



Exploring Senior Cycle Texts *Silas Marner* by George Eliot



Silas Marner by George Eliot is a novel included as part of the Prescribed Material for the Leaving Certificate English Examination in 2024. The extract below is from chapter 10 of the novel, and accompanying questions may be used to explore the novel as a single text at Ordinary Level and/or as a comparative text at Higher Level and Ordinary Level.

Background to the novel:

Silas Marner by George Eliot tells the story of the life of a humble weaver named Silas Marner. When Marner is ostracised from his community for a crime he did not commit, he sets up shop in Raveloe. For 15 years, he lives like a hermit until he loses his valued gold but gains something much more beloved — a family.



Silas spent his Christmas-day in loneliness, eating his meat in sadness of heart, though the meat had come to him as a neighborly present. In the morning he looked out on the black frost that seemed to press cruelly on every blade of grass, while the half-icy red pool shivered under the bitter wind; but toward evening the snow began to fall, and curtained from him even that dreary outlook, shutting him close up with his narrow grief. And he sat in his robbed home through the live-long evening, not caring to close his shutters or lock his door, pressing his head between his hands and moaning, till the cold grasped him and told him that his fire was gray. Nobody in this world but himself knew that he was the same Silas Marner who had once loved his fellow with tender love and trusted in an unseen goodness. Even to himself that past experience had become dim. But in Raveloe village the bells rang merrily, and the church was fuller than all through the rest of the year, with red faces among the abundant dark-ale. Those green boughs, the hymn and anthem never heard but at Christmas — even the Athanasian Creed, which was discriminated from the others only as being longer and of exceptional virtue, since it was only read on rare occasions — brought a vague exulting sense, for which the grown men could as little have found words as the children, that something great and mysterious had been done for them in heaven above and in earth below, which they were appropriating by their presence. And then the red faces made their way through the black biting frost to their own homes, feeling themselves free for the rest of the day to eat, drink, and be merry, and using that Christian freedom without diffidence.



Making connections with the continuum of learning

Students should be able to:

Develop an awareness of their own responses, affective, imaginative, and intellectual, to aesthetic texts. Explore these responses relative to the texts read, generate and justify meanings and build coherent interpretations.

Re-read texts for encountering rich and diverse levels of suggestion, inference and meaning.

(Leaving Certificate Syllabus, p.13)

Please note:

- The following activities might be completed over a series of lessons or as part of a unit of learning. Consider how you might adapt these to suit your context.
- Students may wish to complete some activities individually or in pairs/groups.
- Activities might be completed orally and/or in written format.
- Students may also wish to engage in a think, pair, share activity for some activities.

Activities:

For each question, please support your answer with reference to the extract

- In your opinion, what is the tone in this scene?
How is it created? Why does the author want to create this tone?
- What is your impression of the character of Silas?
How do you form this impression from the above extract?
- What contrasting views of Christmas are presented in this extract?
In your opinion, why does the author create this contrast?
- Re-read the extract to analyse the language used.
Select 3 vivid images or phrases from the extract and explain why you believe they are effective.

