story to Bambridge at a horse fair in another town, and before long the gossip is all over Middlemarch. Furthermore, Lydgate is implicated because he tended to Raffles before his death and at the same time was given a £1000 loan by Bulstrode, which people now interpret as a bribe.

This passage describes how people spread the gossip about Bulstrode and Lydgate almost as if it were a professional duty. This shows the alarming importance that gossip has within Middlemarch society. People do not treat gossip as a frivolous diversion, but rather as a central and serious aspect of life. Indeed, the quotation notes that people pay far more attention to the Bulstrode scandal than they do the question of political reform, another indictment of the small-minded pettiness of Middlemarch society.

Book 8, Chapter 72 Quotes

"And, of course men know best about everything, except what women know better."

Dorothea laughed and forgot her tears.

"Well, I mean about babies and those things," explained Celia. "I should not give up to James when I knew he was wrong, as you used to do to Mr Casaubon."

Related Characters: Celia Brooke, Dorothea Brooke (speaker), Sir James Chettam, Rev. Edward Casaubon

Related Themes:

Page Number: 736

Explanation and Analysis

Having heard the gossip about Bulstrode and Lydgate, Dorothea is adamant that Lydgate must be innocent and is desperate to intervene in order to help clear his name. Both Farebrother and Sir James implore her not to get involved, but Dorothea is reluctant to listen to them. Celia urges her sister to listen to James's advice, implying that as Dorothea's brother-in-law he is the next best thing to a husband (although Dorothea then declares that she doesn't want a husband). In this quotation, she adds that "men know best about everything, except what women know better."

Unlike her more intelligent sister, Celia doesn't get why this statement is funny. This is likely because she thinks that men *are* intellectually superior to women and that the difference between the genders is clear-cut. To Celia, her meaning is clear: women have certain expertise about domestic issues, but otherwise men know best. However, though Dorothea might not admit it consciously, her behavior indicates that she is skeptical that men are intellectually superior to women. To her ears, Celia's statement speaks to the irrationality of believing that men know better than women.

The final part of the quotation is also important, as it shows that while Dorothea is the far more independent, rebellious sister, her attempt to suppress her own free spirit meant that she was overly deferential to Casaubon while he was alive. Celia doesn't second-guess herself, and is thus happy to disagree with Sir James if she thinks he's wrong. In a sexist society, strong-willed women like Dorothea can end up acting meeker than more naturally submissive women like Celia because they are forced to suppress their true personalities.

Finale Quotes

Many who knew her, thought it a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another, and be only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother. But no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done - not even Sir James Chettam, who went no further than the negative prescription that she ought not to have married Will Ladislaw.

Related Characters: Dorothea Brooke, Sir James Chettam, Will Ladislaw

Related Themes:

Page Number: 836

Explanation and Analysis

In the finale, the narrator details what happens to the characters after the end of the main narrative. After getting married Will and Dorothea move to London, where Will embarks on a political career and Dorothea happily leads a life as a wife and mother. In this passage, the narrator observes that despite Dorothea's own contentment, there is something disappointing about a uniquely free-spirited and passionate woman like her ending up as a housewife.

This disappointment is keenly felt by everyone around Dorothea, even those who once tried to curtail her unusual acts and decisions.

At the same time, the passage also notes that no one mentions this disappointment because they can't imagine what else Dorothea could or should have done. This illustrates a depressing aspect of the world in which the novel is set. Women like Dorothea who have extraordinary passion and intelligence end up conforming to societal expectations not because they necessarily want to, but because no other options are available to them.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

PRELUDE

St. Theresa of Avila was an idealistic young woman who lived in Spain in the sixteenth century. There have been many women like her since, women whose lives were not romantic or spectacular but rather filled with tragedy, errors, and disappointment. These women struggled to reconcile their ideals with their desires, and especially with their feminine natures. There is so much variation between women that it is difficult to say anything conclusive about them as a group. Women like St. Theresa have trouble fitting in and finding others like them; they strive to leave a legacy, but their actions usually go unremembered.

In the prelude, the narrator addresses the place of women in history. In the nineteenth century, when Middlemarch was written, history was still largely a collection of stories told about "great men" who had an impact on the world as rulers, intellectuals, artists, or innovators—roles that were essentially closed to women. Indeed, sainthood was one of the few ways that women could leave a legacy in the historical record.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 1

Dorothea Brooke tends to wear simple, modest clothes, which make her look even more beautiful. People consider her highly intelligent, although they think her sister, Celia, has "more common-sense." Though not noble, the Brookes are a "good" family, and women from this social rank tend to dress plainly. Dorothea is deeply religious and obsessed with "intensity and greatness;" these qualities make finding a husband rather complicated. She and Celia are orphans who were educated in England and Switzerland. Their unmarried uncle Mr. Brooke, who is almost 60, arranged their education. He travelled when he was young and is now prone to frequent shifts in opinion.

In the opening to the novel, we are given the impression that Dorothea Brooke is a rather unique and unusual woman. In contrast to Celia, whose "common sense" means that she conforms to the norms of the society in which she lives, Dorothea's love of extremes and fixation on "intensity and greatness" are unusual for a woman. Religious piety is one of the only ways for women to indulge in "greatness" but, as this passage points out, even that interferes with Dorothea's marriage prospects.

If Dorothea marries and has a son, her son will inherit Mr. Brooke's substantial estate. As such she is considered an "heiress." Dorothea's beauty and inheritance make her an appealing candidate for marriage, but again, her "love of extremes" gets in the way. Her dramatic habits of fasting and fervent prayer conflict with the way wives are expected to behave. Women are supposed to have "weak opinions" and conform to societal norms. Most people prefer Celia to Dorothea; on the other hand, Dorothea is undeniably charming despite her unusual behavior. She loves the outdoors and horse-riding, a habit she is constantly claiming she is about to give up.

This passage further emphasizes the ways that Dorothea deviates from the expected behavior of a woman in her community. Furthermore, it also suggests that Dorothea feels conflicted about her own failure to conform to these expectations, as indicated by her repeated vows to give up horse-riding. Dorothea may have a personality that inclines her to rebel against norms, yet she wants to embody these norms at the same time.

Anytime a man comes to the Brookes' house, Tipton Grange, it is assumed he is in love with Celia. Dorothea has a "childlike" understanding of marriage and thinks her ideal husband would be like a father who could teach her things. Today Sir James Chettam is coming to dinner at Tipton along with Rev. Edward Casaubon, whom Dorothea and Celia have never met. Casaubon is a wealthy, respected, and highly educated man who has spent many years writing an ambitious work of religious history (**The Key to All Mythologies**).

This passage introduces an important social custom of the time. Families with daughters of marriageable age receive suitors for social visits, so that both the potential couple and the family can get to know one another.

After Dorothea comes home from the school she has set up in Middlemarch, Celia asks if they should divide up their mother's jewels, since six months have now passed since Mr. Brooke gave them to the sisters. Dorothea kindly responds that they shouldn't wear the jewels, but Celia responds that wearing jewelry is now quite common and that it might help them keep their mother's memory alive. Dorothea enthusiastically responds that if Celia wants to wear them, they should get them out. Dorothea herself refuses to be given any of the jewelry, even the cross, which she is opposed to wearing as a "trinket."

In this passage, readers begin to see how Dorothea's idealism can become a little grating to those around her. Dorothea's decision not to wear jewelry appears to be a personal preference, and it does not seem as though she is judging Celia. However, it is easy to see how Celia could feel pressure to conform with Dorothea's unusual and somewhat extreme way of being.

Upset, Celia says that she is embarrassed to wear the jewelry if Dorothea refuses to do so. However, Dorothea then begins to admire the ornaments, trying to justify this admiration in her head by framing it as a kind of religious mysticism. Celia insists that Dorothea keep a simple ring and bracelet for herself; Dorothea accepts them but urges Celia to put the rest of the jewelry away. Celia asks if Dorothea will wear them around other people, a question that offends Dorothea. Both sisters are upset until Dorothea asks Celia to look at the architectural plans for **cottages** she has drawn. Dorothea rests her cheek against Celia's arm as a way of apologizing for having upset her.

Like all sisters, Dorothea and Celia sometimes find themselves in conflict with one another. This is due to how close they are while at the same time being so different from one another. Dorothea's insistence on accepting only the plainest jewelry from her mother's collection emphasizes that she has no vanity and is perhaps uninterested in wealth. It could also be seen as a rejection of femininity. Her architectural plans suggest that she is more interested in what are regarded as typically masculine pursuits.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 2

At dinner, Mr. Brooke recalls meeting the poet William Wordsworth. Dorothea feels awkward. Sir James explains that he is planning to experiment with technological innovations on his farm, but Mr. Brooke advises against this. Dorothea speaks up in favor of James's plan, as she believes that it is more likely to benefit everyone, both Sir James himself and his tenant farmers. Mr. Brooke dismissively replies that women don't understand political economy. Casaubon interrupts with a non sequitur, explaining that he spends all his time reading ancient books. Dorothea thinks that Casaubon is "the most interesting man she had ever seen."

Mr. Brooke's comment about women not understanding political economy is the first time we witness the expression of overt sexism in the book. The fact that he accuses Dorothea of this after she argues that agricultural innovations will bring mass benefit suggests that it is Mr. Brooke himself who is ignorant. Brooke appears to have a habit of self-inflation, and achieves this in part by asserting his superiority over women.

Sir James says he knows Dorothea likes horse-riding and that he would love to lend her an elegant horse he owns that has been bred especially to be ridden by women. Dorothea impatiently replies that she is giving up riding, wanting to focus only on Casaubon. Sir James responds that Dorothea is too harsh on herself; Celia agrees that she is always promising to give things up. Dorothea blushes, annoyed. She wishes that Sir James would talk to Celia and leave her to converse with Casaubon.

This passage introduces a very important idea within the novel: that people often make strange, unexpected, and even self-sabotaging choices when it comes to love and marriage. Sir James is clearly interested in Dorothea and supports her unique ideas and personality. However, Dorothea is drawn to Casaubon, despite his age and social awkwardness.

Mr. Brooke returns to discussing politics, and Dorothea says that she wishes he would let her organize his documents. Casaubon admiringly comments that Dorothea seems like an "excellent secretary," but Mr. Brooke responds that women are "too flighty" to be trusted with documents. Later, when the sisters are alone, Celia observes that Casaubon is very ugly, but Dorothea disagrees, saying he looks like John Locke. Annoyed, Dorothea accuses Celia of being shallow and not appreciating Casaubon's "great soul." Celia is skeptical that Casaubon actually has a great soul.

Presented with Dorothea and Celia's differing views on Casaubon, readers must determine for themselves who to believe. It is perhaps true both that Celia is rather shallow and that Dorothea has been somewhat blinded by her admiration of Casaubon's intellect and ambition and therefore cannot see him as he really is. This is indicated by the fact that she compares him to the famous philosopher John Locke.

Celia thinks it's a shame that Dorothea doesn't like Sir James, and fears that her sister won't marry any man unless he shares her own ardent principles. Sir James, however, is not put off by Dorothea's strong will; in fact, he finds it charming. He tells Dorothea that horse-riding is healthy, and Dorothea suggests that Celia should do it. They argue until Casaubon intervenes, taking Dorothea's side. Sir James is not jealous of Dorothea's evident admiration of Casaubon, as he would never imagine she would seriously prefer Casaubon to him. Sir James and Celia begin talking, and he concludes that Celia is pleasant and beautiful, albeit not as intelligent as Dorothea.

Just as Dorothea's admiration of Casaubon is unexpected and perhaps misplaced, the same might be said of Sir James's attachment to Dorothea. Dorothea may be a remarkable woman, but she clearly has little interest in James. Celia evidently adores James, but he is not able to see that because he is too fixated on a woman who finds him irritating. Furthermore, James understands Dorothea so little that he mistakenly assumes it is impossible that she would be interested in Casaubon.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 3

The next morning Dorothea and Casaubon have a long conversation, during which she gets to know his "labyrinthine" mind and similarly complex scholarly project. Casaubon explains that he has an enormous number of notes, and that he must now fashion these into a more concise series of volumes. Dorothea is fascinated by this endeavor and thrilled by the way Casaubon speaks to her, as if she is his intellectual equal. She happily concludes that "he thinks with me," although then adds that his mind vastly outmatches hers. She finds herself trusting him quickly.

Again, Dorothea's strong feelings manifest in a self-contradictory way. She is thrilled to feel that Casaubon is speaking with her as an equal, but then quickly reverts to the idea that he is vastly more intelligent than her. This suggests that deep down Dorothea wants to be treated as his equal, but checks herself and pretends she doesn't in order to conform with societal beliefs about men's intellectual superiority.

Afterward, Casaubon looks at Mr. Brooke's documents in his office. Before going, he tells Dorothea he has been feeling lonely. He then leaves for his home, Lowick Manor, which is only five miles away. Nobody would be able to understand Dorothea's unique, strange fantasies about marriage. She begins to dream that Casaubon will propose to her. For so long she has been confused about the direction her life should take and worried that she wouldn't find a husband who was pious enough to suit her. Moreover, her intense religiosity is only one aspect of her personality. She is also passionate, obsessed with knowledge, and desperate to follow the "grandest path" in life.

Dorothea evidently feels that Casaubon is the perfect match for her intense, unusual, and self-contradictory character and ideals. While this may be true, she has based her conviction on very little evidence. Indeed, part of Dorothea's idealism means that she sometimes has trouble seeing things as they really are, but rather gets caught up in fantasies of how she wants them to be.

Dorothea imagines that if she marries Casaubon she will "learn everything." She dreams about helping him with his research and designing **cottages** for the tenants in Lowick, before feeling ashamed that she is getting ahead of herself. In the middle of her daydream, she sees Sir James riding toward her. He greets her, and Dorothea feels annoyed at how friendly he is to her, considering he would be a much better suitor for Celia. Sir James tells Dorothea he has brought her something and hands over a little Maltese puppy. Dorothea coldly replies that she doesn't think animals should be bred only to be pets, because she believes animals have souls of their own.

The moment when Sir James comes riding toward Dorothea, interrupting her daydream, encapsulates the way that Dorothea's fantasies sometimes exist in conflict with reality. Her irritation with James despite how kindly he is behaving toward her indicates that Dorothea struggles with the feeling that she is being misunderstood.

Dorothea adds that she thinks Celia would like the puppy, but Sir James only responds by admiring Dorothea's strong opinions. He goes on to say that he has heard about her designs for tenants' **cottages** and thinks they are "wonderful." He offers to pay for the cottages to be built on his own estate. Dorothea briefly forgets her irritation with him and enthusiastically replies that she would be happy to show him her plans. Sir James never ends up offering the puppy to Celia, which makes Dorothea feel guilty. Meanwhile, Celia is horrified to see Sir James being led on by Dorothea.

It is not that Sir James does not understand Dorothea and who she really is. He actually seems to have a unique appreciation for her personality—especially the sides of her that deviate from the gender norms of the time. What he doesn't understand is that her personality means that she would never be drawn to a person like him. *Sir James may be a perfect "match" in the eyes of many (including Celia), but not Dorothea.*

Shortly after, Casaubon comes to Tipton again. It is increasingly clear that he is deliberately coming to see Dorothea, who is thrilled to spend time with him. During their conversations, the only thing that disappoints her is his lack of interest in the **cottages**. Dorothea feels ashamed at her own feelings of disappointment. Mr. Brooke then goes to visit Casaubon at Lowick, while Sir James visits Tipton with greater and greater frequency. Dorothea feels irritated with him but nonetheless joins him in planning the cottages. Meanwhile, she spends her time in the library, hoping to become more knowledgeable for her conversations with Casaubon.

Casaubon's lack of interest in Dorothea's cottages is the first real evidence that Dorothea's attachment to him may be misplaced. Casaubon represents an ideal to Dorothea, and while he likes her, his disinterest in her architectural plans suggests that he, unlike Sir James, does not appreciate her for who she truly is.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 4

Celia comments that Sir James is eager to do everything Dorothea wants, and Dorothea replies: "He thinks of me as a future sister." Celia blushes and tells Dorothea she is wrong, adding that rumors indicate that Sir James intends to marry Dorothea. Celia goes on to say that it is obvious that Sir James is in love with Dorothea and that everyone will expect her to accept his proposal. Dorothea feels disgusted and bursts out in anger that she has done nothing to make Sir James believe she likes him. Celia says she sympathizes with James and observes that Dorothea always sees the world differently from everyone else.

Celia's reference to other people's rumors and expectations shows that courtship and marriage do not simply happen between two people. Instead, the whole community gets involved, and the opinions of others take on a surprising degree of significance. Dorothea seems to resent this community involvement, as popular opinion conflicts with what she really wants.

Dorothea insists that she must abandon the **cottages** and be rude to Sir James from now on. She begins to cry; Celia tries to comfort her but ends up insulting her by saying that her interest in the cottages is a "fad." Dorothea reacts furiously and feels resentful of Celia. At that moment Mr. Brooke returns from a trip to town. He mentions that he stopped at Lowick for lunch and has brought pamphlets about the early church for Dorothea. Happy again, Dorothea goes to read them in the library.

Dorothea's passionate nature means that she is very sensitive to the world and prone to rather violent mood swings. Her idealism means that she can get excited very easily, but it also makes her vulnerable to disappointment and anger when things do not work out as she hopes.

Mr. Brooke finds Dorothea entranced by her reading; he tells her that he's noticed Casaubon wants a wife. When Dorothea replies that anyone should consider themselves honored to fill that role, Mr. Brooke replies that Casaubon thinks highly of Dorothea as well. He then explains that Casaubon has asked his permission to propose to Dorothea. She doesn't reply at first, but then tells her uncle that if Casaubon proposes she will accept. Mr. Brooke replies that Casaubon is "a good match in some respects," but that she should also consider Sir James, whose land borders Brooke's own. Dorothea says she will never marry him.

As is customary during this time, Mr. Brooke acts as a go-between and authority when it comes to setting up a marriage for Dorothea. While he clearly believes that Dorothea should have some degree of choice in the matter of marriage, he is also hesitant about encouraging her preferences. He also suggests that Dorothea consider pragmatic issues of land and property, which do not appear to interest her as important considerations.

Mr. Brooke is confused, feeling that he doesn't understand women. At 45, Casaubon is 27 years older than Dorothea, and Casaubon's health is poor. Dorothea says she'd prefer a husband who is older so he can teach her, and Mr. Brooke is surprised again, saying he thought Dorothea liked having her own opinions more than most women. He reflects that he never loved anyone enough to submit to the "noose" of marriage. Eventually, he assures Dorothea that she will be able to choose whom she wants. He hands Dorothea a letter and leaves her to read it.

Mr. Brooke identifies the contradictory nature of Dorothea's feelings and concludes that he doesn't understand women. This is a surprisingly apt observation, as Dorothea's self-contradictory thoughts arguably result from the pressure to live up to gender roles that conflict with her true feelings.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 5

The chapter opens with Casaubon's letter to Dorothea. It is comically stiff and convoluted, devoid of any romance or affection whatsoever. He tells her that becoming her husband would feel like "the highest of providential gifts." He concludes by saying that in his old age, loneliness will be even more difficult now that he has had a glimmer of hope of companionship.

Casaubon's social awkwardness makes him a somewhat unlikeable character. At the same time, his earnest expression of loneliness and appeal to Dorothea make him appear more sympathetic.

Reading the letter, Dorothea bursts into tears and drops to the floor. She is overwhelmed with happiness that the life she has been craving now seems available to her. After dinner, Dorothea writes Casaubon a response in her room. She is so nervous that her hand is shaking and she has to rewrite the letter three times. In her short message, she tells him: "I can look forward to no better happiness than that which would be one with yours." Later, she gives the letter to Mr. Brooke, asking that he send it in the morning.

Again, while we may be moved by Dorothea's earnest intensity of feeling, there is also something undeniably comic about her dramatic reaction to Casaubon's stiff, awkward letter. Dorothea is clearly in the midst of a romantic whirlwind—yet how much of this is simply the product of her own imagination?

Mr. Brooke checks that Dorothea is certain she doesn't want to marry Sir James instead. He tells her that he wants her to make her own decision, even though he knows Sir James will be disappointed and that Mrs. Cadwallader will likely be upset with him for failing to deliver a union between James and Dorothea. The next day, a letter arrives from Casaubon saying he will come to dinner at Tipton that night. Celia notices Dorothea's reaction to this news and is horrified to realize that her sister seems to want to marry Casaubon.

Again, while Dorothea theoretically has control over whom she wants to marry, the involvement of her family and even members of the community such as Mrs. Cadwallader make the decision-making process more complicated.

Celia says that she hopes someone else is coming to dinner so she doesn't have to listen to Casaubon eat his soup. Hurt, Dorothea tells Celia not to say things like that; when Celia continues, Dorothea angrily tells her that she is engaged to Casaubon. Celia turns pale and sits down in shock. She then begins to cry. Dorothea assures her it's all right, although in reality she is hurt. She knows that everyone else in the community will feel the same way about her marriage as Celia does. That night, Dorothea speaks freely and enthusiastically with Casaubon. He is overjoyed, as is she. They decide that the wedding will be in six weeks.

Dorothea and Celia are very different, and thus Celia's opposition to Dorothea's marriage could be interpreted as a simple clash between their ideals. It would not be good for Dorothea to marry someone who Celia thinks is a perfect match. At the same time, the intensity of Celia's sadness is foreboding. She may not be the same as Dorothea, but she knows her well, and thus might be right in predicting that Dorothea will not be happy with Casaubon.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 6

As Casaubon's carriage leaves Middlemarch, another carriage enters, containing a woman who is obviously important in some way. The woman happily chats to the Tipton lodge-keeper about her chickens. The woman, Mrs. Cadwallader, is of "immeasurably high birth" yet claims to be poor and always gossips with servants. When she greets Mr. Brooke, she says she saw Casaubon leaving and accuses the two of them of plotting to get Brooke elected as a Whig representing Middlemarch. Mr. Brooke replies that he and Casaubon have barely discussed politics, as Casaubon is only interested in religion.

This passage introduces us to some of the ways in which the world in which the novel is set is undergoing change and reform. As we have already seen, it is a world structured by the class system, a fact that is reinforced here by mention of Mrs. Cadwallader's "immeasurably high birth." However, at the time the Whig party was beginning to push for moderate reforms that would slightly diminish the power of landed gentry.

Mrs. Cadwallader teases Mr. Brooke and warns him not to get involved with politics. Brooke replies that he doesn't debate politics with women, because "your sex are not thinkers." Mrs. Cadwallader mentions Dorothea and Sir James; Mr. Brooke regretfully replies that the marriage will never take place. Just as Mrs. Cadwallader asks whom Dorothea could possibly marry instead, Celia enters the room and, when prompted, tells Mrs. Cadwallader that Dorothea is engaged to Casaubon. Mrs. Cadwallader deems this "frightful," and she and Celia discuss their dislike of Casaubon and appreciation of Sir James.

While not exactly a surrogate mother to Dorothea and Celia, Mrs. Cadwallader does partially inhabit this role by getting involved with the marriage prospects of the Brooke sisters. Her agreement with Celia reinforces the idea that Celia happily conforms with societal norms, whereas Dorothea rebels against them.

Mrs. Cadwallader announces that she must immediately tell Sir James the sad news. She says that she set a bad example by marrying a poor member of the clergy and that other women should "think of their families in marrying." She adds that at least Casaubon has money. Later, Mrs. Cadwallader intercepts Sir James on his way to Tipton. First, she tells him that she accused Mr. Brooke of planning to run as a Whig and that she was unconvinced by his denial. She then warns him to brace himself for bad news, before telling him Dorothea is engaged to Casaubon.

It is somewhat surprising to learn that Mrs. Cadwallader married a poor clergyman considering she appears to hold traditional ideas about what constitutes a "good match." Indeed, the difference between Mrs. Cadwallader's own personal decisions and her recommendations for others suggests that she is a hypocrite—or that, like Dorothea, she struggles to reconcile her own desires with the expectations placed on her.

Horrified, Sir James exclaims: "He is no better than a mummy!" adding that Casaubon "has one foot in the grave." Mrs. Cadwallader attempts to cheer him up and suggests that Celia might have been the better match all along. She notes that Celia clearly likes him, and then she leaves.

Sir James's horrified reaction again shows how alone Dorothea is in finding Casaubon admirable. (Although of course, the intensity of James's feeling is also the result of jealousy.)

Mrs. Cadwallader lives a simple life but is fascinated by all the details of "the great world," which she learns about from letters sent to her by her noble relatives. She has no prejudice toward poor people but despises "the vulgar rich." For years, Mrs. Cadwallader has been keeping an eye on Dorothea and Celia and chastising Mr. Brooke when necessary. She had been planning Dorothea's engagement to Sir James ever since the sisters arrived at Tipton. However, she is now happy to switch the plan to Celia.

Within the English class system, prestige and power do not result from money alone. Although the aristocracy tend to be wealthier than those of lower social status, it is also possible to be noble and poor. Meanwhile, thanks to the rise of industrial capitalism, it is also becoming easier and easier to be low-ranking and wealthy—probably what Mrs. Cadwallader means when she refers to the "vulgar rich."

Sir James himself does not dwell on his sadness about losing Dorothea for long, and in fact actually feels grateful that he didn't propose because this way he avoided rejection. He heads to Tipton in order to discuss the cottages with Dorothea out of "friendly politeness," although subconsciously he is also hoping to see Celia.

The quick turnaround in Sir James's feelings suggests that he perhaps wasn't as attached to Dorothea as we might have assumed. Indeed, he seems to have a more pragmatic than romantic approach to marriage.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 7

All the time that Casaubon spends at Tipton during his and Dorothea's engagement forces him to neglect his scholarly project, **The Key to All Mythologies**. Dorothea suggests that she should learn to read Latin or Greek to help him with his work, but Casaubon replies that learning those languages is known to make women rebellious. Dorothea denies that this would be the case for her, and after some encouragement from Casaubon resolves to start learning herself. Her relative lack of education has always made her uncertain of her opinions, and she looks forward to this changing.

Casaubon's belief that knowledge of Latin and Greek makes women rebellious is important. Throughout history, withholding education has been a way to oppress groups of people on the basis of class, race, and gender. Dorothea must therefore present her desire to learn as a desire to affirm her inferiority through assisting Casaubon. Yet it is difficult to believe that this is what she truly *wants.*

Mr. Brooke tells Casaubon that certain subjects are too difficult for women, but Casaubon replies that Dorothea is only learning the Greek alphabet. Brooke says that women do better at dabbling in the fine arts, such as art and music. Dorothea finds these pursuits silly. Casaubon says he doesn't like music of any kind, and Mr. Brooke concludes that maybe he and Dorothea are well matched after all. He hopefully imagines that Casaubon will eventually be made a bishop, or at least a dean, in the Anglican church. In the future, Mr. Brooke will give a political speech about the excessive income of deans, but he does not know that now.

This passage provides more information about the way woman are viewed in Middlemarch society. They are expected to serve a basically ornamental role, to be both beautiful themselves and to engage in aesthetic pursuits. This highlights how little women are actually valued. They are treated as decorations rather than as full human beings.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 8

Sir James still enjoys coming to Tipton; he does not feel resentful of Casaubon, but rather worries that Dorothea is gripped by some kind of "melancholy illusion." Although he tells himself that he accepts Dorothea's decision, he ultimately decides to intervene and see if the marriage can still be stopped. Sir James goes to the Cadwalladers', where he encounters the jolly rector Mr. Cadwallader. When Mr. Cadwallader suggests that Dorothea marrying Casaubon isn't so bad, Sir James replies that Dorothea is "too young to know what she likes" and that Mr. Brooke should intervene.

It is difficult to tell how much Sir James is really acting in Dorothea's interests here. While on the one hand his fears for her seem genuine (particularly if we believe that he is no longer personally affronted by her not choosing him), at the same time he patronizingly believes that he knows what's best for her better than she does herself.

Sir James stresses that Casaubon is awful. Mr. Cadwallader protests that Sir James, who is handsome, is putting too much emphasis on Casaubon's looks—yet James replies that his personality is the problem. Mr. Cadwallader points out that Casaubon is generous with his poor relatives, but Sir James is unconvinced. He thinks that Casaubon won't make Dorothea happy and that the marriage should be postponed until she is "of age." Mrs. Cadwallader enters and says that Sir James won't have any luck convincing her husband, who only cares about fishing.

Sir James's suggestion that Dorothea's marriage at least be postponed is certainly more reasonable than forbidding it altogether. At only 18, it is actually quite likely that Dorothea is naïve and confused about what she actually wants. Furthermore, the fact that Casaubon is so much older indicates that there could be a problematic power imbalance created by their difference in age and life experience.

Sir James and Mrs. Cadwallader discuss how years of isolated study have spoiled Casaubon's personality. Mr. Cadwallader says that while he can't pretend to understand Dorothea's choices they should still be respected, and that Casaubon is as good as any person. Sir James begins to feel that there is probably no chance of interfering in Dorothea's engagement. Nonetheless, he persists in helping her with the **cottages**. Perversely, during these exchanges Dorothea is more pleasant than ever, as she no longer feels irritated with Sir James.

Mr. Cadwallader's insistence that Dorothea's decisions be respected suggests that he holds rather unusual opinions for a man in Middlemarch. Perhaps his respect for women's choices is what attracted Mrs. Cadwallader to him in the first place.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 9

It is customary for brides to view their marital homes before the wedding and express any wishes about what they would like to be changed. The narrator observes that "a woman dictates before marriage in order that she may have an appetite for submission afterwards." Thus Dorothea, Celia, and Mr. Brooke make a trip to Casaubon's home, Lowick Manor. It is a grand, elegant house, but without children running around and flowers in the windows it is rather dreary. Horrified, Celia thinks about how much nicer it would be to live in Sir James's home, Freshitt Hall.

Here there are hints of a parallel between Casaubon and his house, Lowick Manor. Both are impressive and appealing in principle, but in reality are somewhat grim and depressing. On the other hand, perhaps Dorothea's presence in Lowick will make both the house and its owner more lively and pleasant.

Dorothea, however, is enchanted by Lowick's quiet darkness, and is filled with joy as she walks around the house. She is grateful for Casaubon's efforts to make the house appealing to her, but suggests no changes. When he asks which room she'd like to have as her boudoir, Dorothea replies that she would rather he make all the decisions for her. Celia and Mr. Brooke urge her to make some kind of choice, but she refuses.

Dorothea's refusal even to make the simple decision of which room will serve as her boudoir (private living room for women) suggests that her "appetite for submission" is in overdrive. It seems unlikely that her willingness to completely relinquish her own agency will be able to last very long.

The group stops to examine portraits of Casaubon's family members. Casaubon comments that his mother's sister "made an unfortunate marriage" and that he barely knew her. In the garden, Casaubon tells Dorothea that she will like the nearby village, as the houses there are like the **cottages** she is designing. In a private moment, Celia whispers to Dorothea that she saw a young man with curly brown hair walking up the steps. Dorothea guesses that this man might be the son of the curate, Mr. Tucker.

Casaubon's mention of Dorothea's cottages further confirms the impression that he is making a real effort to make her happy, and that their marriage may therefore not be the disaster everyone is predicting. Make sure to keep in mind Casaubon's aunt with the unfortunate marriage—she will play an important role later in the novel.

Walking with them, Mr. Tucker explains that all who live in the local village are reasonably well off and respectable. Later, Casaubon observes that Dorothea seems subdued. She admits that she wishes that the local people needed more help, so that she could make herself useful. Casaubon assures her that she will be sufficiently fulfilled by her role as "mistress of Lowick." At this moment they see the young man Celia pointed out. Casaubon explains that the man, who is drawing in a sketchbook, is his second cousin. He approaches and Casaubon introduces him as Will Ladislaw.

Dorothea's lament that the local people are essentially not living in worse conditions shows that, despite her noble ideals, she is also somewhat self-centered and naïve. Her desperation to make an impact on the world leads her to come to some rather foolish conclusions. Once again, we might wonder if these foolish conclusions include her decision to marry Casaubon.

Mr. Brooke points to Will's sketchbook and comments that he is an artist, but Will replies that there is nothing worth seeing in its pages. Dorothea says that she has never been able to understand art. Will thinks that Dorothea must be awful (considering that she is marrying Casaubon) and that her comment about not understanding art was probably a thinly-veiled judgment. At the same time, he is enchanted by the sound of Dorothea's voice, which is strikingly passionate.

Dorothea's earnestness and idealism are perhaps part of the reason why she struggles to connect to art. Due to the nature of the society she has grown up in, she has come to see aesthetic pursuits as frivolous and inconsequential. Unfamiliar with her open, sincere nature, Will misinterprets her as judgmental.

Will laughs and leaves. Casaubon explains that Will attended Rugby (a boarding school) and then made the strange choice of going to university in Heidelberg, Germany. Now he wants to travel again. Casaubon concludes that Will is opposed to accuracy and "thoroughness." Casaubon has tried to show Will the importance of patience via his work on **The Key to All Mythologies**, but it has not worked. He says he will support Will for a year, and Dorothea says that this is kind of him, adding that people should be patient with one another. Later, Celia comments that Dorothea's engagement appears to have given her a newfound appreciation for patience.

Although we still know fairly little about Will at this stage in the novel, he seems to have a romantic, nonconformist nature. This is shown by his unconventional decisions, love of travel, and Casaubon's accusations that he is opposed to "thoroughness." Rather than patiently dedicating himself to a single project, Will is free-spirited and restless, suggesting a passionate nature.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 10

A week later Will leaves for "Europe" (with no more specific destination in mind). He is prone to trying extreme behaviors such as drinking to excess, fasting until he faints, and taking opium. None of these experiments have had the transformative effect he was hoping for. He finds Casaubon's plodding commitment to his enormous work of scholarship ridiculous. The narrator observes that, like all people, "Casaubon, too, was the center of his own world" and believes that fate has certain things lined up for him. Yet as the wedding approaches, he does not feel happy.

Somewhat like Celia and Dorothea, Will and Casaubon are total opposites, and their personalities come into relief when compared to one another. Will may be somewhat impulsive, impatient, and passionate, but the force of his personality makes Casaubon seem dreadfully dull in comparison. Somewhat surprisingly, Will's love of extremes makes him seem rather similar to Dorothea.

Dorothea, on the other hand, is filled with excitement and optimism about her marriage. The couple plans to travel to Rome on their honeymoon, where Casaubon will examine manuscripts held at the Vatican. Casaubon invites Celia to come as a companion to Dorothea, but both sisters are opposed to this idea. Casaubon says Dorothea will be lonely because he will have to spend a lot of time studying, and that he would feel freer if he knew Dorothea had a companion. Annoyed, Dorothea tells him not to worry about her or to bring up the subject again.

While Dorothea claims to be totally devoted to Casaubon, there are clearly problematic clashes in what they want out of marriage (and indeed life). Dorothea dreams of being a partner to Casaubon in the truest sense of the word, and of getting to live her dreams through him. Casaubon, meanwhile, seems to basically want to be left alone.

That night, a large dinner party is held at Tipton Grange before the wedding. Dorothea looks modest but serenely beautiful. Guests at the dinner include a banker (Bulstrode) who is a Methodist and thought to be a "hypocrite." The men discuss Dorothea, debating which qualities make a woman attractive. They also discuss Rosamond Vincy, whom Mr. Brooke did not invite to the dinner because she is the daughter of a manufacturer.

This passage emphasizes the different factors involved in being seen as respectable in Middlemarch society. Having money without rank is looked down on, as shown by Rosamond not being invited because her father is a manufacturer. Meanwhile, the Anglican church is seen as the only respectable form of faith.

Mrs. Cadwallader and Lady Chettam discuss medicines, a favorite topic among those of high social rank. They concur that Casaubon has been looking very "dry" since the proposal, and that compared to Sir James he resembles "death's head skinned over for the occasion." Lady Chettam notes that James still refuses to say anything bad about Dorothea. The women then observe that Dorothea is having a lively conversation with Tertius Lydgate about **cottages** and hospitals.

Dorothea's conversation with Tertius Lydgate indicates that she is more comfortable around men discussing serious issues such as medicine, architecture, and reform than she is gossiping about marriage with other women. Again, this marks her as an oddball within Middlemarch society.

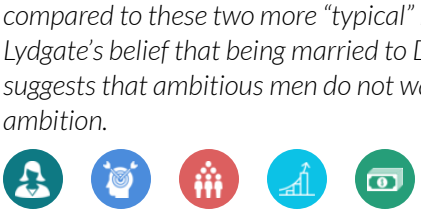
Lydgate is a young doctor who has a charming, empathetic way of talking to people. He is enthusiastic about improving the field of medicine. Some of the men at the dinner party object to this enthusiasm for reform, but Bulstrode welcomes it, saying he hopes Lydgate will one day be in charge of the **New Hospital** in Middlemarch. One man expresses fear about being subject to experimental treatments. Lydgate himself, who cannot hear this conversation, is fascinated by Dorothea, whom he thinks is both a "fine girl" and "a little too earnest." Shortly after the dinner party, she and Casaubon head to Rome.

This passage introduces another major theme of the novel: reform and the intense opposition to it that tends to exist in Middlemarch. The fears over being subject to medical experiments suggest that Middlemarchers have unfounded and irrational fears about science and medicine. These fears are liable to hold the town back in the midst of widespread reform and progress in the rest of the country.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 11

Lydgate is also entranced by "a woman strikingly different to Miss Brooke:" Rosamond Vincy. He does not plan to marry until he has made progress in his career. He is currently "young, poor, [and] ambitious," and thus knows he has some way to go before he becomes an attractive match. He imagines that marrying someone like Dorothea would be hard work, whereas being married to Rosamond would be a heavenly *respite* from work. Rosamond was educated at Mrs. Lemon's school, the best of its kind in England, where she excelled as a model pupil.

Like Celia, Rosamond is the model of the ideal woman. Again, Dorothea's unusual personality becomes more pronounced when compared to these two more "typical" Middlemarch women. Lydgate's belief that being married to Dorothea would be hard work suggests that ambitious men do not want wives who share that ambition.



Though he is not their personal doctor, Lydgate got to know the Vincy family very soon after moving to Middlemarch. The family have been successful manufacturers for three generations, and over this time members have married into both higher- and lower-ranking families. Mr. Vincy himself went "down" by marrying the daughter of an innkeeper. The Vincys are very wealthy, particularly after the death of the childless old Mr. Featherstone, who had been married to Mr. Vincy's sister. The Vincy family's personal doctor is named Mr. Wrench. Rosamond wishes her parents would invite Lydgate over, because she is bored of seeing the same old people.

In the world of the novel, those of the highest social status have not gained their money through work, but rather through landowning. People who have acquired wealth exist lower down the social hierarchy, and different kinds of professions each have their respective rank. Being a manufacturer, for example, is considered "better" than being an innkeeper.

One morning after breakfast, Rosamond is doing embroidery by the fire while Mrs. Vincy asks their servant to wake Rosamond's brother, Fred, who is still asleep at 10:30 am. Rosamond asks her mother to forbid Fred from eating herrings for breakfast, because she can't stand the smell. She laments having brothers. Mrs. Vincy, meanwhile, speaks highly of Fred, saying he is very smart even though he didn't finish his degree. Mrs. Vincy says no man from Middlemarch is flawless, and Rosamond suddenly announces that she will not marry a man from Middlemarch.

From this initial introduction to the Vincy household, both Fred and Rosamond come off as entitled in different ways: Fred because he is sleeping late and failed to acquire his university degree, and Rosamond because she wants to marry "better" than a man from Middlemarch. In Rosamond's case her entitlement becomes a form of ambition, whereas for Fred it manifests as laziness.

Fred enters, and he, Mrs. Vincy, and Rosamond discuss manners of speech and how these betray a person's class. Rosamond and Fred bicker until Mrs. Vincy requests that they stop. Mrs. Vincy asks about Lydgate, whom Fred saw at dinner the night before. She notes that Lydgate comes from "a good family," and Rosamond suddenly wishes that she weren't the daughter of a manufacturer and the granddaughter of an innkeeper. Rosamond mentions that Mary Garth has probably taken a liking to Lydgate, but Fred replies unhappily that he doesn't know and leaves.

It is important to note that Rosamond was not invited to Mr. Brooke's dinner party because she is the daughter of a manufacturer, but her brother Fred was. This shows how gender and class intersect. Presumably, if Rosamond had been invited it would have been as a potential marriage prospect, but her rank is too low for this to have happened.

Mrs. Vincy says that she wishes Rosamond had gone to live with her uncle, a younger Mr. Featherstone, who would have been very generous with her. Mary Garth is living with him now and will surely benefit immensely from it. Rosamond replies that nothing would have been worth putting up with her uncle and his "ugly relatives." Mrs. Vincy replies that Featherstone will likely die soon. Fred sees Rosamond going to the piano and asks if he can play with her; she replies that men look silly playing the flute. However, she relents in exchange for Fred taking her out horse-riding later.

This is one of the few moments in the novel where we explicitly witness men being chastised for not conforming to gender-based expectations. Rosamond's fairly traditional ideas about gender emerge when she tells Fred that men look silly playing the flute. However, her desire to go horse-riding suggests that all people fail to conform to gender roles to some degree.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 12

Fred and Rosamond are out riding when they see a gig belonging to Mrs. Waule, one of their uncle Featherstone's relations. They observe that, despite being enormously wealthy, the Waules and Featherstones stay close to Mr. Featherstone like "vultures" in order to make sure that his money doesn't end up going to the other side of the family. Mrs. Waule, who is Mr. Featherstone's sister, came to visit him that morning while Mary Garth was giving him medicine. Mrs. Waule gossips about the Vincys, saying that Fred is a "clodhopper" who gambles.

As this passage makes clear, people in Middlemarch are highly judgmental of each other. So far we have seen people judged for being old, ugly, rebellious, earnest, impatient, reformist, Methodist, miserly, irresponsible, and, in the case of Rosamond's judgment of her suitors, simply being from Middlemarch! It seems difficult to evade condemnation in such a judgmental community.

Featherstone insists that Mr. Vincy must not give Fred money to pay his debts, and says that he's heard Mr. Bulstrode criticize Mrs. Vincy's habit of spoiling her children. Mary mentions that she doesn't like hearing about "scandal." Mrs. Waule says it upsets her to hear of Mr. Featherstone's name being "made free with" by people who are not his true relatives. Angrily, Featherstone asks if she is implying that Fred has been telling people he will gain inheritance from his uncle's will, and using this to borrow money. Mrs. Waule insists that this isn't what she's saying, but it is what she's heard.

This passage shows that the judgmental nature of people in Middlemarch is fueled by their proclivity for gossip. Not only does everyone in the community have an opinion about other people, but they all have knowledge of other people's business in the first place via a very overactive gossip mill. Indeed, Mary stands out as one of few characters who takes a stand against gossip.

Rosamond enters and Mrs. Waule greets her coldly. Rosamond says Fred will be in shortly, and Mr. Featherstone tells his sister she should leave. Mrs. Waule says she hopes a doctor will be able to heal Featherstone and that she and her nieces would be happy to nurse him back to health. Featherstone accuses them of only wanting money and bids her goodbye. He then dismisses Mary and Rosamond, saying that he wants to speak with Fred. The two young women are close friends, and Rosamond had been hoping to speak with Mary in private.

Featherstone's reaction to Mrs. Waule's offer of help highlights a major downside of being wealthy. Nearing the end of his life, Featherstone possesses a (seemingly well-grounded) fear that no one actually loves him, and that every act of kindness bestowed on him is just a strategy to get some of his money.

Once they are alone, Featherstone accuses Fred of using the promise of his inheritance to borrow money. Fred denies it, but Featherstone insists that Fred explain himself, warning that he can still change his will if he wants. Fred again denies it, and Featherstone tells him he's heard it's true from Fred's uncle Mr. Bulstrode. Horrified, Fred protests that Bulstrode "has a prejudice against me." He says that he never wanted to disrespect his uncle and that he is grateful. Featherstone demands that Fred bring a letter from Bulstrode assuring him that Fred has not promised to pay his debts with his inheritance.

Again, while Featherstone may have a rude and unpleasant manner, his paranoia about the actions of his relatives is well-founded. Mrs. Vincy has already mentioned that she and her family are effectively waiting for Featherstone to die so they can get their inheritance from him. Aware that this is how his family feels, Featherstone desperately attempts to assert authority in the final moments of his life.

Despite his anger, Fred still feels pity for Featherstone, who is neither loved nor respected. Featherstone asks Fred to read him the names of the books on his shelves, asking why Mary needs those books when reading the newspaper should be enough for her. Meanwhile, Rosamond and Mary have been talking quickly upstairs. Rosamond is very beautiful, and most men in Middlemarch consider her "the best girl in the world."

This passage confirms that in Middlemarch, women are not valued for their intelligence—as shown by Featherstone's dismissive comments about Mary's books. Instead they are valued for their looks, which lead men to think Rosamond is "the best girl" of all.

Mary is 22 years old and rather plain, but very honest. She exclaims that she looks ugly next to Rosamond, but Rosamond responds that this doesn't matter because Mary is so "useful," adding that beauty is ultimately quite meaningless. She says it is possible Mary will receive an offer of marriage and asks if Mary likes Lydgate. Mary replies that she can't like someone who behaves as snootily and dismissively toward her as Lydgate does. Rosamond asks Mary to describe him and seems pleased with the description, saying: "I rather like a haughty manner."

Rosamond's comment about Mary being "useful" and her delight at Lydgate's haughtiness suggest that she does not have a particularly strong set of moral principles. Mary seems far more principled, which a shows a similarity to Dorothea, although Mary is arguably more practical and mature than Dorothea is.

Rosamond exclaims that Fred is "horrid," adding that he is lazy, disobedient, and makes Mr. Vincy angry. When Mary says she thought he was going to be a clergyman, Rosamond replies that this will never happen and accuses Mary of always siding with Fred. Mary says that if Mrs. Vincy is worried about Fred proposing to her, Rosamond should assure her mother that Fred intends to do no such thing.

The implication of a union between Fred and Mary is surprising. Thus far Fred appears to be mischievous, lazy, and irresponsible, whereas Mary is honest, hardworking, and mature. Again, love is shown to work in unexpected ways.

At that moment Lydgate arrives, dreading his encounter with Featherstone, whom he imagines will have backwards views about doctors. Rosamond insists to Fred that they leave, and as they are going Lydgate asks if Rosamond is a musician. Featherstone replies that she is "the best in Middlemarch." Rosamond replies that the bar for musical talent in Middlemarch is decidedly low. She and Lydgate exchange an intense look, and Rosamond blushes. She and Fred leave.

Here we see a glimpse of Lydgate and Rosamond beginning to bond over their shared distaste of the provincial way of life in Middlemarch. Note that Rosamond's musical skill shows that she excels in exactly the pursuits that women are supposed to follow.

Ever since Lydgate arrived in Middlemarch Rosamond has been fantasizing about a future with him. She has always been determined to marry someone who is not from Middlemarch, but this is not the only reason why she finds Lydgate a perfect match: he also comes from a "good family" and is talented. She and Fred ride home in silence, each consumed by their own thoughts. Rosamond dreams of impressing Lydgate's high-ranking relatives, while Fred frets over Featherstone's request for the letter from Bulstrode. His boasts about his inheritance from Featherstone were uttered while he was drunk, and have been blown out of proportion by the gossip mill.

Although Rosamond and Fred are preoccupied with very different thoughts, both of them are essentially obsessing over reputation. Rosamond fantasizes about going up in rank through marrying Lydgate; her fixation on impressing his relatives conveys her obsession with reputation and status. Meanwhile, Fred's problems originated in a similar desire to impress (which led to his boasts), and have been worsened by gossip and speculation.

Fred's debt is small, but it is causing him a lot of misery. He feels annoyed that he is the son of a Middlemarch manufacturer. He guesses that Mrs. Waule was the one who told Featherstone about the debt and asks Rosamond if Mrs. Waule said anything about him. Rosamond replies that Mrs. Waule called him "unsteady," but that's it. Fred then mentions that Mary is "the best girl I know," while Rosamond replies that it's strange that Fred is in love with her. She adds that Mary told her she would say no if Fred proposed. As they near home, Fred resolves to seek help from his father about the whole mess with the debt, Featherstone, and Bulstrode.

Fred and Rosamond may be brother and sister, but they don't have a very loving relationship. In fact, they often seem to want to sabotage each other. This has perhaps resulted from their being spoiled by their parents, which has made each of them greedy and selfish.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 13

Having heard Fred's story, Mr. Vincy goes straight to the bank to speak with Bulstrode. People in Middlemarch distrust Bulstrode, some because he is a "Pharisee" and some because he is an "Evangelical." Others are suspicious of him because only 25 years ago no one had heard the name Bulstrode in Middlemarch. He is currently with Lydgate in his office at the bank, discussing the **New Hospital**. Lydgate hopes that having a good fever hospital in Middlemarch could pave the way for a medical school attached to it, which would serve as a model for other, similar schools all over England.

The terms used to insult Bulstrode help contextualize why his religious beliefs are so strongly rejected in Middlemarch. At this time, the Church of England was still very dominant, and Anglicanism was an essential part of "respectable" society. Anglicans objected to both the strictness and the evangelism of "nonconformist" religious groups and believed that these characteristics clashed with norms of propriety.

Lydgate has a charismatic speaking voice, and Bulstrode is moved. He agrees to help finance Lydgate's ambitions. He warns Lydgate that the other doctors in Middlemarch will be inclined to dislike him due to his support for medical reform. Lydgate promises that he will enjoy fighting for what he believes. Bulstrode admits that the quality of doctors in Middlemarch is very poor, and that his experience being treated by city doctors has convinced him that the medical field in provincial areas is severely deficient.

Throughout the novel it is suggested that in order to effectively confront the widespread opposition to reform, it is necessary to be a passionate idealist like Lydgate. At the same time, there is always a risk that this idealism might morph into naïve fantasy. Lydgate's passion is remarkable, but will it be enough for him to survive the bitter opposition that awaits?

Bulstrode explains that the old infirmary lies in the parish of Mr. Farebrother, but that *he* wants someone named Mr. Tyke to be appointed chaplain of the **New Hospital**. Lydgate says that as a doctor he has no opinion on this, but Bulstrode urges that when the matter is discussed at the meeting of the medical board, Lydgate should not let himself be persuaded by Bulstrode's "opponents." When Lydgate simply replies that he hopes there will be no disagreement, Bulstrode begins to explain that his interest in hospitals is about more than just curing people of illness.

Here Lydgate's idealism already runs into trouble. He initially believes that as a doctor, there is no need for him to take a position on matters such as the hospital's chaplain. However, due to the alliances and conflicts that exist within Middlemarch, there is no such thing as being neutral—even on matters about which one has no personal preference or opinion.

Just as Lydgate disagrees, Mr. Vincy enters. Lydgate leaves, and Vincy immediately brings up Fred, saying that someone has been spreading rumors about him. Vincy goes on to say that people are obviously jealous because Featherstone intends to leave most of his land to Fred. Bulstrode immediately chastises Vincy for spoiling his children, which has given Fred "extravagant idle habits." Vincy decides to take this in his stride, saying that he may have made mistakes but it's too late to change them now.

Here we see an example of the kind of religious behavior Middlemarchers object to. Bulstrode's faith means that he is openly judgmental of other people and believes in sticking rigidly to principles. Of course, the reality is that everyone is judgmental in Middlemarch—but it is considered improper to pronounce one's judgments in the direct way that Bulstrode does here.

Vincy explains that someone has been saying Fred has been borrowing money, a story that is clearly "nonsense," but that Featherstone wants a note from Bulstrode denying it. However, Bulstrode replies that Fred *has* been borrowing money and that he therefore doesn't see why he should write the letter. Vincy loses his temper and reminds Bulstrode that the fate of their two families hangs together. If the Vincys go down, the Bulstrodes will go down with them. He curses Bulstrode's desire "to play bishop and banker everywhere," saying that this will turn people against him.

Here we see how respectability and in particular family reputation trump moral principles. Mr. Vincy does not seem to care that Fred did actually borrow money—his focus is on whether that information will become public. He sees it as obvious that Bulstrode should help him cover up Fred's debt in order to save the reputation of their families, rather than honoring the truth.

Bulstrode requests that they not fight, for the sake of Mrs. Bulstrode, Vincy's sister. Vincy agrees, saying that considering they are brothers-in-law they should "stick together." As Vincy goes to leave, Bulstrode tells him that he will think about it, discuss the matter with Mrs. Bulstrode, and "probably" write the letter.

Vincy's appeal to their family connection evidently worked, as Bulstrode has hinted that he will comply with Vincy's request now that he has considered how it would make his wife feel to know the men were fighting.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 14

The letter from Bulstrode arrives the next day. Fred takes it to Mr. Featherstone, who reads it aloud while making angry comments. When he is done, he asks if Fred expects him to believe something just because Bulstrode wrote an elegantly-worded letter about it. He refuses to confirm what he actually believes, and soon calls for Mary. When she enters he snaps at her; it looks like she has been crying. Featherstone asks if Fred is expecting to inherit some of his fortune, and Fred replies he isn't.

Before we might feel tempted to sympathize with Featherstone, this passage confirms that he is a truly cruel person. He appears to enjoy toying with Fred's emotions and is rude and callous to Mary, despite how hard she has been working to take care of him.

Fred is an optimistic person, always confident that everything will ultimately work out. He doesn't see why his luck would run out now. Featherstone hands Fred five bank notes. Fred thanks him and goes to put them away, but Featherstone tells him to count them first. Fred is disappointed to find that the notes amount to less than he'd hoped, but he nonetheless assures his uncle that he is grateful. Featherstone muses that he is a better uncle than Bulstrode, and Fred asks if he should destroy Bulstrode's letter. Featherstone tells him to do it.

The greedy attitude of his family members has fostered a sadistic attitude in Featherstone when it comes to money matters. At the same time, Fred's reaction of disappointment to the £5 he is given suggests that he may deserve to be treated in such a scornful, manipulative way. Although he hides it, Fred is just as greedy as Featherstone suspects.

On his way out, Fred speaks with Mary. She mentions that John Waule was there yesterday, and Fred teases that John is probably in love with her. This upsets Mary, who confesses that it is frustrating to always be addressed in a patronizing way, as if she has no intelligence. Fred says it's a shame she has to live at Mr. Featherstone's and be bullied by him, but Mary replies that it's not so bad. They flirt with one another, but Fred says he thinks it's impossible for a woman to love someone she's always known. Mary goes through a list of famous heroines to see if he's right and finds mixed results.

Despite their differences, Fred and Mary have an easy, open relationship. They evidently feel that they can talk frankly with one another, even when it comes to discussing their own relationship. This is because, unlike couples who only get to know each other over a short period of courtship, they have known each other since childhood. Perhaps this is a better recipe for love than anything else.

They continue flirting, and eventually Fred exclaims hat he will never be "good for anything" unless Mary loves him and marries him when they are ready. Mary warns him against laziness and tells him he should take his exam. Fred begs her for encouragement, but she refuses. She says her father would be horrified by the idea of her leading on a man who was in debt and without a job. As she leaves, she says that Fred has always been good to her. Fred is slightly cheered by this.

Again, Mary is shown to be a principled, mature, and practical person. Unlike Rosamond, who is obsessed with rank, Mary focuses only on what a person can control: hard work and honor.

At home, Fred gives the banknotes from Featherstone to Mrs. Vincy, telling her to keep them safe so he can use them to pay his debt. Mrs. Vincy is happy; she has a special weakness for Fred, her oldest son. Meanwhile, Fred's resolution to pay his debt may have something to do with the fact that he borrowed the money from Mary's father, Caleb Garth.

The dramatic twist at the end of this chapter reminds us of the way everyone in Middlemarch is interconnected with one another. This means that it is hard to do anything secret or wrong without it becoming everyone's business.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 15

The narrator discusses a late historian named Fielding, and also refers to themselves as a historian. The narrator explains that they will now deliver a lot of information about Lydgate, who—despite becoming more entrenched in the Middlemarch community by the day—is still something of a stranger to the townspeople. While Middlemarchers may not know Lydgate well, they feel that he is unusual and expect "great things" of him. In general, their perception of doctors' abilities is highly subjective: everyone thinks that their own family doctor is exceptionally skilled and intelligent, while thinking that the other local doctors are terrible.

This passage confirms that Middlemarchers have a rather backwards perspective on medicine. They are not equipped (or perhaps not willing) to make judgments based on doctors' skill, so they simply choose to regard the doctor that they have already chosen as the "best" in Middlemarch. While this may give people peace of mind, it doesn't do much to advance the state of medicine in the area.

Lydgate is 27, an age at which many men begin to give up on their dreams and ambitions. He is an orphan whose father was in the military. Lydgate figured out early on in life that he wanted to pursue a medical career; this was made possible by the fact that there was no pressure to follow his father's career path, as his father wasn't around. He was always an enthusiastic reader and excelled at school. However, it was not until he happened to find a book about anatomy that he discovered his true passion.

Through Lydgate, the book shows that ambition is highly important and a way in which life gains purpose and meaning. High achievement such as Lydgate's early success in school don't mean much unless it is directed toward a particular goal. Once people have a sense of purpose, their lives become more fulfilled.

The narrator observes that it is odd how fixated we are on stories of interpersonal romance, and not the passion of falling in love with a particular intellectual pursuit or vocation, which is surely just as important. Meanwhile, when men gradually lose their interest or success in their career, it is surely just as sad as falling out of love. Lydgate is determined not to become "one of those failures," and so far he is on the right path. He studied in London, Edinburgh, and Paris. He loves that medicine is both intellectually stimulating and a way of doing good.

The comparison between romantic love and falling in love with one's own career is important. As a book concerned with themes of ambition and disappointment, Middlemarch compares romantic failure with professional failure to show that both forms of disappointment can have a devastating impact on a person.

Lydgate also loves medicine because it is in need of reform. After finishing his studies, Lydgate was determined to work in a provincial town, avoiding the intense, elitist social world of London medicine. He is convinced that there are a great many incompetent doctors practicing in the country, and he thus feels duty-bound to try and make a difference, even if only a small one. Though it might sound strange, Lydgate considers himself a "discoverer." He aims to begin with modest reforms that he knows he is capable of enacting. The first of these is to prescribe medication without actually giving it to patients himself or taking a cut from pharmacists.

The word "discover" contextualizes Lydgate's passion for medicine within both the dramatic scientific progress that was taking place in the nineteenth century and the birth of science as a discipline. It also links Lydgate's medical research with the endeavors of colonial "discoverers." Lydgate's medical ambitions are thus framed as having a potentially transformative impact on the world.

Lydgate hopes to further stimulate the explosion of medical knowledge that took place at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Human knowledge is slow to change, and despite glimpses of advancement, medicine is still "shambling along the old paths." There are many questions about human anatomy that remain unresolved, and Lydgate is determined answer them. Lydgate's personality is still in the process of development, and he is not without flaws. He can be overconfident, too single-minded, and prone to applying his efforts to the wrong cause. However, the narrator emphasizes that all people have flaws like these, so we shouldn't judge him too harshly.

The narrator's mention of Lydgate's flaws draws attention to the fact that no character in Middlemarch is presented as wholly good or wholly bad (with perhaps one exception, as we will see much later in the novel). Instead, Eliot portrays individual humans as complex, contradictory, and fallible, and encourages us to sympathize with her characters in spite of all their flaws.

Lydgate's singular ambition means that he has difficulty enjoying things in life outside of medicine. While he was in Paris he fell in love with a married actress from Provence named Laure. He loved to go watch her at the theatre. One night while Lydgate was watching her perform the part of the play where she stabs her lover (played by her real-life husband), she actually stabbed him, murdering him. There was much speculation about whether the killing was intentional; even some of the actress's fans believed she was guilty, but Lydgate didn't.

Here as well as later in the novel, actresses represent passion, freedom, and rebellion. Choosing to be an actress was certainly not considered a respectable pursuit for a woman, and thus women who go down this path either don't care about the expectations of others or have no choice. Laure's killing of her husband is the ultimate exercise of this rebellion, even if it is accidental.

While Laure was in custody Lydgate had many conversations with her. When she was found innocent and released, she fled to Avignon. Lydgate found her there and approached her after a performance, asking her to marry him. He knew it was crazy but he persevered, telling her he loved her and that he couldn't live without her. Laure told him that when she stabbed her husband her foot really did slip, but that she intended to kill him. Panicked, Lydgate asked if the husband was abusive, but Laure replied that she was simply irritated with him. She concluded: "I do not like husbands. I will never have another."

Although he initially believes she didn't mean to do it, Lydgate's decision to propose to a woman who killed her husband suggests that he may be prone to risky behavior and self-sabotage. His reckless pursuit of Laure conveys the idea that love can make people lose their common sense. Meanwhile, Laure's admission of guilt is scandalous, and would have been even more so to nineteenth-century readers.

Following this encounter Lydgate resolved to have "a strictly scientific view of women." No one in Middlemarch would believe this episode from Lydgate's past. Now, the town expects him to assimilate totally into the community.

Lydgate's resolution to have a "scientific view of women" suggests he is going to force himself to be rational when it comes to love and marriage. However, one could argue that this is not actually possible.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 16

Gossip abounds over whether Mr. Tyke will be appointed chaplain of the hospital. Bulstrode is disliked and distrusted, but many people in Middlemarch think compromising with him is a necessary evil. This is not only because Bulstrode is wealthy and powerful, but also because he is a self-appointed administer of justice when it comes to petty disputes among the townspeople. He believes that whatever power he gains within Middlemarch is ultimately a way of serving God.

Bulstrode's role in the Middlemarch community suggests it is sometimes possible to wield authority simply by conferring it onto yourself. At the same time, many people in Middlemarch are suspicious of "self-made" men and believe that authority should emerge from social class. Bulstrode's power may therefore not last forever.

Lydgate is having dinner at the Vincys' when the chaplaincy is brought up in discussion. Despite his familial connection to Bulstrode, Mr. Vincy is open about the fact that he does not want Mr. Tyke to be appointed chaplain. Vincy much prefers Mr. Farebrother and would happily see him receive the chaplain's salary at the hospital. Still, Vincy admits that he is relieved not to be on the hospital's board of directors, meaning that he does not have to publicly take a position on the matter.

There is an extent to which the conflicts and alliances within Middlemarch are a kind of microcosm of parliamentary politics. While the political issues affecting Middlemarch do not always correlate directly to the ones facing the nation, the careful diplomacy required of ordinary Middlemarchers is something we would usually associate with politicians.

Vincy asks Lydgate about his opinion, and Lydgate replies that he doesn't know much about the two candidates, but adds that he thinks appointments like this are usually overly dictated by interpersonal preference. He points out that the best candidate for the job is not necessarily the person who is best liked. The popular and esteemed Dr. Sprague, who is also at the table, feels uncomfortable. A debate ensues over whether knowledge is truly the most important factor in appointing someone to a position. In Middlemarch, "it [is] dangerous to insist on knowledge as a qualification for any salaried office."

Lydgate's idea that popularity should not be a major factor in qualifying someone to serve in a professional capacity is clearly controversial in Middlemarch. Yet where there are some roles where popularity may be important (such as political positions, or indeed chaplaincies), it is presumably much more important to have medical skill than to be popular when it comes to being a doctor.

Later, Lydgate manages to have a private conversation with Rosamond. They discuss music, and Lydgate says he hopes he will get to hear Rosamond play. Rosamond says Mr. Vincy will surely make her sing, but she is nervous to do so in front of Lydgate. She admits that she feels like "a raw country girl." Fred begins to play the piano, and Rosamond goes to stop him. Finally Rosamond herself begins to play, and Lydgate is captivated. It is the nicest party he has been to in Middlemarch.

Rosamond clearly delights in feeling that Lydgate is superior to her, but this is because she has hopes of marrying him and, in doing so, rising to his rank. In this sense, her actions echo those of Dorothea, who hopes she will be able to achieve her intellectual and religious ambitions through marrying Casaubon.

Mr. Farebrother arrives, and his presence brings further warmth to the atmosphere of the party. After she has finished performing, Rosamond tells Lydgate she expects that he won't like Middlemarch, as it is very "stupid." Lydgate says he's found that everyone thinks their town is more stupid than others. He adds that he's found something in Middlemarch that pleases him—meaning Rosamond—and asks her to dance with him one day. Walking home, he thinks about how much he likes Rosamond, although he is sure he will never feel the same all-consuming love for her as he did for Laure.

By putting down Middlemarch, Rosamond clearly hopes to elevate herself as better than (or indeed the best of) other Middlemarch women. However, this might turn out to be a form of hubris (fatal pride). While Middlemarch may have its problems, completely dissociating oneself from the place one comes from is a fantasy that is often doomed to fail.

Moreover, Lydgate does not plan to get married for another five years. At home, he reads about fever until the early hours of the morning. He is fascinated by the "minute processes" of nature. He puts his book down with an overwhelming feeling of satisfaction and excitement. He feels enormously grateful that he discovered his passion for medicine when he was young. He thinks about the evening. The narrator comments that both Lydgate and Rosamond live in worlds of their own, "of which the other knew nothing."

The narrator's comments about Lydgate and Rosamond's respective worlds suggest that they are both prone to fantasy as a result of their ambition. However, this will not necessarily unite them, as their fantasies are of very different natures. Furthermore, indulging too much in fantasy can become dangerous, as confronting reality will come as an inevitable disappointment.

Rosamond does not spend much time considering what is going on in Lydgate's mind. She is happy that he is intelligent, ambitious, and handsome, but the thing she really cares about is his "good birth." Because pretty much every man who has encountered Rosamond has fallen in love with her, she is confident that Lydgate will be no exception. She sets her mind to being the "perfect lady," sketching drawings, practicing music, reading "the best novels," and memorizing poems. All the older men who visit the Vincys conclude that Rosamond is indeed "the best girl in the world." Only Mrs. Plymdale believes that Rosamond is overeducated, as she will have no use for all her interests and talents once married.

Mrs. Plymdale's belief that there is no use for Rosamond's education is cynical and rather depressing, but the book shows that there is an important truth in it. Women are trained to be "perfect" in order to marry the best man on the market. However, once a marriage actually takes place women don't have much use for the skills and pursuits they have acquired. In this sense, marriage is a kind of dead end for women, an idea that is explored throughout the novel.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 17

The next day Lydgate goes to see Farebrother in the old parsonage where he lives. The vicar's mother Mrs. Farebrother is also there, as is her sister Miss Noble, and Mr. Farebrother's sister Winifred. Lydgate knew Farebrother was unmarried and thus did not expect for there to be so many women present. Mrs. Farebrother is the most talkative of everyone present, and is clearly used to telling people what to do. She is convinced that most ill health is the result of overeating. Mr. Farebrother observes that his mother is like King George III, because she "objects to metaphysics."

Farebrother's three unmarried female relatives often serve as a source of comic relief in the novel. This happens here through Mrs. Farebrother's old-fashioned, anachronistic views, which mark her out from the already backwards and "provincial" world of Middlemarch. The Farebrother household is unusual in that it consists of four adults, none of whom are married.

Mrs. Farebrother replies that in her youth, everyone had the same sense of true and false, right and wrong. Nowadays no one agrees with one another. She laments that there is even a lot of dissent among clergymen. They discuss Mr. Tyke; Farebrother calls him "a zealous fellow" who is not very educated or intelligent. Farebrother invites Lydgate to his study to see his "collection," despite the protests of the women that Lydgate should stay and have another cup of tea. The collection consists of preserved animals, insects, plants, and flowers from the local area.

In the nineteenth century, science is only just starting to become a professional discipline practiced by a trained group of people. As Farebrother's collection shows, amateurs and hobbyists still have a significant role to play in scientific activities and the development of scientific knowledge.

Lydgate mentions that he doesn't really have any hobbies outside of medicine, and Farebrother comments that this is lucky. Farebrother smokes a pipe and Lydgate wonders if the vicar might be in the wrong profession. Farebrother mentions that he knows Lydgate's former roommate from Paris, Mr. Trawley. Lydgate asks after Trawley, and Farebrother says he is working as a doctor at a German bath and is married to a wealthy patient. Lydgate scoffs at this and stresses that the medical industry is in need of reform.

This passage indicates that Lydgate may be a bit narrow-minded and overly judgmental. This is shown both through his admission that he doesn't have any interests outside medicine, and through his scornful reaction to his old friend's marriage. Like most of Middlemarch, Lydgate has a tendency to hastily jump to judgment even when he does not have much information about a situation.

Farebrother comments that it is wonderful that Lydgate has a career he is so passionate about, but that he shouldn't neglect the issue of marriage. He advises Lydgate that having a good wife could actually help his work, and asks if Lydgate knows Mary Garth, who is one of his favorite young women. Lydgate admits that he has barely noticed Mary. They then discuss Bulstrode, and Farebrother warns Lydgate that if he votes against Bulstrode, "you will make him your enemy." Lydgate haughtily responds that he doesn't need to worry about that. However, he also concedes that Bulstrode has been helpful in supporting his plans.

Now we see that, like Rosamond, Lydgate also suffers from hubris. His dismissal of Farebrother's warning indicates that he thinks he knows better than Farebrother, even though he is new to Middlemarch and thus still does not fully grasp how things work there. Lydgate has too much confidence in his own ability without paying attention to the fact that he will need allies and collaborators to succeed.

Farebrother says that he himself is not a fan of Bulstrode's crowd, who he thinks are a "narrow ignorant set." At the same time, he thinks the **New Hospital** will be good for the community. Lydgate asks Farebrother why Bulstrode doesn't like him, and Farebrother explains it is because he doesn't preach "spiritual religion." Also, Bulstrode believes that Farebrother is already too busy to take on additional duties at the hospital. Farebrother warns Lydgate about voting against Bulstrode.

As we can see here, the problem with the chaplaincy decision is that it involves both important, valid considerations (such as whether Farebrother is too busy to take on the role) and petty, irrelevant factors, such as personal preference and allegiances. This makes the whole affair more complicated than it needs to be.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 18

As the vote about the chaplaincy approaches, Lydgate remains undecided. He doesn't really care either way, and thus should logically vote for Tyke to please Bulstrode. However, he has developed an affection for Farebrother, who he now believes is an upstanding person. Farebrother is such a beloved preacher that people come to hear him speak from outside his parish; in person, he is "sweet-tempered, ready-witted, [and] frank." On the other hand, Lydgate also knows that he plays billiards at the Green Dragon for real money, which is concerning. Lydgate has never been able to understand the motivation behind gambling.

With the exception of a few characters (namely Bulstrode, Casaubon, and Dorothea) members of the Middlemarch community are not very pious. They often have quite lax moral principles, and the global community is also clearly influenced by the rise of secularism, as shown by the prominent role of science in the novel. Farebrother is very much a clergyman who acts in accordance with this increasingly secular community.

Lydgate is torn. He feels he should probably just vote for Farebrother; at the same time, the only bad thing he has ever heard about Tyke is that people "could not bear him." He goes to the board meeting hoping that he will hear something during the discussion that will help him decide for sure. When he arrives at the meeting, Dr. Sprague and some of the other doctors are already there. Sprague supports Farebrother. He is suspected of being an atheist, but people don't mind this; in fact, it likely increases their faith in his medical abilities. A very pious doctor would likely be distrusted in Middlemarch.

The detail that people cannot bear Tyke but that this is the only thing said against him suggests that the widespread dislike of him is baseless. Unfortunately, this does not really help Lydgate resolve the dilemma he faces. Meanwhile, the acceptance of Dr. Sprague's atheism again highlights the secularism of the Middlemarch community.

Dr. Minchin's religious beliefs are helpfully vague. His reputation as a doctor is around the same as Dr. Sprague's; both are "Middlemarch institutions." Neither particularly likes Bulstrode, although Mrs. Bulstrode is fond of Dr. Minchin as the only person who truly understands her health. The medical practitioners Mr. Wrench and Mr. Toller are also at the meeting. The discussion begins, and there is a debate over whether the real issue at hand is the souls of sick people or the question of who should get the chaplain's salary.

Here we get more of a sense of why Middlemarch is opposed to reform. Dr. Sprague and Dr. Minchin are treasured as "institutions" within the community, meaning that simply the fact that they have been around a long time qualifies them to be respected.

A lawyer named Mr. Hawley argues that Farebrother has been performing the role of hospital chaplain for free, and thus if it is to become a salaried position Farebrother should obviously get it. Someone else suggests that Farebrother isn't spiritual enough, while another person argues that too much dramatic preaching and praying is bad for sick people. Mr. Brooke is also present, along with the Rev. Edward Thesiger. Brooke says he is happy with whatever is best for Middlemarch, and thinks a salaried chaplaincy is a good idea. He says he has heard positive things about Mr. Tyke and thus plans to vote for him.

As we have seen thus far, Mr. Brooke is far from the most intelligent person in Middlemarch and is prone to changing his opinion. However, his age, rank, and wealth mean that he occupies a position of some authority, and he never lets his ignorance prevent him from joining in on discussions.

Others claim that Mr. Brooke must have received biased assessments of the two candidates. The men debate whether there should be a discussion at all or whether they should simply vote; in the end they choose the latter option, and everyone places the name of the man they're voting for into a glass. The group is evenly split; Bulstrode notices that Lydgate has not yet voted, and thus must make the deciding vote. Mr. Wrench declares that everyone knows Lydgate will vote with Bulstrode. Fulfilling this expectation, Lydgate votes for Tyke.

The dramatic conclusion of this scene serves as a reminder that it may well prove impossible for Lydgate to take a neutral position and remain uninvolved with the petty politics of Middlemarch society.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 19

The narrator observes that during the time in which the book is set, "the world in general was more ignorant of good and evil by forty years than it is at present." At the Vatican, two men observe a woman daydreaming while starting at the floor. One of the men, a German, notices that his friend, Ladislaw, is fixated on the woman. Ladislaw explains that she is married to Casaubon, which shocks his friend, who replies: "Mrs. Second-Cousin [is] the most perfect young Madonna I ever saw." Ladislaw explains that he has only met Dorothea once and didn't know she and Casaubon would be in Rome.

This passage subtly explores tension between past and future. The book is set in 1829-1832, forty years before it was published in 1871-1872. The narrator here expresses the clear opinion that the world has become better during the intervening years. At the same time, the setting of the Vatican, which has existed since the Roman times, symbolizes ancient wisdom, which Casaubon is seeking in conducting research there.

Will's friend is a painter named Adolf Naumann. To Will's dismay, he is determined to paint a picture of Dorothea. Naumann keeps referring to Dorothea as Will's aunt, which greatly annoys him. Naumann says that if Will doesn't want to introduce them, he can approach Dorothea himself and ask if she wants to be painted. Will tries to change the subject, annoyed with himself for getting upset.

Will's irritation with Naumann suggests that his feelings for Dorothea may be more complicated than the simple dislike he felt when they first met at Lowick. He, like Naumann, may feel enchanted by Dorothea's beauty.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 20

Two hours later, Dorothea sits in her apartment and weeps while Casaubon remains at the Vatican working. Dorothea is not sure why she is so upset, yet blames herself for her misery. She has seen all the best sights Rome has to offer, which have had an intense, lasting effect on her. It has been six weeks since her wedding, and it is not unusual for new brides to be overwhelmed with despair at this point in their marital journey. Often the first months of marriage are tumultuous and unhappy, but after this point follows a "cheerful peace."

Disappointment in marriage is a common occurrence in the novel. Considering Dorothea's ideals and fantasies, it would probably be difficult for her not to be disappointed in some way by everyday marital life. At the same time, the fact that she is so sad while still among the spectacular sights of Rome on her honeymoon is ominous.

Dorothea is confused. Casaubon hasn't changed; he is just as serious and intelligent as he always has been. Yet the narrator explains that a person will always appear different to their spouse after marriage than before. At the same time, Casaubon is hardly prone to misrepresenting himself. Honeymoons tend to reveal that the "voyage" of marriage is in reality nothing more than "exploring an enclosed basin." Dorothea has become more and more upset with the dismissive way in which Casaubon talks to her. She increasingly experiences "fits of anger or repulsion."

The change in Dorothea's opinion of Casaubon's nature is based on the suffocating nature of marriage, which emerges through the imagery of the "enclosed basin." Before marriage, a person is still free to choose among different suitors. However, after marriage it becomes inescapably clear that they are stuck with one person, and in this light the person's flaws become pronounced.

Casaubon rarely expresses any real feeling about the spectacular sights they go to see in Rome. Now, at the end of their journey, he tells Dorothea that he thinks that the trip will set her up for a life "as a happy wife." Dorothea says she hopes she can make herself useful back at Lowick, and then asks Casaubon if he plans to finally arrange his notes into the book he has been planning for years. She offers to do whatever it takes to help, and cannot help crying as she says this. Casaubon is infuriated by this; Dorothea doesn't understand any of his private thoughts and concerns.

Before marriage, Dorothea dreamed of living her life through Casaubon. This was a bad idea in general, because living through another is not a recipe for real fulfillment. However, it was a particularly bad idea to attempt this with Casaubon, considering that he is dispassionate and dull, and prefers isolation to spending time with his wife.

A brief argument ensues, and both Dorothea and Casaubon are shocked by the anger expressed by the other. Earlier, she had accompanied him to the Vatican and, when he went to the library, she wandered around by herself. It was at this point that Naumann and Ladislaw spotted her.

Neither Dorothea nor Casaubon wishes the other harm, yet the intense conflict between their ideas and desires means that they are growing to resent and even hate one another.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 21

Back in the moment when Dorothea is crying alone in the apartment, Casaubon's servant Tantripp knocks on the door with the news that a relative of Casaubon is waiting in the lobby. Dorothea is relieved to be distracted from her own self-pity and goes to greet Will. Dorothea explains that Casaubon is very busy, but if Will leaves his address he will write to him. Will is horrified—if not completely surprised—that Casaubon is spending practically his entire honeymoon in the Vatican library. The thought of him and Dorothea being married fills Will with "comic disgust."

Will originally disliked Dorothea on the basis that anyone who married Casaubon must be awful. However, he is now beginning to see that she is nothing like Casaubon, and this makes him think of her very differently. Indeed, Will's disgust suggests that he actually thinks quite highly of Dorothea and may have feelings for her.

Will smiles a charming smile, and Dorothea asks if something amuses him. He replies that he is thinking of when they met and Dorothea insulted his painting—which she immediately denies. She insists that she is just ignorant about art, which has been confirmed by her time in Rome. Will admits that one must learn to appreciate art. He says that many of his friends in Rome are German artists, but that he doesn't like the idea of seeing the world from the perspective of a painter. Will says he doesn't like things that don't "come easily" to him, and Dorothea replies that Casaubon finds this impatience frustrating.

As has become clear by this point, Middlemarch features many pairings of characters who are opposite to each other (e.g. Dorothea and Celia, Sir James and Casaubon, and Rosamond and Mary). Here we see that Casaubon and Will are another of these pairs. Will is impulsive, impatient, and free-spirited; if Dorothea likes these qualities, this does not bode well for her happiness with Casaubon.

Will says that few people are as patient as Casaubon, and it is a shame that his scholarship is hindered by the fact that he can't read German. Dorothea is distressed at the thought that Casaubon's work might actually be pointless. Seeing that he has upset her, Will backtracks, but Dorothea only says that she wishes she had learned German while she was in Switzerland so that she could help Casaubon now.

This passage adds an important twist to our impression of Casaubon. Dorothea has always idealized him, believing that he was a great man akin to John Locke. However, there is actually little evidence for this, and Will's words suggest it might be a mistaken impression.

Casaubon arrives and invites Will to dinner the next day; Will agrees and leaves. Dorothea apologizes to her husband for her angry words that morning and begins to cry again. Casaubon wants to tell her that she shouldn't have seen Will without him, but he doesn't.

Casaubon's desire for Dorothea not to see Will alone shows that he has conservative views about what married women should be allowed to do—which will likely prove problematic for Dorothea.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 22

At dinner the next day, Dorothea is impressed by the charming way Will converses with Casaubon. Casaubon similarly feels proud of Dorothea, who he feels speaks better than most women. Will invites them to visit some artists' studios before they leave, and they agree. He takes them to Naumann's studio, explaining that he has been studying as Naumann's pupil while in Rome. While Will shows them around and compliments Naumann's work, Dorothea feels that she is beginning to understand art a little better.

Dorothea is evidently a remarkably intelligent woman, yet she has suffered within a society that doesn't believe women should receive a substantial education and which doesn't take the views of women seriously. Casaubon may be proud of her intelligence, but he has not demonstrated that he is willing to help Dorothea find intellectual stimulation.

Naumann tells Casaubon that he would love to use him as a model for a picture of St. Thomas Aquinas, and Casaubon is surprised and thrilled—though not half as thrilled as Dorothea, who feels that this confirms that Casaubon is indeed the great man she imagined. Naumann then asks if Dorothea would also consider sitting for him, and she eagerly agrees. Watching her pose, Will is overcome with desire for her. Later that night, Naumann mocks Casaubon and comments excessively on Dorothea's beauty, which annoys Will. He eventually insists that Naumann stop talking about Dorothea.

The two comparisons that have been made between Casaubon and major figures in intellectual history—John Locke and Thomas Aquinas—perhaps indicate that he is a similarly great man himself. Importantly, however, in both cases the comparisons were based purely on looks. Casaubon might look *like a great man, but what does that matter if his intellect and work do not match up?*

Will desperately tries to see Dorothea alone before she leaves Rome. He visits her in the middle of the day, when he knows Casaubon will be at the library. Dorothea asks him to look at some cameos she has purchased as a gift for Celia. She says she finds it hard to enjoy things, such as great art, when she knows that not everyone has access to them. She then clarifies that she is not "a sad, melancholy creature," although she is subject to passionate changes in mood. Will says she is too young to think that way. He then exclaims that she will be "buried alive" in Lowick Manor, which he calls a "prison."

Both Will and Dorothea have a habit of speaking in an open, honest manner, and this sets them apart from the restrained, veiled mode of speech used by most other characters in the novel. The passion and earnestness they share helps foster the chemistry between them, but at the same time it is dangerous, as it risks revealing truths that may be too difficult to bear.

Will is worried that he might have insulted her, but his kind tone ensures that Dorothea is not offended. Dorothea asks him if Casaubon's ignorance of German really dooms his scholarship to irrelevance. Will explains that the topic Casaubon has chosen to write about is developing at great speed, and Casaubon cannot know about the latest advances without reading German. Dorothea gets upset, and Will apologizes, although he notes that he was only telling her the truth. He says that he is determined not to be a failure himself, and for this reason will shortly go back to England, give up the allowance Casaubon has provided for him, and devote himself to work.

Up until this point, we might have assumed that Casaubon's patient dedication to his scholarship was proof that he was producing a great work. However, patience and dedication are not the only ingredients of important scholarship. Crucially, Casaubon lacks the skill necessary for his work to be significant. He is stuck in the past, ignoring the reality of progress and advancements in knowledge.

Will goes to leave, saying he thinks Dorothea doesn't like him. Dorothea insists: "I like you very much." She says she looks forward to seeing what he will do for a career. She asks him to promise that he won't mention the problem with Casaubon's scholarship to anyone else. Will promises and leaves, meeting Casaubon on the way out. When Casaubon comes to meet Dorothea, she tells him about Will's plan to go to England and work his way to financial independence. Casaubon comments coldly that he gave Will an allowance out of a sense of duty, but is uninterested in him as a person.

It is not yet clear whether Casaubon is jealous of Will or whether he simply thinks it is improper for Will and Dorothea to spend time alone together because Dorothea is married. We get the sense that he should be jealous of Will, considering the qualities Will possesses that Casaubon doesn't: youth, passion, and urgent ambition. Importantly, these are qualities that Dorothea also has.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 23

Fred remains troubled by his debt. His creditor is Mr. Bambridge, a horse-dealer who often lends money to hedonistic young men. Fred owes him £160, and three months ago he renewed the debt with the signature of Caleb Garth. Fred has thus far felt completely confident that he will be able to pay back the debt, having always been able to rely on his father's money. Having grown up rather spoiled, he doesn't know much about the value of money or how rich Mr. Vincy actually is.

This passage shows that growing up wealthy tends to make people behave irresponsibly with money. This is true both because they don't have a sense of the real value of money and because they are overconfident that there will always be enough money to rely on if things go wrong, leading them to pursue reckless behavior.

The Garths have always felt great affection for Fred and Rosamond. Before marrying Mrs. Vincy's sister, Mr. Featherstone had been married to Caleb Garth's sister, thereby creating a connection between the Garths and Vincys. Fred has always adored Mary and treated the Garths' house as his "second home." The Garths used to be much wealthier than they are now. The Garths are known for living "in a small way." Caleb was more than happy to renew Fred's debt for him, although Mrs. Garth never found out.

The importance of rank and money in Middlemarch does not preclude friendships from existing across these differences. However, a sense of imbalance can remain prominent. Even worse, this can mean that wealthier people (like Fred) take advantage of those who have less (like Caleb Garth).

While all this is going on, Fred fails his exam, which makes it even worse that he racked up such serious debts in college. Yet his family members are somewhat lenient because they think he will be the main recipient of Featherstone's estate. The narrator observes that rich young men are often treated with more forgiveness for misuse of money than poor people who steal because they are starving. Fred is not a compulsive gambler, but his optimistic spirit, enjoyment of games, and desire for money lead him to betting.

This is an important passage, which identifies serious moral failings of the society depicted in the novel. Fred and other wealthy young men like him are forgiven not because their privilege makes what they've done any more acceptable (in fact, the opposite is true) but because people expect them to become even more wealthy and powerful later. It is thus a kind of unjust, strategic forgiveness.

Years ago Featherstone gave Fred a horse, and in his desperation to pay his debt Fred tries to sell the horse, even though it is a treasured and useful possession. He rides to the Houndsley horse fair accompanied by Bambridge and Horrock, the Middlemarch vet. Fred's fondness for these two men is puzzling, considering he is generally a rather refined, snooty person who looks down on those who aren't university-educated. Horrock is known as a drunk who beats his wife. He indulges in every kind of pleasure, which makes him "a gay companion."

Fred is snooty, but he is also hedonistic, and this leads him to associate with men of lower rank because they indulge in the kind of reckless, sensual pleasure that men of his status are not expected to engage in. By this time it is clear that Fred is a thoroughly irresponsible, practically delinquent young man.

The night before the fair begins, a farmer who knows Bambridge explains that he is selling a hunting horse named Diamond. Fred decides to persuade the farmer to swap horses with him, with Fred throwing in an extra £25. He knows he will be able to sell Diamond, who is much superior to his own horse, for at least £80. He ends up completing the swap and giving the farmer only an extra £30. He immediately heads home.

Fred believes he is pulling off a clever plan, which will allow him to escape the burden of his debt. However, one of the lessons of the novel is that trying to scheme or cheat one's way out of difficulties (and especially *financial difficulties) will never work out well in the end.*

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 24

Unfortunately, only a couple of days after this transaction Diamond has a violent kicking fit and lames himself. Fred is despondent. He decides to confess everything to Mary, and worries that this means he should probably confess to Mrs. Garth, too. Mrs. Garth tends to be judgmental of other women, and "disproportionately indulgent towards the failings of men." Fred finds her in the kitchen, giving a lesson to two of her children, Letty and Ben. Fred asks if these are her only pupils now, and Mrs. Garth explains that she is "at a low ebb with pupils" and as a result her income is small.

Immediately, Fred is doubly punished for his decision to try and get out of debt by selling the horse. Not only does the horse instantly become valueless, but Fred also faces the reality that his inability to pay the debt may put the Garths in serious financial hardship. This is a consideration that has evidently not crossed Fred's mind yet, because he is so insulated and naïve thanks to his family's wealth.

Fred feels worried and guilty. At that moment Mr. Garth arrives, and Fred immediately confesses that he only has £50 toward his debt of £160. Mr. Garth looks embarrassed, and tries to casually inform his wife that he co-signed Fred's debt. Mr. Garth says that this is all happening at an unfortunate moment, as Christmas is coming and the family is already struggling financially. He becomes more panicked as he wonders how they will possibly cobble together £110. Mrs. Garth says that she will give the £92 she had saved to pay for their son, Alfred, to be trained as an apprentice. She adds that Mary surely has £20 saved.

This heart-wrenching scene highlights the severity of Fred's recklessness and the negative impact it is going to have on the Garth family. To Fred, the debt is simply a bit of fun gone wrong. However, he was inadvertently betting with the Garths' savings and their son Alfred's future. Of course, this is not entirely Fred's fault—Caleb is also to blame for lending money that his family desperately needed.

For the first time Fred feels genuine sorrow. He had only been worried about the Garths thinking badly of him, and had not even considered that his actions might put them in a position of financial difficulty. Fred promises to eventually pay them back, but Mrs. Garth snaps that this won't help Alfred now. Mr. Garth also apologizes, saying he was wrong to co-sign the debt. Desperately upset and embarrassed, Fred leaves.

Although this episode hardly paints Fred in a sympathetic light, it is at least true that he quickly sees how wrongly he has behaved and feels genuine sorrow. This suggests that he is not a terrible person and can be reformed. He just needs to grow up and learn how to behave responsibly.

Mr. Garth apologizes to his wife again, but she responds kindly, saying it was silly of him not to tell her about it. Mrs. Garth says he needs to stop being so generous, and that he must go and ask Mary how much money she has saved. Mr. Garth is annoyed that this episode is interrupting "business," which he views as basically sacred. His use of "business" refers to industrial construction and labor. Although he has immense practical skill and knowledge, Mr. Garth is terrible with finances. He is very popular because he works hard and often doesn't even charge people for his labor. His family is poor, but they don't mind.

This is a key passage when it comes to the book's exploration of greed and money. On one hand, it is clear that Caleb was foolish to lend Fred the money and that even those who aren't greedy shouldn't be careless about money. Unfortunately, money is too important for that—it demands to be taken seriously. However, the passage also shows that it is possible (and indeed better) not to care about money, and that fulfillment can be found in other ways, such as through marriage and family.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 25

Fred goes to Mr. Featherstone's house, Stone Court, and dramatically announces to Mary that from now on she will only have the worst opinion of him. He explains the whole story, and Mary immediately cries out in sympathy for her father. Fred begs for Mary's forgiveness, but she says that's not the point. Her forgiveness will not fix the fact that Mrs. Garth has lost her savings and Alfred will no longer be able to do his apprenticeship. Fred asks if Featherstone might advance Mary her salary, to which she replies: "my family is not fond of begging, Fred. We would rather work for our money."

Here we see that Mary is far ahead of Fred when it comes to maturity. Even as Fred is apologizing to her, he remains fixated on himself and his own feelings, which—as Mary points out—are not the point. Moreover, Mary has honor, which leads her to state that she and her family work hard for their money and do not resort to begging. Again, it is clear that these noble qualities are far more important than money.

Mary observes that selfish people always prioritize their own feelings over the harm they've caused others, just as Fred is doing now. Fred attempts to defend himself, but Mary will not hear it. Fred begs her to tell him she loves him, and Mary teases him in return, dreaming up a horrible future for him. However, this makes her smile, and soon after, she runs to tell Featherstone Fred is there. Fred harbors no fears about his future due to the inheritance he presumes he will receive from his uncle. He speaks with Featherstone only briefly before returning home.

This passage shows that Fred and Mary's relationship is remarkably resilient. Mary is painfully aware of how badly Fred has behaved, and does not spare his feelings. Yet just as her mother forgave her father at the end of the last chapter, Mary's fondness for Fred remains. Unfortunately, Fred's ongoing confidence in inheriting Featherstone's wealth suggests he has not learned his lesson.

Later Mr. Garth comes to Stone Court. Alone with Mary, Mr. Garth says he has bad news, but Mary replies that she already knows it. She has already set aside the £24 she has saved, explaining that Fred came to see her that morning. Mr. Garth is overwhelmed with emotion and assures her they only need £18. He then tells Mary to beware of Fred, who has proven to be untrustworthy. He explains that he knows Mary is reasonable, but he still worries as her father. Mary assures him that she will never accept a man who is not financially independent, and father and daughter share a tender moment.

Mary clearly loves Fred, but unlike Dorothea and Rosamond, she has not let love lead her to develop illusions about who Fred is. Her conversation with Caleb suggests that she is able to remain level-headed in part because of the extremely close relationship she has with her family. Mary is in no rush to get married because she is so loved and fulfilled by her parents and siblings.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 26

After selling Diamond as meat for a small price, Fred begins to feel very ill and asks Mrs. Vincy to call Mr. Wrench. Wrench concludes that there is nothing seriously wrong, but when Fred remains very ill the next day, Mrs. Vincy anxiously wonders if she should call Dr. Sprague. At that moment Rosamond sees Lydgate stopping outside the house, and suggests that they invite him in as "they say he cures every one." Lydgate determines that Fred has typhoid fever, and that Wrench prescribed him the wrong medication.

This is the first substantial evidence we have that Lydgate lives up to his reputation as a talented doctor. Amusingly, Lydgate would never have gotten a chance to demonstrate his medical prowess if it weren't for Rosamond's crush on him, as Mrs. Vincy wanted to call Dr. Sprague instead.

Lydgate says Fred must go to bed straight away and be given a nurse; he then gives very specific instructions for his treatment. Mrs. Vincy begs Lydgate to come back regularly, and Lydgate awkwardly suggests that he can come along with Mr. Wrench. Wrench is infuriated by this turn of events and by Mr. and Mrs. Vincy's emotional declaration that Fred might have died if it had not been for Lydgate. The Vincys make Lydgate their family doctor, which prompts a great deal of dramatic gossip in Middlemarch. A rumor even spreads that Lydgate is Bulstrode's illegitimate son.

This passage makes it comically clear how difficult Lydgate's job of reforming medicine in Middlemarch will be. Instead of doctors being able to just get along with their jobs, social considerations, petty rivalries, and gossip abound. Amidst all this, it becomes difficult to assess who actually possesses the medical skill needed to heal people and save lives.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 27

The narrator says that their friend, a philosopher, taught them about an optical illusion wherein a candle held against a scratched metal surface will make it seem as if the scratches lie in concentric circles around the candlelight (when in fact they are multidirectional). This is a metaphor for how people's egos (the candle) give the illusion that they are the center of the events that occur around them (the scratches). For example, Rosamond feels that the whole incident of Fred's illness was actually a way for her and Lydgate to be brought closer together.

The candle anecdote, which is one of many scientific metaphors in the novel, is a powerful way of showing how people's egos influence their perception of the world. The narrator's habit of framing social realities using metaphors from science conveys that human social life is not separate from scientific fact, but is rather part of the natural world.

Under Lydgate's care, Fred gradually gets better, which means that each of Lydgate's visits gets more pleasant and enjoyable for the family. Whenever Lydgate gets a chance, he sits and listens to Rosamond play music. He feels that their shared flirtation is only a "play at being a little in love," because he remains convinced that he cannot marry until the **New Hospital** is finally established. Rosamond, however, believes this is really love and fantasizes of being married. She feels "proud whenever he enter[s] a room" and is sure that he is far superior to all the other suitors she has known.

Rosamond has succumbed to the kind of fantasies that, as we have seen from Dorothea, are potentially dangerous. Rosamond's dreams have prevented her from seeing that Lydgate is too focused on his career to take the prospect of marriage seriously right now. Furthermore, her fixation on his superiority is shallow. She doesn't seem to like Lydgate as a person so much as she is infatuated with his rank.

Rosamond doesn't think about money "except as something necessary which other people would always provide." Lydgate relishes the time he spends with her, especially because he finds the men of Middlemarch very dull. One evening he finds Rosamond deep in conversation with Ned Plymdale, another young Middlemarch bachelor. Rosamond explains that Lydgate has been the family's "guardian angel" during Fred's illness. Lydgate makes several rude, obnoxious comments, leaving Plymdale horrified. Rosamond pretends to be offended, but is secretly thrilled by Lydgate's pretentious display of superiority. She feels that they are "as good as engaged."

This passage confirms that Rosamond is in the midst of a misguided illusion when it comes to Lydgate. She embraces his obnoxious behavior and concludes that they are "as good as engaged" despite the fact that they have not even discussed marriage. Furthermore, her naïve understanding of money does not bode well for her future either. It has already been mentioned that Lydgate is poor, but Rosamond is too caught up in fantasy to notice.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 28

Dorothea and Casaubon arrive back from their honeymoon to January snow. The morning after their arrival Casaubon speaks to Mr. Tucker in his library, while Dorothea wonders when the life of "wifely devotion" she craves will begin. When she asks Casaubon what she should do, he simply replies, "whatever you please, my dear." The excitement she felt on first getting a glimpse of Lowick has totally evaporated. She feels an affinity with Casaubon's aunt who had the "unfortunate" marriage, and wonders what the woman's life was like.

On the surface Dorothea appears to possess a masochistic "appetite for submission," to the extent that she resents Casaubon's willingness to grant her agency. However, perhaps Dorothea is just telling herself that what she craves is "wifely devotion." It is more likely that what she really wants is intellectual stimulation and companionship.

Dorothea runs into Celia and Mr. Brooke, who greet her enthusiastically. Dorothea and Celia go to speak alone, and when Celia asks if Dorothea enjoyed Rome, Dorothea avoids answering. Celia mentions Lady Chettam and immediately blushes, prompting Dorothea to ask what's going on. Celia confesses that while Dorothea was gone, she and Sir James became very close, and were engaged three days ago. Dorothea replies that it is a wonderful match, and Celia adds that Sir James has been continuing work on the **cottages** in Dorothea's absence.

Dorothea was correct in guessing that Sir James would be a better match for Celia than he would be for her. However, it seems as if she was less skilled in predicting the success of her own marriage to Casaubon. Her refusal to answer Celia's question about Rome suggests that she is in denial about her marital problems, or at least wants to keep up appearances.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 29

This chapter begins with another consideration of Dorothea's perspective before switching to Casaubon's. The narrator argues that Casaubon cannot be blamed for choosing to marry, and points out that he tries to provide everything for his young wife. He had been convinced that Dorothea was the perfect match for him. Overall, he has not led a happy life, and he is severely self-conscious about what other scholars and clergymen really think of his abilities. In fact, he is so insecure about his own work that it makes him question his religious faith. The narrator expresses pity for him.

This is the first time that we get a glimpse of Casaubon's subjectivity, which has previously remained quite mysterious. The narrator suggests that this passage will increase the reader's sympathy for Casaubon. Yet while it is clear that Casaubon means Dorothea no harm, it is also hard to sympathize with someone who refuses help in order to preserve an overinflated idea of himself.

Casaubon had planned to rely on Dorothea's help with his work, but now this strikes him as not worth the effort. Nonetheless she insists on being given tasks to perform. One morning Casaubon hands Dorothea a letter addressed to her from Will which had been enclosed in a letter from Will to Casaubon. He tells her that he will not accept Will's request to come and visit them at Lowick. Dorothea angrily asks why Casaubon assumes she will disagree on this matter. He wearily replies that he doesn't want to argue about it. Just at that moment, Casaubon drops his book and grips the table, unable to breathe.

Dorothea is so desperate to appear submissive that she gets angry at Casaubon's presumption that she will want Will at Lowick (even though it is clear that she and Will get along). This is the kind of manipulative and self-sabotaging behavior that can develop in unhappy marriages. It shows that Dorothea is still trying to suppress her true nature, which will surely only cause more problems.

Dorothea helps Casaubon to the couch. Sir James arrives and Dorothea explains that her husband has "had a fit." Sir James is unsurprised that Casaubon should be on the brink of death so soon. He suggests that they call Lydgate, who has recently done an excellent job of treating Lady Chettam. When Sir James tell Celia what happened, they both remark on how awful Casaubon is and how strange it is that "noble" Dorothea is married to him. Sir James suggests that Celia go to her sister before Lydgate arrives. Although he is now perfectly happy with Celia, Sir James still thinks it's a shame that more wasn't done to prevent Dorothea from marrying Casaubon, for her own sake.

Casaubon is so intensely disliked that even his sister-in-law and her fiancee react to his apparent heart attack by discussing how terrible he is. While sometimes people are looked on more kindly after death than they are when they are alive, this does not seem likely in the case of Casaubon.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 30

Casaubon recovers within a few days, but Lydgate remains worried and stresses that Casaubon needs to stop working so hard. Casaubon protests that this will be miserable, and Lydgate commiserates. Lydgate speaks with Dorothea, assuring her that Casaubon's health is improving. He tells her that it is possible that Casaubon might live for another 15 years, provided that he is "careful against mental agitation of all kinds." He suggests travel, mentioning the trip to Rome, but Dorothea immediately replies that this would not work. She pleads for Lydgate's advice, imploring him to consider Casaubon's attachment to his work.

Lydgate's diagnosis presents a dilemma for Casaubon (and, by extension, Dorothea). Casaubon's best chance of extending his life is to stop working, but without work he essentially doesn't have a life. Dorothea's pleas to Lydgate suggest that she is in denial about the reality facing her husband: if he keeps working, he will not live much longer.

Lydgate feels he cannot answer, and so he leaves. Dorothea sobs and returns to Casaubon's study, where she finds the letters from Will, which she decides to tidy away so Casaubon will not see them and get upset again. She reads Will's letter to her husband. Will reiterates his plan to become financially independent on returning to England, and adds that Naumann has requested that a painting he made for Casaubon be brought to him at Lowick—hence Will's plan to visit. Dorothea gives the letters to Mr. Brooke, asking him to write and explain that Casaubon is too ill for visitors.

It is odd that Casaubon refused to allow Will to come and visit, considering that his letter was kind and he is clearly not requesting any further financial support from Casaubon. Casaubon's wish not to see Will can perhaps only be explained by jealousy over Will's friendship with Dorothea.

Mr. Brooke writes a long letter complimenting Will and explaining that he cannot come to Lowick. However, Brooke then suggests that Will come to stay at Tipton instead, as Brooke is interested in discussing politics with him. He sends the letter without telling Dorothea, who is busy tending to Casaubon.

Many twists of fate in the novel take place because the characters act in secret, without telling one another what they have done. Brooke's secrecy is not malicious, but it will come to have a big impact on the remainder of the story.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 31

That evening Lydgate speaks with Rosamond, expressing surprise and confusion about Dorothea's marriage. Lydgate and Rosamond's flirtation cannot be kept secret in Middlemarch, which is rife with gossip (especially about Rosamond). Mrs. Plymdale and Mrs. Bulstrode discuss Rosamond; Mrs. Plymdale says she knows the Bulstrodes have helped encourage the courtship between Lydgate and Rosamond, but that she is actually grateful that Ned is not going to marry her. She believes that Rosamond thinks too highly of herself, convinced that "no young man in Middlemarch is good enough for her."

Mrs. Plymdale's words may sound like a defensive attempt to save face, but her assessment of Rosamond is correct. Meanwhile, the gossip about Rosamond and Lydgate's relationship only adds fuel to the fire of Rosamond's fantasy. Can she be blamed for getting caught up in the dream of marrying Lydgate if it is all that anyone is talking about?

Mrs. Bulstrode expresses shock at the idea of there being anything between Lydgate and Rosamond, adding that she isn't prone to gossip. Later, Mrs. Bulstrode tells Rosamond that she has heard that she is engaged. Rosamond denies it, but Mrs. Bulstrode immediately begins warning her niece about marrying Lydgate, because he is poor and Rosamond is unlikely to inherit anything from Mr. Vincy. Rosamond denies that Lydgate is poor, mentioning his "high connections." Mrs. Bulstrode asks if Lydgate has proposed and, embarrassed to say no, Rosamond requests that they stop talking about it.

This passage reveals that Rosamond is too naïve (or too obsessed with rank) to know the difference between "high connections" and money. While she certainly appears to care more about social status than money, her desire for superiority surely necessitates a certain amount of wealth. We know that Mrs. Bulstrode's warnings are wise because both the narrator and Lydgate himself have said that Lydgate is poor.

Following this exchange, Mrs. Bulstrode decides to speak with Lydgate herself. She scolds Lydgate for leading Rosamond on and interfering with her other marriage prospects, which infuriates him. The next day when Farebrother invites Lydgate to dinner at the Vincys', Lydgate refuses, saying he has too much work to do. He decides that he won't go to the Vincys' again except in a professional capacity. This leaves Rosamond devastated, though she comforts herself by imaging that Mrs. Bulstrode might have stopped Lydgate from coming.

At this stage it is unclear whether Lydgate decides to stop going to the Vincys' out of pride or because he is genuinely worried about misleading Rosamond, considering that he doesn't plan to marry yet. Either way, the situation shows how difficult it is to go about one's life in Middlemarch without multiple people interfering.

However, after ten days Lydgate stops at the Vincys' with a message for Mr. Vincy and finds Rosamond alone. He is moved by how obviously overwhelmed she is to see him; this moment "shook flirtation into love." Lydgate asks what's wrong, and Rosamond begins to cry. Lydgate embraces her and kisses her tears. Within half an hour, they are engaged. That night, Lydgate finds Mr. Vincy returning from Stone Court with the news that Featherstone will probably soon die—news that has put Mr. Vincy in a decidedly happy mood. He cheerfully gives his approval of Lydgate and Rosamond's engagement.

For all his single-mindedness, Lydgate is quite easily seduced by Rosamond. Seeing her passion for him causes him to instantly change course and propose immediately. This could be interpreted as romantic, but it is also potentially dangerous. Lydgate is not acting in a practical, considered manner, and neither is Rosamond. Instead, they are both caught up in a dream.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 32

All of Featherstone's relations are hoping to receive something in his will, even the poor ones to whom he never showed any generosity in his life. As Featherstone lies on his deathbed, countless relatives arrive at his house. He won't see any of them, so Mary carries their messages to him. Some of the guests, such as Featherstone's brother Jonah, simply refuse to leave the house. A great many of them are now crowded in the kitchen, which distresses Mary. The relatives eventually confront Featherstone, who is enraged by their presence. He declares: "I've made my will, I tell you, I've made my will."

The scene of Mr. Featherstone's relatives descending like vultures around his deathbed (alongside Mr. Vincy's joy at the news of his imminent death in the previous chapter) is decidedly sinister. It highlights how greed not only corrupts people's morals, but also leads them to behave in unbecoming, dishonorable ways.

Mr. Trumbull, the Middlemarch auctioneer, has a meeting with Featherstone, and as he is waiting to go up to Featherstone's room the crowd of relatives asks for an update on Featherstone's current state of mind. Trumbull gives an evasive answer, but subtly implies that Featherstone's land may not be inherited by anyone in the family at all. In reality Trumbull doesn't know anything about Featherstone's will. He discusses Mary's books with her, claiming to be "a great bookman myself." The relatives mutter about Mary, supposing that Featherstone will have certainly left her something in the will.

Mr. Trumbull's decision to stir up controversy among Featherstone's relatives is highly irresponsible. It shows how the proclivity for gossip and temptation to seem like an authority can make people behave in reckless ways. Once again, selfishness and ego make the characters reveal the ugliest sides of themselves.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 33

Mary often likes to sit in Mr. Featherstone's room after midnight, keeping watch over him and immersing herself in her own private thoughts. At 3 am, she hears Featherstone call her name. He opens a tin box that contains several keys, and asks how many of his relatives are currently in the house. Featherstone calls them "fools," and then tells Mary that he has made two wills and intends to burn one of them. He asks Mary to use the key to unlock his iron chest and get one of the wills. She refuses, saying that if she gets involved people will be suspicious of her.

Mary's wisdom, honesty, and pragmatism here save her from a potentially disastrous turn of events. Even when faced with the demand of a man who has authority over her, Mary trusts her own instincts. This is part of what makes her such an admirable and unusual character.

When Mary continues to refuse to help, Featherstone begins to cry. He then asks her to call Fred instead and, panicked, she says she'll only do that if she can get the other relatives as well. Featherstone tries to give Mary almost £200 in banknotes, stressing that she will certainly never receive such an amount again. She refuses and offers him cordial, saying they can speak about it in the morning. Featherstone attempts to throw his walking stick at her and misses. Mary goes back to her seat by the fire, hoping Featherstone will fall asleep again. Some time passes, and Mary notices that he has died, still holding the keys in one hand and the money in the other.

Here Mary's behavior is so noble that it is difficult to not to wonder if she is actually acting in a foolish way. As we have seen, her entire life savings amounted to £24 (before £20 of them had to be used to bail out Fred), and thus we know how much of a difference £200 would make to her. However, given her wisdom, it is likely that she was right in refusing to comply with Featherstone's request. This refusal becomes especially dramatic considering that Featherstone dies immediately afterward.

BOOK 4, CHAPTER 34

Featherstone is buried in May. He has left specific instructions for an extravagant, impressive funeral. Featherstone always loved to spend his money in a way that reminded others of his superiority and power. At Featherstone's request, Mr. Cadwallader performs the service. Mrs. Cadwallader has persuaded Sir James and Celia to drive her to Lowick. Against Lydgate's advice, Casaubon has returned to working with the same intensity as always.

There is something darkly fitting about Featherstone's lavish funeral considering that everyone there doesn't actually care about him but only wants his money. While an extravagant funeral is theoretically supposed to signify that someone was popular and intensely loved, in this case it simply confirms that Featherstone was rich.

Casaubon, Dorothea, and their guests watch through the window as the funeral train enters the church. Celia looks away, saying it makes her too sad to watch, and commenting that Dorothea probably likes it because "she is fond of melancholy things and ugly people." Dorothea says she is merely interested in her neighbors. The group discusses the funeral-goers, and Dorothea exclaims in horror at the idea that Featherstone was completely unloved when he died. Mrs. Cadwallader notices a stranger among the funeral crowd, a man with "a sort of frog-face."

Although Celia and Dorothea are close, Celia's rather amusing comment shows that she fundamentally doesn't understand her sister. Her belief that Dorothea loves "melancholy things and ugly people" likely rests on Dorothea's rejection of light-hearted, aesthetic pursuits that are seen as typically feminine. Of course, this does not mean Dorothea likes things because they are sad or ugly.

Everyone strains to see the stranger, and in that moment Celia exclaims that she didn't know Ladislaw was coming. Mr. Brooke casually explains that Ladislaw is staying with him. Casaubon concludes that Dorothea must have asked Mr. Brooke to invite Ladislaw to stay at Tipton. Dorothea knows Casaubon hates Ladislaw, although she doesn't know why. Brooke indicates that he thinks Ladislaw would prove himself to be a talented speechwriter, and says he will go to find him now.

Here we begin to see the consequences of Mr. Brooke's secretive behavior. Again, Brooke did not mean to cause any harm through secretly inviting Will—in fact, as his comments here show, he invited him because he thinks Will can help his political career. However, this self-centered short-sightedness could have bad consequences.

BOOK 4, CHAPTER 35

All of Featherstone's relatives are hoping to get some of the limited amount of land and money that Featherstone has left behind. Most of the relatives are furiously jealous of the Vincys, as it is expected that Fred will inherit the majority of the land. However, all the speculation is confused by the appearance of the frog-faced stranger, who presents himself as one of the mourners. He is identified as Rigg. Fred overhears Jonah mentioning a "love-child," and when Fred links this phrase to Rigg's ugly face, he struggles to suppress a laugh. Seeing this, Mary asks to swap seats with him so Fred is out of the others' sight.

There is a general atmosphere of nastiness at the reading of Featherstone's will, created mostly by the greedy excitement and speculation which has totally dwarfed any pretense of mourning that took place at the funeral. This sense of nastiness is further increased by Fred's reaction to Rigg—a reaction that suggests Fred is just as immature and thoughtless as ever.

Now that all Featherstone's relatives are assembled, it is time for the reading of his will. Featherstone's lawyer Mr. Standish was surprised and a little excited when he found out about the second will. The audience listens nervously as Standish reads the first will, announcing that about £3000 will be distributed in small, even amounts among a great many of Featherstone's relatives. The Garths are not mentioned, but Mr. Vincy and Mrs. Vincy learn they will receive £100 each. It is then announced that Fred will receive £10,000; he is so happy that he has to bite his cheeks to stop himself from smiling.

Again, this scene highlights the selfish, greedy, and ugly side of the people assembled at the reading. Fred behaves in a particularly despicable way; he is so happy about the money he is due to inherit that he cannot pretend to be solemn without physically biting his cheeks. Meanwhile, there is dramatic irony created by the fact that as readers, we know there is a second will.

The rest of Featherstone's property and land is all given to Joshua Rigg, who is also expected to take "Featherstone" as his surname. Everyone is profoundly shocked except Rigg himself. However, then a second will is read, which cancels out the first one entirely. This new will gives *all* Featherstone's land and property to Rigg, leaving only a little extra to build alms-houses in Featherstone's name. The only person present who inherits anything is Trumbull, who gets Featherstone's gold-plated cane.

While Featherstone appears to have had a change of heart at the last minute (as indicated by his desire for Mary to burn one of the wills), his original plan—which is the one carried out—was to have a dramatic twist of events that raised people's expectations before dashing them. In a sense, Featherstone wanted to make sure he had the last laugh.

Mr. Vincy angrily declares that Featherstone must have lost his ability to reason when he made the will. Standish and Trumbull insist that his mind was perfectly healthy. Mr. Garth suggests that the will is actually not that surprising, adding: "I wish there was no such thing as a will." Jonah chimes in, calling Featherstone "a hypocrite." Rigg seems unbothered by the malicious comments circulating among the relatives. Rigg has a high-pitched voice and "a vile accent." Fred laments that he will have to train as a clergyman after all, and asks Mary what she shall do. She replies that she will get another job, and leaves.

Despite the amount of sincere distress in the room, there is something inescapably comic about the chaos that ensues after the reading of the will. Once people lose out on the inheritance they believe they deserve, all the selfish, greedy, and nasty behavior they had been suppressing suddenly comes to the surface.

Concluding the chapter, the narrator reflects that any stories about "low people" in the book can be redeemed by being considered as parables. The narratives of low-ranking people may well serve as metaphors for the lives of the nobility. The narrator concludes by mentioning that Featherstone died before Lord Grey was elected Prime Minister and the Reform Act was passed.

At the time Middlemarch *was published, it was still customary to devote novels to the lives of high-ranking people. Here the narrator's invocation of the Reform Act suggests that* Middlemarch*'s attention to people of different ranks reflects broader social change.*

BOOK 4, CHAPTER 36

Mr. Vincy's view of the world has been drastically transformed by the reading of Featherstone's will. He furiously tells Fred that he'd better retake his college exam and pass this time. Mrs. Vincy tells her husband not to be so harsh to Fred; while both parents agree that Fred has been "robbed," Mr. Vincy thinks it has not helped that their son is so spoiled. Mrs. Vincy tries to appease her husband by mentioning Lydgate's high-ranking relatives, but Mr. Vincy curses relatives in general, adding: "I don't want a son-in-law who has got nothing but his relations to recommend him."

It is now clear how much of the Vincys' carefree attitude toward life was based on their belief that Fred was soon going to inherit a large amount of property from Featherstone. Now that this has not happened, they are forced to take a hard look at their previous assumptions and indulgences. For the first time, Mr. Vincy sees how misguided it was to spoil Fred and Rosamond.

Mr. Vincy declares that he withdraws his approval of Rosamond's engagement, and the next day Mrs. Vincy informs her daughter of the news. Rosamond is adamant that the engagement will go ahead despite her family's change in circumstances. She notes that Fred's lack of inheritance is not her problem, and that her brother should start working. Meanwhile, Mr. Vincy makes it clear that he will not provide any money for the young couple. It becomes clear that the couple must marry within one year and preferably sooner. This messes up Lydgate's plan, but he decides he must accept it. Farebrother assures Lydgate that being married will probably help his career rather than hinder it.

It is easy to see both sides in Rosamond's conflict with her parents. From Rosamond's perspective, it is true that Fred's loss of fortune isn't her fault, and that she shouldn't have to pay for her brother's lack of job. It is also cruel of Mr. Vincy to rescind his approval of her engagement after he already gave it. At the same time, Mr. and Mrs. Vincy's desire for Rosamond to take Lydgate's financial situation seriously is also sympathetic. Right now Rosamond is in naïve denial.

One evening, Lydgate notices that Rosamond has been crying, and after some prompting she explains that Mr. Vincy and Fred have been fighting and that Mr. Vincy no longer supports their engagement. Lydgate assures her that it is too late for Mr. Vincy to oppose it, and that they could perhaps solve the problem by getting married right away, waiting to buy Rosamond's wedding clothes after the fact. Rosamond finds this idea puzzling and somewhat unappealing, as she has been fantasizing about the clothes she will wear to meet Lydgate's relatives.

Rosamond's reaction to Lydgate's solution suggests that she is being foolish and naïve about the wedding, more caught up in fantasy than reality. (Note that the phrase "wedding clothes" doesn't refer to the bridal dress but to the clothes Rosamond will where on social occasions surrounding the wedding, such as visits to Lydgate's relatives.)

Lydgate suggests they marry in six weeks, and while Rosamond doesn't believe this is enough time, she says she can try to hurry the preparations. They kiss, both feeling ecstatically in love. The rushed preparations for the wedding mean that Lydgate ends up spending more money than he would have otherwise. When Rosamond approaches Mr. Vincy, he once again expresses disapproval on the grounds that Lydgate is poor. He says that between Fred's bad luck and parliament on the brink of being dissolved, it feels like the world is ending.

Mr. Vincy's proclamations might be needlessly dramatic, but Rosamond and Lydgate's rushed marriage does have a mild air of disaster. Considering the existing concern over Lydgate's finances, his extra spending on the wedding is ominous. However, both he and Rosamond are unaware of this due to the intensity of their love.

Rosamond objects that these things have nothing to do with her marriage. She says that Lydgate's high rank means that he will surely end up wealthy and powerful, and adds that marrying him is her only chance of happiness on earth. Mr. Vincy softens, saying Lydgate must write to him and ask for his permission. Once Lydgate has done so, Vincy demands that Lydgate get life insurance, which Lydgate agrees to do.

Rosamond is essentially making the same mistake about Lydgate that her family did about Fred: believing that he will become wealthy in the future, even though there is no assurance of this happening. In both cases, this blind faith is a recipe for disappointment.

Soon after, Rosamond tells Lydgate how much she looks forward to meeting his family members; Lydgate does not share her enthusiasm, saying: "my cousins are bores." Rosamond is embarrassed by the idea of Lydgate's relatives visiting Middlemarch and meeting her own family, and thus hopes that Lydgate will eventually get a position somewhere else in the country.

Rosamond continues to fixate on an idea of the future that does not seem to be shared by Lydgate. She is desperate to leave Middlemarch and her past behind, but Lydgate has only just arrived and his ambitions will make him more and more entrenched in the community.

BOOK 4, CHAPTER 37

The dramatic political events occurring at this time have created a great deal of confusion in Middlemarch. Many had stopped reading the local newspaper *The Pioneer*, which has a progressive bent, due to its over-tolerant position on the Catholic Question. However, the anti-Catholic *Trumpet* is not favored either. Mr. Hackbutt tells Mr. Hawley that Mr. Brooke is rumored to have acquired the *Pioneer* in secret, adding that he has got "a very brilliant young fellow"—Ladislaw—to be the paper's editor. The two men intend to use the paper to push the Reform agenda.

"The Catholic Question" refers to the events surrounding the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829, which allowed Catholics to become Members of Parliament. This change is obviously related to broader questions around religious tolerance (explored in the book through Bulstrode) and also to Reform itself, a movement to change the country's electoral system and make it more democratic.

Hawley ridicules Reform, which leads Hackbutt to point out that, though he is no radical, the electoral system in England does have serious problems. Mr. Brooke, meanwhile, describes Ladislaw as a "kind of Shelley," clarifying that he means this in a complimentary way. He appreciates Ladislaw's "enthusiasm for liberty, freedom, emancipation" and tells Casaubon that he is glad they are related. Casaubon could not feel more differently. Ladislaw knows that Casaubon hates him. Ladislaw knows he has a debt to his cousin due to the financial support Casaubon once provided, yet he is convinced that Casaubon has "done a wrong to Dorothea in marrying her."

Brooke's comparison refers to Percy Bysshe Shelley, a Romantic poet famous for his radical social, political, and economic views. Shelley advocated for atheism, and against war and the monarchy. His rebellions got him kicked out of Oxford and cut off from his family. He died at the age of 29 in Italy. Although Shelley is now seen as an important radical, in a conservative place like Middlemarch, it would be hard to see how a comparison to him could be meant as a compliment.

Ladislaw is determined to faithfully watch over Dorothea and has managed to see her a few times since coming to Middlemarch, although never alone. To Dorothea, seeing Will is like a brief glimpse of sunshine in her prison-like existence. Finally Will manages to see her alone, and admits to her that he aimed to catch her without Casaubon. Dorothea explains that she has learned a lot since Rome in order to be able to help her husband, and adds that it can be tiring to learn and know so much.

Dorothea seems to not yet realize how much Will hates Casaubon. Furthermore, although the narrator compares her life at Lowick to a prison, Dorothea has not yet fully admitted that her marriage is a failure. She is clearly still attached to the original fantasy of being an intellectual helpmeet to Casaubon.

Will says that Casaubon should get a secretary, and Dorothea says neither she nor her husband wants that. Will then says that this is because Casaubon is too insecure about his own work to have anyone else look at it. Rather than getting angry, Dorothea is quiet. Will mentions his grandmother, Julia, who was disowned for marrying a poor Polish musician. Dorothea suddenly exclaims: "I wish I knew all about her!" She wonders how Julia coped with transitioning from "wealth to poverty," but Will admits he did not know her or his grandfather very well, and that they died young.

Dorothea romanticizes Julia's trajectory because it is so different from her own. Julia married for love and was forced to give up all her wealth as a result. Perhaps naively, Dorothea is excited by this story. Will's response tempers this romanticization, particularly when he points out that both Julia and her husband died young. Marrying for love isn't necessarily a "happily ever after."

Dorothea says that she has always had "too much of everything." Will explains that his mother also ran away from her family, though not for a man, but rather to be an actress. He then tells Dorothea about Mr. Brooke buying the *Pioneer* and asking Will to stay in Middlemarch and edit it. He says that he will stay unless Dorothea wants him to go, but she assures him she wants him to stay. As he goes to leave, he wants to ask Dorothea not to mention their conversation to Casaubon, but he doesn't want to corrupt her innate honesty, so says nothing.

The history of rebellious women in Will's family makes him an even more fitting match for Dorothea, as he—unlike everyone else in Middlemarch—might actually be able to understand and sympathize with her free-spirited nature. Of course, unfortunately this has emerged too late, once Dorothea is already married to Casaubon.

When Casaubon comes home, Dorothea tells him about Will's visit and Mr. Brooke's proposal. She suggests that it would be good for Will to finally have a job that he can dedicate himself to. The next day, Casaubon writes Will a letter telling him that Will's acceptance of Mr. Brooke's proposal would be "highly offensive" to him. He cites his previous support of Will as grounds for him to be able to forbid Will from taking the position. He also tells Will not to come to Lowick again.

Crucially, Casaubon does not give a reason why Will's acceptance of the position at the Pioneer *would be "offensive"—he just cites his authority over Will as the reason why Will should comply with his wishes. This once again shows that Casaubon is cold and unfeeling, with too much reverence for authority and tradition.*

Meanwhile, Dorothea keeps thinking about Julia. She thinks that the unjust way Julia was treated means that Casaubon "ha[s] a debt to the Ladislaws." She suddenly feels sure that in order to repay this debt, Casaubon should give Will a steady income which would continue to be paid even after Casaubon's death. This idea fills her with happiness and a sense of purpose. Late that night, Dorothea tells her husband that she has been thinking about money, and how she has always had too much of it.

Dorothea has an unusually strong and forward-thinking sense of justice. At this time, it is normal for families to cut off members who act in disobedient and rebellious ways. However, Dorothea sees that this is not right. Unfortunately, her naivety means that she believes Casaubon will agree and be willing to right this past wrong.

Dorothea then mentions Julia, suggesting that Casaubon himself perhaps felt a debt and that's why he paid for Will's education. She says she doesn't think it's right that Will is poor while they are rich. Casaubon tells Dorothea that it is not her place—nor within her capacity—to try and influence him on a subject like this. The next day Casaubon receives a response from Will, saying that Will disagrees with the idea that Casaubon has a right to forbid him from staying in Middlemarch. While Casaubon has supported him in the past, Will is now independent and may do what he likes.

Casaubon is a deep believer in hierarchy and authority, and he holds the conservative view that people should temper their behavior according to their place in this hierarchy. Neither Dorothea nor Will sees the world this way, but unlike Will, Dorothea has limited means to rebel against it. This passage also illuminates that Casaubon does not truly respect Dorothea's intelligence and opinions, but rather expects her to remain subservient to him.

Casaubon is suddenly convinced that all of Will's recent actions have been part of a plan to turn Dorothea against him. He considers contacting Mr. Brooke or Sir James for help. However, he doesn't feel he can rely on anyone to take his side. He also doesn't want anyone to know that he is jealous and insecure when it comes to Will. This would be as bad as letting his fellow scholars judge his work. He therefore says nothing to anyone.

Like many people whose insecurities lead them to isolate themselves, Casaubon begins to suffer from paranoia. Crucially, his social paranoia about Dorothea and Will mirrors his intellectual paranoia about other scholars viewing him as a fraud.

BOOK 4, CHAPTER 38

Sir James comes to lunch at the Cadwalladers', and the group discuss their disapproval of Mr. Brooke's latest endeavor. They speculate about whether Mr. Brooke will run for election; Mr. Cadwallader says there are rumors that Bulstrode is backing this plan. Sir James is concerned that Mr. Brooke is in danger of losing his dignity, and notes that Ladislaw doesn't want Brooke to run in the upcoming election. Mrs. Cadwallader thinks Ladislaw is "dangerous" and has radical ideas. Sir James thinks it is regrettable that anyone of Ladislaw's rank should stoop to working at a newspaper.

This scene demonstrates a range of the reasons why the rather conservative Middlemarchers oppose progressive politics. Not only do they oppose Reform, but they think it is improper for people like Brooke and Ladislaw to demean themselves by getting involved with politics. They fear anything that seems too progressive as a form of "radicalism."

Sir James criticizes the way Mr. Brooke runs his estate, saying that he doesn't take good enough care of his tenants. He thinks Caleb Garth should take over managing it, as he did until 12 years ago when Brooke fired him. Brooke enters, and Mr. Cadwallader shows him a copy of the *Trumpet* accusing him of being a bad landlord who is "retrogressive" and "evil." Brooke tries to take the criticism in stride, but turns red as he speaks.

It might seem surprising that Sir James should also criticize Brooke for being a bad landlord considering that James is not sympathetic to social progress. The model of existence James appears to subscribe to is one of "noblesse oblige" wherein the nobility have a duty to take care of the less fortunate—yet also retain their disproportionate wealth and power.

Sir James mentions Garth's farming innovations and Brooke says he doesn't have the money for that; Mrs. Cadwallader then points out that running for parliament is extremely expensive. Mr. Cadwallader says he thinks Brooke should immediately hire Garth to renovate his farms in order to disprove the *Trumpet*'s accusations. Brooke simply replies that he is not actually such a bad landlord.

For all their opposition to Reform, Brooke's friends actually give him some very useful advice. As anyone familiar with politics knows, it is vital that someone running for public office make sure that their personal life accords with their political positions.

BOOK 4, CHAPTER 39

One day Dorothea comes to see Mr. Brooke and Will while they are at work together on the issue of capital punishment. Her presence in the room has an electrifying impact on Will. However, she more or less ignores him, and he feels despondent. Dorothea says that Sir James has told her that Mr. Brooke plans to improve the farm and **cottages**, which thrills her. However, Brooke says he is only considering it. Dorothea insists that Brooke shouldn't run on a progressive platform unless he treats his own tenants fairly.

This passage suggests that Dorothea's architectural plans for the tenant cottages emerged because Brooke's tenants were always living in bad conditions. Again, this does not set him up well for a political campaign rooted in fighting for social progress.

Mr. Brooke admits that Dorothea may have a point, although not without mentioning the limits of women's intelligence. He is called outside, leaving Will and Dorothea alone. Will asks if she knows that Casaubon banned him from coming to Lowick; Dorothea, shocked, says: "I am very, very sorry." Will says that he plans to stay in Middlemarch, but laments that he will never get to see Dorothea. He calls her situation at Lowick "imprisonment." The two of them discuss faith; that is, the beliefs that motivate them and give life meaning. Dorothea says she must leave, as Mr. Brooke and Celia will be expecting her.

Casaubon's ban on Will's coming to Lowick of course has the unintended effect of increasing the intensity of feeling between Will and Dorothea. Anytime a union between two people is forbidden, this union takes on a much more suspenseful, romantic aspect.

Outside, Mr. Brooke approaches one of his tenants, Mr. Dagley, telling him that his son has killed a leveret and is locked up in the stable as punishment. Brooke says the boy will be returned soon, and speaks to Mrs. Dagley about discipline. Mrs. Dagley complains about her husband's drinking, while Mr. Dagley protests that Brooke's decision to push Reform in Middlemarch is ironic considering his poor behavior as a landlord. Shocked, Brooke hurries away. He had always assumed that his tenants liked him.

This episode reveals that Brooke's reputation as a landlord is even worse than we might have assumed. He is so hated that his tenants risk punishment by rudely defying him. This suggests that he has indeed been treating them terribly, as they feel they have nothing to lose. Brooke is clearly a hypocrite who has not internalized the principles of social progress.

BOOK 4, CHAPTER 40

Mary is now back home with her family, waiting to begin another job. She is sewing a handkerchief for Rosamond on the occasion of her wedding. She tells Mrs. Garth that she has decided to go and teach at a school in York, though she doesn't like being inside classrooms. As her siblings tease her Mary tries to laugh, but cannot fight back her tears. Mr. Garth reads a letter from Mr. Brooke, asking him to come back and manage both Freshitt and Tipton. Everyone at the table is delighted; Mr. Garth tells Mary not to go to the school after all, as the family will have enough money now.

Fred's debt, along with Featherstone's death, has left the Garth family in a dire financial situation. Mary has a strong sense of duty and thus tries to avoid feeling sorry for herself, but struggles to hide her sorrow. However, this all changes when Caleb gets the letter from Brooke. This turnaround shows how the lives of poor people can be instantly transformed according to the whims of the rich.

That evening, Mr. Farebrother comes to the Garths' house, announcing that he is there to deliver a message from Fred Vincy, who has just returned to Middlemarch after a few months away. Fred will soon go away again to study, but is too ashamed and upset by his unpaid debt that he cannot bear to say goodbye to the Garths himself. Mr. Garth announces that Fred's debt has already been forgotten, and that the family is about to become rich thanks to his new job. Mrs. Garth corrects him, noting that they will hardly be rich, just secure.

Again, while Fred is clearly genuinely ashamed and regretful about his behavior, he has not matured enough to realize the importance of coming to speak to the Garths himself. He still remains focused on his own feelings, and in doing so does not take responsibility for his actions. In return the Garths treat him with kindness that he arguably doesn't deserve.

Farebrother congratulates Mr. Garth. They discuss Fred and whether he should indeed enter the clergy, or whether, as Mary suggests, this would degrade the whole profession. Mr. Garth says he feels that Fred probably wouldn't make a good clergyman, but also that they should feel sympathy for Fred after Featherstone implied he was going to leave him land, only to snatch it away at the last moment. Even Mrs. Garth says she will forgive Fred if he proves himself worthy. Mary leaves the room.

Again, the Garths show themselves to be models of kindness, sympathy, and generosity. Although Fred is perhaps undeserving of their forgiveness, perhaps the second chance he receives from them will motivate him to turn his life around and become a responsible person.

With Mary gone, Mr. Garth tells the story of how Featherstone asked her to burn one of the wills right before he died. Mrs. Garth says there was nothing Mary could have done differently, but that Mary still feels guilty, blaming herself for Fred's misfortune. They swear Farebrother to secrecy; he says goodbye and leaves. On his way out, Farebrother sees Mary outside with her younger sister Letty. Mary calls Fred "worse than ridiculous," and then says she is happy that she will not have to go away to work.

This passage reveals a twist: despite everything she and her family have done for Fred, Mary feels guilty because in not burning the will as Featherstone requested, she feels that she is responsible for the loss of Fred's fortune. This shows that Mary is perhaps too *sympathetic and kind-hearted.*

Farebrother leaves and walks to Lowick, speculating that Fred and Mary have feelings for each other. Meanwhile, Mr. Garth tells his wife that he is considering asking Fred to work under him as a kind of assistant. Mrs. Garth points out that Mr. Vincy and Mrs. Vincy would be far too proud to let that happen, and besides, Fred is now going back to college. Mr. Garth agrees that they should wait for a bit. The couple then discusses the possibility that Rigg is selling some of the land he just inherited to Bulstrode.

Training under Mr. Garth, who is an honest, skilled, and hard-working man who truly cares about Fred, would surely be a positive step in Fred's career. However, the issue of rank means that he and his parents might not even consider it. This shows how high social status can actually inhibit people from realizing their potential.

BOOK 4, CHAPTER 41

The narrator points out that, contrary to popular opinion, it is often "low people" who inadvertently end up having the greatest impact on the world. For example, no one would have expected that Joshua Rigg would play any significant role in shaping life in Middlemarch. As a person, Rigg is even-tempered and takes care over his appearance. He intends to marry a woman with good connections, "in a solid middle-class way." He grew up in a port town and didn't receive much education. At Stone Court he is standing with an unkempt man nearing 60, a man who is his total opposite.

The narrator's observation in this passage is progressive, yet also tempered with conservatism. The idea that low-ranking people (rather than high-ranking rulers and landowners) actually shape history is somewhat radical. Crucially, however, the narrator suggests that low-ranking people inadvertently *shape history, as is the case of Rigg. He impacts Middlemarch only as a kind of accident; he himself has little agency.*

The unkempt man's name is John Raffles, and he is trying to persuade Rigg to give Rigg's mother some money so she can have comfort in her old age. Rigg replies that it is Raffles who makes his mother's life miserable, adding that he has not forgotten Raffles kicking him when he was a child and hogging food so there was none for Rigg or his mother. It becomes clear that Raffles is Rigg's stepfather, and that Rigg hates him. Raffles begs Rigg for alcohol; Rigg reluctantly brings him brandy and a £1 coin.

Despite Rigg's new fortune, he struggles to disconnect himself from the "sordid" reality of his past. Both here and in later sections of the book, Raffles serves as a reminder that it is impossible to ever truly leave your past behind you. No matter how much one's circumstances improve, their past will come back to haunt them.

BOOK 4, CHAPTER 42

After returning from his honeymoon, Lydgate goes to Lowick to check on Casaubon. Casaubon's hard work has always tended to produce paranoia about what others think of him and feelings of sadness about his scholarship, but it also produces a refusal to admit that he has failed. He is tormented by Ladislaw's presence in Middlemarch and by Dorothea's lively, insistent personality. He suspects that Dorothea is judgmental of him, which is especially upsetting considering how she once "worshipped" him as a genius. Casaubon's suspicion and jealousy regarding Dorothea and Ladislaw intensify every day.

Casaubon's situation shows how paranoia feeds on itself. The more paranoid he becomes, the more isolated he becomes, which itself leads to more paranoia. Because he refuses to admit vulnerability and let anyone access his internal feelings, this cycle will only continue.

The bad state of Casaubon's health makes everything worse still, as he is not sure whether he will live long enough to complete the work that he has spent thirty years preparing. He is tortured by the idea that his death would bring joy to Ladislaw, and is convinced that Ladislaw will try to marry Dorothea once she is widowed. He believes that such a union would be "fatal" to Dorothea and that he therefore has a duty to stop it.

It is unclear whether Casaubon has any genuine worries for Dorothea's wellbeing or whether his belief that marrying Ladislaw would be a disaster for her simply results from jealousy. He can likely see that Ladislaw and Dorothea are well-suited to each other, but this makes him even more opposed to their being together.

Lydgate finds Casaubon taking a walk. Casaubon sees that Lydgate looks thin and sad. Casaubon tells him that he wants to know if Lydgate thinks his illness is terminal. Lydgate replies that he can't say for sure, as heart disease is unpredictable, but adds that people often die suddenly and unexpectedly from it. It is possible Casaubon could live for another 15 years. Lydgate goes, and Casaubon is left confronting the inescapable reality of his own death. Dorothea goes to join her husband outside, but Casaubon reacts coldly, so she leaves him alone. She angrily wonders what she has done to deserve this treatment.

Despite knowing that he might not have much time left on earth, Casaubon can't find it within himself to change his ways and let Dorothea in. He keeps pushing her away, which only adds to the misery they are both experiencing. Unfortunately, Casaubon is still too stuck in his ways for there to be much hope of his changing before he dies.

For the first time, Dorothea blames Casaubon, rather than herself, for the problems in their marriage. By nightfall, she decides to tell her husband that she is not feeling well and that she won't come down to dinner. However, at this moment Tantripp tells her that Casaubon will eat in the library and doesn't want to be disturbed. She waits until the late hour when she knows Casaubon will be asleep, then goes outside to the hallway. She sees Casaubon there, and he asks sympathetically if she was waiting for him. He takes her hand and they walk together.

The surprisingly tender moment that emerges at the end of this chapter is moving. Casaubon is presented in a decidedly unflattering way in most of the novel, but in this brief moment we see a touching, vulnerable side to him. He probably truly loves Dorothea, but has spent too many years being insecure, bitter, and lonely to properly know how to show it.

BOOK 5, CHAPTER 43

Despite the fact that she rarely leaves Lowick Manor without Casaubon, Dorothea goes into town to ask Lydgate for the truth about her husband's health. Arriving at Lydgate's house, she asks to see Rosamond. Rosamond, who looks stunning in a pale blue dress, tells Dorothea that Lydgate is at the **New Hospital**. Dorothea suddenly notices that Will is also in the room; he asks if he should go to the hospital and tell Lydgate that Dorothea wants to see him. Dorothea says she will go herself. Will is devastated that this rare opportunity to see Dorothea is over already. Talking about her with Rosamond, he calls her a "perfect woman."

Will doesn't bother to hide his obsessive love for Dorothea, which adds to the potential danger of their proximity to each other. In a community that is obsessed with rumor, gossip, and scandal, Will's evident adoration of Dorothea could prove dangerous, particularly considering that Casaubon is already paranoid about the two of them.

When Lydgate comes home that evening, Rosamond tells him that Will is totally enraptured by Dorothea. Rosamond has been surprised to discover that married women can still cast this kind of spell over men. She then protests that Lydgate works too much, saying that he obviously prefers medicine to her. Lydgate replies that he knows Rosamond would not want to interfere with his ambition, which will allow them to move up in society.

This passage illuminates Rosamond's naivety in two ways. Firstly, she is only now realizing that romantic desire is not simply repelled as soon as someone is married. Secondly, her complaints about Lydgate's commitment to medicine indicate that she wasn't really prepared to marry a man like him.

BOOK 5, CHAPTER 44

Rosamond and Lydgate discuss the reforms needed in Middlemarch, both to improve the conditions of poor tenants and to advance healthcare. Lydgate stresses that the problems cannot be solved by one man alone. In addition, his work is made more difficult by opposition to reform. A further challenge is added by Bulstrode's unpopularity, which means that many people oppose anything that is associated with him. Lydgate is shocked by the "ignorance" in Middlemarch. He is dismayed by the number of people who distrust him simply because he is young and new to the area.

This passage shows that Lydgate himself was also naïve. His grand ambitions about bringing reform and progress to Middlemarch blinded him to the reality that it is a conservative community highly resistant to change. Furthermore, the reasons for this resistance are often irrational—yet unfortunately, this makes them no less powerful.

Dorothea says she is glad Lydgate has told her about this, and promises to give £200 a year to the **New Hospital**, as she has too much money anyway. Later she asks Casaubon about giving £200 out of the £700 a year allowance she receives through her marriage. He suggests it's too much for one cause, but doesn't seem to really mind. Casaubon concludes that Dorothea must know the same truth he knows about his health. He doesn't trust her kindness toward him, which makes him feel desperately lonely.

The prospect of charitable giving is the only way that Dorothea has been able to exercise true agency since she has gotten married. Her involvement with the hospital may therefore prove very positive. On the other hand, will philanthropy be enough to satisfy her ardent passion for social reform?

BOOK 5, CHAPTER 45

A rumor spreads that Lydgate intends to let patients at the **New Hospital** die on purpose so he can use their cadavers for medical experiments. Lydgate's decision not to sell medication to his patients himself is also seen as highly suspicious, partly because only London doctors are considered worthy of charging for their services, rather than just earning money through the sale of drugs. In a conversation with the grocer Mr. Mawmsey, Lydgate explains that the existing system leads to doctors overprescribing useless medicines in order to earn a living. Following this conversation, townspeople begin saying that Lydgate claims medications themselves are useless.

This passage encapsulates how Lydgate's attempt to bring necessary medical reform to Middlemarch gets misinterpreted and turned into a spectacle, creating widespread hysteria. Though Lydgate's explanation of why doctors shouldn't sell medications is both clear and reasonable, people in Middlemarch are so resistant to change that they perhaps deliberately choose to misunderstand it.

Mr. Hawley advises Mr. Wrench and Mr. Toller (to their disappointment) that the law cannot be used to stop the kind of medical reforms Lydgate is pushing. Mr. Toller declares that it doesn't matter; patients themselves will object to Lydgate's refusal to dispense drugs, and thus the practice is doomed to fail. Toller is at least half-correct: many people are skeptical about the treatment they will receive from Lydgate. At the same time, Lydgate heals a great many people, including those whom the other local doctors had tried and failed to cure. The suspicion over his attitude toward medication begins to subside.

This passage takes a more hopeful turn, suggesting that even conservative, suspicious communities can be brought around to reform through seeing the evidence themselves. At the same time, it is not just patients that Lydgate has to persuade; it is also the hostile community of existing doctors who are personally invested in seeing him fail, even if this means more people in Middlemarch suffer and die as a result.

When Mr. Trumbull contracts pneumonia, he asks Lydgate to treat him. Lydgate suggests that Trumbull's "robust" nature means he would be a perfect candidate for allowing the disease to work itself out, without the intervention of medication. Trumbull consents, and after healing from his illness declares that Lydgate is by far the best doctor in the area. All of this happens before Lydgate cures Fred's fever. Farebrother is a vocal defender of Lydgate but, paradoxically, is also known as "a chief flag of the anti-Bulstrode party."

Lydgate's struggle to stop overprescribing medication is fascinating from a contemporary perspective. We might assume that the over-prescription of medicine is unique to our age, a creation of "Big Pharma." In reality, this problem has existed at least since the early nineteenth century, suggesting that it is very deeply rooted and may be difficult to change.

The **New Hospital** will be dedicated to fever. Lydgate will be "chief medical superintendent" with final decision-making power. Every doctor in Middlemarch refuses to work at the hospital, so Lydgate hires people from elsewhere. The Middlemarch doctors do not oppose Lydgate's medical work so much as his supposed showiness and "arrogance." Both he and Bulstrode are accused of being "charlatans." Meanwhile, Farebrother advises Lydgate to be careful about money.

Again, opposition to Lydgate and the New Hospital has no legitimate foundation. Instead, it is rooted in petty jealousy, conservatism, and spite—as well as distrust of Bulstrode because of his religion and lack of family connections.

That evening, Lydgate tells Rosamond about an anatomist named Vesalius who lived in the 16th century. He had to secretly steal corpses in order to conduct his research, and was vilified as a result. However, he made major discoveries about the human body. Rosamond confesses: "I often wish you had not been a medical man." This upsets Lydgate, as being a doctor is such an integral part of him, and thus he feels like Rosamond does not truly love him for who he is. Rosamond teases him and he lets it go.

This passage confirms that Rosamond did not marry Lydgate for who he was, but instead constructed a fantasy about him and the life they would lead together. She was so convinced by this fantasy that she ignored even the most basic facts about Lydgate's personality. This shows how after marriage people can become strangers to each other.

BOOK 5, CHAPTER 46

Ladislaw predicts that, with all the hype surrounding the Reform Bill, there will soon be another election. Brooke says he doesn't want to take a position on the question of electoral reform, instead focusing on the abolition of slavery and criminal reform. However, Ladislaw insists that the English population is desperate for electoral reform. Ladislaw is happy about Brooke's appreciation of his rhetorical skill. At the same time, if it weren't for Dorothea he would certainly still be in Italy, engaged in creative pursuits.

Throughout the novel it is unclear whether Ladislaw is truly committed to reform—or indeed whether he is truly committed to anything beyond Dorothea. He seems passionate about reform, but the detail that if it weren't for Dorothea he would be in Italy doing something creative throws off this impression.

It is true that Ladislaw enjoys "belonging to no class." This is taken as grounds for people in Middlemarch to distrust him, although opinion is divided on whether Ladislaw deserves to have been cut off by Casaubon. He likes "to ramble about among the poor people," and especially loves playing with children. The people in Middlemarch who like him tend to be those in favor of Reform, such as Farebrother and his female relatives. Yet Ladislaw spends most of his time at the Lydgates', where he and Lydgate get into debates about political versus medical reform.

Ladislaw's fondness for talking to poor people suggests that he is a genuine social radical, even if he is also a bit of a dilettante who can sometimes get distracted by the thought of other pursuits. Although he and Lydgate are passionate about different kinds of social progress, their bond shows that medical reform and political reform are actually closely connected, perhaps even parts of the same overall project.

Lydgate refuses to believe that "society can be cured by a political hocus-pocus." The debate turns bitter, and Ladislaw gets upset, which Lydgate insists was not his intention. Rosamond declares that they are both "unpleasant," particularly for having mentioned money. To ease the tension, Ladislaw and Rosamond sing together. Once Ladislaw leaves, Rosamond asks why Lydgate was so irritable that evening; he doesn't tell her it was because a bill for furniture has been stressing him. Rosamond is pregnant and Lydgate doesn't want to upset her.

It is ironic that Lydgate should be so opposed to political reform considering he is confronting the consequences of such opposition to his *kind of reform every day. While his words could just be ascribed to his bad mood, they also indicate that getting people to accept change is always difficult, even among people who consider themselves progressive.*

BOOK 5, CHAPTER 47

The debate with Lydgate has a great effect on Will, who suddenly worries that he is "making a fool of himself" through his work with Brooke. Surprisingly, he does not spend time dreaming of becoming Dorothea's husband in the event of Casaubon's death. Due to his romantic nature, the feelings he has are enough to satisfy him for now. At the same time he is determined to remain close to her at any cost. He debates whether he should go to Lowick Church on Sunday, worrying that Casaubon will interpret it as a transparent attempt to see Dorothea.

Will is the classic tortured hero who is content to wallow in self-pity over the woman he cannot have. This arguably makes it unfair that he is willing to cause so much disruption in Dorothea's life by attempting to see her despite Casaubon's feelings against it. He doesn't think about Dorothea suffering from the consequences of Casaubon's jealousy.

Will heads to church, humming a tune he has made up himself. When Dorothea enters the church she does not acknowledge him, and Will suddenly feels awkward. He does not join in the singing of hymns. As the congregation leaves, Will attempts to catch Casaubon's eye, but Casaubon ignores him. He and Dorothea exchange a glance and she bows, but looks like "she [is] repressing tears." He watches them walk away with a deep sense of melancholy.

Dorothea is arguably behaving in a more mature way than Will here. It is unclear what Will was hoping to achieve by coming to Lowick Church, but he could only have reasonably expected a brief, wordless exchange considering Casaubon is there. His disappointment is thus his own fault.

BOOK 5, CHAPTER 48

Dorothea is miserable over the fact that Casaubon refused to acknowledge Will. Her life feels empty, as she cannot do anything to truly please Casaubon. She can't see Celia, who is resting after having just given birth to a baby. That Sunday night after dinner Casaubon suggests they go to the library, where he asks her to read a document to him and make notes that he requests. Later, she finds Casaubon wrapped in a blanket, and asks if he is ill. He says he is simply uncomfortable and asks her to read to him.

Dorothea is in a truly miserable position here. She cannot see the man she truly loves (although note that she has not yet admitted to herself that she loves Will), but even her efforts to be loyal to her husband are not rewarded. They are instead met with indifference and scorn.

Before he goes to sleep, Casaubon asks Dorothea if she will promise to act according to his wishes after he dies. She is uncertain about making the promise before knowing what those wishes are, and asks that he give her some time to think about it. Casaubon falls asleep, but Dorothea is kept awake by her thoughts. She expects that Casaubon sees her as the last hope that his scholarship will actually be published. She is hesitant to agree to keep working on it after his death, as she finds it hard to believe that the project will ever amount to anything.

When Dorothea first got married, it would have been her dream come true to be asked to finish working on Casaubon's manuscript after his death. This way she would truly have been able to live out her dreams through him. However, now that her illusions about his scholarship have been shattered, the dream no longer holds up.

At the same time, Dorothea cannot bear the cruelty of denying his request. Tormented, she is not able to fall asleep until the morning. Upon waking she goes to see Casaubon in the library, and he tells her that he doesn't feel well and is going to take a walk outside. First, however, he asks if she has an answer for him. Dorothea doesn't reply, but asks if she can meet him outside momentarily; Casaubon agrees and leaves. Dorothea intends to agree to his request, even though this decision makes her very sad and weary.

Dorothea's absolute loyalty to her husband, though painful to witness, is admirable. Unlike other characters in the novel, she accepts responsibility for her bad decision (marrying Casaubon) and knows that she must live with the consequences.

Eventually Dorothea reluctantly goes out to meet Casaubon in the garden. She finds him sitting at a bench, seemingly asleep. She tells him that she is ready to give him an answer, but he doesn't respond. Beginning to panic, she tries to wake him and fails. Casaubon is dead. Later, Lydgate sits with her while she talks hysterically, apparently in denial about her husband's death. She asks Lydgate to convey messages to Casaubon, declaring that she is ready to make her promise.

The dramatic timing of Casaubon's death means that Dorothea feels a deep burden of responsibility not for his passing, but for failing to give him the peace of mind that she would comply with his wishes after he was gone. This guilt manifests in her hysterical denial of Casaubon's death.

BOOK 5, CHAPTER 49

The day after Casaubon's funeral, Dorothea remains shut up in her room. Sir James tells Mr. Brooke that until Dorothea is feeling better, she is not to know about any "business." She should spend time with Celia and the baby, and Ladislaw should be sent away immediately. Brooke nervously replies that he can't do this without giving Ladislaw a reason. Sir James angrily declares that Casaubon has wronged Dorothea, asserting that "there was never a meaner, more ungentlemanly action than this." Casaubon was clearly jealous of Ladislaw's relationship with Dorothea, and now it will appear as if Dorothea is to blame for his suspicions.

Though we do not yet know exactly what the "business" Sir James and Mr. Brooke are discussing refers to, it clearly involves something Casaubon has done out of jealousy over Will and Dorothea. Mr. Brooke's objections to sending Will away are transparently rooted in his own desire to keep Will on for his political campaign, rather than coming from genuine concern for either Dorothea or Will.

Mr. Brooke insists that sending Ladislaw away won't prevent malicious rumors and gossip. He also can't force him to leave the country. Sir James begins desperately scheming ways to get Ladislaw a colonial post. He is filled with hate for Casaubon, but at the same time distrusts Ladislaw. Brooke suggests that sending Ladislaw away might imply that they were actually suspicious of Dorothea. Sir James laments that they failed to stop it when "Dorothea was sacrificed once," and that as her brother-in-law he is determined it won't happen again. Brooke advises that a good first step is to bring her to stay at Freshitt Hall immediately.

Sir James has a lot of genuine concern for Dorothea, but this concern still leads him to talk about her in a way that is deeply patronizing, robbing her of any agency of her own. His claim that she "was sacrificed" completely ignores the fact that Dorothea herself chose to marry Casaubon, and in his considerations of what should be done now he doesn't consider what Dorothea herself wants (and in fact he wants to keep all plans secret from her).

BOOK 5, CHAPTER 50

After staying at Freshitt for week, Dorothea starts asking "dangerous questions." She speaks to Mr. Brooke about who will take over as the clergyman for Lowick; Brooke assures her there is no rush in worrying about it, but suggests Mr. Tyke. Dorothea asks to see Casaubon's will as there may be instructions regarding the appointment of a successor in there. Brooke assures her that there aren't and that she shouldn't be thinking about the will yet. He hastily exits. Celia remains absorbed in the behavior of her baby, and when she sees Dorothea crying she tells her not to be sad.

Just as Casaubon prevented Dorothea from getting involved with any serious matters in life, now after his death she is also hindered from even knowing about his will, let alone making any decisions. We can see how plainly frustrating this situation would be, especially for someone as filled with her own strong opinions as Dorothea.

Celia eventually admits that Casaubon has done something terrible and that she must warn Dorothea about it. She reveals that Casaubon stipulated that all the property Dorothea will inherit from him would be taken away if she were to marry Ladislaw. Both Celia and Sir James are convinced there is no chance of Dorothea marrying Will. Dorothea is shocked and feels like her whole world has been turned upside down. She feels both horrified by Casaubon's secret feelings of jealousy and a "a sudden strange yearning of heart towards Will Ladislaw." She has never (consciously) thought about him in this way before.

Dorothea's "sudden strange yearning" reveals how misguided Casaubon was in banning her from marrying Ladislaw. Because people are naturally drawn to whatever they are not allowed to access, forbidding a union between Dorothea and Ladislaw actually implants the idea of that union in Dorothea's mind! If Casaubon had not been so paranoid, he would have seen that Dorothea was too loyal to consciously consider it alone.

Lydgate enters and checks Dorothea's pulse. While speaking with him, Dorothea starts violently sobbing. Lydgate is convinced that Dorothea has made herself ill by repressing her desire for freedom. He recommends that Dorothea should be allowed to view the will if she wants to, and after Celia confesses that she told her sister about Casaubon's stipulation, Sir James finally agrees to drive her to Lowick. Dorothea says she would like to continue staying at Freshitt, and also to spend time with Mr. Brooke at Tipton, but Sir James advises against visiting Tipton as he knows Ladislaw will be there.

The strength of Dorothea's personality is so intense that it is literally irrepressible—her attempts to deny her true feelings have caused her to develop a physical illness. This conveys the importance of honoring one's own feelings and not trying to suppress them in order to conform to society's expectations.

At Lowick, Dorothea finds Casaubon's instructions for her to finish **The Key to All Mythologies**, which she now regards as a "tomb." Now that he is dead, Dorothea no longer feels inclined to act according to his wishes out of sympathy. She wants Will to have half of Casaubon's property, in order to right the wrong done to Julia. However, she doesn't know if it will be possible to do this now. She speaks with Lydgate, who recommends Farebrother instead of Tyke as Casaubon's successor. Dorothea says she'd be happy to hear Farebrother preach in order to help her decision. Lydgate mentions that Farebrother and his family adore Will, oblivious of how charged Dorothea's relationship with Will now is.

The trajectory of Dorothea's marriage shows the ease with which a person's dreams and ambitions can turn into a prison or "tomb" in reality. This passage also highlights Casaubon's cruelty through the control he seeks to exercise over Dorothea even after his death. Not only has he forbidden her from marrying Will, but he also expects her to continue the work that he himself didn't finish despite working on it for decades.

BOOK 5, CHAPTER 51

At this point the "dry election" takes place (nicknamed as such because people are so absorbed in politics that sales of alcohol decline). Will has no idea about Casaubon's will, but has noticed that Brooke has suddenly stopped inviting him to Tipton, which angers him. He thinks: "I might as well be at Rome; she [Dorothea] would be no farther from me." Brooke remains hesitant about the Reform Bill, but Will insists that if they sit around waiting for a perfect bill, nothing will ever change. Brooke is always ultimately persuaded by Will's arguments.

Here we learn that while Will has a reputation as a bold radical, in reality he is actually more of a reformist than a revolutionary. Mr. Brooke's opposition to the Reform Bill may well be rooted in Brooke's ignorance and indecisiveness rather than an objection that it is not radical enough. However, Will's response shows that he is more moderate than we might expect.

Mr. Brooke has a conversation with Mr. Mawmsey who, as the local grocer, finds himself pulled in multiple directions as he has customers across the political spectrum. Business is good for him at the moment, and thus he is wary of any great societal change. Will has written many speeches for Brooke, but worries that the scattered nature of Brooke's mind will mean that he fails to deliver them properly.

This passage introduces a more valid reason why people can be scared of change. If they are secure and prosperous, the prospect of change can be scary. However, this is also a way in which people act selfishly, caring only about their own prosperity instead of justice.

One morning in May, Brooke prepares to give a public speech in advance of the official nomination procedure the next day. He initially feels optimistic; however, after the first candidate gives a comprehensive and impressive speech, Brooke grows nervous. When it is his turn, he gives a confident introduction and declares that he has never been "so proud and happy in my life." From this point, his speech becomes more and more boastful, incoherent, and filled with irrelevance. At this moment an effigy of Brooke is hoisted up in the crowd. People are laughing at him, and start pelting the effigy with eggs.

Brooke is a pompous and obnoxious character and thus fairly unsympathetic. However, in this moment it is difficult not to feel deep pity for him, even if it is also clear that he is unqualified to run for political office. The vicious nature of the audience's reaction highlights the strong feelings that exist around the questions of reform and political change more generally surrounding this election.

Eggs now come flying at Brooke himself, and he flees to avoid being hit. He tries to assure Will that everything will be all right with the nomination the next day, even though this hardly seems likely. Will starts thinking about his future; he feels that there are many opportunities for success open to him, and he resolves to leave Middlemarch. However, he won't go until he and Dorothea exchange "some kind of sign." Facing pressure to abandon his run for election, Brooke decides to do so but blames it on ill health rather than his unsuitability. He tells Will that he is going to France for a while, and Will says he will stay in Middlemarch for the moment.

Both Brooke and Will are gripped by delusional thinking in this moment. Despite being pelted with eggs and jeered off the stage, Brooke is somehow still trying to convince himself that his nomination will be successful. Will, meanwhile, clings to his position in Middlemarch despite the disaster surrounding him, purely out of hope for a "sign" from Dorothea.

BOOK 5, CHAPTER 52

In June, Farebrother and his relatives celebrate the news that he will be taking over Casaubon's post. Miss Winifred tells him through happy tears that he should finally get married; he agrees but laments that he is "a seedy old fellow" and no one could love him. Farebrother intends to keep his old parish as well, even though this will be a lot of work. However, at just that point Fred Vincy returns from college having finally gained his degree. He tells Farebrother that though he doesn't want to, he might go into the church so the money spent on his education doesn't go to waste.

This passage explores the way that both Farebrother and Fred struggle with the demand to live up to societal expectations. Now that he has secured a prosperous income it is expected that Farebrother should get married, but he doesn't know if he will be able to find someone. Meanwhile, Fred knows that having obtained his degree, he should enter the clergy even though this is not what he really wants.

Fred thinks that life as a clergyman will be too "serious" for him, but he feels that there is nothing else he can do. He also confesses that he has been in love with Mary Garth since childhood, who in the past has been opposed to his entering the church. He feels that he will only know what to do once he knows Mary's current opinion. The next day Farebrother goes to see Mary and asks her what she thinks Fred should do. However, before she can answer he adds that Mr. Garth told him about her refusal to burn Featherstone's will and her guilt over it.

Fred's deference to Mary's opinion is moving, and sets him apart from most other men in Middlemarch. Unlike these others, he has not accepted that men are naturally superior to women—or at least doesn't act like he thinks this. He genuinely trusts Mary's judgment and believes that she knows what's best for him better than he does.

Farebrother says he thinks he will be able to relieve Mary's guilt, and then explains to her that burning one will would have made the other one legally void. Her actions therefore did not ruin Fred's future in the way she feared. Mary is happy to hear this. Farebrother then mentions Fred's dilemma about the church again, saying that he personally feels Fred would do well as a clergyman and could work for him as his curate. However, Fred's decision is completely dependent on Mary's opinion.

Recall here that Farebrother has a remarkably secular attitude for a clergyman, and it is perhaps for this reason that he believes that Fred could have a perfectly good career in the church. A more deeply religious clergyman would likely see that Fred would not be the best candidate to devote his life to Christianity.

Mary confesses that she isn't sure if she will marry Fred at all, but that she certainly couldn't marry him if he entered the church. She explains that people like Fred do not have the right "to represent Christianity," as their hearts are not really in it. Finally, Mary repeats that until Fred has done something "serious," she will not consider him as a suitor. However, after Farebrother asks about Mary considering someone else (with the possible implication that he means himself), Mary clarifies that she is very attached to Fred. She just wants him to prove himself.

Mary's pragmatic nature is so strong that she subsumes her evident adoration of Fred underneath her knowledge that she will need to marry a responsible person. She displays a remarkable balance between loyalty and pragmatism: while it would be easy for her to accept Farebrother or another man as her husband, she instead patiently waits for Fred even though he may never change.

BOOK 5, CHAPTER 53

Bulstrode was annoyed on learning that Farebrother had been given the appointment at Lowick. He bought Stone Court from Joshua Rigg "as a retreat," and is currently doing it up so that he might soon move there. Rigg is greedy, and has always known that he would be skilled as a money-changer. He hopes to have his own money-changer's shop on the North Quay, and will thus soon leave Middlemarch. One evening, Bulstrode goes to Stone Court to meet Caleb Garth, who is advising him about his improvements to the property. Raffles suddenly appears and greets Bulstrode warmly, implying that they are old friends.

Even though the narrator describes Joshua Rigg as greedy, there is also something touching about the fact that he uses the enormous inheritance from Featherstone to realize his childhood dream. Rigg could easily stay in Middlemarch and use his money and power to try and enter high society; instead, he stays true to his original ambitions.

Raffles drunkenly explains that he came to Stone Court before, when Rigg owned it. He is now seeking Bulstrode's address, pulling out a crumpled letter from his pocket. Caleb politely says goodbye to Bulstrode and leaves. Bulstrode has gone completely white. Trying to remain calm, he explains that he bought Stone Court from Rigg. They walk together, and Bulstrode angrily tells Raffles to stop implying that they are close and address him with more formality. Once they are inside Stone Court, Raffles invites himself to stay the night. Bulstrode reluctantly agrees, hoping that if he speaks to Raffles in the morning once he's sober, he'll be more reasonable.

Just as he did to Rigg, Raffles now shows up in the life of Bulstrode as a kind of ghost representing Bulstrode's past. Bulstrode may deny that he knows Raffles well, but the fact that he has gone white on seeing him suggests otherwise. Raffles clearly has something on Bulstrode that is making Bulstrode really frightened. At the same time Raffles is evidently an alcoholic, and his behavior is likely to be unpredictable.

Bulstrode returns to Stone Court at 7.30am the next day. He asks Raffles why he came to meet him, and why he came back from America. Raffles says he stayed 10 years but that was enough, and he won't go back. Bulstrode implies that he is willing to pay Raffles to stay away from him. However, Raffles now wants to anger Bulstrode, and says he likes the idea of making friends in Middlemarch. Bulstrode is horrified; he wonders if he should refuse to see Raffles again, and just call him a liar if he says anything about Bulstrode to others.

Bulstrode's offer to pay Raffles suggests that whatever Raffles has on him is something genuine—and dangerous. It is also important to recall here that Bulstrode is very strict and righteous when it comes to matters of religious faith. According to his own beliefs, it is unacceptable to bribe someone, no matter what the cause. This makes it clear that Bulstrode is desperate.

Raffles mentions someone named Sarah, who is Bulstrode's "step-daughter." He then makes a show of struggling to remember the name of a man that begins with L. He shouts "Ladislaw!" and writes it down so he doesn't forget again. Raffles leaves soon after, and Bulstrode is consumed with feelings of horror and doom.

The end of this chapter provides a shocking twist: there is something in Bulstrode's past that connects him not only to Raffles, but also to Will Ladislaw.

BOOK 6, CHAPTER 54

Dorothea has been at Freshitt three months and is growing bored by spending all her time with Celia and the baby, Arthur. She loves Arthur and would do anything for him if necessary, but finds it tedious to just stare at him all day. Celia is unaware of this, and thinks it is good Casaubon died before Dorothea got pregnant because their baby would not have been as lovely as Arthur, and now Dorothea can fulfill any maternal desires through Arthur. She doesn't want Dorothea to go back to Lowick, and others such as Sir James's mother and Mrs. Cadwallader disapprove of Dorothea living alone there.

Somewhat perversely, once Celia has her baby she becomes more childlike than ever. She wants Dorothea to retreat to her pleasant, carefree world of domestic bliss with Arthur and forget about all the serious problems in her life. However, Dorothea cannot shut off her mind as easily. The baby is not enough to distract her from the enormous problems facing her back in the outside world.

Mrs. Cadwallader protests to her husband that Mr. Brooke is being irresponsible by neglecting to bring suitors to see Dorothea. Dorothea, meanwhile, has been hoping to see Will, but apart from that brief moment in church there has been no sign of him. Eventually, however, Will comes to Lowick, telling the butler that he is there to say goodbye. The butler notes that Casaubon's jealousies were obviously baseless, and that he heard from Mrs. Cadwallader that Dorothea is going to marry a lord.

The butler's comment shows how dangerous gossip can be. Mrs. Cadwallader may want Dorothea to marry a lord, but there is no evidence that this is likely to happen. However, once this becomes a rumor it has the capacity to have disastrous consequences.

When Dorothea enters, Will tells her he is leaving Middlemarch. He plans to carry on his political work in the city. In the midst of their cordial, restrained conversation, Will suddenly bursts out: "Good God!" Dorothea doesn't respond, but instead offers Will the portrait of Julia that hangs in Lowick. He says he prefers that she keep it. Dorothea comments that Will seems remarkably happy having "nothing," but he replies that for the first time in his life he is aware of the disadvantage of being poor. He desperately wants a sign from her that she loves him, but he also fears the impossible position in which this would put them.

Recall that Lydgate has essentially told Dorothea that repressing her feelings made her physically ill. By this point, we should know that such self-censure will only end badly for both Dorothea and Will. However, they cannot bring themselves to admit their true feelings to one another. As a result, they both remain unsure over whether these feelings are reciprocated.

Sir James enters; Will says goodbye to Dorothea and leaves. Dorothea acts casual, while Sir James remains horrified about the idea of Will and Dorothea together.

James's horror reminds us that the problem isn't only Will and Dorothea's self-censure; the whole community will be scandalized if they become a couple.

BOOK 6, CHAPTER 55

The narrator comments that youth may be an optimistic time, but it is also the point in life when disappointments are felt most strongly, because they are new experiences. Although Dorothea feels miserable after Will's departure, she does not yet realize that she is in love with him. She goes to stay a night at Freshitt on Celia's request, and Mrs. Cadwallader is invited to dinner. It is hot, and Celia requests that Dorothea take off her widow's cap, which Dorothea does reluctantly. Mrs. Cadwallader starts talking about Dorothea remarrying, and James is once again horrified.

Another problem with suppressing your feelings is that it alienates you from yourself, to the point that sometimes it can be hard to know what you really want. This is certainly true of Dorothea, who has spent a long time in denial—first by trying to be the perfect, loyal wife to Casaubon, and now by refusing to admit that she could possibly be interested in marrying Will.

Dorothea says that Mrs. Cadwallader is free to have fun speculating, but that she has no intention of marrying again. Instead, she hopes to make "a little colony" on a large area of land. Workers would live there, and Dorothea dreams of being friends with them all. She has been discussing the plan with Caleb Garth.

Dorothea's fantasies are well-intentioned, but it is hard not to wonder if empathy for the poor is really what motivates them. What she really seems to want is a way to be in control of something.

BOOK 6, CHAPTER 56

Caleb Garth is impressed by Dorothea's grasp of "business." Caleb has been very busy, and is now occupied with plans for a **railway** line that will run through Lowick. The people of Middlemarch are in general adamantly opposed to the railway. Landowners are horrified by the idea of a railway running through their land, even if they are offered money by the railway company in exchange. There is a small hamlet in Lowick called Frick, where residents don't really even understand what railways are, but are opposed to them anyway.

From a contemporary perspective, it might seem ridiculous that the Middlemarchers are so opposed to a technological development that will obviously bring a lot of benefit to the community. On the other hand, suspicion about new technologies is not always a bad thing. There are legitimate fears about railways, such as pollution and the destruction of the natural landscape.

Solomon Featherstone, who is overseer of roads in the area, one day hears from a wagon driver named Hiram that "railroad people" have been hanging around Lowick discussing cutting up the land with railway lines. Hiram notes suspiciously that the men come from London. Solomon encourages Hiram's suspicion, saying the men should take their **railways** elsewhere. Soon after, Caleb comes to survey an area of land in Lowick with his assistant, Tom.

This passage shows how wealthier people (Solomon Featherstone) stoke the fears of working-class people (Hiram) about technological development.

Fred Vincy rides past on his horse. He is stressed: Mr. Vincy is adamant that he become a clergyman, whereas Mary is adamant that they will never marry if he does so. He has decided not to enter the church, but has not yet told his father this, and he still doesn't know what he is going to do instead. Suddenly, he encounters a group of workers chasing the railroad men, waving their hay-forks. Tom is knocked to the ground. Fred gallops toward them, cursing them for having injured the boy. Hiram yells at Fred.

This passage shows that, somewhat surprisingly, local people in Middlemarch are so opposed to the railway that they will actually resort to violent intimidation to stop it. This might seem shocking, but it is also one of the only ways working-class people can express their opinions (even after the Reform Bill, they would still have been ineligible to vote).

Fred puts the injured Tom on his horse and tells him to ride it to the nearby stable. Fred offers to help Caleb, who laments that the group of men who chased him has been told lies about the **railway**. He explains: "The poor fools don't know any better." Caleb approaches the men, telling Fred to stay behind. He tells them that they can't stop the railway, which will be built regardless of their feelings. He adds that the railway is largely harmless. One of the workers complains that the railway will only benefit rich people, and that Caleb appears to be taking their side.

Caleb's sympathy with the working men shows that it is important not to be judgmental of those who oppose technological progress. They may have been lied to and, more importantly, they may have legitimate concerns about technology, such as the way that this technology might only benefit the rich.

Eventually the workers declare that they were only having fun, and that they won't interfere again. Fred helps Caleb with his work, feeling joyful. He admits that he wishes he had started working with Caleb before going back to his degree, and asks if it's too late to learn Caleb's "business." Caleb says Fred would be able to learn, and then Fred brings up Mary, saying he would "do anything for *her*." He explains that he got Farebrother to speak with her, which is how he knows her feelings about his entering the church. Caleb tells him to come to his office tomorrow at 9 am.

Fred's regret about doing his degree before he started working with Caleb shows that the pressure to do the "respectable" thing can sometimes lead people down the wrong path. Trying to live up to people's expectations has created an impossible dilemma wherein Fred must choose between the approval of his father and the woman he wants to marry.

Later, Caleb tells Mrs. Garth that Mary and Fred like each other and that he intends to take Fred on and "make a man of him." Mrs. Garth replies that it would be a shame for Mary to marry Fred when she could have gotten someone better, such as Mr. Farebrother, who she believes was ready to propose. Caleb points out that when Mrs. Garth married him, there were probably lots of people who thought she could have had a better match. Furthermore, Fred adores Mary. Mrs. Garth tells Caleb that he is a wonderful father, although afterward she weeps in private.

Note that the women in the novel who "married down" (Mrs. Garth, Mrs. Cadwallader) express regret about it after, even though their marriages seem very happy. This suggests that those who marry for love—and in doing so forsake wealth and social status—may be reasonably happy with their own decisions, but still wonder about what life would be like if they had chosen differently.

The next day Caleb assigns Fred office work. He is disappointed with Fred's penmanship, saying he is shocked that Fred's expensive education has amounted to this. Fred is humiliated and apologizes, but Caleb assures him that he can learn to write better with practice. He says that Fred should tell Mr. Vincy that Caleb will employ him on a starting salary of £80 a year. When Fred does so, Mr. Vincy declares that Fred has "thrown away your education, and gone down a step in life." He will not try to interfere with Fred's decision, but he declares: "I wash my hands of you."

Mr. Vincy's horror at Fred's decision to work for Caleb reveals his snootiness. While it is not what Mr. Vincy hoped Fred would do, by working for Caleb Fred is at least taking initiative and responsibility, rather than shying away from hard work as he has done for most of his life. Meanwhile, Caleb's advice for Fred to practice his terrible handwriting suggests that expensive educations are not necessarily worth the money.

Fred asks if he can stay at home, saying he will contribute to the costs of the household. Mr. Vincy agrees only because he knows Mrs. Vincy will want it this way. Father and son shake hands. Meanwhile, when Fred tells his mother that he intends to marry Mary, she is equally miserable. She still thinks that Fred is the best young man in Middlemarch and that it is a horrible step down for him to marry Mary. Mrs. Vincy remains miserable, and eventually Mr. Vincy tells her to cheer up. Fred, however, is not their only problem: Lydgate has been getting into debt, and the Vincys expect that Rosamond will soon ask them for money.

Fred has disappointed both his parents by failing to live up to the ambitions they had for his life. Yet their reactions suggest that these ambitions were always more fantasy than reality. Mr. Vincy wanted Fred to enter the church even though he is not very religious, whereas Mrs. Vincy is convinced that he is best young man in Middlemarch despite much evidence to the contrary. These illusions have paved the way to disappointment.

BOOK 6, CHAPTER 57

Fred goes to the Garths' house. They are outside celebrating the brief return of the family's eldest son, Christy, who is studying and is deeply passionate about education. Christy disapproves of Fred. Fred says that he is stopping en route to Lowick Parsonage to see Mary, and some of the Garth children beg to come too. However, Mrs. Garth says they must let Fred go alone. She tells the children to show Christy the rabbits, and they all run off together.

This passage is another reminder that the Garths are poor but honorable, unlike the wealthy and shallow Vincys. Christy Garth is a foil to Fred: not only is he working hard for his degree but he is also passionate about education. Fred approached his education more as a chore to get over with.

Alone with Mrs. Garth, Fred comments that she must think badly of him. Mrs. Garth admits that she was "surprised" by Mary's interest in Fred and tells Fred it was wrong and thoughtless of him to convey his message to Mary via Mr. Farebrother. When Fred finally realizes that she is implying Mr. Farebrother loves Mary, he is shocked. He says goodbye to Mrs. Garth, uneasy about the news that he has "a rival."

Again, we see that Fred is well-meaning, but also that his self-centered nature makes him ignorant of what's going on around him. He had never considered that Farebrother liked Mary or that his attachment to Mary denied her opportunities to consider other men.

Once Fred gets to Lowick Parsonage, he, Mary, Mrs. Farebrother, Miss Winifred, and Miss Noble discuss clergymen. Mary admits that she doesn't like clergymen as a rule, with the exception of the Vicar of Wakefield and Mr. Farebrother. When Mr. Farebrother joins them, Fred feels "horribly jealous" and convinced that Mary will choose the vicar instead of Fred. When Fred and Mary get a brief moment alone, Fred dramatically declares that he sees Mary is going to marry Farebrother. Mary scornfully tells Fred that he is being ridiculous. Though she doesn't admit this directly, she only loves Fred.

Due to his immaturity, Fred's attempts to express his feelings often end up emerging in a melodramatic, self-pitying fashion. He could have asked Mary about her feelings in a calm, respectful manner, but instead he becomes jealous even though there is little to no evidence that Mary actually plans to marry Farebrother. However, Mary's lifelong devotion to Fred means that she overlooks these flaws.

BOOK 6, CHAPTER 58

Rosamond's baby was born prematurely and died, and this is thought to have been caused by her going horse-riding during her pregnancy, against Lydgate's wishes. This all took place during a visit from Captain Lydgate, a relative whom Tertius despised as a "vapid fop." Rosamond was thrilled that the son of a baronet was staying at her house and was overjoyed to be able to introduce him to guests. Tertius was polite but distant in his interactions with Captain Lydgate, but admitted to Rosamond that he hated him and so did Will, who stopped coming to their house as soon as the captain appeared.

Rosamond is so dazzled by Captain Lydgate's rank that she doesn't see that, at least according to Tertius, the captain has a terrible personality. To Rosamond, a person's characteristics don't actually matter much, as the most important fact about them by far is their social status.

Rosamond believed Will was jealous of Captain Lydgate and secretly found this delightful. Tertius accused Rosamond of wishing he was more like his cousin, and privately lamented that she didn't admire him. When Captain Lydgate asked Rosamond to come riding with him, she did so without telling Tertius. He found out anyway and was furious, forbidding her from going again. He said he was going to reprimand his cousin for taking Rosamond on such a dangerous excursion, but Rosamond pleaded with him not to.

It is difficult to evaluate who is in the right on the issue of Lydgate banning Rosamond from going riding. In general, men exercise excessive control over their wives' decisions in Middlemarch society. Yet in this case, Lydgate has the medical expertise to back up his concerns about Rosamond's riding while pregnant.

Rosamond went riding again, and this time her horse got spooked, throwing her and (perhaps) making her lose the baby. Rosamond maintains that the ride did not cause her miscarriage. While Lydgate is outwardly full of sympathy for his wife, he is also frightened by how easily Rosamond defied hm. In the past year and a half, Lydgate has been spending money on things he can't afford, and now he finds himself suffocated by debt. Rosamond's "extravagant" tastes are partly to blame, but so is Lydgate himself, who has been spending irresponsibly.

This passage paints Lydgate in a sympathetic light. The fact that Rosamond defied his warnings and then lost the baby could cause him to be angry at her, but instead he (at least outwardly) remains kind. This shows the strength of his love for her. At the same time, it remains to be seen if this love is powerful enough to see them through the increasing difficulties they face as a couple.

The horror of this debt is made worse by the fact that the bills are going to keep mounting. He approaches the silversmith, Mr. Dover, who agrees to take on the bill for Lydgate's furniture in exchange for certain items Lydgate had previously bought—in particular, an amethyst necklace worth £30. He arrives home to find Will playing the piano with Rosamond. It has been a few weeks since Will went to Lowick to bid Dorothea goodbye, but for now he is still working in Middlemarch. Dismissing Rosamond's protests, Will leaves.

The effort to keep up appearances has ended up costing Lydgate so much that he must now try to subtly sell some of his possessions in order to manage his debt. Of course, all of the things mentioned in the passage are nonessential, luxury items. However, it is unlikely Rosamond will see it that way because she sees wealth and social status as so important.

Lydgate thinks about Laure and wonders if Rosamond would ever kill him. He begins by saying to Rosamond that she has probably noticed his lack of money. He explains that someone is going to come and take an inventory of their furniture as security, and Rosamond is horrified. She says she will ask Mr. Vincy for money, but Lydgate replies that "it is too late for that." Rosamond suggests they leave Middlemarch and go to London or Durham, but Lydgate refuses. He says that Mr. Dover will buy back some of their silverware and Rosamond's jewelry.

Lydgate's thoughts about Laure suggest that on some level, he is fundamentally frightened of women. Whether this fear already existed or was created by his infatuation with Laure is unclear. Either way, it has made it difficult for him to have a normal relationship with Rosamond; despite his efforts to be responsible, he will ultimately do anything to appease her.

Furious, Rosamond leaves the room and returns with her jewelry box. She says Lydgate can return whatever he wants and that she will go to her parents' house the next day, saying she will be back by evening. He urges that it is important that they handle the inventory so the servants don't know anything about their financial problems, and Rosamond reluctantly agrees to stay at home. Lydgate says he won't return any of her jewelry, only pieces of silverware. Lydgate attempts to comfort her and gives her a kiss. He feels an inescapable sense of doom about the future.

This passage proves that Lydgate is paralyzed by his fear of Rosamond and thus cannot take the action that is necessary to get them out of debt. Rosamond herself displays expert knowledge of how to manipulate Lydgate through passive aggressive behavior. She makes a show of self-sacrificially giving in to his demands, when in fact she knows that this will actually make him give up those demands.

BOOK 6, CHAPTER 59

Fred hears from Farebrother's female relatives about the stipulation in Casaubon's will forbidding Dorothea from marrying Will. Fred has not spoken much to Rosamond since she got married; she is highly disapproving of his decision not to enter the church and instead work for Mr. Garth. Lydgate, meanwhile, believes that there is something between Dorothea and Will, and that if true, this rumor is "too serious to gossip about." He is feeling so detached from Rosamond that he does not even consider speaking to her about it. Rosamond tells him the story as she heard it from Fred, and Lydgate urges her not to repeat it to Will.

This passage demonstrates how gossip connects everyone in Middlemarch to each other, to the point that members of the community seem to feel personally invested in things that actually have nothing to do with them. Of course, Rosamond and Lydgate's close friendship with Will does mean that they care about Will's romantic life—yet instead of talking to Will directly about this, they discuss it with others behind closed doors.

The next time she sees Will, however, Rosamond brings up Dorothea, declaring the whole situation "thoroughly romantic." Will goes bright red and asks what she is talking about; surprised, she explains everything. Rosamond tries to remain playful, saying she is excited about his and Dorothea's wedding, but Will angrily insists that they will never marry. After Will leaves, Rosamond sits alone, feeling melancholy.

Rosamond can be rather callous when it comes to other people's feelings—she treats the situation Will is in like an entertaining story rather than a truly difficult experience. Will, on the other hand, could be accused of taking his own life a bit too seriously.

BOOK 6, CHAPTER 60

At the end of August, a successful lawyer has a public sale of his furniture, books, and paintings, as he is about to buy a new mansion and fill it with new things. The auction is treated "as a kind of festival." Mr. Bulstrode's health prevents him from attending, but he asks Will to buy a painting that his wife wants. Despite having declared he would leave weeks ago, Will remains in Middlemarch, because the truth is he doesn't want to leave. Will agrees to go reluctantly. Many of the men at the auction look down on him because he is part-Polish.

Will's tendency toward indecisiveness is starting to make him look rather foolish. Having declared that he will leave Middlemarch, he nonetheless remains there, arousing suspicion from those who already distrust him due to his ancestral background.

The auction begins with small items, such as a novelty book of riddles, before moving on to paintings and prints. Suddenly a "shabby"-looking stranger arrives, and members of the crowd wonder who he is. Finally the painting Mrs. Bulstrode wants is brought out and Will is relieved, as he is desperate to go. Will bids £5, while Mr. Trumbull enthusiastically attempts to push up the price. In the end, it is sold to Will for £10. As he goes to leave, the stranger—Raffles—approaches and asks Will if his mother was named Sarah Dunkirk. Will says she was.

Will tries to get his favor for Bulstrode over and done with as quickly as possible; he seems uncomfortable in the public setting of the auction, likely because he is embarrassed about still being in Middlemarch and hurt by the scorn with which the townspeople treat him. However, his attempt at inconspicuousness is ruined by the sinister reappearance of Raffles.

Raffles tells Will that he knew Sarah when she was young, and that he also knew Will's father. He asks if Will's parents are still alive, Will angrily tells him they aren't, and Raffles says goodbye and leaves. Later that night, however, Raffles finds Will again. He says he knows that Sarah left her family because they ran a "respectable thieving line" and she didn't want to have anything to do with it. He suggests that they have a drink at the local tavern, but Will says he has to go. Walking away, Will feels dirty.

Part of the reason Raffles is so unnerving is that he behaves in a friendly manner, but it is clear his intentions are malicious. He does not observe the customs for proper behavior shared by other people in Middlemarch, and as such seems creepy and disturbing.

BOOK 6, CHAPTER 61

When Mr. Bulstrode gets home that night, Mrs. Bulstrode tells him that a strange man has been at the house claiming to be an old friend of Bulstrode's. The man (Raffles) flirted with her and wouldn't leave until she practically forced him to do so. The next day, Bulstrode confesses that Raffles's presence has worried him. Mrs. Bulstrode reflects that she doesn't actually know that much about her husband's past, other than that he worked at a bank and that his first marriage was to a much older widow.

In this passage, it becomes more obvious that Bulstrode has secrets from his past that he wants to keep hidden, and that Raffles either reminds him of those secrets or perhaps intends to divulge them to others. The idea that Bulstrode has a sordid past justifies the suspicions Middlemarchers have of him based on his lack of traceable family reputation.

When Bulstrode saw Raffles at the bank earlier that day, Raffles said he might leave Middlemarch the following day, but only if he wanted to. Raffles cannot get Bulstrode in any legal trouble, but he can expose secrets about his past that Bulstrode desperately wants to keep hidden. Bulstrode is struck by memories of his past as a young man and member of a Calvinist church in London. He was an orphan who had gone to a charity school. As a young adult, Bulstrode became friends with the wealthiest man at his church, Mr. Dunkirk.

Bulstrode is an archetypical self-made man: an orphan educated at a charity school, he worked his way to the position of wealth and power he now occupies. In the early nineteenth century, working one's way up from the bottom is still a rare occurrence, especially in England where the class system has such a strong hold. As a result, people are suspicious of those who do it.

Eventually Dunkirk gave Bulstrode the job being of his "confidential accountant." Dunkirk was a pawnbroker and sold goods without properly inquiring where they came from. Not long after this, Dunkirk died, and Bulstrode and the widowed Mrs. Dunkirk planned to marry. Before the marriage, however, Mrs. Dunkirk was desperate to reconnect with her daughter (Sarah), who had run away years before to be an actress. She knew that Sarah had a son and wished to bequeath her fortune to her grandson. However, eventually she gave up hope and married Bulstrode.

Because most legitimate avenues of wealth and power are reserved for those who come from "good" families, people like Bustrode often find themselves mixed up in shady business. The Dunkirks made their money through pawning stolen goods, and—while the young Bulstrode may have found this morally objectionable—his association with them was the only chance for him to move up in society and gain wealth of his own.

Bulstrode had hired Raffles to find Sarah and in truth Sarah *had* been found; however, Bulstrode paid Raffles to keep this a secret. Bulstrode has always justified these actions by thinking that God had clearly created a path for him to move up in the world, and that Sarah and her family were unfit as inheritors of Mrs. Dunkirk's wealth because "they were given up to the lightest pursuits." Bulstrode has occasionally felt tormented by his actions. Five years after he bribed Raffles, Mrs. Dunkirk died. Over that time, Bulstrode had worked hard to enlarge his wealth and secure his reputation as a respectable gentleman.

Bulstrode justifies his decision to keep Mrs. Dunkirk's wealth rather than giving it to Sarah on the grounds of his strict religious beliefs. He tells himself that Sarah is unfit to receive the money because she is engaged in "the lightest pursuits," e.g. the bohemian life of the theater. However, given that Bulstrode himself has lied and cheated his way into inheriting money that itself comes from theft, is he really in a position to judge?

Aware that he had sinned, Bulstrode told himself that he was using his money in service of God. He is relieved to see Raffles leaving Middlemarch after all, and he asks Will to a private meeting at 9 pm. He tells Will that he has secret information about how their pasts are connected. Bulstrode asks if Sarah ever mentioned her own mother, before revealing that Mrs. Dunkirk was his wife and that he gained wealth from the marriage that otherwise would have gone to Sarah. Will goes to leave, but Bulstrode implores him that he now wants to right this past wrong.

Through Bulstrode, Eliot explores how fervent religiosity often disguises hypocrisy and corrupt behavior. Bulstrode tries to justify all the wrongs he has done not only by telling himself that he is serving God, but also through his righteous belief that his rejection of the Anglican church means that he serves God better than others do.

Bulstrode says he wants to give Will the inheritance he would have received from his grandmother, Mrs. Dunkirk. Will realizes that Bulstrode knew how to find Sarah and that he deliberately concealed this information. Bulstrode confirms that this is true, repeating that he now wants to make amends. He offers Will £500 while he, Bulstrode, is living and even more after he dies. Will asks if Bulstrode was involved in the Dunkirks' pawn-broking business, saying he knows that it involved theft and deception.

Bulstrode believes (or rather, hopes) that he will be able to atone for his past sins by giving Will the money that was originally owed to Sarah. Yet does this really count as atonement considering he has only been prompted to make amends after Raffles has arrived and threatened to reveal his secrets? In reality, Bulstrode is just trying to protect himself.

Bulstrode knows he should be honest, but his pride makes him defensive; he tells Will it is none of his business to be asking such questions. Will, however, replies that it is both acceptable and necessary for him to ask, saying: "My honour is important to me." He adds: "You shall keep your ill-gotten money." Will leaves before Bulstrode can say anything else. Part of what inspired Will to refuse the money so quickly was the knowledge that he could never face admitting to Dorothea that he acquired money in this way. Bulstrode, meanwhile, bursts into tears.

Will behaves admirably here. However, like Fred and Mary, this sense of honor doesn't come from his own instincts as much as it is inspired by his love for Dorothea, who is an exceptionally principled person. This suggests that at its best love can be a positive and transformative force, compelling people to behave in more moral ways than they might otherwise.

BOOK 6, CHAPTER 62

Will is determined to see Dorothea one more time and then leave Middlemarch, even though he is somewhat embarrassed to say goodbye twice. He would never ask Dorothea to give up everything to marry him. He has a vague dream of returning in years to come with his own fortune so they can finally be together. Meanwhile, Sir James feels that he must talk to Dorothea about Will, even though he usually avoids bringing up this subject with her at all costs. He decides to use Mrs. Cadwallader as a go-between.

Although Will obviously does care about Dorothea, his refusal to tell her how he feels is arguably not the kindest thing to do for her. Will tells himself that he is sparing her the agony of having to make an impossible choice, but if he truly respected her agency, surely he would let her know the true nature of his feelings so she could make a properly informed decision.

Mrs. Cadwallader tells Dorothea that Will is in Middlemarch and that he is constantly "warbling" with Rosamond. Upset, Dorothea asks that nothing bad be said about Will, and she leaves immediately for Tipton Grange. While driving there she weeps. She intends to do some errands Mr. Brooke left for her, but upon arriving at Tipton she is informed that Will is there, picking up his portfolio of sketches. Will can see that Dorothea has been crying. He says that he had wanted to say goodbye again, adding that this time he believes he won't ever come back.

Mrs. Cadwallader's use of the word "warbling" is a humorous contrast to the somber gravitas with which Will and Dorothea approach life. Both of them are romantics who have ended up with a tortured view of the world and their place in it. Mrs. Cadwallader is a reminder that it is perhaps not necessary to take everything so seriously.

Dorothea and Will can hardly bring themselves to speak to each other. Will admits: "What I care more for than I can ever care for anything else is absolutely forbidden to me." Dorothea dismisses the idea that she could be what Will cares for most, thinking that instead he must be referring to Rosamond. Though Will would never admit it, he wants to know that Dorothea loves him. They say goodbye; Dorothea asks that he remember her, and he almost angrily replies that he would forget everything else before her. After Will goes, Dorothea finally understands that he loves her.

Dorothea and Will's serious, dramatic personalities mean that they both revel in their own private intensity of feeling, refusing to just be open and honest about what they want. We could interpret this as romantic, but at the same time, their inability to communicate also suggests that they each remain too trapped in their own private worlds to be able to properly consider the feelings of the other.

Despite everything, Dorothea feels happy that she is free to dream about Will, who she finally knows for sure has done nothing wrong. As she is driving away from Tipton, she passes Will, who tips his hat at her. She doesn't turn around or get out, but rather sits there thinking that she wishes she had always known how he felt. At the same time, she is troubled by the inappropriateness of their relationship, particularly since Casaubon forbade it. Within two days, Will leaves Middlemarch.

The moment where Dorothea passes Will in her carriage is agonizingly anticlimactic. Now that she knows that he loves her, we are led to expect a dramatic exchange between them. However, this event doesn't transpire, reminding us of these characters' startling capacity for miscommunication, self-censure, and restraint.

BOOK 7, CHAPTER 63

At Mr. Toller's Christmas dinner party, he and Farebrother discuss Lydgate, who is very busy at the **New Hospital** these days, preparing a new cholera ward. Toller is disdainful of Lydgate's efforts, and some of the other men discuss their jealousy over his marrying Rosamond. They also gossip that Lydgate has been living beyond his means. Farebrother has known Lydgate to be practically allergic to discussing his personal life, but wants Lydgate to know that if he ever wants someone to talk to, Farebrother's "friendly ear" is waiting.

Lydgate's struggle exists in large part because of his isolation. Shunned by the other Middlemarch doctors and alienated from Rosamond, he is left to deal with his problems alone. However, he then makes this worse by isolating himself even further, refusing to discuss his personal life with friends and acquaintances.

On New Year's Day Farebrother goes to a party at the Vincys'. All the Vincy children are there, along with Lydgate and Mary Garth. Mrs. Farebrother comments that Lydgate spends a lot of time away from Rosamond, and Mrs. Vincy chimes in that it has been very difficult for Rosamond to have a husband who works so much. Mary is telling the Rumpelstiltskin story to the children, and Farebrother has been looking longingly at her while pretending he is just absorbed in the story. Farebrother has recently realized that Fred is jealous of him—and that his feelings for Mary haven't gone away.

This scene reminds us of the fact that private emotions always seem to end up becoming matters of public business in Middlemarch. Issues that should remain between two people are debated as if they are everybody's concern. This makes it especially difficult to face personal problems in the community, because the problem itself will also be accompanied by public scrutiny.

Farerbrother approaches Lydgate and says he heard from Mr. Brooke that Lydgate was responsible for persuading Dorothea to give Farebrother the position at Lowick. Lydgate calls Mr. Brooke "a leaky-minded old fool." Farebrother continues his attempt to be friendly, telling Lydgate that life is easier when one can rely on one's friends. Lydgate knows Farebrother is reaching out to help and support him but his pride means that he would rather die than accept. Feeling hurt, Farebrother drops the subject.

Farebrother's kind nature means that his offer of support to Lydgate does not just emerge from a sense of duty after Lydgate's favor to him. Farebrother can see that Lydgate is suffering in silence and knows that his self-imposed isolation is only making it worse. However, because Lydgate refuses to accept help, nothing can be done.

BOOK 7, CHAPTER 64

Lydgate is over £1000 in debt and has no way to supplement his rather meager income. He is now constantly in a bad mood, which further distances him from Rosamond. He tells her that they will need to cut back on expenses, including letting go two of their three servants. Rosamond replies that "it would be very injurious to your position for us to live in a poor way"—yet Lydgate insists they have no choice. He points out that some people who are of their same rank live in a much more simple way.

Rosamond's claim that cutting back on expenses would hurt Lydgate's career is transparent. We know that she does not really care about Lydgate's career because she has basically admitted as such herself. She remains in denial about their desperate financial situation, simply refusing to believe that changing their lifestyle is an option.

Rosamond angrily points out that Bulstrode should pay Lydgate for his work at the **New Hospital**, but Lydgate says he agreed to do it for free from the beginning. He then sadly suggests that they should sell their house to Ned Plymdale and his new wife, Sophy Toller. Rosamond begins to cry and tries to hide this from her husband. She again suggests that they sell their things and leave Middlemarch, but Lydgate replies angrily that he won't abandon his work there. Rosamond chastises him for not being nicer to his relatives, but Lydgate says he refuses to "beg" from people.

In this scene Lydgate's similarities to Caleb Garth emerge, and these similarities make it more clear why Lydgate has gotten himself in so much debt. Both Caleb and Lydgate have a problem of offering to work for free, and at the same time refusing to ask for financial help when they need it (recall Mary's comment that the Garths prefer to work for their money than beg). This is a problematic combination.

Furious, Lydgate walks out of the house. He feels bitterly disappointed in his marriage, and particularly in Rosamond's refusal to care about what he wants and needs. They make up later that evening, but Lydgate still feels uneasy. The next day Rosamond goes to see Mrs. Toller and congratulates her on Sophy's marriage to Ned. Rosamond asks where they will live and Mrs. Toller says they are still choosing; she asks Rosamond if she knows anywhere that's available, and Rosamond says she doesn't.

Rosamond's duplicity here is striking. It would have been scandalous for a woman both to lie and to defy her husband in such an obvious way at the time. Although she is behaving recklessly, there is something almost admirable in Rosamond's refusal to concede any ground to Lydgate. At the same time, her tactic seems bound to end in disaster.

After this visit, Rosamond stops at Mr. Trumbull's office. Trumbull says that Lydgate came by that morning, and Rosamond pleads with him to halt the plans to give her house to Ned Plymdale but to keep it a secret that she has come to him. She says that Ned and his wife are going to move into a different house and that "Lydgate would be annoyed that his order should be fulfilled uselessly." Trumbull assures her that he will take care of it.

It is so unimaginable that a married woman should be acting how Rosamond is that Mr. Trumbull does not hesitate for a second to wonder about the truth of her story. He is certain that she is telling the truth.

That evening, Rosamond—who is in a surprisingly happy mood—tells Lydgate that she went to Mrs. Plymdale's and learned that Ned already has a house. She says she told Trumbull to keep an eye out for another person who might want their house. Rosamond asks how much money Lydgate would need for them to stay in their house; Lydgate replies "at least" £1000, and Rosamond says nothing. The next day she writes to Lydgate's uncle Sir Godwin, telling him that she thinks she and Lydgate should leave Middlemarch for the sake of his career. She adds that they would need £1000 to do this.

Rosamond's web of lies gets bigger and bigger. She shows surprisingly little remorse for all this duplicity—it has even put her in a cheerful mood! This is somewhat frightening, and actually recalls the remorseless behavior of Laure after she stabbed her husband. Although Rosamond's crime is clearly nowhere near as serious, it appears that when it comes to women, Lydgate has a type.

The morning of the Vincys' New Year's Day party, Lydgate says he is going to Trumbull's office, and Rosamond admits that she told Trumbull not to look for another house for them. Lydgate is furious that she secretly disobeyed his wishes. Rosamond says that people can get over debt if they have good social status. She asks that Lydgate promise he won't go immediately back to Trumbull, but Lydgate replies that it is *she* who should promise that she won't disobey him again. Miserable, Lydgate reluctantly considers going to see Sir Godwin, knowing that a letter won't be enough to persuade his uncle to help.

Rosamond's belief that social status alone is enough to get someone out of debt shows how painfully naïve she is when it comes to matters of money. Of course, for someone unfamiliar with the English class system it might be confusing to understand how status and wealth do not always correlate. Yet Rosamond does not have this excuse, as she has been living in English society her whole life.

BOOK 7, CHAPTER 65

Lydgate does not mention his plan to go and see Sir Godwin to Rosamond. One morning she sees a letter addressed to Lydgate from his uncle, and she is overwhelmed with hope. While reading the letter Lydgate turns white and says that he cannot handle Rosamond constantly acting against his wishes in secret. In the letter, Godwin chastises Lydgate for getting Rosamond to write to him and says he cannot help. He says he already has too many dependents to take care of, and implies that it is Lydgate's own fault for getting into debt and choosing a low-paying profession.

The reply from Sir Godwin reveals that Rosamond clearly acted foolishly. Yet the situation isn't entirely her fault. The sexist norms of the society in which she lives mean that Sir Godwin finds it inconceivable that Rosamond would write to him of her own accord—instead he believes that Lydgate must have put her up to it. Rosamond is suffocated by a society that does not account for women's agency as individuals.

Once they have both read the letter, Lydgate furiously tells Rosamond that he hopes it is clear how she has ruined things, and that if she plans to go on disobeying him he wishes she would at least do it openly. Rosamond is furious with everyone. The only person she doesn't blame for her current grim circumstances is herself, as she has tried her best to make everything better. Lydgate pleads for her to admit that she acted wrongly, but Rosamond defends herself. After a moment of reflection, Lydgate implores her that they cannot go on at odds like this. Rosamond says she wishes she had died with their baby, and Lydgate comforts her.

Rosamond's capacity for self-delusion is quite astonishing. Perhaps the fact that she spent so long as the most desirable young woman in Middlemarch has left her with a lasting impression that she is perfect while everyone around her is flawed. This delusion was likely further stimulated by her parents' spoiling her while she was growing up. Even now, Lydgate allows himself to be manipulated by her and forgives her for lying to him over and over again.

BOOK 7, CHAPTER 66

Lydgate no longer has the capacity to carry out medical research and experiments. He has never been tempted to gamble, and yet now, in his desperation, he finds himself considering it. In Middlemarch, most gambling happens in the billiard room at the Green Dragon. Lydgate goes there and plays well, finally seeing a glimmer of hope in the future. Young Hawley, who is studying to be a lawyer, arrives with Fred Vincy. Fred is shocked to see Lydgate gambling. Fred has been working hard and wants to relax and celebrate by playing billiards, though he has promised himself he won't bet.

The novel takes a pretty strong stance against gambling, which is shown to be a dangerous, irresponsible, and foolish pursuit that never leads to anything good. Indeed, gambling is one of several ways of acquiring money that always comes back to haunt people (the others being theft, deception, and cheating). To borrow Ladislaw's phrase, "ill-gotten money" is worse than no money at all.

However, before long Fred is tempted to bet the £10 he has brought with him. At this point Lydgate has won £16, but Hawley's arrival disturbs his lucky streak, and Lydgate begins "losing fast." Fred plans to ask Lydgate if Rosamond is home in order to prevent his downfall from continuing, but at that moment he is told that Farebrother is downstairs and wants to speak with him. Before going, Fred urges Lydgate to stop playing and to come with him to see Farebrother. Embarrassed, Lydgate reluctantly agrees. When they meet Farebrother, Lydgate greets him but then leaves.

Fred's desire to stop Lydgate's gambling could simply be a matter of worrying about his family's reputation. On the other hand, perhaps it is a sign that Fred is finally gaining some maturity and responsibility when it comes to money.

Farebrother says that he was disappointed to hear that Fred has been going to the Green Dragon every night, though Fred assures him that he has not been betting. Farebrother then mentions their romantic rivalry. Fred says he remains committed to Mary; Farebrother comments that Mary seems to feel the same about Fred, but that her feelings could change if Fred messes everything up. Farebrother says he wants Fred to be happy and successful. Moved, Fred says he will make himself "worthy" of both Mary *and* Farebrother. They part ways.

Farebrother's kind-heartedness becomes even more prominent here, when he not only refuses to get in the way of Fred's romance with Mary but even assures him that Mary loves him in return. Farebrother genuinely cares about everyone around him. In this sense, even though he is not particularly strict or pious, he is arguably the most Christian character in the novel.

BOOK 7, CHAPTER 67

The day after losing at billiards, Lydgate feels repulsed by his own actions. He has learned that Rosamond has already asked Mr. Vincy for financial help twice and been refused. His only remaining option is to go to Bulstrode. Before he can approach Bulstrode, however, he receives a note from him asking to meet him at the bank. Bulstrode has lately been suffering from insomnia, which has seriously jeopardized both his mental and physical health. Lydgate explains that anxiety can have terrible bodily repercussions, as he himself knows all too well at the moment.

Lydgate and Bulstrode encounter one another in moments of absolute desperation. Although the problems they are facing are different, both are significantly rooted in the need to preserve one's reputation at all costs. If Lydgate didn't face so much pressure from Rosamond to keep up appearances, then he would have been able to curb their spending.

Bulstrode says that in order to relieve some stress, he is planning to step back from several aspects of his business and to move to the coast. Given this, he plans to withdraw from the **New Hospital**, which leads Lydgate to believe that Bulstrode must have lost a lot of money. Bulstrode says that Dorothea would be the only person who might reasonably be expected to finance the hospital in the future. He has approached Dorothea about it and she has asked for some time to consider the proposal.

Lydgate and Bulstrode's ambitious plans to bring medical reform to Middlemarch are coming crashing down. Neither man is equipped to bring his dreams into reality, and as a wealthy widow Dorothea is the last hope for the hospital. Without money, even hard work is not enough to make ambitions succeed.

Lydgate suggests that he can go and talk to Dorothea and Bulstrode agrees, although he adds that at the moment she is in Yorkshire with Sir James and Celia. Lydgate says that his association with the **New Hospital** has made him unpopular as a doctor, and most of his patients can't pay him for his services. He explains that he is £1000 in debt and, full of shame, asks for a loan. Bulstrode says that he unfortunately can't help and advises Lydgate to declare bankruptcy. Lydgate says that this would be unbearable and wouldn't help him anyway. He says goodbye and leaves.

We do not know why Bulstrode refuses Lydgate's request. After all, he has the money, as evidenced by his attempt to give it to Will Ladislaw. He may be trying to save money in order to pay off Raffles, or perhaps he wants to avoid putting Lydgate in the position that Will refused of accepting "ill-gotten money."

BOOK 7, CHAPTER 68

Bulstrode's sudden decision to leave Middlemarch was prompted by the return of Raffles on Christmas Eve. Raffles invites himself to stay at Bulstrode's. As soon as he can, Bulstrode organizes a coach that will take Raffles far away to Isley. He tells Raffles that he will pay him to stay silent, but if Raffles ever shows his face in Middlemarch again Bulstrode will immediately cease all financial support. He says that if Raffles doesn't leave the house immediately he will call the police. However, even with Raffles gone Bulstrode still feels he can't stay in Middlemarch, and starts making plans to leave.

Bulstrode's terror at the consequences of Raffles telling everyone about his past shows how wrongdoing and guilt eat away at a person. Even with Raffles gone, Bulstrode can never feel safe. The burden of his secret and the possibility of it being revealed have become so intense that he has no choice but to flee and try to start life over yet again.

Bulstrode asks Caleb Garth to help him find a tenant for Stone Court, and Caleb suggests Fred Vincy, on the grounds that he could be trusted because Caleb himself would be watching over him. Although Bulstrode is not fond of Fred, he agrees in part to please Caleb and in part to satisfy Mrs. Bulstrode, who wanted her husband to help Rosamond and Lydgate with their debt. Busltrode stresses that he couldn't help his wife's married relatives, but that he will do Fred the favor of letting him live in Stone Court. Caleb is thrilled, but keeps the plan secret as a surprise for Fred.

Recall that Mrs. Bulstrode is Fred and Rosamond's aunt, which is why she (unlike many in Middlemarch) loves the Vincy children and wants to help them. The interconnection of people in the Middlemarch community through blood, marriage, and profession creates a complex web of debts and favors between the characters.

BOOK 7, CHAPTER 69

Caleb Garth comes to see Bulstrode at the bank and tells him that there is a "very ill" man at Stone Court—Raffles. Horrified, Bulstrode asks Caleb to call Lydgate. Caleb then apologetically says that he must stop working for Bulstrode as a result of things he has heard about him from Raffles. Bulstrode urges Caleb not to believe this "slander," and when Caleb sadly refuses, Bulstrode asks to at least know what Raffles said. However, Caleb replies that he will never repeat it. He believes that Bulstrode must have atoned for his actions and that he doesn't intend to increase Bulstrode's suffering.

Caleb's profound sense of honor illuminates the similarity between him and Will. Both refuse to be involved with any wrongdoing even when it might greatly benefit them. Furthermore, both are honorable enough that they do not consider making Bulstrode's secret public. This restraint is unusual and admirable in a community so fixated on gossip and scandal.

Later, Bulstrode goes to Stone Court, desperately hoping that Raffles's illness might kill him before he can tell anyone else about Bulstrode's past. However, he finds Raffles more or less all right. Raffles claims that he only revealed all to Caleb in the midst of a hallucination. Bulstrode then calls Lydgate to attend to Raffles's health, explaining that Raffles's illness has affected his mental capacity. After examining Raffles, Lydgate tells Bulstrode that his condition is likely not fatal. Bulstrode says he will stay the night with Raffles and Lydgate gives him instructions for Raffles's care.

Raffles's alcoholism makes his behavior especially unpredictable. It is unclear whether or not he is actually ill, and if this illness is largely a physical or mental problem. It is also unclear whether his claim to have told Caleb Bulstrode's secret in the midst of a "hallucination" is true. Raffles appears to be using this as an excuse for his behavior, when in fact the "hallucination" could just mean that he was drunk.

Raffles is suffering from alcohol poisoning, and Lydgate imagines that Bulstrode is taking care of him as an act of charity. Lydgate gets home to find Dover's man taking his furniture and Rosamond crying in their bedroom. She says she wants to stay with her parents until Lydgate has secured "a comfortable home." Lydgate says she can go if she wants, but that there is no rush. He says they might have a surprise twist of good fortune, such as him breaking his neck. Rosamond is hurt by the "violence" of his words, but says she will stay.

Both Rosamond and Lydgate employ passive aggressive and self-pitying tactics in order to appeal to the sympathy of the other. This tends to work when Rosamond does it to Lydgate, but not the other way around. This conveys that it is Rosamond who holds the true power in the relationship.

BOOK 7, CHAPTER 70

Once Lydgate leaves, Bulstrode goes through Raffles's pockets, where he finds a few bills and pennies. When Raffles wakes up Bulstrode offers him food, which he refuses. Later, Raffles appears to hallucinate that there is a doctor in the room, and tells this vision that Bulstrode is trying to starve him as punishment for revealing his secret, which Raffles claims he never did. Bulstrode finds strength in his conviction that Raffles is on the brink of death. He regrets not giving Lydgate the loan, as in the event of Raffles's death he will want Lydgate on his side.

In this moment, the encounter between Bulstrode and Raffles takes a darkly sinister turn. Bulstrode is not trying to kill Raffles, but he is hoping that he will die, and Raffles arguably senses this when he accuses Bulstrode of trying to starve him to death. Raffles is realizing the mistake of finding himself unwell and helpless in the house of a man he has been trying to blackmail.

Lydgate returns and observes that Raffles's condition has deteriorated, but says that he still expects him to pull through. Bulstrode comments that Lydgate himself does not look well, and pleads with him to sit for a moment. He tells Lydgate that he will write him a check for £1000, which Lydgate can repay when he is able. Lydgate is relieved and thanks Bulstrode. Left alone, Bulstrode continues to fixate on the prospect of Raffles dying. That evening he gives Raffles some opium per Lydgate's instruction, and then leaves him in the care of a servant.

Lydgate perhaps should have realized that something strange was afoot due to the combination of Bulstrode's sudden change of mind and the appearance of the ailing Raffles in Bulstrode's home. However, whether out of obliviousness or desperation, Lydgate ignores these ominous signs and accepts the money.

That evening, Bulstrode contemplates suicide. Sitting by the fire in his living room, he realizes that he didn't tell the servant when to stop giving Raffles doses of opium, and wonders if he should correct this oversight or not. A little while later the servant knocks on his door and says that Raffles has been begging for brandy, claiming that he is "sinking down through the earth." Bulstrode thinks for a minute, and then gives her the keys to the wine cooler, saying that it is wrong to deny a man such a request on his deathbed.

This is a crucial passage, as there are several moments when Bulstrode's level of guilt is decidedly ambiguous. Bulstrode "realizes" that he forgot to tell the servant how much opium to give Raffles, but to what extent was this oversight deliberate? Bulstrode is definitely guilty of helping to give Raffles alcohol when Lydgate forbade it—yet does this mean he is trying to kill him?

In the morning Bulstrode prays for a while. He then goes to see Raffles, who is asleep and seems very close to death. That afternoon Lydgate comes and witnesses Raffles die. He and Bulstrode go into Middlemarch together, discussing cholera and the Reform Bill. Bulstrode briefly mentions the arrangements for Raffles's burial, but apart from that they do not speak about him. Later, Lydgate tells Farebrother that he has received a loan from Bulstrode and will be able to repay his debts. He plans to establish a surgery and take on an apprentice.

The chapter ends on a hopeful note for Bulstrode and Lydgate, a welcome change after so much misery and doom. However, the fact that this hope emerges out of Raffles's death is also ominous. While Bulstrode (and to a greater degree Lydgate) is not exactly responsible for Raffles's death, his involvement is definitely suspicious.

BOOK 7, CHAPTER 71

Five days later, Bambridge, Hopkins, and Hawley are talking outside the Green Dragon. Bambridge mentions that while he was at the horse fair at Bilkley recently, he learned some gossip about how Bulstrode got his wealth from an old friend of Bulstrode's called Raffles. Hopkins exclaims that he just conducted a funeral for Raffles the day before, and that Bulstrode was in attendance. Bambridge is shocked; Hopkins explains that Raffles died at Stone Court and that Lydgate attended to him. The crowd grows larger as more people come over to listen. Bambridge reveals the story he heard from Raffles, including the detail of Will's involvement.

This scene is the perfect example of how gossip and misinformation originate. None of the men talking outside the Green Dragon is lying, and the facts they present certainly make up a coherent, convincing picture. However, this picture is not exactly true, and is likely to get further misinterpreted as the gossip spreads.

Bambridge's story "spread through Middlemarch like the smell of fire." Caleb is forced to admit that he heard the story too, and the gossip morphs to indicate that it was Caleb himself who first started spreading it. Distrust of Will, who is thought to have "cursed alien blood," grows as a result of the story. Meanwhile, gossip also spreads about Lydgate suddenly being able to pay his debts thanks to a loan from Bulstrode. The excitement over this gossip is so intense that spreading it becomes akin to a job for some members of the community.

Of course, the Middlemarch residents have grounds to be seriously distrustful of Bulstrode, and to a certain extent Lydgate, after hearing the story. However, the fact that Will is also denounced shows how much rumor and gossip are fueled by preexisting prejudice rather than serious evidence.

The other Middlemarch doctors interview the servant who tended to Raffles in order to determine if Lydgate colluded in his death. The townspeople conclude that even if Bulstrode merely paid Lydgate to remain silent about the truth of his past, this still puts the already unpopular Lydgate in "an odious light." People are aware of Bulstrode's plan to leave Middlemarch, which they now see as him "running away" before the truth gets out. There is speculation over whether Bulstrode can be forced by law to give up his wealth to Ladislaw. Raffles, meanwhile, is painted as a wonderful man and tragic victim.

Again, this passage shows how the truth is mixed in with prejudice, fabrication, and hysteria in a way that is unethical and dangerous. The community seems to have some interest in restoring justice (as shown by their inquiry over whether Bulstrode can be forced to give Will the money he is owed), but their interest is largely in reveling in the scandal.

Bulstrode, still thinking himself safe, has abandoned his plan to leave Middlemarch permanently and instead decides to go to Cheltenham for six weeks as a vacation. There is a town meeting about cholera and sanitation; Bulstrode and Lydgate go together, and when they enter the hall Lydgate feels "a peculiar interchange of glances" being directed at them. When Bulstrode goes to give his opinion about the sanitation issue, Hawley stands up and asks for permission to speak on a matter of "public feeling." He says that he and others present want Bulstrode to resign from all his public positions due to the "shameful" way he gained his fortune.

Here we witness the frightening side of mob mentality in Middlemarch. However much Bulstrode deserves to be condemned, the way that the town conspires around him and Lydgate entirely based on hearsay is disturbing. Again, if their interest were in justice, then an official inquiry and hearing would be necessary. However, instead they choose to immediately expel Bulstrode from the community.

Overwhelmed by a feeling of absolute horror, Bulstrode is silent, but only for a moment. He then declares that those who accuse him are hypocrites who believe lies because they hate him. Some people hiss and Hawley immediately fires back that Bulstrode must explain himself if he is to maintain his innocence. The meeting's chairman, Mr. Thesiger, tells Bulstrode that he will receive a proper hearing but that his current behavior is unacceptable. He then asks Bulstrode to leave the meeting. Bulstrode goes to leave; seeing that he can barely walk, Lydgate helps him out.

Throughout the novel, characters faced with a difficult situation rarely choose to react in the most dignified, honorable way they can. Rather, their pride makes them become defensive, righteous, and accusatory—even when they are very clearly in the wrong (and, as in this case, outnumbered by a remarkable degree). This is one of the profound human weaknesses explored in the narrative.

Lydgate himself now believes that Raffles's death is suspicious and that the £1000 Bulstrode gave him was a bribe. After the meeting, Mr. Brooke and Farebrother go to see Dorothea and tell her the shocking news about Lydgate and the **New Hospital**. Dorothea says she cannot believe that Lydgate is guilty, and that they must prove his innocence.

Among the people of Middlemarch, Dorothea stands out as someone who is inclined to believe in someone's innocence rather than their guilt. In Lydgate's case, this is perhaps because of their shared passion for social reform.

BOOK 8, CHAPTER 72

Farebrother tells Dorothea not to approach Lydgate herself, as this will insult his pride. Dorothea remains desperate to find proof of Lydgate's innocence, while Sir James—who is these days her "best friend"—advises her strongly against intervening. Dorothea remains so passionate about helping Lydgate that Farebrother is almost convinced she is actually right. However, James insists that she hold back. Celia urges Dorothea to listen to James, who as her brother-in-law acts as a kind of stand-in for her husband. Dorothea replies: "As if I wanted a husband!" Celia is confused, as Dorothea used to always be so submissive to Casaubon.

Celia's confusion over Dorothea's sudden unwillingness to defer to the authority of a man is somewhat warranted. However, Celia fails to understand two things: firstly, that Dorothea never wanted to submit to the authority of just any man, but rather held Casaubon in particularly high esteem. Secondly, Dorothea herself has appeared to undergo a change of heart and finally realize that she prefers to trust her own opinions.

BOOK 8, CHAPTER 73

Lydgate takes Bulstrode home from the meeting, leaving him in the care of Mrs. Bulstrode. Lydgate regrets ever coming to Middlemarch, feeling that his whole life has turned into a disaster. Regardless of whether Bulstrode brought about Raffles's death, Bulstrode is decidedly guilty in the eyes of the community. Lydgate curses himself for accepting Bulstrode's money; if he had not done this he would at least have a chance of escaping implication in the scandal.

One of the biggest lessons of the Bulstrode scandal is that the truth of a person's guilt does not actually matter that much in Middlemarch. This is both because gossip is so rife and because reputation is so important. Damage to a person's reputation is permanent even if they are later proven to be innocent.

Even if Lydgate could find some way to prove his innocence, he knows that the damage done to his reputation is permanent. Despite wishing that he had never accepted Bulstrode's money, he decides to now stand by Bulstrode. As he nears home, dread builds as he thinks of telling Rosamond about the whole affair.

Through this whole affair, Lydgate displays a surprising amount of loyalty to Busltrode. Perhaps this is due to his general isolation, which means that Bulstrode is the only person he has left.

BOOK 8, CHAPTER 74

On hearing about the scandal, the women of Middlemarch generally feel sympathy for Mrs. Bulstrode, who is well-liked and thought to be remarkably honest. People are not as sympathetic to Rosamond, yet at the same time, while the Vincys are not universally liked they are also thought to be honest and respectable, without any sordid secrets. Rosamond is criticized as "showy" even as she is also seen as a victim. Some of the Middlemarch women believe that the revelation about Bulstrode's past is enough to give Mrs. Bulstrode reason to leave him. There is speculation that both the Bulstrodes and the Lydgates will leave Middlemarch.

Divorce was not a legal possibility for the vast majority of people in England until 1857. However, when faced with a scandal of this magnitude it may be socially acceptable for Mrs. Bulstrode to separate from her husband. This is due to the idea that Bulstrode misrepresented himself so enormously—including hiding past criminal acts—that Mrs. Bulstrode essentially married him under false pretenses.

Mrs. Bulstrode, meanwhile, has stayed home since the scandal broke and thus is unaware of what is happening, although she senses that something is terribly wrong with Mr. Bulstrode. She asks Lydgate about it, but he gives a vague answer. She then goes to see Mrs. Hackbutt, whose husband was at the town meeting. Mrs. Hackbutt wants to tell Mrs. Bulstrode to leave her husband, but she restrains herself. Although Mrs. Hackbutt doesn't say anything explicitly, Mrs. Bulstrode is beginning to understand that whatever is worrying Bulstrode is of a very serious nature.

Women's subordinate position in society means that they do not fully take part in public life and, as such, can be left in the dark when it comes to important matters. This is perhaps why gossip is so prevalent among the women in Middlemarch—rather than a frivolous pastime, it is actually a necessary means for them to understand what is going on in their community.

It is Mrs. Bulstrode's brother Mr. Vincy who finally tells her everything. He laments that even if Bulstrode is found innocent by a jury, this won't make much difference—he will still be seen as guilty by most people. He adds that both she and Rosamond would have been better off never marrying. Mrs. Bulstrode cannot say anything in response and requests help to get to her carriage, saying she feels faint. Once home, she tells her daughter that she won't eat dinner and then locks herself in her room.

Mr. Vincy's comment that both Rosamond and Mrs. Bulstrode would have been better off having never married shows that a woman's fortunes in life are inextricably tied to her husband. Although they may feel sympathy for Rosamond and Mrs. Bulstrode, people do not see them as individuals independent from their husbands.

Despite her misery and deep disappointment, Mrs. Bulstrode is a loyal person, and knows that she will stand by her husband. Knowing she is upstairs and guessing what has happened, Bulstrode is highly distressed. Mrs. Bulstrode finally comes down to see him at 8 pm. The two of them weep together, and it is as if Bulstrode is making a "confession" without actually saying the words.

The final scene in this chapter is very moving. It suggests that real love can overcome even the greatest of obstacles, particularly because love involves forgiveness and total, unconditional understanding of another person.

BOOK 8, CHAPTER 75

Even after Lydgate's debts are paid, Rosamond remains unhappy. She is terribly disappointed with her marriage, and to cheer herself up she used to fantasize about Will Ladislaw being in love with her. Now that Will is gone, she dreams of moving to London, where she is convinced everything would be better. Just before the town meeting, she receives a letter from Will saying he will have to come to Middlemarch soon and that he looks forward to seeing her and Lydgate. She is so happy that (without consulting Lydgate) she decides to host a small party and sends out invitations.

This passage goes back in time a little bit; Rosamond does not know about the Bulstrode scandal. However, her ignorance of this disaster does not mean that she is happy. The strain that Lydgate's debt has put on their marriage has proven to be an impossible burden, made worse by the fact that Rosamond once again avoids confronting reality and instead chooses to escape into fantasies about Will.

Every person Rosamond invites says they can't come. Lydgate finds out and demands that Rosamond stop inviting people over. Rosamond is angry, but doesn't believe that anything new has happened to prompt this restriction. Later, Mr. Vincy and Mrs. Vincy tell her everything. Mr. Vincy says he doesn't believe that Lydgate has caused anyone any harm, but that it would be best if he and Rosamond left Middlemarch anyway. Rosamond is horrified, feeling that this is the worst thing that could have happened to her.

Rosamond has spent so much time fixated on preserving her and Lydgate's aspirational class status, yet she is now faced with far more serious damage to their reputation. Of course, this should put her earlier stress about seeming adequately wealthy and high-ranking into perspective, but that doesn't seem likely.

Back at home, Rosamond is furious not only at Lydgate's involvement in the scandal, but also that he didn't tell her about it. Lydgate immediately notices Rosamond's change in disposition and realizes that she knows everything. Lydgate expects her to say that she doesn't believe the rumors, but she says nothing. Lydgate is shocked by her selfishness. Just as he begins to speak, Rosamond asks if he will now finally be willing to move to London. Lydgate says nothing and leaves the room. Rosamond resolves to tell Will everything when he comes to visit.

This encounter is important for its contrast to the scene between Mr. and Mrs. Bulstrode. Bulstrode has committed a far greater crime than Lydgate has, and yet Mrs. Bulstrode still chose to stand by him. Rosamond, however, can't forgive Lydgate for getting mixed up in the scandal even though it was not really his fault. This suggests that she does not truly love him.

BOOK 8, CHAPTER 76

Dorothea invites Lydgate to Lowick Manor. She has become very excited about the idea of helping him. When he arrives, the signs of prolonged misery are clear on his face, and she is shocked at how terrible he looks. When Dorothea mentions the **New Hospital**, Lydgate says that he is not in a position to give advice about whether she should continue supporting it, as he may soon have to leave Middlemarch. She immediately declares that she doesn't believe the rumors about him; feeling deeply moved, Lydgate thanks her. She asks that he tell her the full truth.

Here Dorothea emerges as a kind of saintly figure (the significance of this is revealed in light of the discussion of St. Theresa of Avila in the "Prelude"). Not only is she willing to support the New Hospital, but she is convinced of Lydgate's innocence and prepared to stand by him even if this means facing public ostracization.

Lydgate says that he doesn't want to "bear hard on Bulstrode," because despite everything he is still grateful to him for the £1000. Dorothea promises that she won't repeat his words to anyone, although she says that if she did, many people in Middlemarch would believe her. Although this may be naïve, Lydgate chooses to trust her, and tells her everything.

Lydgate's desire not to seem as if he is shifting all the blame to Bulstrode certainly emerges from loyalty, but is also strategic. Appearing as though he is trying to evade guilt by sacrificing Bulstrode will likely only increase the suspicion people have of him.

Lydgate finishes by saying that it has since emerged that Raffles was given more opium than Lydgate prescribed (plus brandy, which he forbade). He doesn't know how or why his instructions for Raffles's care were not followed (and therefore does not know if Bulstrode is guilty of helping to kill Raffles). Either way, Lydgate is condemned by association—"the business is done and can't be undone." Moved, Dorothea says she can't bear the idea of Lydgate's ambitions coming to this end.

Dorothea's comment shows that her admiration for Lydgate does come from their shared commitment to social reform. Perhaps she sees some of herself in Lydgate, not only on the basis of their shared passions but also because she, like Lydgate, has experienced the bitter disappointment of failed ambitions.

Dorothea suggests that Lydgate stay and keep up his work at the **New Hospital** while waiting for the rumors to die down. She says he might even one day still become a famous medical innovator. Lydgate says he can't do that because he has lost faith in himself. Dorothea insists that she has too much money and wants to give it away, especially after Sir James and Mr. Brooke persuaded her that her idea of building a colony was "too risky." Hearing about Dorothea's ardent desire to help others, Lydgate cannot help but smile. However, he then repeats that he cannot stay, because it would make Rosamond too unhappy.

After everything Lydgate has been through in his mission to bring medical reform to Middlemarch, the final impediment to his attempting to realize some of his ambitions is Rosamond. This proves that his initial fears about how getting married would affect his career were all too prescient. While Lydgate arguably has a duty to make Rosamond happy, there is no doubt that marrying her was fatal to his career.

Dorothea asks if she can go and try to persuade Rosamond to stay. Lydgate agrees that she should visit her, saying that it would please Rosamond to hear that Dorothea still holds him in high esteem. However, he also says that the **New Hospital** should be merged with the Old Infirmary, and thus handed over to someone else. He has decided to go to London, but thanks Dorothea again for going to see Rosamond. As he rides away, he is overcome with admiration for Dorothea's selflessness. Back at Lowick, meanwhile, Dorothea writes a note and a check for £1000 to Bulstrode, in order to relieve Lydgate's debt to him.

Lydgate's decision to move to London is somewhat painful to witness, as it means that all of his efforts in Middlemarch have come to nothing (and therefore that the standard of medical care in the area will not improve). However, it is perhaps the more honorable thing to choose Rosamond's happiness (and, to a lesser extent, his own dignity) over remaining in Middlemarch and battling in vain to force reforms in a community that does not want them.

BOOK 8, CHAPTER 77

Since discovering the scandal, Rosamond has barely left the house. Some days she does not even leave her room. However, one morning she decides to walk into town to post a letter to Will. There have been malicious rumors circling around Middlemarch that Will is "the grandson of a thieving Jew pawnbroker." Though confident that Will loves her, Dorothea believes that it is impossible that they will ever get married.

This is a low moment not just for Lydgate and Bulstrode, but for the entire Middlemarch community. It appears as if almost everyone is struck by some kind of terrible disappointment of their own.

Dorothea arrives at the Lydgates' and, believing that Rosamond is not in, her servant shows Dorothea into the drawing room. Dorothea finds Rosamond in tears, and Will sitting next to her holding both her hands. When they notice her presence they both leap up. Dorothea apologizes, saying she has a letter for Lydgate and that she didn't realize Rosamond was there. She leaves before either Rosamond or Will can say anything, and goes straight to Freshitt Hall. Gripped by a kind of mania, she intends to tell Sir James and Mr. Brooke all about Lydgate's marriage difficulties.

The dramatic twist in this scene has a rather Shakespearean element, with Dorothea tragically misinterpreting the nature of Rosamond and Will's exchange. Although she only recently consciously realized Will was in love with her, Dorothea has also never had to confront the idea that he loved another woman—or indeed that another woman loved him. She is left in a profound state of shock.

BOOK 8, CHAPTER 78

After Dorothea leaves the drawing room, Will and Rosamond stand very still; Rosamond puts her hand on his arm, but Will shouts: "Don't touch me!" He walks to the other side of the room. Rosamond says he should go and tell Dorothea he prefers her. Will rants in reply, saying: "I never had a *preference* for her, any more than I have a preference for breathing." Rosamond is deeply hurt by this outburst. She feels that her life is totally ruined. Will leaves, and when Rosamond tries to stand up she faints. Later, Lydgate finds her in bed still in her clothes. He embraces her while she sobs.

Again, Will's dramatic words in this scene can be read in quite different ways. The absolute and total nature of his devotion to Dorothea may strike some as highly romantic. His love for her is so intense that he appears to experience it more as a form of suffering than joy. Others may find this overblown, and even question whether Will really loves Dorothea if he sees his love for her as a painful burden.

BOOK 8, CHAPTER 79

After tending to Rosamond, Lydgate reads Dorothea's letter. Will arrives and Lydgate tells him that Rosamond has had a "nervous shock" and is in bed. Lydgate then explains that Will is implicated in the scandal surrounding Bulstrode. Will makes a dark joke about his own reputation but refrains from mentioning the fact that he refused Bulstrode's money, as he doesn't want to embarrass Lydgate. Lydgate mentions that Dorothea is his only supporter; Will's reaction convinces Lydgate that he has come to Middlemarch to see her.

At this point in the novel, most of the chapters become much shorter, with each one containing less action than some of the previous chapters. This builds up suspense, leading the reader to expect a series of climactic events or resolutions before the novel's end.

BOOK 8, CHAPTER 80

Dorothea sees Farebrother in the morning and promises to have dinner with him that evening. She stops by the schoolhouse and then, on the way home, strikes up more conversations with local residents. At dinner, Farebrother and Mrs. Farebrother playfully comment on Miss Noble's crush on Will Ladislaw. When Dorothea gets home that night, she finally admits to herself that she has been in love with Will since Rome, and bursts into tears. Feeling resentful of Will and the torment he is causing her, she cries herself to sleep.

It is somewhat astonishing that Dorothea only now admits to herself that she has loved Will since Rome, a fact that will have seemed very obvious to readers throughout the novel, thereby creating dramatic irony. Yet we also know that Dorothea is exceptionally capable of suppressing her own emotions, which is why it has taken her so long to figure out her true desires.

Dorothea wakes up in the early hours of the morning with a sudden sense of clarity. She forces herself to reflect on the moment when she caught Will and Rosamond together and to wonder what was really going on. She rings for Tantripp, who is shocked to see that she is still in yesterday's clothes, and she asks for a cup of coffee and her new dress and bonnet. Tantripp expresses approval that Dorothea is finally deciding to put away her mourning clothes. By 11 am, she is on her way to Middlemarch, determined to "save Rosamond."

Here the manic mood Dorothea was in after finding Will and Rosamond returns. She is struck by a profound sense of energy and lucidity despite her lack of sleep, and also seems to be in the midst of a bit of a savior complex (as evidenced by her conviction that she is going to be able to "save Rosamond").

BOOK 8, CHAPTER 81

Dorothea arrives and asks Lydgate, who clearly has no idea what happened the day before, if she can see Rosamond. Lydgate expresses his deepest thanks for Dorothea's £1000 check. Rosamond looks alarmed when Lydgate tells her Dorothea is here to see her, but agrees to come downstairs. Rosamond feels resentful of the power held by Dorothea, who is both the object of Will's love and Lydgate's financial rescuer. As the women greet each other, they are both overwhelmed with emotion. Dorothea says she hopes that Rosamond won't find it inappropriate for them to discuss Lydgate's situation. Rosamond assures her she won't.

As has been made clear throughout the novel, Dorothea and Rosamond are opposites: their personalities and desires could not be more different. However, that does not mean that they are unable to feel sympathy for one another, even if this sympathy is tinged with intimidation.

Dorothea tells Rosamond that Mr. Farebrother, Mr. Brooke, and Sir James all know and believe the truth about Lydgate's involvement in the Bulstrode scandal. She then stresses that Lydgate desperately wants to make Rosamond happy and feels wretched about how his actions have hurt her. On hearing this Rosamond bursts into tears. For the first time, the illusion of her "dream-world" in which she is blameless and everyone else is at fault has been broken. Dorothea reflects that marriage is very difficult, as even the closeness of two people can become a kind of curse.

This passage contains a highly surprising twist. Rosamond has clung to her own belief that she is innocent throughout the novel, even as evidence mounts that she has contributed to the problems facing her and Lydgate. However, it takes the kind-hearted intervention of Dorothea for Rosamond to finally see her marriage from a different perspective and understand that she is also at fault.

Composing herself, Rosamond explains that Dorothea misinterpreted the scene between her and Will yesterday. She says that Will was confessing that he loved "another woman," but that after Dorothea saw them Will was adamant that he couldn't explain the truth to her. Dorothea is stunned, but focuses on comforting Rosamond. Lydgate enters and asks if Dorothea wants a carriage, as it has started raining. However, Dorothea maintains that she is "strong" and wants to walk in the rain. She and Rosamond exchange a heartfelt yet restrained goodbye. Once Dorothea leaves, Rosamond tells Lydgate that she is "better than any one."

Again, Dorothea is exhibiting saint-like behavior—endeavoring to solve the problems of others that actually have nothing to do with her. Perhaps rather than building cottages or a colony, the best way for her to exercise her passion for bringing good to the world is by simply offering comfort and advice to those in her community. She evidently has a natural aptitude for it.

BOOK 8, CHAPTER 82

On returning to Middlemarch, Will had hoped that he would encounter Dorothea somehow. However, he also came back because he was considering taking the money Bulstrode offered him in order to carry out a new social endeavor in the "Far West." He also planned to spend time with his friends Lydgate and Rosamond, and if he ended up at Lowick Manor by some coincidence, then so be it. On discovering the scandal, he considered getting a coach straight to London—however, he ended up staying.

Will's temptation to accept the money Bulstrode offered him either shows that he is not as honorable as we may have assumed, or that he is descending into a nihilistic spiral now that he knows he cannot have Dorothea. Perhaps he believes that without her, there is no point in living up to his moral principles anymore.

Following the incident with Dorothea, Will returns to the Lydgates' and pretends that he and Rosamond have not yet seen each other. When Lydgate briefly has to leave the room, Rosamond hands Will a small note that he reads later that night, once he is in bed. In the note, Rosamond says that she explained the whole situation to Dorothea, who came to see her "and was very kind." Will is overwhelmed, struck with frightened wonder about what will happen now.

The fact that Rosamond conveys her message to Will in secret via a note adds an extra sense of drama to this exchange. Will is finally faced with the question of whether to confess his feelings to Dorothea or keep them hidden—potentially forever.

BOOK 8, CHAPTER 83

Dorothea has been occupying herself by attending to the needs of the local people in Lowick, but two days after her trip to the Lydgates' there is no one left to help. She sits in the library and attempts to read a book about political economy, but finds it impossible to concentrate. Miss Noble comes to see her and says she can't stay long, as she has "left a friend in the churchyard." She then explains that the friend is Will, who will not come in because he is worried that he has "offended" Dorothea. However, he has asked that Dorothea come and see him outside briefly.

The various go-betweens that become involved in Dorothea and Will's relationship remind us that nothing is ever truly private in Middlemarch, even one's deepest, most secret feelings. Whereas before everything (and everyone) seemed to be conspiring to keep Will and Dorothea apart, the tide has changed, and there are now people helping them to finally be together.

Dorothea thinks about Casaubon's will, and somewhat hesitantly tells Miss Noble that Will should come in. When they first see each other, Dorothea and Will struggle to speak. Will confesses that he is embarrassed to be back so soon, and he also mentions the rumors about his family history. He explains that Bulstrode offered him money, but that he did not accept it because he was sure Dorothea would not approve. He admits that without Dorothea's respect, he feels he has nothing to live for. A sudden thunderstorm breaks out, and they grip hands in fright and do not let go.

Dorothea and Will have spent so much time privately thinking about one another that when they are finally in each other's presence they cannot even bring themselves to talk. Confronting the reality of each other is overwhelming, and it is only once the storm breaks out that they are finally able to break through their hesitancy and touch each other, as if reminding each other of the reality of their existence.

Will admits that he is hopeless, because even if Dorothea loves him he will always be poor and they therefore cannot be together. For this reason, he had intended to leave and no longer trouble her. Dorothea says she "would rather share all the trouble of our parting," and they kiss. After another period of silence, Will bursts out in anger at their situation. He declares that they can never marry, but Dorothea says there is a chance they can. Will tells her goodbye, but she replies that she hates her money and wouldn't mind being poor. Immediately Will embraces her while she begins to cry.

Even after they kiss, Will remains committed to the idea that his union with Dorothea is impossible. This is perhaps simply another manifestation of his tortured, romantic nature. There may be a side of Will that—like Dorothea—is afraid of what he wants and even more afraid of getting it. Eventually, however, they are able to get over this fear and realize that they should obviously be together.

BOOK 8, CHAPTER 84

Just after the House of Lords defeats the Reform Bill, Mr. Cadwallader and Mrs. Cadwallader, Sir James, Celia, and Lady Chettam are all sitting outside together discussing politics. Mr. Brooke approaches and mentions that he has "sad news," which he will tell everyone if they go inside. He announces that Dorothea and Will are engaged. James dramatically declares that he should have shot Will years ago, and Celia and Mr. Cadwallader reprimand him. Yet James insists that it is "scandalous" and that if Will was honorable he wouldn't do this.

The mention of the Reform Bill connects the political turmoil of the country with the turmoil of Will and Dorothea's relationship. Political change is in the air, and within Middlemarch society there could perhaps be no greater change than the sudden news that Dorothea and Will are going to get married after all.

Mr. Brooke says he tried to reason with Dorothea, but there was no use as she doesn't want her fortune anyway. Sir James insists that Dorothea is committing a wrong, while Mr. Cadwallader says she is just doing something James doesn't agree with. Mrs. Cadwallader blames the others for not arranging alternative suitors for Dorothea. Mr. Brooke says that he is not going to disown Dorothea over it. Sir James realizes that he is so angry in part because he had been hoping Arthur would inherit the entirety of Lowick and Freshitt after Dorothea's death. He feels embarrassed.

For all of Mr. Brooke's foolishness and sexism, he can at least be credited for respecting Dorothea's agency—both when it came to marrying Casaubon and now again with Will. Sir James still has the illusion that he can (and should) interfere with Dorothea's life, but after reflecting about how his own personal investment in her marriage may be swaying his opinion, he appears to realize he is acting unfairly.

Mr. Brooke says the wedding is in three weeks. Mr. Cadwallader comments that if Dorothea wants to be poor then her choice must be respected. Mrs. Cadwallader mentions Will's low rank and "frightful" ancestry, but Mr. Cadwallader calls this "nonsense" and says they should leave. Mr. Brooke invites everyone to dinner the next day, and Celia asks Sir James if they can go to Lowick. James replies that he cannot bear to see Dorothea.

Mr. Cadwallader's comment about Dorothea's wanting to be poor sounds almost sarcastic, based on the assumption that Dorothea would obviously never want to be poor but must accept it as a negative consequence of marrying Will. As we have seen, however, Dorothea resents her wealth and actually doesn't want it.

Celia sees Dorothea alone in her boudoir. She tells Dorothea that she has deeply disappointed everyone, especially James. She laments that Dorothea will be poor and surrounded by "queer people," and that she will never get to see her. Celia begins to cry. Dorothea explains that she and Will are moving to London. Celia remains upset until Dorothea says with complete decisiveness that the wedding will take place. Celia asks if Ladislaw is "very fond" of Dorothea, and Dorothea replies: "I hope so. I am very fond of him."

Celia has never been able to understand her sister, as their personalities and desires are so different. However, she still loves Dorothea and thus despite how little she understands Dorothea's perspective, she does want her sister to be happy.

BOOK 8, CHAPTER 85

Mr. Bulstrode prepares to leave Middlemarch. He has been tormented by the idea that Mrs. Bulstrode might think he is a murderer and plans to tell her the whole truth one day, though perhaps not until his deathbed. He has been very doting to Mrs. Bulstrode, whose hair has turned white from distress. He plans to sell all the land he owns in Middemarch, and asks his wife if there's anything she'd like him to do before they go.

Mr. and Mrs. Bulstrode's marriage is far from perfect, especially considering the enormous secret that Bulstrode is now keeping from his wife. However, they are also proof that it is possible to have a marriage that is both loving and flawed.

Mrs. Bulstrode thinks about it and asks if they could help Lydgate and Rosamond, who are also leaving the area. However, Bulstrode explains that Lydgate will not accept any further help from him. He then suggests that instead they could resurrect the old plan of installing Fred in Stone Court. He tells Mrs. Bulstrode that she must propose it to Caleb Garth herself and assure him that he won't need to make any arrangements with Mr. Bulstrode.

At this point in the novel, loose strands of the narrative begin to be tied together. While not a conventional happy ending in any sense, there are glimmers of happiness that emerge through the characters' accepting their fates and showing small acts of kindness to one another.

BOOK 8, CHAPTER 86

At the Garths', Caleb goes outside to see Mary, who is playing with Letty. He asks Mary to walk with him, telling her that it unfortunately may be a long time before she can get married. Mary says she is happy and doesn't mind waiting, then asks if Caleb is okay with her marrying Fred. Caleb says he won't try to change Mary's mind if her decision has been made, and Mary replies that she and Fred are completely devoted to one another. Caleb then asks her what she thinks about Fred living at Stone Court. Mary is stunned, saying "it is too good to believe."

Again, Mary and Fred's "happy ending" isn't perfect. Her family isn't thrilled with the match, and due to Fred's financial circumstances they will have to wait a while for the wedding. However, the "good enough" ending is in a way more moving than a more traditional happy ending because it is more realistic.

Mary embraces Caleb, saying he is "the best man in the world." Fred arrives at the house, and while talking with Mary he mentions that he hopes they will be married in two years. She tells him the news about Stone Court, and Fred is so shocked that he initially doesn't believe her. Mary assures him it's true, and then tells him she loves him.

Another moving aspect of this ending is the fact that Bulstrode's misfortune ends up becoming the source of a great deal of happiness for Caleb, Mary, and Fred. Through generosity, it is possible to bring a silver lining to even the worst situations.

FINALE

The narrator notes that after learning about the lives of young people, readers are likely to be curious about what became of them. They note the frequency with which marriages can become disappointments after wonderful beginnings. Fred and Mary's marriage is not a disappointment. Fred impresses the community by becoming a "theoretic and practical farmer" who is widely admired in the agricultural industry, yet whose success is perhaps secretly the work of Mary. Mary publishes a children's book, for which people give Fred credit. Thanks to Farebrother's mentorship, Fred becomes a mature, serious, and respectable man.

The "Finale" contains a brief summary of the "good enough" endings Eliot constructs for her characters. One common aspect of all of these endings is that the female characters all remain oppressed on the basis of their gender. In this case, Mary's success as a children's book author is tempered by the fact that she gives credit for her work to Fred. This reflects the grim reality for women in the nineteenth century.

Fred and Mary have three sons. They are never wealthy, but they are able to buy the furniture at Stone Court, where they possibly still live at the time of writing. Lydgate dies at the age of 50, leaving Rosamond and their children well provided for through his life insurance. Before his death he works in London and Europe and writes a treatise on gout; his expertise in this area makes the family wealthy. Despite this, Lydgate always sees himself as a failure who never managed to realize his original ambitions. Throughout their marriage Rosamond continues to frustrate him, although as they get older his opposition to her desires steadily wanes.

The difference between Fred and Mary's marriage and Lydgate and Rosamond's marriage is clearly an issue of compatibility: Rosamond and Lydgate never knew or loved each other like Fred and Mary did. However, Lydgate's trajectory also shows that expectations make an enormous difference when it comes to success and failure. Lydgate's life was not a failure from the outside, but his lofty ambitions made him see it that way.

After Lydgate dies of diphtheria, Rosamond marries an older, wealthier doctor, who is fond of her and Lydgate's four children. She calls this second marriage her "reward." As for Dorothea, she never regrets giving up her fortune to marry Will, who becomes a prominent political figure and Member of Parliament. Many people think it is a shame that Dorothea ends up "merely" a wife and mother, although it is not clear what else she could have done. Mr. Brooke writes to Will and Dorothea often.

Despite the momentary revelation Rosamond had during her conversation with Dorothea at the end of the book, fundamentally Rosamond never changes as a person. She remains shallow and resentful of Lydgate. This suggests that people are capable of changing in minor ways, but that overall their personalities remain consistent.

One day Celia receives a letter saying that, after a dangerous pregnancy, Dorothea has given birth to a son. She is upset that Sir James won't let her see her sister, but James immediately says he will take her the next day if she wants. Celia's love for Dorothea means that Sir James eventually gets over his resentment of Will and disapproval of Dorothea's second marriage. The couples begin seeing each other at regular intervals, and their children become close. Mr. Brooke lives a long time; Dorothea's son inherits Tipton Grange. The narrator concludes that Dorothea's life is far from perfect, but that her unique spirit had a profound, if "hidden," impact on the world.

The fortunes of the Brooke sisters, their husbands, and their uncle are ultimately the best in the book. The fact that Celia and Dorothea's love for one another means that their husbands overcome the enormous divide between their lifestyles reflects the novel's general theme of political and social change. The country continues to transform, thanks in part to the lives of people like Dorothea, who despite not being important or famous still make a big difference to the world.

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