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UNGUIN ACTIVE READING

LEVEL 3

Silas Marner

George Eliot



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1.1 What's the book about?

Read the title of Chapter 1 and the new words at the bottom of page 1. Look at the picture on the same page. Then talk to another student and answer these questions. What do you think?

- 1 Does this story happen in the present or the past?
- 2 What is Silas Marner's job?
- 3 How old is Silas Marner?
- 4 Is the man next to Silas a friend or an enemy?
- 5 Are these two men rich?
- 6 Is Raveloe a place or a person?

1.2 What happens first?

1 Read the sentences in *italics* below the title of Chapter 1. Then look at the picture on page 3. What do you think?

- a Where is Silas Marner?
.....

- b What is he thinking?
.....



2 Read the new words at the bottom of page 2. Then answer these questions about the picture on page 3.

- a What has the minister got in his hand?
.....

- b Is Silas behaving like a happy man or not?
.....

- c What is the minister thinking?
.....



3 Read the new words at the bottom of page 3. Look at the picture on pages 4 and 5 and describe Silas's house and the land around it.

The Weaver of Raveloe

*Dark thoughts drove all love out of his heart.
Because he was not a clever man, he stopped believing in a loving God.*

As a young man, Silas Marner lived in a big town. He was a **weaver** and his friends were also weavers. They all went to the same church, in a place called Lantern Yard. At that time Silas Marner had a strong love of God and he went to church every Sunday. He was a good and honest man.

His best friend in Lantern Yard was William Dane. William was older than Silas and he, too, seemed a very fine young man. But William more often forgave his own **faults** than the faults of other people. He saw everyone's mistakes except his own. Even his teachers at school were sometimes wrong. But William Dane was always right.

Silas loved this young man and found no fault in him. He liked the fact that William was sure about everything. Silas was less sure of himself. He worried about his own faults. This difference between them showed in their faces. Silas's eyes shone with love but saw little; they were open and honest and almost too kind. William had a more secretive look in his narrow eyes.



weave /wi:v/ (v) to make cloth using a special machine. Pieces of cotton, for example, are passed over and under other pieces.

fault /fɔ:lt/ (n) a problem or weakness in a person. If something bad is your *fault*, your actions are the reason for it.

One day Silas met a girl called Sarah. Soon he was in love with her and he wanted to marry her. She loved him and promised to become his wife. But they could not marry yet because they needed more money.

Sometimes Silas brought William with him when he met Sarah. There was no fear in his heart. He loved them both and he wanted them to be friends.

Then, one day, a bag of money was stolen from the church. Silas's knife was found in the church, so his house was searched. It was William who found the empty bag behind a cupboard in Silas's bedroom.

'It was you,' William said to his friend angrily. 'Tell the **truth** now!'

This hurt Silas deeply. 'William,' he said, 'I did not take the money. We are old friends. In nine years, I never once told you a lie. God will show us the truth.'

'Silas,' William replied, 'how could I know all your secrets? Sometimes a man seems honest, but deep in his heart he is bad.'

Silas looked at his friend, red in the face. Angry words were ready to pour from his mouth. But something stopped them. The red turned to white and his legs almost failed him. Finally, he spoke in a low voice.

'I remember now. The knife wasn't in my pocket.'

William said, 'I know nothing about that.'

The other people from the church wanted to know more, and asked a lot of questions. But Silas did not explain his words. 'I am in great trouble, but I can say nothing,' he told them. 'God will show you the truth.'

They returned to the church. They did not call in the police; that was not their way. 'But we have to find out the truth,' they all agreed. First they fell on their knees and asked God for help. Then one of them offered two white cards to Mr Paston, the **minister**. On top, the cards were the same. But one had a **mark** on the other side of it. The minister had to choose one of the cards.

'God will guide his hand. The minister will take the clean card,' said Silas to himself. 'But how can a man – a friend – **behave** so badly? I shall never forget that.'

Mr Paston chose one of the cards and held it up. It was the one with the mark. He spoke in a cold, hard voice. 'Silas Marner, you have done a terrible thing. You do not now belong to our church. You can only return to it if you give back the money. You will also have to say that you are sorry. And you will have to change your way of life.'

Silas listened without a word. He stood up only when the others started leaving their places. He went to William. He spoke with great difficulty.

truth /tru:θ/ (n) the *true* facts about something

minister /'mɪnɪstə/ (n) someone who works for a Christian church

mark /mɑ:k/ (n) a shape or sign on something; a hole or other sign that can be noticed

behave /bɪ'heɪv/ (v) to do things in the way that is described



‘I remember that day when you wanted a knife. You used mine and you never gave it back to me. *You* took the money. You lied about me to protect yourself. But do not be afraid. God will not hurt *you*. He hurts only the good. He, too, is a God of lies.’

The church people never forgot these terrible words, but William replied calmly. ‘You should not speak like that. But I shall only say “God forgive you”, Silas.’

Silas left the church. It was the end of the world that he knew. Dark thoughts drove all love out of his heart. Because he was not a clever man, he stopped believing in a loving God.

‘God has turned away from me,’ he thought. ‘Sarah will, too. If she does not, she will not be happy either. How can we be happy if God hates us?’

At home he sat alone. He was like a sick man; he could do nothing. He did not even want to see Sarah. ‘She will never believe me. She won’t be able to accept the truth, so she won’t believe me,’ he said to himself.

The next day he was working at his **loom** when the minister brought a message from Sarah. She did not want to marry Silas or to see him again. Silas said nothing. He turned back to his work.

Little more than a month later, Sarah married William Dane. Silas left the big town and moved to the village of Raveloe.

He lived there quietly for the next fifteen years. He lived and worked in a small house outside the village next to an old **quarry**. Nobody took stone from the quarry now, so it was full of water. Few of the villagers went near it. Silas was known as a very strange man, and they were a little afraid of him.

loom /lu:m/ (n) a machine used for making cloth

quarry /'kwɔri/ (n) a place where sand or stone is taken from the ground



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Silas Marner

George Eliot

British English

Classic

Silas Marner loves only one thing – his money. Each night he takes it out from his hiding place and counts it. Then two things happen to change his life – his gold coins are stolen and a little girl comes to live with him. Slowly, Silas Marner starts to change.

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