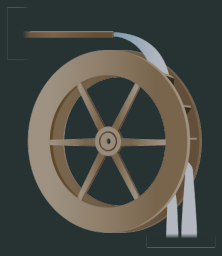

The Mill on the Floss

Study Guide by Course Hero

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Book Basics

AUTHOR
George Eliot

YEAR PUBLISHED
1860

GENRE
Tragedy

PERSPECTIVE AND NARRATOR
The Mill on the Floss features a third-person omniscient narrator, who periodically lapses into using the first-person singular pronoun *I.* The narrator continually comments on the action of the story, often using an ironic tone. The narrator's use of verbal irony throughout the novel is sometimes playful and humorous and sometimes biting and bitter. Eliot gives the narrator a male persona, although many critics point out how close the author is to her protagonist, Maggie Tulliver. Thus the narrator at times seems overly sympathetic toward Maggie to the degree that he doesn't see Maggie clearly. The narrator includes the reader in the text by referring to himself and the reader on occasion using the first-person plural pronoun *we.*

TENSE
The Mill on the Floss is written primarily in the past tense, although the narrator occasionally lapses into the present tense when referring to himself or addressing the reader.

ABOUT THE TITLE
In *The Mill on the Floss,* the mill of the title, Dorlcote Mill, belongs to the Tulliver family and is responsible for their prosperity until Mr. Tulliver loses it in a prolonged legal battle and brings his family to ruin. The Floss is the river that flows through the town and eventually takes the lives of Maggie and Tom Tulliver when it overflows its banks.

In Context

The Midlands Setting

George Eliot uses two geographical areas in the Midlands as the settings for her novel. The Midlands are in central England, and the Western Midlands are lowland areas that in the author's time produced coal. Eliot grew up in an English village in the county of Warwickshire, located in the Western Midlands. Eliot's father, Robert Evans, managed the 7,000-acre Arbury Estate for the Newdigate family, where the author was born. The estate included many acres of farmland worked by tenant farmers, a coal mine, streams, and miles of deciduous forest, with leafy trees that lose their foliage in the winter.

When Eliot was still an infant the family moved to Griff House—a large, eight-bedroom structure with stables, a dairy, farmyard, and orchard—in nearby Nuneaton. The descriptions of the Tulliver home in the novel are partially based on the author's memory of Griff House. Eliot was her father's favorite, and he would take her with him when he went on work rounds. This gave her much exposure to the green vistas of the country estate as well as the dialect of the servants, whom she often sat with while her father conducted business. Eliot played in the fields and fished in the canals and ponds around Griff House with her older brother Isaac. These early childhood memories inform the descriptions of lush scenery as well as the pitch-perfect dialogue in *The Mill on the Floss*, as does Eliot's early close relationship with her brother.

Eliot had planned a river flood early on in the process of writing *The Mill on the Floss*, so she and her partner George Henry Lewes researched an appropriate setting on which to base the town of St. Ogg's. They settled on Gainsborough, in Lincolnshire, in the East Midlands, which sits on the Trent River. Eliot even used the Old Hall in Gainsborough as a model for the bazaar that takes place in Book 6. The Trent River features an eagre, a single tidal wave that flows up the estuary during high tide. An estuary is the place where the river meets the sea.

The narrator describes how Maggie and Tom are accustomed to watching the tidal bore on the Floss in the spring that comes up in a rush "like a hungry monster." The tide moves through the river in the spring and the fall and can travel 18 miles upstream from Derrythorpe to Gainsborough. When very high tides coincide with a sudden influx of water caused by heavy rains, the results can be catastrophic. Eliot had read accounts of terrible storms in England in 1857 that were especially disastrous for the area around the Trent River, when the river flooded the land for miles around so that hundreds of acres were underwater. She used these descriptions of the flood to inform the final scenes in the novel.

Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ*

George Eliot, one of the 19th century's foremost moralists, was actually an atheist. Nonetheless, she could enjoy the rituals of Christianity and thought it good that people found comfort in religious participation. She found moral imperatives in philosophical texts and condoned Christian values that were humanistic. Moreover, she agreed with German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach, the author of *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), that the idea of God was a projection of what was best in human beings. For a time Eliot followed French philosopher Auguste Comte, who proposed a secular "Religion of Humanity." Eliot was reading German monk Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation of Christ* (c. 1418–27) and English writer John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) when she was writing *The Mill on the Floss*.

Imitation of Christ is a devotional classic of Christianity that was a beloved foundational text even in Eliot's time. Thomas à Kempis advocates strict self-scrutiny and provides a clear vision of what constitutes a spiritual life. He names humility as the most important virtue and urges people to let go of their egoistic feelings of superiority. He counsels renunciation of worldly desires and an embrace of human suffering, which will draw the spiritual seeker closer to Christ. For Christians, Jesus is the son of God who came to Earth to suffer, die, and redeem humanity, and his life symbolizes resignation to the will of God.

In *The Mill on the Floss,* Maggie latches onto the idea of renouncing all worldly desire as a way to escape her unhappiness, not understanding that the monk who wrote *Imitation of Christ* is addressing those who have already renounced the world. In the monk's view, this world is an illusion or a pale shadow of eternal life. Maggie, on the other hand, wants passionately to engage with the world and is renouncing her desire in a vain attempt to escape emotional pain. She also doesn't have any spiritual consolations in the form of mystical experience or a feeling of oneness with God—something that a serious student of Thomas à Kempis would expect and perhaps experience.

Roma (Gypsies) in England

The Roma or Romany, whom the English called gypsies, were nomadic people thought to have originated in northern India. They reached Europe by the 14th century and Western Europe by the 15th century. By the 16th century these nomads had entered the British Isles. The Roma and similar wanderers (such as the Irish Travelers) have historically faced prejudice, banishment, and exile, although they always managed to return to the countries trying to ban them.

In the 19th century they lived on the borders of English society,

traveling in covered wagons and pitching tents where they temporarily settled. They made a living by selling goods and tinkering (repairing household or farm items), trading livestock, and working as animal trainers. The Roma also worked seasonally on farms, harvesting fruits and vegetables. Working also as entertainers, the Roma danced, sang, played musical instruments, and told fortunes, either with tarot cards or by reading palms. Despite the fact that the English were willing to trade with the Roma or avail themselves of other services, they viewed them as dangerous outsiders. Nonetheless, the Roma lifestyle was romanticized, which is why Maggie dreams about running away to the gypsies who are outsiders like herself. She is also compared to a wild gypsy by members of her family.

Watermills in England

Water mills in England date back to the days of the Roman conquest, and by the 11th century the *Domesday Book* (1086), a survey of England commissioned by King William the Conqueror, lists 6,000 operational mills. Water mills continued to be used for commercial purposes even into the 20th century. A water mill may house machinery to grind grain, as the one in the novel does. The machinery is powered by a wheel turned by moving water, usually a river. The water mill consists of a water supply and control system (including the wheel or turbine) and the millhouse structure that grinds the grain. Many mills were sited on a millstream, or artificial channel, so that the water could be better managed. In the novel, the mill sits on a tributary to the river Floss, called the Ripple.

What Is It Worth?

Money has a small but important role in *The Mill on the Floss*.

- Mr. Tulliver's mortgage on his property is 2,000 pounds, which would amount to about $227,528 now.
- Mr. Tulliver owes the Gleggs 500 pounds, which would amount to about $56,882 now.
- Mr. Tulliver's sister owes him 300 pounds, which would amount to about $34,129 now.
- Mr. Tulliver pays 100 pounds a year to keep his son at the tutor's, which would amount to about $11,376 now.

Darwin in the Novel

George Eliot stayed abreast of the science and philosophy of her day, and she read English naturalist Charles Darwin's *The Origin of the Species* (1859) while she was working on *The Mill on the Floss*. Darwin's seminal work is the foundational text of evolutionary biology. At the same time, her partner George Henry Lewes was researching his own *Studies in Animal Life* (1860). Darwin's ideas about the role of adaptation in survival of species and the mechanisms of heredity inform many of the observations in the novel about the Dodsons and the Tullivers. Also seen in the novel are French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's ideas (later disproved) that acquired characteristics (those that are learned and not carried by the genes) or habits could be passed on to the next generation. This was something that Lewes and Eliot believed, as well as their good friend, English philosopher and biologist Herbert Spencer. Thus Eliot looks at the Tullivers and the Dodsons as the products of their heredity, which has been created in part by the repetition of certain habits that are then passed down.

Author Biography

Early Life and Education

George Eliot was the pen name of Mary Ann, or Marian, Evans, born in the Midlands of England on November 22, 1819, on the estate of her father's employer, where Mr. Evans worked as the land agent (manager). She was the youngest of three children by her father's second wife, who died in 1836 when Eliot was still in her teens.

The author was first sent to day school as an infant and toddler and then to boarding school at age five, primarily because her mother could not care for her children at home; Eliot spent most of her early life separated from her mother. The keen pain of children with absent or missing mothers is a key theme in *The Mill on the Floss*, and no doubt Eliot tapped the memory of her own childhood to portray that suffering. In her preteen years, under the influence of a charismatic Evangelical teacher, she became extremely religious. When her mother died she returned home to keep house for her father. She and her father moved to Coventry in 1841, after her brother and his new wife took over Griff House, the family

home. In Coventry she made friends with religious freethinkers and began turning away from traditional Christian orthodoxy.

Eliot was a gifted linguist, fluent in several languages. Upon reading the works of secular biblical scholars and translating two such important works from the German *(The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* by D.F. Strauss and *Essence of Christianity* by Ludwig Feuerbach) that examined historically the life of Jesus and called biblical miracles into question, she gave up religion for good.

Personal Life

After her father died in 1849, Eliot spent time abroad with friends and then moved to London in 1851 to become a freelance writer. She first worked as subeditor (person who prepares text for print) of the *Westminster Review*, a prestigious literary journal, and she met George Henry Lewes, a journalist, critic, and philosopher. The two became friends and eventually lovers and literary partners. Lewes could not easily divorce his estranged wife Agnes, who had given birth to her lover's children, although all of those children legally belonged to Henry Lewes. Lewes became Eliot's common-law husband in 1854. The author's beloved brother Isaac cut off all ties with her in 1857 after she informed him of her status, and he did not resume contact until the last year of Eliot's life. He also demanded that his sister Chrissey cut off relations with Eliot. Chrissey finally ignored her brother's orders because she was dying. Unfortunately, she relented too late; Chrissey died in March 1859, before Eliot could travel to see her.

Writing Career

Lewes suggested that Eliot begin writing fiction and provided her with moral support to become a novelist. In addition to translations (including *Ethics*, the primary philosophical treatise of Baruch Spinoza), essays, and criticism, Eliot wrote short fiction, poetry, and seven novels: *Adam Bede* (1859), *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), *Silas Marner* (1861), *Romola* (1862–63), *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866), *Middlemarch* (1871–72), *Daniel Deronda* (1876).

The Mill on the Floss is highly regarded for its vivid portrayal of childhood and considered to be the most autobiographical of Eliot's novels. Most critics agree the relationship between Tom and Maggie in Eliot's second novel, *The Mill on the Floss*, is patterned after her real childhood relationship with Isaac. It reflects the pain she felt in being rejected by him—first, after her father died and there was no place for her in the family home (Griff House) after Isaac married, and second, when he cut her off from himself and the family for living outside the bounds of matrimony.

Death and Legacy

Lewes died in 1878 and shortly afterward Eliot married a family friend, John Cross. Eliot died two years later, on December 22, 1880, at age 61. *The Mill on the Floss* was enormously successful, as were all of Eliot's works, and she was one of those fortunate writers to have been financially rewarded and praised by the critics and literati in her own lifetime. That early assessment of Eliot only grew after she died, and she continues to be considered among the best of the English novelists of the 19th century; her masterpiece *Middlemarch* is deemed by some to be the best novel written in English. *The Mill on the Floss* is perhaps her first breakout performance, in which she portrays with sometimes shocking clarity the depth of childhood rage and the effects of maternal indifference and familial rejection on the child who doesn't fit into the family paradigm. Not surprisingly, *The Mill on the Floss* has been subjected to classical Freudian readings that help illuminate the plight of the main protagonist, Maggie Tulliver, and her tragic end.

Characters

Maggie Tulliver

As a child Maggie Tulliver is rebellious, angry, and full of rage because she is constantly criticized by her mother and her aunts. She adores her brother, Tom, who is often emotionally cruel to her, and she spends her entire life trying to meet with his approval, even as she unconsciously thwarts him. She leads Philip Waken on, not owning up to the fact that she doesn't love him, and she runs away with her cousin's beau but then ultimately refuses to marry him out of guilt. In the end she is the agent of Tom's destruction.

Tom Tulliver

Although Tom Tulliver loves his sister Maggie, he often treats her cruelly because he doesn't understand the depth of her emotions. He never questions his own values and morals and believes his sister should follow his creed. Tom heroically bails the family out of debt through his hard work. He disowns his sister after her aborted elopement but ends up dying with her in the flood after they have a final reconciliation.

Philip Wakem

Philip Wakem falls in love with Maggie Tulliver when they are both young because she is kind to him and he sees the depths of her own need. He is sensitive, intelligent, artistic, and kind, and he continues to hold out hope that he can marry Maggie, although he has many signs that should dissuade him. In the end he forgives her for running off with her cousin's beau, Stephen Guest, and is able to love her unconditionally, apart from his own need.

Stephen Guest

Although Stephen Guest is spoiled and somewhat conceited, he chooses Lucy Deane as the woman he intends to marry because he does have a streak of originality and can see how superior she is to the upper-class women he is expected to choose from. However, he becomes infatuated with Maggie and convinces her to elope with him, although she leaves him before they can get married or consummate the relationship. Stephen grieves for Maggie after she dies and ends up marrying Lucy.

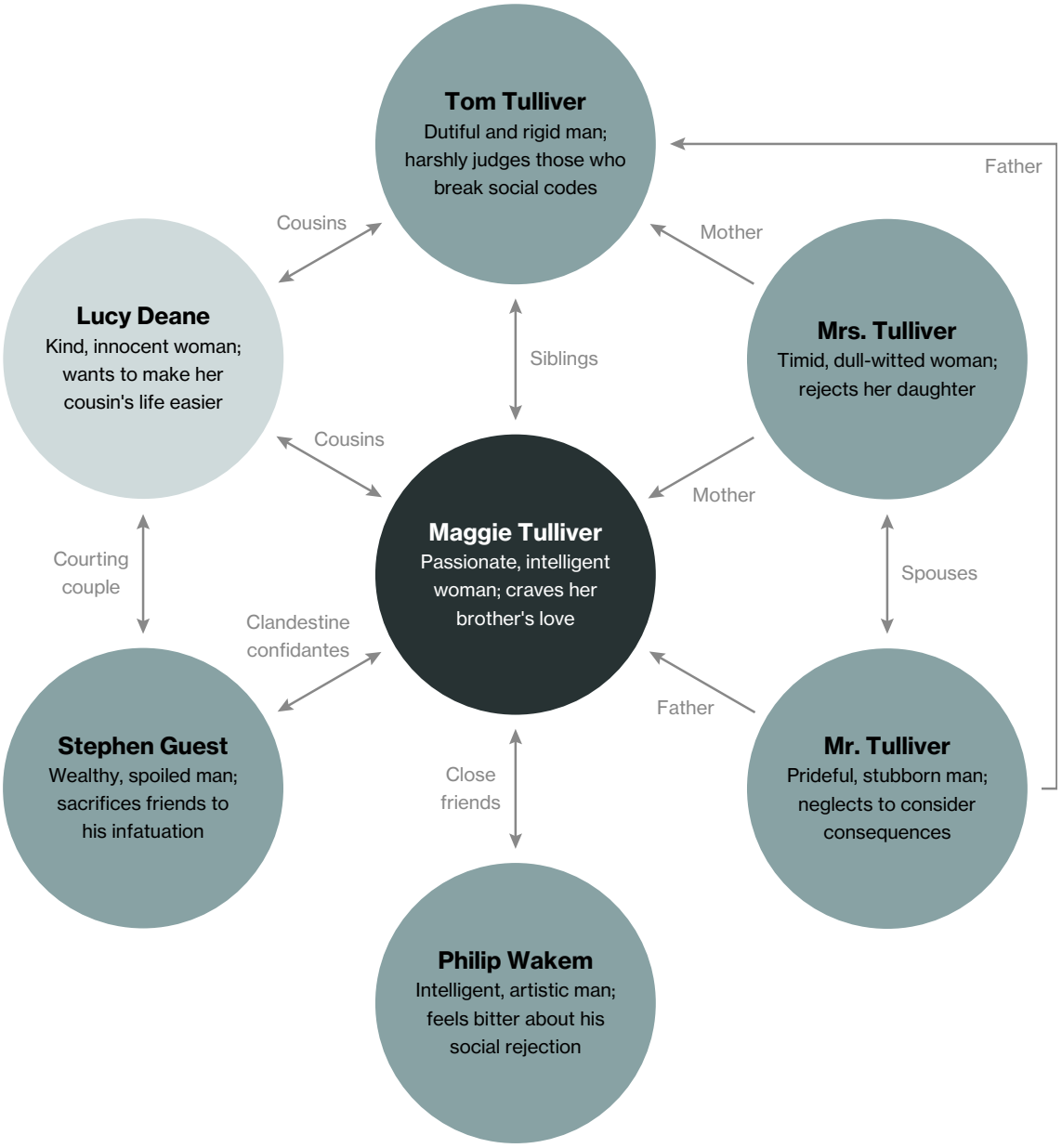
Mr. Tulliver

Mr. Jeremy Tulliver is a headstrong and impetuous man with a quick temper. He has a generous nature and loves his children, especially Maggie, but has no respect for his wife, whom he chose for her beauty and stupidity. He ends up losing everything because he will not listen to reason and insists on taking people to court because he thinks they are infringing on his water rights.

Mrs. Tulliver

Mrs. Tulliver is not very bright, and she submits to people pushing her around—from her elder sister to her husband. She values things more than she does people, and she has no loyalty toward her husband. She is a less-than-adequate mother, especially to Maggie, who needs acceptance and affection. She has a hard time relating to her daughter because she is so different from herself. Later, when Maggie is being ostracized by the town for her elopement and disowned by her brother, Mrs. Tulliver stands by her daughter.

Character Map



- Main Character
- Other Major Character
- Minor Character

Full Character List

Character	Description
Maggie Tulliver	Maggie (also Magsie) Tulliver is the protagonist of the novel who begins as an exceptionally bright but loved-starved child and grows into a needy and passionate woman. In attempting to follow a perverse philosophy of self-sacrifice, she ends up hurting all the people who love her.
Tom Tulliver	Tom Tulliver is the self-righteous and conventional older brother of Maggie who follows the letter of the law and grinds people down (including himself) in the process.
Philip Wakem	Philip Wakem is the humpbacked son of the lawyer Mr. Wakem who feels isolated because of his deformity. He falls in love with Maggie Tulliver.
Stephen Guest	Stephen Guest is the upper-class suitor of Lucy Deane who ends up falling madly in love with Maggie Tulliver.
Mr. Tulliver	Mr. Jeremy Tulliver is the father of Maggie and Tom Tulliver and the owner of Dorlcote Mill, until he loses it by pursuing useless lawsuits.
Mrs. Tulliver	Mrs. Bessy Tulliver is the mother of Tom and Maggie Tulliver. She favors Tom and hurts Maggie's self-esteem, but she is an inadequate mother to both of her children.
Mr. Deane	Mr. Deane is husband to Susan and uncle to Tom and Maggie. He is a senior manager at Guest & Co. and has worked his way up from the bottom.
Lucy Deane	Lucy Deane is Tom and Maggie's cousin and a year younger than Maggie. She is the daughter of Susan Deane. She is amiable, kind, and compassionate.
Mrs. Susan Deane	Mrs. Susan Deane is one of the Dodson clan and Tom and Maggie's aunt on their mother's side.
Mr. Dix	Mr. Dix is the owner of a mill upstream from Mr. Tulliver who settles his dispute with him through arbitration.
Mr. Furley	Mr. Furley holds the mortgage on Mr. Tulliver's land and sells it to Mr. Wakem.
Mr. Glegg	Mr. Glegg is husband to Jane and uncle to Tom and Maggie. Mr. Glegg is kind and amiable but doesn't like to part with his money.
Mrs. Jane Glegg	Mrs. Jane Glegg is the eldest sister of the Dodson clan and Tom and Maggie's aunt on their mother's side. The matriarch of the Dodson family, she is overbearing, judgmental, and bossy in the extreme.
Mr. Gore	Mr. Gore is the lawyer who represents Mr. Tulliver's interest in the case against Mr. Pivart. Gore loses to Mr. Wakem, Pivart's lawyer.
Miss Guest	Miss Guest is the name used to refer interchangeably to Stephen Guest's two sisters. Both are class-proud and condescending, but by the end of the novel they are attempting to reunite their brother with Lucy Deane.
Bob Jakin	Bob Jakin is Tom's boyhood friend whom Tom rejects over a minor quarrel. In Tom's trouble Jakin rekindles the friendship and later helps him make money through foreign trade. He is also a friend to Maggie.
Maggie Jakin	Maggie Jakin is the child born to Bob and Prissy; she is named after Maggie Tulliver.
Mrs. Jakin	Old Mrs. Jakin is Bob's mother, whom he lives with as a bachelor. After he marries, he brings his mother to live with him and his wife.
Prissy Jakin	Prissy Jakin is Bob Jakin's wife.
Dr. Kenn	Dr. Kenn is a highly respected and kindly clergyman who attempts to help Maggie when she returns to St. Ogg's in disgrace.

Kezia	Kezia is a household servant who remains loyal to the family after its downfall.
Luke Moggs	Luke Moggs is the head miller at Dorlcote Mill and a loyal employee.
Mrs. Moggs	Mrs. Moggs is the wife of Luke Moggs.
Mr. Moss	Mr. Moss is a farmer who works very hard but lives in poverty. He is married to Mr. Tulliver's sister Gritty.
Mrs. Gritty Moss	Mrs. Gritty Moss is Mr. Tulliver's sister who has produced eight children with her husband and lives on a farm with him.
Mr. Pivart	Mr. Pivart is a farmer who begins using the river to irrigate his fields and is forced to go to court over water rights after Mr. Tulliver sues him.
Mr. Poulter	Mr. Poulter is an old soldier hired by Rev. Stilling as a drillmaster to teach Tom about proper physical bearing and posture.
Mr. Pullet	Mr. Pullet is husband of Sophie and uncle to Tom and Maggie. He is a gentleman farmer.
Mrs. Sophy Pullet	Mrs. Sophy Pullet is one of the Dodson clan and Tom and Maggie's aunt on their mother's side. She likes to dress well and tends to be dramatic, especially about illness and death. She is a hypochondriac.
Mr. Riley	Mr. Riley is an auctioneer and appraiser. A friend to Mr. Tulliver, he advises Mr. Tulliver to send Tom to Rev. Stelling to get his education.
Laura Stelling	Laura Stelling is the oldest child of Rev. and Mrs. Stelling.
Mrs. Stelling	Mrs. Stelling is the wife of Rev. Stelling and a somewhat indifferent mother.
Rev. Stelling	Rev. Walter Stelling is a minister with an Oxford education who takes Tom as his first pupil and insists on giving him a classical education.
Mr. James Torry	Mr. James Torry is one of the middle-class set in St. Ogg's who dances with Maggie at the Guests' and is attracted to her. After she comes back from her elopement he treats her disrespectfully.
Mrs. James Torry	Mrs. James Torry is the wife of Mr. Torry and one of "the world's wives" who ostracizes Maggie when she returns from her aborted elopement.
Dr. Turnbull	Dr. Turnbull is the doctor who takes care of Mr. Tulliver in his illnesses.
Mr. Wakem	Mr. Waken is a lawyer who represents Mr. Pivart against Mr. Tulliver in court in their dispute over water rights. He eventually ends up buying Tulliver's mill and hiring him back as a tenant to manage it. He is Philip Wakem's father.

Plot Summary

Book 1: Boy and Girl

The tragedy of the Tulliver family is told by an omniscient male narrator who appears to have a female sensibility and is extremely sympathetic toward the main character, Maggie. The Tulliver family consists of nine-year-old Maggie and her older brother Tom, almost 13, together with their father, who owns Dorlcote Mill on the tributary of the Floss River, and his wife, Bessy Tulliver, formerly a Dodson. Mrs. Tulliver lacks warmth and empathy as a mother and favors her son, and she regularly criticizes Maggie, whose looks she finds objectionable—she is dark and doesn't take after the blonde Dodsons—and whose passionate emotions and depth of intelligence she cannot relate to nor understand. The Dodson sisters, particularly Jane Glegg and Sophy Pullet, also criticize Maggie and unfavorably compare her to her blonde and well-behaved cousin, Lucy Deane, the daughter of Susan Deane, also a Dodson sister. Maggie is loved and protected by her father, although his care cannot make up for what she misses

from her mother. Thus Maggie transfers much of her love and affection to her older brother Tom and can't bear to be at odds with him.

As the story begins Mr. Tulliver has decided to send his son, Tom, for further schooling with a private tutor, Rev. Stelling, who lives at a distance. When the Dodsons come for dinner and learn about this plan, Mrs. Glegg in particular raises strong objections and gets into a serious argument with Mr. Tulliver, and she ends up reminding him he owes her 500 pounds. Meanwhile Maggie's reunion with her brother, who has just returned from school, is spoiled because she has forgotten to feed his rabbits and they have died. He tells her he doesn't love her and won't take her fishing, but he finally forgives her with some prodding from his father. The relationship between the siblings is developed in Book 1, and it becomes evident that Tom is a self-righteous taskmaster with fixed ideas about what is fair and proper behavior, while Maggie craves her brother's love and affection and is devastated whenever he rejects her. After the argument with Mrs. Glegg, Mr. Tulliver is determined to repay her the money as quickly as possible, although she has no intention of calling in the debt. He ends up borrowing the 500 pounds he owes his sister-in-law from a client of his enemy, a lawyer named Mr. Wakem, who has successfully disputed Mr. Tulliver once in court and will likely represent a farmer who is arguing with the miller over water rights.

While Mrs. Tulliver is visiting her sister Mrs. Pullet, Tom gets annoyed with Maggie again and punishes her by ignoring her and paying exclusive attention to their cousin Lucy. This sends the passionate Maggie into a rage, and she pushes Lucy into the mud. Fearful of the consequences, Maggie runs away, planning to join the gypsies, to whom she has been compared on numerous occasions. She quickly happens on a gypsy camp shortly after leaving her aunt's house, and one of the gypsies puts her on his horse to return her to her family. Mr. Tulliver happens to cross paths with them on his way back home, and he takes the child and makes sure that neither her mother nor brother give her more grief.

Book 2: School-Time

Tom is packed off to Rev. Stelling and hates this new arrangement. He has a difficult time with academic subjects like Latin and geometry, and for the first time he feels inadequate. Tom is overjoyed to return home for the Christmas holidays, but his happiness is somewhat marred by his father's continual ire over a dispute with the farmer Pivart, who is diverting water for irrigation. Mr. Tulliver is determined to sue him over water rights, even though he has already lost one lawsuit about using his land as a thoroughfare. He believes the lawyer Wakem was behind this legal action, and Pivart intends to have Wakem represent him in court.

Wakem has also decided to send his handicapped son to Rev. Stelling for further education, and when Tom returns after the holiday, he meets the humpbacked Philip for the first time. The boys form a cautious friendship, although Tom can't help but distrust the son of his father's enemy. They soon get into an argument and stop talking to each other, but when Maggie visits she develops a friendship with Philip. When Tom hurts his foot after playing with a sword, Maggie stays in his sickroom, and Philip begins visiting as well. Before Maggie leaves Philip tells her that he wishes he had her for a sister, and the two of them part on very good terms. In fact, Philip has fallen in love with Maggie.

Time goes by and Maggie is sent to a girl's school with Lucy, and toward the end of Tom's third year, Maggie comes to fetch him back home. A terrible calamity has occurred: his father has lost the lawsuit and, as a result, Dorlcote Mill, the house, and the land. Even worse, their father has fallen off his horse and seems to be temporarily out of his mind.

Book 3: The Downfall

Mr. Tulliver not only lost his property, but he is also bankrupt and owes money all around. The siblings come home to find the bailiff in the house, for they are to be "sold-up," and the money used from the sale of their property and goods to pay down some of their debt. The Dodsons are called to a family council, and although they all have plenty of money, they will not bail the Tullivers out and go only as far as buying back enough of the furniture and stock to allow the family to live like paupers in their old quarters. Mrs. Glegg severely chastises Mrs. Tulliver in place of her husband (who is still ill) and tells the entire family they must now humble themselves, having brought disgrace on the Dodsons. Shortly thereafter, Tom applies to Uncle Deane to help him get a job, and Mr. Deane finds him a place as a laborer in a warehouse. Tom is determined to work hard and pay off his father's creditors.

Mr. Deane has positioned his company to purchase the mill property, but Mrs. Tulliver foolishly goes to Mr. Wakem to beg

him not to buy it at auction, even though she was told by her brothers-in-law to stay away from him. Wakem didn't even realize it was up for auction, but now he outbids Mr. Deane's company. As a result, when Mr. Tulliver comes back to his senses he learns that if he wishes to stay on as a tenant he will have to work for Wakem. He agrees to do this for the sake of his family and because he can't bear to leave the land he was born on. Nonetheless, he has Tom make a vow of vengeance on Wakem and write it in the family Bible.

Book 4: The Valley of Humiliation

All of the efforts of the Tulliver family are now centered on saving enough money to pay off their remaining debt. Mr. Tulliver saves every penny he can from his own earnings, and Mrs. Tulliver economizes at home. Tom brings home his entire salary and puts it in his father's tin box. Mr. Tulliver remains depressed and distant, and Tom, between working and taking bookkeeping classes, is barely home. Maggie feels more and more isolated and longs for human contact and affection, but her family has no time for that.

One day Bob Jakin, an old friend of Tom's and a traveling peddler, stops by with some used books, since he knows Maggie loves reading. In the pile left by Bob, Maggie finds an old Christian classic, Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ*. The book preaches withdrawal from the transitory charms of the world and counsels renunciation. Maggie thinks she has found the secret to life, and she immediately begins putting à Kempis's advice into practice. But Maggie has neither the understanding nor the background to make proper use of this mystical tract, and she ends up using renunciation as a way to cover up her deep dissatisfaction.

Book 5: Wheat and Tares

One day Wakem calls on Mr. Tulliver with his son Philip, who is back in town, but Maggie avoids him. Maggie, immersed in her new philosophy, still allows herself to walk in the Red Deeps, a wood near the mill. She is now 16 or 17 and has grown into a tall, dark-haired, dark-eyed beauty. Philip follows her to the woods shortly after he glimpses her at the house, and the two have a heartfelt reunion. Maggie tells Philip, however, that she cannot see him because her father and brother have forbidden it. Philip, even more in love when he sees Maggie again, convinces her after a second visit to the Red Deeps that he might run into her from time to time, which would not constitute secret meetings. She agrees because she is starving for companionship.

Maggie and Philip continue their friendship for about a year. He loans her books, and they have long discussions about literature and art. Philip finally reveals to Maggie that he loves and worships her. She admits that she has not thought of him as a lover but she says she could "hardly love anyone better." Nonetheless, how she feels is beside the point, since they could never be together because of the rift between the two families. Maggie kisses Philip and gives him false hope, even though she is not sexually attracted to him. Soon afterward Tom accidentally discovers his sister has been meeting Philip, and he promises to tell their father if she doesn't stop seeing him. Maggie agrees, and Tom meets Philip and upbraids him in the worst possible terms.

While Maggie has been clandestinely seeing Philip, Tom has been making a profit by speculating with a small amount of starter money borrowed from the Gleggs. He has been trading goods abroad with Bob Jakin and has saved enough money to pay his father's debt. He springs this surprise on his father, and they hold a dinner for the creditors and pay them. Afterward, a slightly drunk Mr. Tulliver returns home and gets into an argument with Wakem, who is waiting for him at the mill. He ends up quitting his job and seriously beating Wakem until he is stopped by Maggie. He then falls ill and dies the next day.

Book 6: The Great Temptation

Book 6 opens two years later. Maggie has been teaching out of town; Mrs. Tulliver is living with the Deanes since her sister Susan died; and Tom is boarding with Bob Jakin's family. Lucy is being courted by the heir of the manufacturing magnate who heads her father's business, young Stephen Guest. While they are not yet engaged, they have an understanding between them. Philip Wakem has become good friends with both Stephen and Lucy, and the three of them play and sing together. When Maggie comes for an extended visit, Stephen is immediately attracted to her and vice versa. With Tom's permission, Maggie is able to renew her acquaintance with Philip, since he is friends with Lucy, but Tom warns her that if she returns to her previous relations he will disown her. As time

passes, Maggie allows Philip to believe that, if it were not for her brother, there would be no obstacle in the way of their happiness. Meanwhile, she struggles with her feelings for Stephen. During this same time period, Mr. Deane is able to buy back the mill from Wakem so that Tom can manage it for Guest & Co. and eventually buy it himself. Wakem agrees to sell the property for the sake of his son. When Philip first tells his father about his feelings for Maggie, he disapproves, but he then accepts the possibility of Maggie as a daughter-in-law.

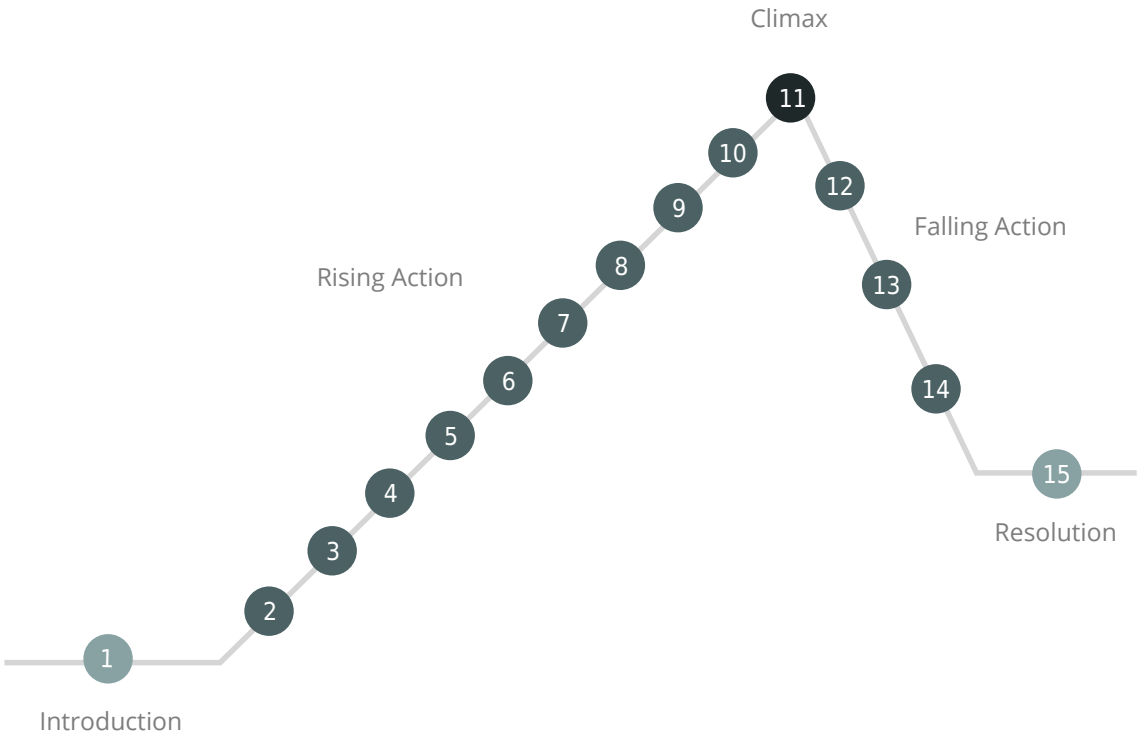
Maggie is determined to go out of town again and has accepted a new position. But she and Stephen find themselves alone for a boating excursion, and he engineers an elopement, which Maggie at first agrees to but then renounces. She tells Stephen she cannot be happy with him when it will cause so much grief to the two people they have left behind—Lucy and Philip.

Book 7: The Final Rescue

Maggie comes back to town unmarried, and she has not consummated her relationship with Stephen. She attempts to return to her brother, who now lives at the mill, but he categorically disowns her. Maggie then becomes a boarder at Bob Jakin's. Although she has been shunned by the town and can't get work, Maggie insists on staying in place. Stephen writes her to say he still wants to marry her, but she resists him.

In mid-September the river overflows and badly floods the town, and Maggie is swept out by herself in one of Bob Jakin's boats as she and his family are trying to leave. Maggie immediately rows toward the mill and reaches Tom, who calls to her from the attic. He is alone because his mother left the day before for her sister's house. He comes down to join Maggie in the boat, but as soon as Tom gets them out into the river, a large piece of debris crashes into their boat, capsizing it, and the siblings drown. They are found embracing each other at the moment of death, having accomplished a final reconciliation.

Plot Diagram



Introduction

1. Mr. Tulliver argues with Mrs. Glegg about Tom's education.

Rising Action

2. Philip and Maggie make friends when she visits Tom.

3. Mr. Tulliver loses his lawsuit and becomes a bankrupt.

4. Mr. Tulliver remains at the mill as a tenant, cursing Wakem.

5. Tom ends the relationship between Maggie and Philip.

6. Mr. Tulliver argues with Wakem and dies after Tom pays debt.

7. Maggie returns to St. Ogg's and meets Stephen Guest.

8. Maggie and Philip rekindle their friendship.

9. Stephen declares his love to Maggie.

10. Tom gets the mill back with the help of Mr. Deane.

Climax

11. Maggie and Stephen leave St. Ogg's to elope.

Falling Action

12. Maggie returns to St. Ogg's alone, and Tom disowns her.

13. Philip and Lucy forgive Maggie.

14. Maggie and Tom reconcile, then die together in the flood.

Resolution

15. Philip, Stephen, and Lucy visit the graves.

Timeline of Events

Easter week 1829

The Dodsons are invited for dinner; Mrs. Glegg quarrels with Mr. Tulliver.

A few hours later

Maggie runs away to join the gypsies.

November 1832

Tom leaves school after Mr. Tulliver loses the lawsuit and is bankrupted.

1833

Maggie reads *An Imitation of Christ* and embarks on the path of renunciation.

April 1837

Tom uncovers Maggie's visits with Philip and demands she renounce him.

Spring 1829

Tom returns from the academy and brings Maggie a fishing line.

The next day

Maggie pushes Lucy into the mud.

Spring 1830

Maggie meets Philip Wakem at King's Lorton and spends time with him in Tom's sickroom.

January 1833

Mr. Tulliver recovers and agrees to tenant the mill; he curses Mr. Wakem in the Bible.

June 1836

Maggie and Philip meet at the Red Deeps for the first time.

May 1839

Maggie returns to town after two years and meets Lucy's beau, Stephen Guest, at the Deanes' home.

A week later

Mr. Deane purchases the mill from Mr. Wakem; Tom will manage it for Guest & Co. and work off the debt.

Five days later

Maggie leaves Stephen at Mudport and returns to St. Ogg's unmarried.

August 1839

Philip writes a letter to Maggie, forgiving her.

September 1839

Maggie burns Stephen's letter renewing his proposal, then realizes Bob Jakin's house is flooding.

Many years later

Lucy and Stephen marry; Lucy, Stephen, and Philip visit the graves.

Three weeks later

Tom pays off the Tullivers' debt; Mr. Tulliver whips Mr. Wakem and then dies.

June 1839

Stephen declares his love for Maggie, and she refuses him rather than hurt Lucy and Philip.

A few days later

Stephen and Maggie leave St. Ogg's to elope.

Same day

Tom disowns Maggie, and she moves with her mother to Bob Jakin's lodgings.

August 1839

Lucy visits and forgives Maggie.

The same night

Maggie rows to the mill in Bob's boat to save Tom; they both die in the flood.

Chapter Summaries

Book 1, Chapters 1–3

Summary

Chapter 1: Outside Dorlcote Mill

The narrator directly addresses the reader, describing the great Floss River and the black ships, "laden with the fresh-scented fir-planks, with rounded sacks of oil-bearing seed, or with the dark glitter of coal," moving toward the town of St. Ogg's. Nearby, the tributary of the Ripple flows into the Floss, and the narrator walks along it, arriving at Dorlcote Mill. Suddenly he wakes, realizing he has been dreaming of standing on the bridge in front of the mill as it looked on a February afternoon many years ago. He now commences to tell what Mr. and Mrs. Tulliver were discussing before the fire in their left-hand parlor.

Chapter 2: Mr. Tulliver, of Dorlcote Mill, Declares His Resolution about Tom

Mr. Tulliver, owner of Dorlcote Mill, tells his wife, Mrs. Bessy Tulliver, that he plans to remove Tom from his current day school and send him out of town for a better education. He wishes for Tom to acquire the kind of knowledge that will put him on an equal footing with the lawyers and arbitrators with whom Mr. Tulliver has had contentious dealings over his water rights. Mr. Tulliver's mill is on a tributary of the great Floss River, and he uses its water power to grind grain. In the course of the novel he has arguments with another mill owner as well as a farmer who is using the river for irrigation.

Mrs. Tulliver thinks he had better ask her family their opinion, and Mr. Tulliver responds that he will do what he thinks best for his own son. He worries that Tom might be slow, since he takes after his mother's side, while his nine-year-old daughter is smart and takes after his side, although "an over-'cute woman's no better than a long-tailed sheep—she'll fetch none the bigger price for that." Mrs. Tulliver then begins complaining about Maggie's naughtiness, absent-mindedness, unruly black hair, and brown skin, which doesn't run on her side of the family. She compares Maggie to her niece Lucy, a blonde child whom she is sure takes more after herself than her own mother, Mrs. Deane. Maggie won't keep away from the water, and Mrs. Tulliver doesn't doubt she'll "tumble in and be drownded some day." The narrator ends the chapter describing Maggie's mother as "healthy, fair, plump, and dull-witted; in short, the flower of her family for beauty and amiability."

Chapter 3: Mr. Riley Gives His Advice Concerning a School for Tom

Mr. Tulliver asks his educated friend, Mr. Riley, about how he might further educate Tom. Mr. Tulliver wants to put him into business, he says, so that he can "make a nest for himself, an' not want to push me out o' mine." Maggie is reading a book and listening to the conversation, and she jumps up to tell her father that Tom would never be so naughty to commit such a deed. When Mr. Riley asks what she is reading, she tells him it is *The History of the Devil*, by Daniel Defoe, in which a woman suspected of witchery is thrown in the water: whether she swims to save herself (proving she's a witch) or drowns (proving her innocence), she is doomed. Riley counsels her to read a "prettier" book, and she takes *The Pilgrim's Progress* from an old bookcase to show him a picture of the devil fighting with Christian. At this point an embarrassed Mr. Tulliver chases Maggie into the kitchen. He tells Mr. Riley he chose his wife for her manageability, not brains, but is puzzled that breeding with her has produced a son who can't read nor speak very eloquently. He would like to remedy those weaknesses with education, and Mr. Riley suggests sending Tom to Rev. Walter Stelling, a clergyman with a degree from Oxford who has decided to take private pupils. Mr. Tulliver wonders if the classically trained Rev. Stelling can teach his son what he needs for business, and Mr. Riley convinces him that a "thoroughly educated man" can easily "take up any branch of instruction."

Analysis

The narrator establishes an intimacy with the reader in the first chapter of the novel, referring to himself in the first person. This narrator is very close to his characters, particularly Maggie Tulliver, and appears to have a female sensibility

despite the fact that George Eliot plants specific information to indicate he is male. For example, as pointed out by Eliot scholar Juliette Atkinson, he refers to holding guns and billiard cues, both male activities in the early 19th century, and refers to "our youth and manhood." The narrator has been found unreliable by some critics because he doesn't seem to understand the meaning of Maggie's actions, and many critics, following the early analysis of British literary critic F.R. Leavis, say that George Eliot loses objectivity in narration because the material in the novel is highly autobiographical. Whatever the flaws of the narrator, he immediately enlists readers' sympathies and draws them in: he wakes from a dream of the town of St. Ogg's and its river—the central motif of the novel—as they appeared on the day his story begins. The narrative then takes on a fairytale quality, as the omnipotent narrator begins to eavesdrop on the conversation of Mr. and Mrs. Tulliver in February 1829. The narrator also establishes a strong ironic voice to add humor to the story as well as criticize the behavior of certain characters or society in general. For example, he calls Mrs. Tulliver "dull-witted" and then says she is considered the flower of her family because of her beauty and manageability, the reason her husband chose her.

Mrs. Tulliver is the opposite of her daughter Maggie, who is exceptionally intelligent and unmanageable. Maggie has the wrong kind of looks—thick, black hair and brown skin—unlike her blonde, pretty, and amiable cousin Lucy, whom Mrs. Tulliver would prefer as a daughter. The rejection of Maggie by her mother, evident in Chapter 2, is likely at the root of Maggie's neediness—an overwhelming desire to be loved, admired, and accepted—something she doesn't experience from anyone in her family or extended family, except from her father. But even Mr. Tulliver, who allows that Maggie is "over-'cute" (over-acute), says her brains won't do her much good since she is only a girl. He then compares young Maggie to a sheep with a long tail, clearly superfluous to its primary purpose. In addition to abundant animal imagery in the novel, much of it associated with Maggie, are numerous references to inherited traits, beginning with Mr. Tulliver's comment that Maggie, not Tom, has inherited his brains. These references indicate that George Eliot recently had studied and incorporated new ideas about evolution from Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*, published in 1859.

Maggie shows off in front of Mr. Riley and tells him about the witch who is doomed no matter which course she chooses. This story foreshadows Maggie's own destiny, in which she seems always caught between a rock and a hard place.

According to one reading of the novel by critic Nina Auerbach, there is a demonic quality inherent in Maggie's extreme emotions and the actions that follow from them, so her identification with the witch is apt. Also foreshadowed in these first chapters is Maggie's drowning; her mother declares that because she won't stay away from the river, Maggie will fall in and drown someday.

Unlike Maggie, her brother Tom, almost four years her senior, takes after the slow side of the family—the Dodsons—and his father wonders if he will be equal to the classical education Mr. Riley is proposing. Mr. Tulliver's attitude toward his son is at least as suspect as his wife's attitude toward her daughter. He wants his son to rise higher in the world, which seems admirable, but his reasons are so that Tom can help him fight the lawyers and meddlers interfering with his water rights. Moreover he does not want to cede any part of the mill or its work to his son, even as a partner, fearing to lose his power as the patriarch. Maggie immediately comes to Tom's defense because she adores her brother and, according to Freudian interpretations of the novel, substitutes her brother for her absent and rejecting mother and less than adequate father. She also identifies with Tom's maleness, since she lives in a society and family that doesn't value females.

In addition to introducing the river as a symbol, these chapters introduce the symbol of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a well-known Christian classic beloved by Western Europeans in the 19th century. Pilgrim Maggie is the main protagonist of the novel, identifying at various points in time with the pious Christians in John Bunyan's extended allegory—for example, Christian and Christiana—as well as the demon, Apollyon. When Mr. Riley counsels her to put Defoe aside and read a more appropriate book, she grabs the unimpeachable Bunyan, but the first thing she shows him is Christian battling the devil, who has been so nicely painted by her brother. This little scene foreshadows the demonic side of Maggie's nature: she seems to accidentally wreak havoc wherever she goes and can even turn a text as exemplary as *The Pilgrim's Progress* (and later, *The Imitation of Christ*) into an instrument of dark, unconscious desires.

Book 1, Chapters 4–6

Summary

Chapter 4: Tom Is Expected

Maggie is not allowed to go with her father to pick up Tom from his school because of the rain, and in a fit of pique, she dunks her black hair in a bucket of water so her mother can't attempt to comb out the curls she set the night before. After submitting to a scolding, in which her mother says her aunts will not love her because of her bad behavior, Maggie retires to her attic refuge where she keeps a "Fetish," a large wooden doll that has been "defaced by a long career of vicarious suffering." With three nails in its head, the doll has most recently stood in for Aunt Glegg, Mrs. Tulliver's oldest sister. Maggie has stopped driving nails into the doll for fear of destroying the illusion that the head could still be hurt, since she often makes a poultice for it once her fury was spent. Today Maggie soothes herself "by alternately grinding and beating the wooden head against the rough brick of the great chimneys ... sobbing all the while with a passion that expelled every other form of consciousness." Calmed by her tantrum, she goes out to join her dog Yap, whirling around and chanting, "Tom's coming home!" She runs into Luke Moggs, the head miller, and while talking to him realizes she forgot to feed her brother's rabbits. Luke informs her that the rabbits have died and then tries to comfort her by saying these anomalous "lop-eared rabbits" would likely have expired anyway.

Chapter 5: Tom Comes Home

Mrs. Tulliver is overjoyed to see her "sweet lad," who submits to being kissed, while Maggie hangs onto thirteen-year-old Tom's neck "in rather a strangling fashion." Tom tells Maggie he has new fishing lines and hooks, and one is for her. He wants them to fish at the Round Pool the next day and congratulates himself for being such a good brother for remembering her. When Tom mentions the rabbits, she tells him they are dead. Maggie offers to give him the money from her savings to buy new rabbits, but that doesn't right the wrong for him. He tells Maggie he doesn't love her and won't take her fishing. Devastated, she creeps back into the attic. When she is missing at teatime, Mr. Tulliver realizes that Tom has been mean to her, since she would have been shadowing him all day otherwise. He sharply demands that Tom go up the attic to get his sister. Tom obeys but feels righteous in his treatment of Maggie. "He was particularly clear and positive ... that he would punish everybody who deserved it: why, he wouldn't have minded being punished himself, if he deserved it; but, then, he never *did* deserve it." When he calls for her, she runs to him sobbing: "O Tom, please forgive me—I can't bear it—I will be good—always remember things—do love me—please, dear Tom!" Tom relents, and the narrator describes the next day—an idyllic moment of childhood, with two children fishing on "their own little river." While Maggie is perfectly happy to simply gaze into the Round Pool and luxuriate in time spent with her brother, Tom happily calls "Magsie" back to tell her there's a fish on the end of her line.

Chapter 6: The Aunts and Uncles Are Coming

Easter week finds Mrs. Tulliver baking pastry in preparation for a family party. The narrator stops to describe Mrs. Tulliver's clan, the Dodsons, who think very highly of themselves: "while no individual Dodson was satisfied with any other individual Dodson, each was satisfied, not only with him or her self, but with the Dodsons collectively." Although timid Mrs. Tulliver has been bullied by her sisters, she is happy to be a member of her clan and to have at least one child (Tom) who favors her side. The day before the company arrives, Tom brings jam puffs out from the kitchen to share with Maggie, and when he splits the last one with his knife the pieces are uneven. His childish sense of fairness inspires him to ask his sister to choose her piece with her eyes closed. He then gets angry at her for eating the larger part of the pastry that fell to her without offering him some, even though she initially asked him to take the larger portion. Maggie is crestfallen when he calls her greedy, while he runs off to play with his friend Bob Jakin, a boy of a lower class who lives with his mother in a round house farther down the river. As the two boys discuss the big flood that made the Round Pool many years before and the possibility of a deluge occurring again, Bob takes out a halfpenny to play heads-and-tails. When Tom wins, Bob lies about how the coin fell. The boys get into a fistfight, and Tom forces Bob to give up the penny and then throws it in his face, saying he wouldn't have kept it anyway, but he hates cheats. Bob unsuccessfully tries to give Tom back the knife he received from his friend earlier in their friendship, but Tom has already stalked off.

Analysis

Maggie expresses overt hostility toward both her mother and aunts (her mother's sisters): she tells Mrs. Tulliver in Chapter 2 that she doesn't want to do patchwork for Aunt Glegg because she doesn't like her, and she spitefully wets her head to aggravate her mother, who is always trying to remake her (Maggie has straight hair, not curly hair like her cousin's). Mrs. Tulliver is most concerned that her daughter's lack of presentability—she has wet her head and pinafore—will reflect on her bad mothering rather than that Maggie's behavior is a sign of unhappiness. "Folks 'ull think it's a judgment on me as I've got such a child—they'll think I've done summat wicked," she says. In one of the most startling scenes in Victorian literature, Maggie retreats to the attic and vents her considerable rage on a wooden doll, whom she "tortures" as a stand-in for the people she hates because they reject her—for example, her Aunt Glegg—and perhaps also as a stand-in for herself, a daughter who can never measure up to her mother's expectations. Her extended beating of the doll's head is a clear indication of an unusual and neurotic level of anger in a nine-year-old child. Critic Nina Auerbach, who sees this novel partly as a Gothic tale, notes this performance as an early example of her demonic, emotional explosiveness. Peggy Fitzhugh Johnstone identifies Maggie's unresolved childhood rage as a narcissistic wound caused by her devaluation by her family. This rage, says Johnstone, manifests as passive-aggressive behavior. For example, Maggie forgets about Tom's rabbits and lets them starve to death—something perhaps unexpected in a child with such fine sensibilities that perceive the mistreatment of the helpless or downtrodden.

When Tom comes home he brings a thoughtful present for his little sister—her very own fishing gear to take to the Round Pool. But at the same time, he makes a big fuss about how he had to save to purchase these items. He wishes to be lauded as a magnanimous brother and to be profusely thanked and perhaps worshipped—something that Maggie is prone to do. But when she tells him about the dead rabbits, he viciously turns on her, telling his adoring sister that he doesn't love her—clearly the most hurtful thing he could say. She offers to give him her money to buy more rabbits, but he scorns her offer, saying he has more money than she because "I shall be a man ... and you're only a girl." He means to punish her, acting as a self-righteous Jehovah who will punish "everybody who deserved it" and wouldn't mind getting punished himself, except in his view he never does anything wrong, the narrator ironically notes.

Tom's harsh views are also evident after the children make up and he calls Maggie selfish for eating her entire half of the last jam puff that he divided between them. Maggie offered him the bigger piece, but he would not take it because to do so would violate his misconstrued self-image in which he sees himself as a "fair" person. Yet he expects his sister to read his mind and give him a bit of her own half of the jam puff. This should be his reward for his "fairness." He also punishes Bob Jakin for cheating on the coin toss by beating him to get the coin and then humiliating Bob by throwing it in his face. At 13 Tom has assimilated the external Christian and middle-class values he has learned, but as Saint Paul says in the New Testament, Christians are ministers "not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." Throughout the novel, Tom retains a desire to be fair and deliver justice, but he does so without considering differences or context. As a result, he creates a cramped ambit of acceptable behavior for himself and others, which produces emotional impoverishment.

Nonetheless, the bond between the siblings is evident in Chapter 5, when Tom takes his sister fishing after their reconciliation. They go to the Round Pool, an Edenic symbol of wholeness, which was created after one of the river floods. This scene is emblematic of an important theme in the novel, which is the vividness of the sorrows and joys of childhood, which often have an intensity unmatched by emotions felt by adults. Maggie is submerged in a kind of ecstasy, looking into the glassy water until Tom tells her she has caught a fish. "Maggie thought it would make a very nice heaven to sit by the pool in this way, and never be scolded. She never knew she had a bite till Tom told her; but she liked fishing very much." In this perfect moment of childhood, Maggie feels loved and accepted.

Book 1, Chapters 7–9

Summary

Chapter 7: Enter the Aunts and Uncles

The narrator ironically says the eldest of the Dodson sisters, Jane Glegg, who though still attractive at 50 seemed ugly to

Tom and Maggie. Aunt Glegg never wears her new clothes until the old ones are entirely worn out, one of her many particular habits. She begins her visit by criticizing sister, Mrs. Pullet, for being late and her other sister, Mrs. Tulliver, for not having dinner ready at 1:00, according to Dodson family custom. Sophy Pullet arrives, magnificently dressed and conspicuously exhibiting grief for a neighbor who has recently died of dropsy (heart trouble). Mrs. Tulliver favors this sister, who feels sorry for her producing two "naughty awkward children." Little Lucy Deane, the Tulliver children's cousin, is about a year younger than Maggie, and when she appears with her mother, Mrs. Susan Deane, Mrs. Tulliver mentally makes unfavorable comparisons between the blonde child and her dark daughter. Mr. Pullet is a gentleman farmer, Mr. Glegg is retired from business, and Mr. Deane works as a manager in the prestigious firm of Guest & Co. Having worked his way up from the bottom, Mr. Deane is now the richest of the husbands.

After Aunt Pullet criticizes Maggie's hair, which she says ought to be thinned and cut shorter, Mrs. Tulliver whispers to Maggie to go back upstairs to have her hair brushed by the servant, but instead, the child goes into her mother's bedroom for a pair of scissors and cuts her thick black hair off. Maggie enlists Tom's help to cut the back where she can't reach. After Tom leaves Maggie realizes how foolish she has been. When she finally comes downstairs to dinner, she is met with shock from the women and amusement from the men. She bursts into tears, and her father soothes her, saying she was right to cut her hair if it bothered her.

At dinner the Dodson clan learn of Mr. Tulliver's plans to send Tom to Mr. Stelling, and Mrs. Glegg voices strong objections. She and Mr. Tulliver get into a serious quarrel, and after she brings up the money she has lent to his family and he tells her she should keep her place, she storms out, her husband following behind.

Chapter 8: Mr. Tulliver Shows His Weaker Side

After the party Mrs. Tulliver worries that Mrs. Glegg will call in their debt, and Mr. Tulliver immediately decides to raise the 500 pounds he owes her. His first idea is to get back 300 pounds he loaned the Mosses. His brother-in-law Mr. Moss is a poor farmer barely eking out a living, and he and Mr. Tulliver's sister Gritty have eight children. Mr. Tulliver speaks to Moss, demanding the money, but then has a change of heart, going back to his sister to say he can wait. He tells her he will bring the children soon, especially Maggie, whom Gritty has specifically asked for. She is Maggie's godmother, and the two are very fond of each other.

Chapter 9: To Garum Firs

Mrs. Tulliver visits her sister, Mrs. Pullet at Garum Firs with Maggie, Tom, and Lucy, the latter having an extended visit with her cousins. When they first arrive, Mrs. Pullet takes Mrs. Tulliver and the girls into her best room upstairs where she has locked up her new bonnet in a box in the wardrobe. She models the millenary for them, and Mrs. Tulliver is sufficiently impressed. When they join Mr. Pullet and Tom in the living room, Maggie inadvertently drops a sweet cake on the floor and crushes it and knocks over her brother's glass of cowslip wine, for which she is scolded by the grownups. When the children are sent out doors to play, Mrs. Tulliver takes the opportunity to raise her concerns about the loan, and Mrs. Pullet agrees to talk to their sister about not calling in Mr. Tulliver's debt.

Analysis

Chapter 7 introduces the Dodsons, and as more than one critic has pointed out, the author spares no irony is painting this bourgeois, conventional, and judgmental clan primarily in unsympathetic terms, despite George Eliot's famous protestations in response to a review that called the Dodsons "mean and uninteresting." Eliot claimed not to hate the Dodsons (modeled on her aunts) and to admire their virtues, such as honesty and thrift. Nonetheless, she mostly faults them for their dogmatism and religion of materialism as well as their lack of sympathy for sensitive souls of deep feeling and imagination such as Maggie. At the same time, the aunts provide comic relief, particularly Aunt Glegg and Aunt Pullet, in what is otherwise a somber novel.

Mrs. Tulliver's three sisters have all married well, and Susan Deane is the only other sister with children (an older, grown child is mentioned in passing later in the novel). Jane Glegg, the eldest and family matriarch, is disliked by both Tom and Maggie because she is bossy and critical. She is the epitome of the Dodson spirit, which is tremendous pride in their own family and particular way of carrying on in the world, coupled with a deeply judgmental attitude toward all who are not

Dodsons. True to form, Mrs. Glegg immediately begins criticizing Mrs. Tulliver for not having the dinner ready at 1:00, as is customary for a Dodson, and faults her sister for spending so much money on an elaborate dinner, since Mrs. Tulliver should be pinching her pennies as she does. Unlike Mrs. Glegg, who prefers to wear her old clothes out, Mrs. Pullet's rich costume is so wide across the shoulders that it brushes both doorposts when she comes in. Mrs. Pullet is a hypochondriac and overly dramatic, which is why she is weeping for a neighbor, even as her Mrs. Glegg scolds her for crying over someone who is not kin.

Maggie is accustomed to constant criticism about her hair—too much, too black, too unmanageable—and her skin—too dark—but this time she is determined to retaliate, perhaps driven by both her aunts' words and the implicit comparison between herself and her cousin Lucy. Maggie is understandably humiliated by her own actions, which rains down more criticism, in the form of shock and amusement among her relatives. Her father, the only one who defends her and doesn't judge her, once again comes to her rescue.

The argument between Mr. Tulliver and Mrs. Glegg triggers a series of bad decisions on the part of the miller, who is now determined to pay off the debt to his officious and meddling sister-in-law. The Dodson attitude toward money and material possessions is explored to some extent in these chapters. On the one hand, Mrs. Glegg has loaned her brother-in-law a considerable sum of money, but on the other, she is charging him five percent interest, which is the same amount she would expect from a stranger. The Dodsons are hard-headed and practical about money, unlike Mr. Tulliver, who has loaned his sister 300 pounds, also a large sum (which he is less in a position to afford), but has received no interest and knows he will likely never get his money back from his sister's impoverished husband. The Dodson worship of material possessions is apparent in Mrs. Pullet's display of her new bonnet, which is described by the narrator as an elaborate ritual that takes on the cast of a religious rite. Although her sister properly admires Mrs. Pullet's millenary, for Maggie "the sight of the bonnet at last was an anticlimax. … she would have preferred something more strikingly preternatural."

Book 1, Chapters 10–13

Summary

Chapter 10: Maggie Behaves Worse Than She Expected

Tom is angry with Maggie because she knocked over his house of cards in the morning after he said he wished Lucy was his sister, and he is further annoyed because Maggie spilled his wine. To punish her he pays Lucy exclusive attention, leading her toward the pond to look at the pike while Maggie tags along. The children have been told to stay along the walks, as the ground is very muddy. At the pond Tom directs Lucy to bend down in the grass to look at the fish, chasing his own sister away. In a fury, Maggie pushes Lucy into the mud. Tom carries Lucy back to the house to be cleaned up, and he is scolded by his mother for disobeying, saying he should have known his sister would cause some mischief. Meanwhile, Maggie has run off, and Tom cannot find her when he returns to the pond.

Chapter 11: Maggie Tries to Run away from Her Shadow

Maggie has decided to run away to the gypsies, since she often has been called wild, like a gypsy. Her fantasy is that they will accept and respect her, appreciating her superior knowledge. After walking a while she fortuitously stumbles on a gypsy camp but is disappointed by the dirty and disheveled people she meets. She will not take the food offered by an old gypsy woman. One of the gypsy men is chosen to take her home, and they meet her father on the road, also on the way home, and he gives the gypsy some money, grateful his daughter is unharmed. At home Mr. Tulliver chastises his wife and son, and Maggie hears no further reproach from either of them.

Chapter 12: Mr. and Mrs. Glegg at Home

The Gleggs live St. Ogg's, and the narrator takes time out to tell the story of the patron saint of the town. Ogg was a poor boatman who ferried people across the river Floss. On an evening of bad weather, a woman dressed in rags and carrying a child begged to be taken to the other side, and Ogg finally

agreed. When the woman stepped ashore after the ride, her rags were transformed into flowing white robes, and she emanated light and glory, which shone on the river. The lady blessed the ferryman who did not question her "heart's need," so that whomever steps into his boat will be safe from any storm. After Ogg died his boat would appear during floods, with the Blessed Virgin (the mother of Jesus) at the prow shedding light to help desperate rowers find their way in the darkness.

Mr. Glegg, a retired wool merchant, is an enthusiastic amateur gardener, known by his neighbors to be amiable if tight-fisted with his money. He is used to arguing with his quarrelsome wife, although their arguments never amount to much. The kind-hearted Mr. Glegg feels sad about his wife's quarrel with her family, and she feels he has not adequately taken her side against Mr. Tulliver, who is "none o' my blood." He becomes impatient, telling her he has provided for her, allows her to keep her own money, and will leave her well provided for when he dies, even though she continues to go on "biting and snapping like a mad dog!" This speech has a calming effect on her. Moreover, he has advised her to keep her money with the Tullivers, who are paying interest at five percent, until a better investment comes along. For both of these reasons she tells him later that she plans to keep her money where it is for her sister's sake.

Chapter 13: Mr. Tulliver Further Entangles the Skein of Life

When Mrs. Pullet shows up to mediate for Mrs. Tulliver, she finds that Mrs. Glegg has decided to drop her grudge and not recall her money. Meanwhile, Mrs. Tulliver makes the same error with her husband that she has repeated on numerous occasions, which is to say something to him that elicits the opposite response from what she intended or desired. In this instance she tells him Mrs. Pullet has gone to Mrs. Glegg to smooth things over so he doesn't have to worry about the loan, and he immediately decides that he must pay her the money as quickly as possible and writes her a letter expressing that intention. Mrs. Glegg, who has the firm principles of the Dodsons, does not alter her will against the Tulliver children in retaliation, but Mr. Tulliver's actions further widen the breach between the two families. Mr. Tulliver finds someone to loan him the money, although the lender is a client of his enemy, the lawyer, Mr. Wakem.

Analysis

Maggie is mastered by her rage in Chapter 10, this time because of Tom's rejection. Here is an adoring sister who has been waiting for weeks for her brother to come home, but mostly what he has done since he arrived is reject and scold her, most recently by saying he wishes Lucy were his sister instead of Maggie. He then punishes her again by ignoring her in favor of his cousin—even chasing her away. The narrator describes Maggie "looking like a small Medusa with her snakes cropped" as she is kept outside Tom's loving orbit. Maggie's unruly hair is a symbol of otherness and destructive power and is mentioned here in connection with Medusa, the Greek goddess who turned people into stone. Not surprisingly, Maggie pushes Lucy into the mud and, knowing how seriously her offense will be perceived, runs off, imagining to find some solace among outsiders, the gypsies, who must be like her. Maggie defends her fragile self-esteem by bragging to herself as well as to others about how smart she is, which is why she imagines instructing the gypsies. Neither Tom nor Mrs. Tulliver nor the Dodsons ever stop to consider that Maggie's outbursts are responses to their harsh and rejecting behavior. While Mrs. Tulliver scolds Tom for disobeying the adults and taking the girls to the pond, she does so by saying he should have known his sister would cause trouble. "It was Mrs. Tulliver's way," the narrator says, "if she blamed Tom, to refer his misdemeanor, somehow or other, to Maggie." In addition, Mrs. Tulliver is more concerned over what her husband will say about the lost child rather than the lost child herself. Only Mr. Tulliver has some understanding of Maggie, and when he finds her on the road on the way back from his sister's house, he protects her from her mother and brother, who do not dare utter another word against her.

When the action switches to the Glegg household in Chapter 12, the narrator naturally introduces the fable that foreshadows Maggie and Tom's fate and symbolizes Maggie's dilemma. The woman in need, the Blessed Virgin and mother of Jesus, symbolizes both Maggie and the mother Maggie doesn't have. Like the woman in rags, Maggie has a "heart's need," which neither her mother nor her brother respond. While Maggie's father loves and protects her, she requires a lot of attention and validation, and Mr. Tulliver is not equipped to be both mother and father to his wayward child. Furthermore, in some sense he values her less than Tom because she is a girl—for example, he is proud of her intelligence but thinks it superfluous for her eventual role as a wife and mother. The

Virgin of Ogg is also a warm and protective mother, unlike Mrs. Tulliver, who is cold and withholding. At the end of the novel, Maggie will become a perverse mother herself, coming to rescue her brother but instead becoming the agent of his destruction when their boat capsizes on the swollen river. In keeping with the demonic aspect of her nature, Maggie will turn the legend upside down, replacing the mother of God (the Virgin Mother of St. Ogg) who appears with her boat to save stranded travelers, with herself, sister and destroyer, conjuring a final reckoning with Tom.

In Chapter 12, Mrs. Glegg is shown to be less of a harridan than the reader might have expected. While she is angry with her kindly husband for not vigorously taking her part against her brother-in-law, she is mollified when he tells her plainly he plans to leave his money to her. The conversation between them points to the inferior position of women with regard to money. In 1829 a woman's money automatically belonged to her husband when she married unless he allowed her to keep it, which Mr. Glegg has done. Moreover, a husband could leave his money to whomever he chose and could legally make his widow a pauper. Mr. Glegg's financial advice about his wife's money—to leave it with Mr. Tulliver since it is accumulating interest—is in alignment with her own inclination to not create additional family dissent. Unfortunately, dull Mrs. Tulliver, who has been married to her husband for 13 years, still hasn't figured out that he does the opposite of what she advises. Moreover, she doesn't understand him well enough to perceive that she will hurt his pride by saying she sent her sister to the woman who holds his loan. Thus, Mrs. Tulliver's stupidity triggers her husband's rash decision, which will have serious consequences.

Book 2, Chapters 1–3

Summary

Chapter 1: Tom's "First Half"

Tom becomes very unhappy when put under the care of Rev. Walter Stelling at King's Lorton. He first must reconcile himself to the idea that his schooling will be prolonged and "that he was not to be brought up in his father's business." Next, he must adjust to a curriculum that includes Latin grammar, geometry, and a new way of pronouncing English and deporting himself as a gentleman, which makes him feel for the first time in his life that he is "all wrong." Tom is slow to learn Latin, and Rev. Stelling scolds him for not being sufficiently interested in the subject to apply himself. Although Rev. Stelling is not cruel, he is strict and demanding, and the narrator says "under this vigorous treatment Tom became more like a girl than he had ever been in his life before," since his pride is perpetually bruised. Moreover, since Mrs. Stelling has had a second baby, she enlists Tom as a babysitter for her first child, Laura.

In October Maggie comes to visit along with Mr. Tulliver, and he leaves her behind for a fortnight's (14 days) visit. Maggie brags to Tom that she could learn his Euclid (geometry), and when she can't make anything of it, Tom feels triumphant. She then begins reading the Latin grammar, of which she can make more sense, although Tom says girls can't learn Latin. Maggie shows off in front of Rev. Stelling, wanting him to admire her cleverness. The next day the siblings put before him the question of whether Maggie could learn Tom's lessons if she were taught, and he responds that girls have a lot of "superficial cleverness" but can't go far in anything because they are "quick and shallow." Maggie feels disheartened. Despite Maggie's attempt to outshine him, Tom misses her when she leaves, but the December holidays finally arrive.

Chapter 2: The Christmas Holidays

Snow blankets Dorlcote Mill for Christmas, but Tom's happiness is overshadowed by his father's current worries. Mr. Tulliver is angry all the time and works himself up when complaining about Mr. Pivart, who is higher up on the Ripple tributary and using the water for irrigation. Mr. Tulliver takes his actions as an infringement of his rights. He is convinced his old nemesis, Lawyer Wakem, is egging Pivart on, and he says to his sister he will "go to law" if he must, although neither she nor Mrs. Tulliver think this is a good idea. He believes Mr. Wakem was behind a previous dispute with Mr. Dix, another mill owner, which was settled by arbitration, and that it was Mr. Wakem's fault he lost a lawsuit to prevent people from using his land as a thoroughfare. At some point in the holiday Tom mentions that Mr. Wakem's son will be joining him as a pupil of Rev. Stelling's.

Chapter 3: The New Schoolfellow

Tom returns to school in January and finds Philip Wakem there. He is uncomfortable about going to school with the son of "a bad man." Philip's deformity—a humpback—also makes him uneasy, and he vaguely relates it to Lawyer Wakem's seeming bad character. The pastor leaves the boys together in his study to get acquainted, and Tom can't help but be impressed by Philip's sketching ability. He learns that Philip has already studied Latin, Greek, mathematics, and writing. Since Philip is past the Latin grammar, he volunteers to help Tom. "I can't think why anybody should learn Latin," Tom says, and Philip explains "it's part of the education of a gentleman." While Tom is almost 14, Philip is already 15.

Analysis

For the first time Tom is out of his own element and thrust into a world in which he has no mastery. Tom had previously entertained dreams of becoming a "substantial man" like his father, who went hunting and rode "a capital black mare," but now he must adjust himself to a different type of life he cannot even imagine. What he is learning from Rev. Stelling seems disconnected from his previous education as well as the previous way he has imagined himself as a man. Rev. Stelling's corrections of his dialect and his own inability to grasp seemingly esoteric subjects are a blow to his self-esteem. The narrator equates this new state of powerlessness with being like a girl because previously, "he had a large share of pride, which had hitherto found itself very comfortable in the world ... reposing in the sense of unquestioned rights; but now this same pride met with nothing but bruises and crushings." Such is the perpetual state of a girl in a sexist society that views women as the inferior gender; a girl must learn to be humble, defer to her betters, and not think too highly of herself. Mrs. Stelling further feminizes Tom by saddling him with her eldest child as often as she can.

Into Tom's new world comes Maggie, eager to show off her intellectual gifts to new people she meets, and she wants to impress Rev. Stelling as she did Mr. Riley. Tom is overjoyed to see her, despite their bickering. When she tells him she will be a clever woman, he replies, "O, I daresay, and a nasty conceited thing. Everybody'll hate you." Rev. Stelling also reminds her of her place when he determines that women "couldn't go far in anything." Maggie is mortified: "She had been so proud to be called 'quick' all her life, and now it appeared that this quickness was the brand of inferiority." While Tom thus regains his ascendency as a male, Maggie feels for the first time the weight of pervasive societal sexism and the oppression it engenders. Thus, as the story unfolds, Maggie's rage is a response not only to her family's devaluation of her selfhood but also society's devaluation. As critic Peggy Fitzhugh Johnstone notes, "Maggie's is a 'narcissistic rage': a chronic and disproportionate anger in response to any incident perceived as a narcissistic injury—an incident that attacks the already weak sense of self, or that repeats the pattern of rejection by her parents and society."

The seeds of Mr. Tulliver's downfall are planted in these first chapters of Book 2. Both his sister and wife oppose Mr. Tulliver's "going to law" because legal action is costly. Mrs. Tulliver's pleading not to pursue legal action, just like her attempt to prevent her sister's calling in the loan, has the opposite effect on her husband, although his animosity toward Mr. Wakem is the driving force behind his determination. He is a quarrelsome fellow who likes to dominate, which is why he married the passive-aggressive Mrs. Tulliver. In his mind, Mr. Wakem has been challenging his water rights through surrogates, and he has already lost to him once. Fighting legal battles is Mr. Wakem's business, but Mr. Tulliver takes his opposition personally and wishes to triumph over the lawyer. The fates of these two families become further intertwined when Philip Wakem becomes a pupil of Rev. Stelling. Although Philip is friendly and offers to help Tom, he cannot help but view him with suspicion. Tom's response is always conventional, and this is the son of his father's enemy; in addition, he has difficulty dealing with Philip's handicap, which gives him a strong aspect of "otherness"—something that Tom would prefer to avoid.

Book 2, Chapters 4–7

Summary

Chapter 4: "The Young Idea"

Although Tom continues to regard Philip with wariness, he accepts his help with Latin and is happy to listen to stories of battles and heroics that Philip has read about in books.

Nonetheless, Philip has a "nervous irritability, half of it the heart-bitterness produced by the sense of his deformity." In such moods he is easily slighted, especially when the boys are outdoors and Tom patronizes him. Rev. Stelling begins to ease up on Tom as he takes on additional projects, and Philip's help also makes Tom's life easier. The village schoolmaster, an old soldier named Mr. Poulter, gives him drilling lessons to improve posture, and one day he, after prodding from Tom, brings his sword and demonstrates exercises with this weapon. Once Mr. Poulter gets started, Tom's nervousness and excitement cause him to come indoors to fetch Philip so he can also witness this marvel. Philip is absorbed in playing the piano and singing when Tom interrupts him. He also hates to hear about the drilling lessons. Thus in a fit of temper he calls Tom a "lumbering idiot ... not fit to speak to anything but a cart-horse." Tom answers in kind, saying Philip's father is a rogue and he no better than an imp and a girl. Mrs. Stelling hears the commotion and finds Philip crying after Tom storms back out, but he tells her it's his toothache. After the drill Tom convinces Mr. Poulter to let him keep his sword for a week.

Chapter 5: Maggie's Second Visit

The two boys remain estranged when Maggie comes for a second visit. Maggie watches some of Philip's lessons and determines he is very clever and wishes him to think she is also smart. She additionally is drawn to Philip because of his handicap; she has "a tenderness for deformed things," imagining they will be more grateful for her love and attention than ordinary beings. Philip does like Maggie, who seems unlike her brother. The narrator says: "I think it was that her eyes were full of unsatisfied intelligence, and unsatisfied, beseeching affection."

After his lessons Tom is intent on showing off to his sister, so he invites her upstairs in secret. He has Maggie hide her eyes while he dresses up like a battle-tested soldier and blackens his eyebrows and chin with cork, posing with the sword. Maggie is duly impressed, but then he draws the sword from its sheath and begins pointing it at her, finally losing his grip until the sword falls on his foot and cuts it.

Chapter 6: A Love-Scene

The doctor comes to patch Tom up, and fortunately the injury will not cause permanent damage. Philip visits Tom in his room to deliver that news, since he guesses Tom is worried about being lamed. Afterward Philip joins Maggie in the sickroom whenever he is not at his lessons. One day Philip and Maggie are alone in the study, and he asks her if she would love him as well as Tom if he were her brother. She readily answers in the affirmative, adding she would be so sorry for him. Maggie realizes her mistake when Philip blushes, so she tells him how clever he is and that if he were her brother she would like him to teach her. Philip confesses how much he cares for Maggie, and she responds sadly that Philip may be fonder of her than is Tom. She offers to kiss him as she does Tom, which she does "quite earnestly." After Maggie leaves, the boys drift apart again and revert to old feelings of animosity.

Chapter 7: The Golden Gates Are Passed

Tom remains at the Stellings' in King's Lorton until he is 16, and Maggie attends Miss Firniss's boarding school in Laceham along with Lucy Deane. During this period, Philip and Maggie see each other only in the town of St. Ogg's. Mr. Tulliver is now fighting a lawsuit against Mr. Pivart, who is represented by Mr. Wakem, so Maggie has no hope that her friendship with Philip might be resumed. In November of the year Maggie turns 13, she brings Tom the news that her father has lost the lawsuit and will lose the mill and the land because of costs he has incurred. Even worse, Mr. Tulliver has fallen off his horse and appears to have lost touch with reality. Tom asks Rev. Stelling for permission to leave, and the siblings return home together.

Analysis

Not surprisingly, it doesn't take long for Tom and Philip to become enemies, and their animosity illustrates an important theme in the novel—the limits of empathy. Tom has no ability to empathize with people who are unlike him, while Philip is quite the opposite. However, Philip's sensitivity due to his "deformity" (his injured spine makes him appear as if he has a hump on his back) makes him jump to conclusions about other people's motives. While Philip is able to help Tom with his schoolwork without making him feel stupid, Tom does not easily return the favor and is condescending to Philip due to his physical limitations. Tom listens to Philip's heroic fighting stories but wants to assert his predominance—much like his father—and must mention how he beat the fellows in his last school in

boxing and climbing. He asks Philip if he could go fishing, insensitively saying, "It's only standing, and sitting still, you know." But when Tom runs in to ask Philip to join him in watching Mr. Poulter's sword-exercise, he does so partly out of fear, to temporarily remove himself from the swordplay, and partly out of excitement, genuinely thinking that someone who tells such good stories about battles would be interested in Mr. Poulter's display. But perhaps Philip has received one slight too many from Tom, and he turns on him with uncharacteristic virulence, calling him stupid. Tom's retort is even more cutting, and Mrs. Stelling, another inadequate maternal figure (Philip is motherless) "is not a loving, tenderhearted woman," so Philip doesn't confide in her because she lacks sufficient empathy.

Maggie, on the other hand, immediately wins Philip's affection. When she first meets him, she perceives he is smart and wishes him to see the same quality in herself. She is drawn to him out of pity but also because of her awareness of the brutal calculus of power relations. Specifically, those who are outcast in some way will be more accepting of her own affection, since they will be grateful for attention they are not accustomed to receiving. Philip easily sees Maggie's need and responds to it because he knows what it is like to feel unloved and rejected. She is also a beautiful child, despite the Dodsons' disapproval of her dark looks, and she holds out the promise of a rich friendship. Unlike her brother, Maggie does have empathy and realizes she has hurt Philip's feelings by obliquely referencing his weakness. She immediately corrects herself by referring to his strength—his mental faculties—which he could use to teach her. Philip is already in love with Maggie, but she views him as a brother—one whom she says perhaps cares for her more than Tom does. What Maggie means is that she perceives that Philip *sees* her—he sees her personhood and not only his projected image of her. No one in Maggie's family—not even her father—sees her clearly. Her mother sees only what is absent from the ideal daughter that Maggie is not; Tom sees her as an obstinate sibling who doesn't know her place and continually breaks the unspoken rules of society; and Mr. Tulliver sees Maggie as another version of his sister Gritty, who needs love and protection. Maggie's exceptionality—her high intelligence and depth of feeling—is considered an aberration by her family members. Philip, on the other hand, is drawn to that exceptionality as well as Maggie's kindness. Indeed, Maggie has a deep well of kindness and compassion, and her outbursts are always a result of her own feelings of hurt and rejection. But she is too young and inexperienced to realize Philip's feelings go beyond brotherly affection.

Tom's and Maggie's childhoods end when Mr. Tulliver loses his last lawsuit, along with his mill, house, and land. His hubris in thinking he was shrewd enough to prevail over his enemies has led to a terrible consequence, and the miller cannot immediately face his situation. He falls off his horse (symbolic of his fall off his "high horse" and the resulting downfall), seeming to suffer some type of amnesia, which is psychologically—rather than physically—based.

Book 3, Chapters 1–3

Summary

Chapter 1: What Had Happened at Home

At first Mr. Tulliver had thought he could save his disastrous situation by selling his property to the mortgage holder and continuing on as manager and tenant of the property. Mr. Riley recently died without paying back the 250 pounds he owed Tulliver, which created an additional financial burden. The 500 pounds he borrowed to pay back Mrs. Glegg was coming due, and he put up his household furniture as a bond. He thought his wife should be able to get the money from the Pullets with the same furniture as collateral. "The pride and obstinacy of millers, and other insignificant people, whom you pass unnoticingly on the road every day, have their tragedy too; but it is of that unwept, hidden sort, that goes from generation to generation, and leaves no record," the narrator comments. The last straw fell when Mr. Tulliver learned his mortgage holder had sold his debt to Wakem. He fell off his horse and remained insensible until someone found him and took him home. When Tom hears the whole story he tells Maggie to never speak to Philip again.

Chapter 2: Mrs. Tulliver's Teraphim, or Household Gods

When Tom and Maggie get home from King's Lorton, they find a bailiff in the house who has arrived to collect most of their belongings. Their mother is in the store-room, looking at all her household treasures—linens, cutlery, a silver teapot, and the

like—in despair because they are to be "sold up." Tom asks if his aunts can't save her precious household items, but Mrs. Pullet has already refused to buy anything except a few tablecloths, and Mr. Glegg says they will buy back only what the family absolutely needs to live, but he must consult with Mrs. Glegg. No one wants Mrs. Tulliver's precious china. Mrs. Tulliver blames her husband for beggaring the family by "going to law," and for the first time Tom feels some resentment toward his father. She turns to Tom for solace in her grief, and Maggie is angered that neither of them seem worried about her father's collapse. Maggie had been blamed all her life, the narrator says, so she will not now blame her father when nothing can come of it. "Her father had always defended and excused her, and her loving remembrance of his tenderness was a force within her that would enable her to do or bear anything for his sake," the narrator says.

Chapter 3: The Family Council

The next day the entire Dodson clan shows up for a family council. Mrs. Tulliver begs for help so that a few of her heirlooms may remain in the family: a silver teapot, her china, her best castors, and the sugar tongs—the first thing she ever bought for her trousseau. Mrs. Glegg says Mrs. Tulliver can hardly be thinking of china or silver when she needs the basics like a bed and a blanket. She says this for her sister's own good: "it's right you should feel what your state is, and what disgrace your husband's brought on your family, as you've got to look to for everything—and be humble in your mind." The narrator ironically notes that "Mrs. Glegg paused, for speaking with much energy for the good of others is naturally exhausting." The consensus is that the Dodsons will buy back from the bailiff only the necessary items needed for the Tulliver family to live, even though Mrs. Tulliver continues to beg Mrs. Deane to buy the teapot. Tom attempts to assuage his mother's pain by asking the Dodson relatives to give the family the money that would prevent their being "sold up" to the bailiff and offers in exchange his and Maggie's inheritance (the money the Dodsons plan to leave them in their wills). The Dodsons immediately nix the plan because they would lose interest on their savings. Moreover, Mrs. Glegg objects that her money should be "squandered on them as have had the same chance as me, only they've been wicked and wasteful."

Maggie speaks with particular strength to her aunts about their treatment of her parents, and both Mrs. Pullet and Mrs. Glegg chastise Maggie, with the latter saying she will come to no good. In the midst of this drama, Gritty Moss arrives, having just heard of the Tullivers' misfortune. When the Dodsons propose that the impoverished Mosses pay the 300 pounds they owe Mr. Tulliver, Tom speaks on his father's behalf to say he never meant to call in that debt. Mr. Glegg decides that if the money was a gift, it doesn't need to be figured into the settlement of the Tulliver bankruptcy.

Analysis

In Book 3, Chapters 1–3, the ugly side of mercantilism is thoroughly exposed by the author whose work became a moral compass for the Victorian era. No doubt the mercantile mindset, which promotes trading at a profit and accumulating capital, allowed for the rise of the European bourgeois class. But the business mentality can be harsh, especially when applied to one's relatives, and it often opposes Christian values. As critic Kathleen Blake notes, Mr. Tulliver belongs to the pre-capitalist economy of gift exchange, while the Dodsons are strictly capitalists. Mr. Tulliver seems to loan his sister 300 pounds, but he more properly meant it as a gift. He loses an addition 250 pounds loaned to the dead Mr. Riley. He has not properly understood his financially precarious situation, believing he owns the mill and property because it has been in the family for over 100 years. In truth, as the reader learns in Book 1, Chapter 8, after he provides his sister with a large dowry, Mr. Tulliver carries a large mortgage on "his" property. Thus, the generous Mr. Tulliver puts family and friends ahead of his monetary interests and is motivated by overweening pride to carry out lawsuits he can ill afford. Moreover, where previously Mr. Tulliver couldn't pay back the loan of 500 pounds to his sister-in-law quickly enough, he now thinks that his wife's sister Mrs. Pullet will take their same furniture as collateral and allow him to pay down the promissory note for that same 500 pounds that now belongs to Mr. Wakem. He imagines she will do this for her sister, but he couldn't be more wrong.

In Book 3, Chapter 2, aptly titled "Mrs. Tulliver's Household Gods," Mrs. Tulliver's extreme materialism is shockingly revealed, as she sits in her storeroom among her household items, most of which she doesn't use or takes out only on special occasions. These are her "laid-up treasures," some of them marked with her maiden name or initials. Her children find her in this closet weeping and remembering how she built her marriage trousseau. Her best linen she meant to pass on to Tom, but now she laments that he will never have it. Mrs.

Tulliver cries for her things, but she has no pity for her husband lying in bed, seemingly insensible, and she has roused even Tom's ire against him. Clearly she has reason to be angry with him for bankrupting the family, but he is still her husband, and she seems to have no thought for his grief and illness. Maggie angrily scolds her mother for caring more about her things than her husband, and she also resents that her mother has now created a new dyad with her son from which Maggie is excluded.

Mrs. Tulliver's greatest wish is that her sisters buy some of her most precious items—not so that she can get them back, but because she wants them to stay in the family. She has imbued these material items with her personhood and cannot bear to think of them being used and passed around by strangers. But the Dodson sisters are hardly ready to comply with her need. After arriving to "help" with the family crisis, they—led by Jane Glegg—are primarily concerned with humbling their improvident relatives and venting their own grievances about how the family name has been disgraced. They do not intend to buy Mrs. Tulliver's things: as uncle Pullet points out, the family shouldn't pay more for these items than what they would "fetch" at auction, which would be very little. Mrs. Glegg cannot punish Mr. Tulliver directly, but she must punish her sister who married an improvident man she is unable to control. Like a true bourgeois, she sees the Tullivers' troubles as entirely of their own making, and she possesses no Christian sympathy for their misfortune. Rather, like an Old Testament prophet, she wants even the Tulliver children to "feel as they've got to suffer for their father's faults."

The Dodsons turn down Tom's suggestion that they act with Christian charity toward their sister because their morality is based on the key commandment that they accumulate as much money as possible and pass it on to the next generation. Their second commandment is that they must uphold conventional ideas about respectability. Both of these commandments would be violated by any attempts to make the Tullivers whole. Tom shares much of the Dodson mentality, while Maggie shares her father's pre-capitalist outlook. She tells them to get out if they have no feeling for their own sister and "won't part with anything, though you would never miss it." She also draws a comparison between her father's values and theirs when she says he would have helped them if the shoe were on the other foot. Mrs. Glegg predicts that Maggie will come to no good because she does not share the Dodson values, while they praise Tom for ensuring his father's wishes are carried out with regard to the money he gave his sister.

Thus, the Dodsons show that, within their paradigm, they are honorable and wish to do right by Mrs. Moss.

Book 3, Chapters 4–6

Summary

Chapter 4: A Vanishing Gleam

Mr. Glegg and Tom enter Mr. Tulliver's bedroom to look for the £300 promissory note from Mr. Moss. Mr. Tulliver awakens in a somewhat lucid state and asks what they are doing. Tom explains and asks him what to do about it, and Mr. Tulliver confirms that he meant to forgive the loan. He also instructs Tom to pay Luke the miller the £50 he is owed.

Chapter 5: Tom Applies His Knife to the Oyster

The next day Tom visits his uncle Deane at his place of business to get some advice about how he might get some work. Tom does not feel Maggie's indignation against his Dodson relatives for their lack of generosity, since he "saw some justice in severity." Coming up on 17, he wants no handouts—simply some help getting employment so he can support the family. Mr. Deane asks Tom what he has learned in his three years of schooling at Mr. Stelling's, and it becomes clear that not much of it will be of use in business. Mr. Deane then gives him a lecture about what it means to start at the bottom of a company, as he did, and expresses his doubt that Tom would be willing to do so, having been spoiled by his father's high expectations. When Tom sees Maggie he reports the encounter and that his uncle advised him to learn bookkeeping. Maggie makes a joke about a bookkeeper in a Walter Scott novel who could have taught her the trade as he did to the female character, and then she could have taught Tom. He gets angry and says it's always the same with Maggie, "setting yourself up above me and everyone else." He scolds her for speaking out in front of the Dodsons and putting herself forward when she should have let him do all the talking. "You think you know better than any one," Tom says, "but you're almost always wrong. I can judge much better than you can." Maggie feels Tom's harshness and bursts into tears, and she

sees ahead of her a life with no love in it.

Chapter 6: Tending to Refute the Popular Prejudice against the Present of a Pocket-Knife

While the sale of the household furniture continues, Tom receives a visit from Bob Jakin. Tom doesn't remember him until he pulls out the pocket knife Tom gave him. Bob recalls Tom was his favorite companion of childhood, despite how the friendship ended. Just then Maggie comes in and notices that many of the books have been sold and tears up. When Tom gets back to Bob and asks him why he came by, he explains that his work as a bargeman put him in the vicinity of a mill fire, which he extinguished, and the mill owner rewarded him with ten sovereigns. He has spent one sovereign on a goose for his mother and some clothes to begin a new trade as a packman (a travelling peddler) and wants to give Tom the other nine. Both siblings, especially Maggie, are moved by his kindness, but Tom refuses the money. Maggie tells Bob that they are happy to have him as a friend.

Analysis

A more serious rift begins to open between Maggie and Tom because of the family's financial crisis, in which it becomes clear that they hold diametrically opposed views about life and how people ought to conduct themselves. Once the Dodsons have done the minimum to allow the family to continue for the time being at Dorlcote Mill, Tom sees it as his job to support the Tullivers. He "steps up" admirably as the man of the family and shows his strong character in applying to his uncle for any kind of work. He doesn't blame the Dodsons, as Maggie does, because his conventional sense of fairness aligns with their own views. He doesn't see why his mother's family should give them money when his father hasn't taken care of his own. He also believes that Maggie was wrong to scold the aunts and uncles, first because she should take a back seat to him as a female and a younger sibling, and second because she is almost always wrong in her assessment of a situation—meaning her values are different from his. When Maggie, daydreaming about something she read in a book, mentions how it is too bad she can't teach him bookkeeping, he takes this as one more piece of evidence of Maggie's desire to dominate with her intellect, but in this case Maggie is innocent. She is only daydreaming about how she might have helped her brother. An important theme in the novel is the necessity of human connection, and Maggie is continually trying to connect emotionally with others, particularly her brother. She can endure poverty, but she doesn't know how she can endure a life without love, and the more she becomes estranged from Tom, the more bereft she feels.

Bob Jakin is reintroduced in Book 3, Chapter 6, and he serves as a foil to highlight the Dodsons' lack of charity. Here is someone who was rebuffed and humiliated by Tom in their childhood. Yet, Bob remembers what was good about their relationship, especially the fact that Tom gave him a pocket knife. Bob is now willing to give him the sum total of his liquid wealth—nine sovereigns earned by putting out a fire. Understandably, the Tulliver children will not take Bob's money, but Maggie at least understands that he is also offering his friendship, and she accepts it on behalf of both herself and her brother. Later, Bob will play a key role in helping the Tullivers get out of debt.

Book 3, Chapters 7–9

Summary

Chapter 7: How a Hen Takes to Stratagem

Mr. Tulliver begins to recover, and Dorlcote Mill is on the market. Mr. Deane is thinking that his firm, Guest & Co., might buy it, since it has always done good business and might be improved by adding steam power; he could then hire Mr. Tulliver back as the manager. He is worried, however, that Mr. Wakem might take a notion of buying the property himself. He must mention all of this to Mrs. Tulliver, since he arrives one day to inspect the property. Mr. Deane also finds Tom a temporary job in a warehouse and helps him get evening lessons in bookkeeping.

Mrs. Tulliver now conceives a plan to speak to Mr. Wakem and mentions it to her brothers-in-law, Mr. Glegg and Mr. Deane, who tell her emphatically to steer clear of the lawyer. Nonetheless, she visits him in his office and asks him not to

buy the mill. This is a surprise to Mr. Wakem, who had not thought of it, and he learns from Mrs. Tulliver that Guest & Co. is considering its purchase. While Mr. Wakem does not return Mr. Tulliver's enduring hatred and has simply been besting him at business, he has been irritated by Mr. Tulliver's continual insults. He now has two good reasons to buy the mill: first, it is a good investment and he will prevail over Guest & Co., a friendly rival. Second, buying the mill and keeping Mr. Tulliver on as the manager will mortify his old enemy.

Chapter 8: Daylight on the Wreck

In January the family is discussing Mr. Wakem's offer to hire Mr. Tulliver to manage the mill, should he recover, since the lawyer has now purchased the property. The Dodsons, particularly Mrs. Glegg, feel that Mr. Tulliver should humble himself and do what he can so that his wife's family doesn't have to step in and help again. Mr. Tulliver finally comes downstairs to resume his life, but he has lost a sense of how much time has passed since he first received the letter from his lawyer, Mr. Gore. He now learns he is a bankrupt and that everything has been "sold up." Mr. Tulliver offers an apology to his wife, but she says nothing to make him feel better. Rather, when he says he'd like to make amends, she suggests he allow the family to stay in place, even though Mr. Wakem now owns everything. He immediately agrees and says, "this world's too many for me ... it's no use standing up for anything now." Tom doesn't agree with the family that his father should buckle under Mr. Wakem, but Mr. Tulliver tells Tom to "say no more."

Chapter 9: An Item Added to the Family Register

The Tullivers had held the land and the mill for generations, the narrator says, which is a strong reason for Mr. Tulliver to keep his promise to his wife: "He couldn't bear to think of himself living on any other spot than this, where he knew the sound of every gate and door, and felt that the shape and color of every roof and weather-stain and broken hillock was good." He mentions to Luke the miller that "when the mill changes hands the river gets angry." When Mr. Tulliver comes indoors he tells his son to get the Bible. He commands Tom to write that his father has agreed to work honestly for Mr. Wakem so he can die in his old home but that he wishes "evil may befall him." He charges Tom to write his own version of what Mr. Wakem did to his father and to make him and his family "feel it, if ever the day comes." Tom gladly follows his father's orders.

Analysis

Mrs. Tulliver is perhaps stupid; the narrator makes fun of her, calling her a hen who wishes to prevail upon the farmer to not wring her neck. But perhaps she unconsciously wishes to punish her husband for making a shambles of their life. She is a woman who generally takes orders from men, and yet she takes it upon herself to go into town and speak to Mr. Wakem, despite the fact that two of her male relatives have told her explicitly that would be a bad idea. In fact, Mrs. Tulliver takes Mr. Wakem's part against her husband in her own mind. When she conceives her plan, she imagines presenting herself as separate from her husband, someone who never wanted to oppose him in the courts. The Tullivers' marriage, unlike that of the Gleggs, is clearly a loveless union, and neither spouse respects the other. Mrs. Tulliver does not see herself as her husband's partner nor helpmate, and she is inclined to throw him under the bus if she can obtain an advantage by doing so. The result of approaching Mr. Wakem is that she once again gets the opposite outcome of what she intended (or seemed to intend). The lawyer decides to avail himself of a good business proposition and at the same time humiliate the man who has been a thorn in his side.

Once Mr. Wakem buys the mill and Mr. Tulliver is on his feet and well enough to understand what has happened to him, he agrees to buckle under the lawyer, both for his family's sake as well as his own. He is a broken man, and he can't imagine giving up the lifelong habit of living and working on the land where he was born. George Eliot and her partner George Henry Lewes kept abreast of scientific discoveries, and the discussions about heredity and adaptation that circulated because of Darwin's work, as well as speculations of early physiologists and psychologists, inform *The Mill on the Floss*. According to Lewes and others, habits form channels in the mind, which people then travel over again and again, often unconsciously. Thus, Mr. Tulliver's habit of living at the mill would be hard to override. Both children forgive their father, which is evident by Maggie's unwavering sympathy and Tom's willingness to take up his father's burden. Mr. Tulliver reminds his wife that it's been 18 years since they married, and she promised to take him for better or worse, to which she responds, "I never thought it 'ud be so for worse as this." Mr. Tulliver makes a genuine apology, and he readily agrees to do

the one thing that will make some amends, telling his wife she may do what she likes with him now that he's brought her into poverty. For her part, she gives him no token of love nor loyalty nor solace.

In Book 3, Chapter 9, the novel once again takes a Gothic turn. Mr. Tulliver notes that the river gets angry when the mill changes hands, and "there's no telling whether there mayn't be summat *in* the story, for this is a puzzling world, and Old Harry's the devil got a finger in it." Here is another instance of the heavy-handed foreshadowing of the story's ending, in which the river rises up and kills Maggie and Tom. When Mr. Tulliver has Tom write in the Bible a vow of vengeance against his enemy, Maggie trembles like a leaf and tells her father "it's wicked to curse and bear malice," but he responds that it's the "rascals" who are wicked. For his part, Tom is happy to carry out his father's orders and tells Maggie once again to mind her own business.

Book 4, Chapters 1–3

Summary

Chapter 1: A Variation of Protestantism Unknown to Bossuet

Book 4 opens with a rumination on history, using journeys down the Rhone and Rhine rivers, respectively, as metaphors to demonstrate that human communities can appear either sordid and vulgar or sublime and heroic. The lives of the people on the Floss river may seem to be in the first category, hardly rising to "the level of the tragi-comic." Even when shaken from their moorings by "the iron hand of misfortune," they have "little trace of religion, still less of a distinctively Christian creed." Still, it is necessary to feel the "oppressive narrowness" of the Tullivers and Dodsons to understand Tom and Maggie. The religion of the Dodsons consisted in revering what was "customary and respectable," but in their pursuit of wealth and propriety, they cultivated many good traits, including integrity, industriousness, loyalty, and honesty. The Tullivers are not too different, except that they have a "richer blood," with elements of "generous imprudence, warm affection, and hot-tempered rashness."

Chapter 2: The Torn Nest Is Pierced by the Thorns

The Tulliver family has settled into the dreary routine of poverty, which also threatens despair. Mr. Tulliver acts as Mr. Wakem's manager while Tom goes out to work, and Mrs. Tulliver cannot seem to gain her equilibrium with "the objects among which her mind had moved complacently all gone ... and she remained bewildered in this empty life." Maggie now caters to her distraught mother, while Mrs. Tulliver insists on doing the heaviest work to save Maggie's hands. Mr. Tulliver displays a "taciturn hard concentration of purpose" and feels uncomfortable with his old friends. While his creditors have already agreed to accept less than the money Mr. Tulliver actually owes, he is determined to save every penny so he can pay them off in full. Mrs. Tulliver supports him in his stinting, as does Tom, who contributes his salary to the tin box of the family's savings. Mr. Tulliver continues to look toward Maggie for comfort, although he can no longer be truly cheered by her. Tom is also preoccupied and weary. The Dodsons visit only for short periods, since they cannot stay for meals. They are also discouraged by the bare rooms and "Mr. Tulliver's savage silence."

Chapter 3: A Voice from the Past

One day Bob Jakin, who now works as a traveling peddler, stops by the Tullivers' home and catches Maggie on the porch reading one of Tom's old schoolbooks. He is traveling with his dog Mumps and has brought her several used books he happened upon in his travels. Maggie is grateful for Bob's gifts, but after he leaves she begins thinking about how books had not given her the key to understanding how to endure the sorrow in her heart. Moreover, "she thought it was part of the hardship of her life that there was laid upon her the burthen of larger wants than others seem to feel," the narrator says.

Among the books brought by Bob, she notices *The Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis, and begins reading. She is immediately thrilled by the author's words, which admonish the reader to put aside self-love and personal desires and think instead of the sufferings of others to more easily bear one's own adversity. Maggie thinks she has found "the secret of life" that will help her reach "a sublime height ... without the help of outward things." The narrator notes that because of her youth she does not realize "renunciation remains sorrow, though

sorrow borne willingly"; unfortunately, Maggie still wants happiness. People in mental anguish need an "emphatic belief," or "enthusiasm," and Thomas à Kempis's words are a lifeline for Maggie. Of course, she brings her pride, willfulness, and impetuosity into her spiritual project—for example, when she embarrasses her brother by attempting to get work in plain sewing in town, where everyone knows her. But her mother notices that her headstrong child has become submissive, and Mrs. Tulliver feels more affection for her, insisting on plaiting her thick black hair into "a coronet at the summit of her head."

Analysis

In Book 4, Chapter 1, the narrator steps back from the story to provide a larger context in which to understand the narrow lives of the Dodsons and the Tullivers. The narrator begins with life along two particular rivers, the Rhone and the Rhine, before he turns to life on the Floss. He uses these two rivers as symbols of two different sensibilities—the first earthbound and commonplace, even to the point of being sordid, and the second romantic, sublime, and perhaps even spiritual. Life on the Floss, for the most part, is in the first category. The river is a powerful symbol in the novel and variously stands in for Maggie's emotions, which run deep and can be destructive to those around her. It represents the Edenic state of childhood and the channel of life upon whose banks the dramas of people's lives are played out. Each person also travels along their individual channels of life, and the repetition of certain actions creates the deep channels of the mind that bind people, often against their will, to a particular course of action. George Eliot was familiar with Charles Darwin's work on how species survive through adaptation and natural selection—those who have best adapted to the environment are most likely to survive and pass on their hereditary traits to the next generation. But she also believed in Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's ideas (later disproved) that acquired characteristics (those that are learned and not carried by the genes) or habits could be passed on to the next generation. Thus she looks at the Tullivers and the Dodsons as the products of their heredity, which has been created in part by the repetition of certain habits.

As noted by critic Kristie M. Allen, *The Mill on the Floss* demonstrates how habit prevents change and adaptation. Moreover, the channels in the mind created by habit, says Allen, form character, have a cumulative effect, and have moral consequences. In this first chapter of Book 4, whose title ironically refers to Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, a 17th-century theologian who fought against Protestant religious innovations, Eliot provides an extended critique of the bourgeois morality of the Dodsons. While she allows (through her narrator) that the Dodsons have some admirable traits, she clearly states that they have left the religion of Christianity behind and have taken up the religion of materialism, in which morality consists primarily of accumulating wealth and ensuring it is passed on to the next generation. The chapter that follows shows how Mrs. Tulliver has been emptied of content because she has lost her things and no longer knows who she is or what she stands for. In her best show of care for her daughter, she seeks to do all the difficult work to save her daughter's hands. Mr. Tulliver continues to turn to Maggie for comfort, but he can give her none in return. Tom merely comes and goes, completely focused on earning money. In their poverty the Tullivers have been exposed for what they are—bourgeois specimens devoid of an inner life. The exception, of course, is Maggie. But as the lack of affection in the household becomes even more pronounced and the entire family focuses on saving enough money to restore Mr. Tulliver's good name, Maggie becomes more and more bereft.

Into this void, Bob Jakin drops *The Imitation of Christ,* a mystical tract by a 14th-century Augustinian monk who was living through the Black Plague, a time that must have seemed like the end of the world. The monk has voluntarily left the secular world behind and counsels novice monks in the path of renunciation. Those who followed the monk's path had already seen through the transitory nature of the immanent world and had a rich tradition of prayer and contemplation through which they might experience transcendence. And even if they did not experience transcendence, they truly believed in it. Maggie, a product of the secular religion of the Dodsons and Tullivers, has none of that. While the counsel of Thomas à Kempis can temporarily fill the void in her yearning heart, it is bound to be a stop-gap measure for a passionate girl who more than anything wants to be loved in the here and now.

Book 5, Chapters 1–3

Summary

Chapter 1: In the Red Deeps

On one day late in June, Mr. Wakem calls on Mr. Tulliver with his son Philip, and Maggie runs upstairs to avoid a reunion in front of their fathers. One of the pleasures Maggie still allows herself is a long daily walk, and she often ends up at the Red Deeps, a high bank crowned by a stand of Scotch firs. The narrator describes Maggie in her 17th year (age 16) as a tall, beautiful woman. She is looking up at the trees on the crest of the hill when she notices a shadow. Looking down she sees Philip Wakem, who has followed her to the woods. Both young people are happy for the opportunity to speak to each other. Philip shows Maggie a sketch he made of her on the day they last parted and she declared she'd never forget him. Maggie asks Philip if he likes how she looks now, and he answers she is more beautiful than he expected. They cannot be friends, Maggie says, because her brother and father would object. Desperately in love, Philip asks Maggie to agree to see him once in a while so they can remain "friends of the heart, and help each other." Maggie does not imagine Philip in the role of a lover and sees no harm in his proposal, even as the voice of conscience tells her that secret interviews if discovered will cause anger and pain. She doesn't give him a definitive answer. When they part company Maggie says she is grateful for Philip's having loved her, and he counters that she will never love him as much as she does Tom. "Perhaps not," she replies, "but ... the first thing I ever remember in my life is standing with Tom by the side of the Floss while he held my hand: everything before that is dark to me."

Chapter 2: Aunt Glegg Learns the Breadth of Bob's Thumb

Tom is doing well at the warehouse, and Mr. Deane is thinking of trusting him to travel as a buyer. Tom's uncles have more and more confidence in him, and he decides to test Mr. Glegg's friendliness with a business proposition. Through Bob Jakin, Tom has an opportunity to trade on his own in foreign cities by purchasing a small amount of goods, but rather than use his own money—which goes into Mr. Tulliver's tin box—he decides to ask for a small loan at interest from his uncle. Together he and Bob Jakin explain the scheme, and Mrs. Glegg overhears them talking and wants to know what's going on. Bob Jakin not only uses reverse psychology to get Mrs. Glegg to buy some of the materials in his pack for sewing but also gets her to put up some of her money, along with her husband's money, for Tom's venture into trading.

Chapter 3: The Wavering Balance

The next time Maggie runs into Philip at the Red Deeps, she tells him she had decided they must part because they cannot carry on in secret. Since they have to separate, he asks her to stay a while so he can study her for a second portrait, and she agrees. As they talk, she learns he enjoys painting, music, and literature, and she explains how in resignation she has found peace and sometimes even joy. Philip vehemently objects to her philosophy, saying she is simply escaping pain by "starving into dullness all the highest powers of [her] nature." Maggie gets upset by these words because she fears they have some truth in them, so he changes the subject. She then tells him that if he had been her brother, he would have loved her well enough to bear with her and forgive everything. "That is what I longed that Tom should do. I was never satisfied with a *little* of anything," she confesses. This is why it is better for her to do without any earthly happiness. Philip again objects to "self-torture" and begs to supply her with books and see her sometimes, acting as her teacher. Philip again equivocates, saying he can walk in the Red Deeps and meet her by chance, which would not be deliberate secrecy, and Maggie does not object.

Analysis

While Tom begins making good progress on the mercantile path of the Dodsons with the help of his friend Bob Jakin, Maggie begins an unconscious defiance of all that the Dodsons and Tullivers hold dear. When she first sees Philip again, she avoids him because she doesn't want the meeting to be "robbed of all pleasure in the presence of two fathers." Her first thought, then, is not of the vow her brother has written in the Bible, nor of the horror both he and her father would feel in her reacquainting herself with the son of their arch-enemy. Moreover, she immediately has a presentiment that a new door might be opening for her, despite her commitment to resignation.

The Red Deeps, where Maggie communes with nature, is a place in which she feels completely at home. The novel's Gothic aspects are at play in the description of Maggie, a beautiful, "broad-chested" woman with liquid eyes, red lips, dark coloring, and a "jet crown" above her "tall figure" who

"seems to have a sort of kinship with the grand Scotch firs." The Red Deeps are where she finally meets Philip again, and the place becomes symbolic of their passion—on her side a passionate need to connect with a like-minded human being, and on his a partial satisfaction of the passionate love he feels for this lovely and sympathetic creature who can see beyond his deformity. As critic Robert P. Lewis points out, the predominant feature of Maggie's character is a "destabilizing desire for 'more.'" In Book 4, Chapter 3, when Bob Jakin first brings her a packet of books, she remembers how she wanted more books at school, and she thinks about how her need seems to be much larger than other people's. Maggie does not long for more possessions, but rather for some intangible that she cannot name.

George Eliot was familiar with the philosophy of Edward Schopenhauer, and in his key text he posits an inexorable force behind the phenomenal world, which he calls "will." This will drives both creation and destruction and always wants *more and more*. Maggie seems to manifest that Schopenhauerian will more so than most people, and in that sense she has a touch of Gothic demonism and cannot help but wreak havoc. When Philip says she will never love anyone like her brother, she recalls her first moment of self-consciousness, when her loving brother held her hand by the side of the river. The rest of her life has been an attempt to return to that unity with a beloved object, but Philip cannot take the place of that lost brother. Moreover, while he can provide Maggie with a necessary human connection, he ultimately cannot fill her bottomless need. After her first meeting with Philip, Maggie thinks that forbidding a friendship with him is "unreasonable—so unchristian!" At the same time, she knows that resuming the friendship will open the door to her "illimitable wants." When she meets him the second time, she warns him that a secret friendship will cause "misery" and "dreadful anger," yet she allows Philip to wheedle her into continued conversation and accepts his stratagem of running into her by chance—which would not technically be a secret meeting.

Philip, in his own need, is willing to take what he can get, and he understands Maggie better than anybody. He knows that she is not suited to renunciation, and he understands that she is using à Kempis's philosophy like a drug to numb the pain of isolation and loneliness. He understands that Maggie does not want to take responsibility for disobeying her brother and father and sees that, with a little cajoling, he can get her to agree to see him.

Book 5, Chapters 4–7

Summary

Chapter 4: Another Love-Scene

The narrator fast-forwards to April of the following year: Maggie and Philip have been meeting regularly in the Red Deeps, and he has been loaning her books, which they discuss at length. They playfully discuss *Corinne*, a novel by Sir Walter Scott, and Maggie says she wants no more books in which "the blond-haired women carry away all the happiness" and feels she wants to avenge "all the rest of the dark unhappy ones." Philip says perhaps she can avenge herself on her blonde cousin Lucy and steal away any handsome man who may be courting her, but Maggie is not pleased with the joke. As the conversation moves on, Philip reveals to Maggie that he loves and worships her. She admits she had not thought of him in that way, although she is grateful for *any* love. "Can you bear to think of me as your lover?" he asks. "Do you love me?" She answers that she could "hardly love any one better," but there's no point in talking about it since they are forbidden even to be friends. After she kisses him, he says he fears she is forcing herself to love him out of pity, but she repeats what she said, adding "I should like always to live with you—to make you happy." But she will not wound her father for him, she says. Philip now feels some hope, and Maggie kisses "his pale face that was full of pleading timid love—like a woman's." Maggie has a real moment of happiness and belief, thinking "if there were sacrifice in this love, it was all the richer and more satisfying."

Chapter 5: The Cloven Tree

Mrs. Pullet has come to visit and remarks on Maggie's beauty. Tom is also proud of his sister, whom people have been calling "a very fine girl," and he is happy with her since she has become less ascetic. During dinner Mrs. Pullet also mentions she has seen Philip Wakem "scrambling out o' the trees and brambles at the Red Deeps" on more than one occasion. Tom becomes suspicious and waits for his sister later in the afternoon and catches her coming out of the house for a walk. He accuses her of going to meet Philip at the Red Deeps. Since their parents are not at home, he takes her inside and

demands she confess everything, which she does, even admitting that she told Philip she loved him. Tom demands that she never speak another private word to Philip, otherwise he will put the whole affair before their father, and Maggie accepts his terms. "You are a disobedient, deceitful daughter, who throws away her own respectability by clandestine meetings with the son of a man that has helped to ruin her father," Tom says. He then insists they go together to the Red Deeps, and Tom confronts Philip and insults him. He accuses him of bringing dishonor on his sister and directly insults his deformity. "Who wouldn't laugh at the idea of *your* turning lover to a fine girl?" he says, while Maggie says she will listen no longer. Back at home Maggie berates her brother for his conduct and accuses him of self-righteousness, small-mindedness, pettiness, and lack of compassion. She feels indignation and pity for what Philip suffered at the hands of her brother. "And yet," the narrator asks, "How was it that she was now and then conscious of a certain dim background of relief in the forced separation from Philip?" He ironically notes that it must be because she had been delivered from concealment.

Chapter 6: The Hard-Won Triumph

A few weeks pass, and the siblings are not on speaking terms. Tom now asks his father how much he has in the tin bank—193 pounds. He then surprises him by saying he has another 320 pounds in the bank in town, and with all that money they can pay Mr. Tulliver's creditors. Mr. Tulliver expresses how proud he is to have such a good son, who will likely be taken into partnership by his uncle before long. He predicts Tom will get rich, and if he does, he can perhaps get the mill back.

Chapter 7: A Day of Reckoning

The Tullivers have ordered a dinner for the creditors to celebrate the payment of the debt, and Mr. Tulliver, who usually doesn't drink, has too much brandy. The party breaks up at an early hour, and Tom stays in town to conduct some business while Mr. Tulliver rides home. As he approaches the yard gate of the mill, he sees Mr. Wakem on his black horse. The lawyer addresses Mr. Tulliver somewhat disrespectfully, faulting him for his farming methods, and Mr. Tulliver responds that he can get someone else to farm for him. Mr. Wakem sees he has been drinking and tells Mr. Tulliver that he can clear out the next day. The lawyer then tries to leave, but Mr. Tulliver raises his whip and rushes forward, and Mr. Wakem's horse throws its rider. Mr. Tulliver gets off his horse and begins flogging Mr. Wakem until he is stopped by Maggie. Mr. Tulliver goes inside, physically and mentally spent; he lies down but does not get up the next day. His last words to Tom are to try to buy back the mill and take care of his sister and his mother. He hopes that if God forgives rascals—he himself cannot—"he won't be hard wi' me."

Analysis

About a year has passed when the reader encounters Maggie in Book 5, Chapter 4, and she has found a way to put aside any guilt she might feel for engaging in a protracted intellectual friendship with the son of her father's arch-enemy. Philip and Maggie are talking about a Walter Scott novel in which the dark-haired heroine loses out to her fair-haired rival. Eliot consciously uses this trope (a recurring motif in literature that has the aspect of a cliché) of the defeat of the dark heroine, but in her novel Maggie does exactly what Philip predicts, which is to steal the lover of her blonde cousin. While the author may have seen this as just another foreshadowing device, in fact it points to Maggie's unconscious demonic side, of which Eliot seems largely unaware. This conversation in which Maggie claims to take the side of the rejected lover leads to Philip's declaration of love. Like any number of women who bask in the unspoken worship of a man when they are not physically attracted to him, she pretends to have been unaware of his feelings. But unlike other women, Maggie feels gratitude for affection when none is provided from any other quarter.

Maggie's self-image also requires that she appear to act with compassion toward others. Thus she gives Philip a rather lukewarm reciprocation of his love and talks herself into believing that "sacrificing" herself to Philip would make her love all the richer. While some critics, and no doubt the character's creator, let Maggie off the hook because she has no experience of romantic love, it seems fair to question whether she is all that innocent. Certainly, she is an extremely intelligent person, and if she has not directly experienced love, she has read about it in the books of Walter Scott and other novelists. Therefore, she must know that she is not in love with Philip. Yet she leads him on, to the point of making him believe that if she were free she would certainly be willing to marry him. But this is a lie.

When Tom finds out what his sister has been up to, he is

predictably outraged, and Maggie seems to derive some satisfaction from providing her brother with the details of her relationship with Philip. Perhaps she is unconsciously punishing Tom, who represents both himself as well as her emotionally absent parents, for leaving her entirely on her own in the family's time of trouble. Critic Peggy Fitzhugh Johnstone argues that Maggie's childhood aggression, based in her family's rejection, is transformed in her young adulthood into a sexual misuse of power. Thus, she leads Philip on, even though she knows she doesn't love him, and she hurts Tom and her father by secretly carrying on a relationship with Philip. She still desperately wants her family's love and affection, so she swears not to see Philip again. Some part of her is also relieved that Tom has intervened in what has become a love affair and thus a burden. Tom demands the additional assurance of having her witness his dressing down of Philip, but while Maggie could perhaps not have avoided this confrontation, she certainly could have stood up for Philip against her brother, as she stood up for her father against her aunts. Instead, she passively allows Tom to hurl the worst insults at the man she professes to love. Could it be that a part of her feels as Tom does—that Philip is presuming too much in presuming to love her? Once they return to the house, Maggie chastises her brother for being a Pharisee—someone who adheres to the letter of the law rather than the spirit of it. Another way to look at what Maggie does is to see her actions as Christian, in continuing a friendship with Philip and agreeing to marry him if no obstacles were in the way, while Tom's actions are guided by a more primitive morality that must seek vengeance on one's enemies, no matter what the cost.

The final scene in the life of the elder Tulliver is a terrible one and also carries Gothic overtones. The Tullivers have lost their property, and the previous sale of their household goods has cleared the debt of most or all of the 500 pounds against the furniture, but there was additional debt owed to other people in town. By religiously saving every penny of his income and making some sound investments with Bob Jakin's help, Tom is finally in the position to pay off his father's creditors. But this moment of triumph is spoiled, not only by his sister's infidelity to the family, but also by his father's lack of restraint. In both cases the Tulliver habit of impetuosity thwarts the Dodson habit of conventional rectitude and restraint. Mr. Tulliver burns all his bridges when he strikes down Mr. Wakem, and in death he leaves his family with one more burden—to vacate the property immediately. It is hard not to feel for Tom Tulliver, who has been working for years to help take care of his family and rectify the mistakes of his father, only to have his triumph spoiled by the selfishness of his sister and father.

Book 6, Chapters 1–3

Summary

Chapter 1: A Duet in Paradise

Book 6 opens two years later in the Deanes' drawing room. Lucy Deane wears mourning for her mother and is entertaining Mr. Stephen Guest, the son of the manufacturing magnate at the head of her father's business. Something of a dandy, the handsome Stephen has been courting Lucy and intends to marry her, even though she is slightly below him in social status. Lucy is pretty but not beautiful, and she has many excellent traits, so he is "not surprised to find himself in love with her." Lucy tells Stephen that her cousin Maggie, whom she loves very much, is leaving her current teaching job and will be visiting for a month or two. Stephen assumes she will be fat, blonde, and dull-witted like Mrs. Tulliver, who is living with the Deanes, and Lucy thinks it a good joke not to disabuse him of this notion. She also tells him the little history of the Tullivers she knows: Mr. Tulliver blamed Mr. Wakem for his misfortune and had a terrible quarrel with him the day before he died, and Maggie will not live with her aunt, Mrs. Pullet, or be dependent on Tom, so she took a position as a teacher. Philip is friends with Stephen and Lucy, and the three of them play and sing together, but Lucy asks Stephen to tell Philip to stay away until she writes to him. Lucy wants to avoid a meeting between Philip and Tom and to check with Maggie to see if she feels comfortable seeing Philip, given the history between the families.

Chapter 2: First Impressions

When Maggie arrives, Lucy tells her she is very much in love with Stephen and expects he will propose at some point and they will become engaged. The cousins continue a heart-to-heart talk, and Maggie says, "I don't think I could ever bear to make any one *un*happy; and yet I often hate myself, because I get angry sometimes at the sight of happy people." Lucy answers she is just depressed because of her hard life. Since

Lucy knows her cousin loves music, she intends for her to have "a riotous feast of it." She now broaches the subject of Philip, who is their "third voice," and learns that Maggie has no objections to meeting him. Before the conversation gets much further, Stephen shows up and is astonished and quite taken by Maggie's beauty and even blushes, which Maggie finds gratifying. The young people tell Maggie about a bazaar that will take place to raise money, and while Lucy is doing "fancy work," she wants Maggie to contribute some "plain sewing," which she does very beautifully. Maggie explains she got good at it because she did it to make money, and while Lucy is somewhat embarrassed that her cousin has exposed her poverty to Stephen, it only heightens Maggie's beauty in his eyes. Lucy proposes that they go out rowing on the river, and when Maggie leaves to get her bonnet, Stephen claims Maggie is too tall and fiery for his taste, but in truth he is much intrigued by her.

Chapter 3: Confidential Moments

Maggie has been awakened to the "presence of a world of love and beauty and delight" by Stephen's "fine bass voice" and the attention he has paid to her. Lucy asks Maggie if she dislikes Stephen because he seems conceited, but she reassures her cousin he is charming and approves him since he will make Lucy happy. Maggie then tells Lucy of her whole history with Philip. "It is very beautiful that you should love Philip," Lucy says. "And in my opinion, you ought not to give him up." She thinks the obstacles in the way of their happiness will eventually disappear.

Analysis

Book 6 opens two years after Book 5 ends, and while many critics have said the ending of the novel is unsatisfying, not many have paid attention to the crucial missing details about those two years, particularly why Maggie had become so adamant about not living with her mother and Tom. Did Maggie wish to get away from both Philip and Tom? Did brother and sister quarrel again after their father's death? Neither does the reader learn how Lucy and Stephen come to be such good friends with Philip Wakem. Readers find out, through Lucy's explanation of the Tulliver family woes to Stephen Guest, that Mr. Tulliver died the day after he attacked Mr. Wakem.

Lucy's personality has not changed much since her childhood days: she is still a loving and kind cousin with at least as much sympathy and generosity of nature as Maggie. Lucy pities Maggie's hard lot in life, and now she wants to give her a fine holiday. She is also a trusting person without an ounce of guile, and she readily confesses how it stands between her and Stephen. Likewise, Maggie explains her history with Philip, and Lucy thinks her cousin's unusual choice exactly suits Maggie's "general uncanniness." It is "romantic" and "out of the common way" as is everything concerning her cousin. Lucy also has a large enough imagination to guess how it stands between them when she says, "Philip will adore you like a husband in a fairy tale." Philip's adoration is one of his main attractions, but when Lucy says she will contrive to bring them together despite the obstacles, Maggie tries to smile, but shivers, "as if she felt a sudden chill." Clearly, she doesn't love Philip any better as a potential mate than she did when she left St. Ogg's. She has not been completely honest with her cousin, perhaps because she can hardly be honest with herself when it comes to Philip. Maggie tells Lucy another lie when she says she can't bear to make anyone unhappy: clearly she has already made both Philip and Tom unhappy by agreeing to enter into a problematic relationship with the lawyer's son. She also tells a remarkable truth about her resentment around happy people, and perhaps Lucy should have paid more attention. On some level Maggie is aware of her unconscious, destructive rage, although she does her best to keep it on a leash by feeding herself with fine Christian sentiments.

Stephen Guest is more than a "hairdresser's block," as one early critic called him. He is a spoiled member of the upper class, but he has a streak of eccentricity evident in his choosing Lucy to fall in love with rather than a woman of his own class, since he recognizes her excellent qualities of heart and mind. He is conceited, but not exceedingly so, even if he is something of a dandy, and his eccentricity takes him off guard when he is swept away by Maggie's looks and her otherness. She is also immediately drawn to Stephen while the innocent Lucy sits nearby, entirely unaware that the alternating coldness and friendliness between her lover and cousin is a bad sign of emotions already running underground.

Book 6, Chapters 4–6

Summary

Chapter 4: Brother and Sister

Maggie visits her brother at Bob Jakin's house where Tom is a lodger. Jakin has since married and bought a house by the river, along with two pleasure boats. While waiting for Tom, Maggie converses with her old friend and learns her brother is likely in love with Lucy. When Tom comes in and they have a private moment, she tells him she wishes to see Philip for Lucy's sake since he is a frequent guest at the house. Tom makes it clear that, while he doesn't object to such visits, if she becomes Philip's lover again she must give up her brother. He fears she could be "led away to do anything" because she has "no judgment and self-command" and "will not submit to be guided." He mentions that he wished to provide a home for her with his mother, but she refused. He points out her penchant to go from one extreme to another, "tak[ing] pleasure in a sort of perverse self-denial" and then being incapable of "resist[ing] a thing you know to be wrong." She promises Tom that she has given up the idea of Philip as a lover and that he should believe her. The two of them part on good terms, both seeming to extend forgiveness.

Chapter 5: Showing That Tom Had Opened the Oyster

Mr. Deane has a meeting with Tom to tell him how well he has done. He is proud of his 23-year-old nephew, who has been working for him for seven years. He and his partner want to offer Tom a share in the business, which he deserves entirely on his merit. Tom doesn't refuse but brings up the idea that he promised his father he'd try to get the mill back, which had been in the family for five generations. Perhaps Guest & Co. can buy it from Mr. Wakem and Tom can manage it and work off the price and eventually become its owner. He believes he can do that as well as continue to work on other projects. "I want to have plenty of work," he tells Mr. Deane. There's nothing else I care about much." Tom has reason to believe Mr. Wakem might want to part with the property since the man that the lawyer put in charge—actually his illegitimate son—is running the business into the ground. Mr. Deane promises to discuss the matter with Mr. Guest.

Chapter 6: Illustrating the Laws of Attraction

Maggie is also having her moment, having been launched into St. Ogg's society by her cousin Lucy. Everyone is impressed with Maggie's beauty and refinement, although she has some social awkwardness. Maggie is enjoying herself for the first time in her life, living the life of a young lady, no longer treated like a nonperson or a nuisance, and having free time to practice the piano. Lucy is happy that Stephen has become more interesting and amusing in Maggie's presence and thinks about how they will be a foursome once Maggie and Philip can be united. Stephen continues to pay scrupulous attention to Lucy, but there is now an invisible connection between him and Maggie, and they have a hyperawareness of each other's presence when they are together in the same room. One day Stephen contrives to arrive at the house when he can speak to Maggie alone. In a pregnant exchange of pleasantries, Stephen and Maggie reveal their mutual attraction, and at the end of his very short visit—ostensibly to drop off some music and inform the women that Philip is back from his sketching expedition—Stephen invites Maggie to walk out with him in the garden, and she agrees to take his arm. After they walk a short time, she runs back inside and bursts into tears, wishing to be with Philip again in the Red Deeps. Stephen walks home, in much confusion about his feelings toward Maggie.

Analysis

Tom agrees that his sister can see Philip in company, mostly not to create unnecessary tension or awkwardness for his cousin Lucy. He also assumes the social situation is temporary since his sister will leave town in a few months. Nonetheless, he clearly articulates his categorical imperative, which is that no sister of his shall ever unite herself to the Wakems if she expects to remain his sister. He feels he must say this because he doesn't trust her to do what he considers to be the right thing. Even though she witnessed her father's last gasp of hatred toward Mr. Wakem and had to stop Mr. Tulliver from doing further damage, Tom still thinks there is a chance Maggie might revert to her former relations with Philip. He does not understand her seesawing back and forth between unnecessary asceticism and transgressive indulgence. Another way to look at this vacillation is as tension between resignation and defiance present in all of Eliot's female protagonists,

according to critic Susan Fraiman. Such feminist readings of the author's texts see women as both agents and victims. Thus, Maggie's story is a kind of anti-bildungsroman (a tale of growth and development, from childhood to adulthood) in which the main character is thwarted at every turn.

Tom is not wrong to doubt his sister's stability. On the one hand, she tells Tom she has "given up thinking of him [Philip] as a lover." Yet she has allowed Lucy to think she still loves Philip, and when Lucy says, "I shall puzzle my small brain to contrive some plot that will bring everybody into the right mind, so that you may marry Philip, when I marry—somebody else," Maggie makes no objection, even if she does tremble.

Once again Tom is on the verge of a great success when his path intersects with Maggie's. She has been away for two years, but in the next few months she will once again bring chaos into her brother's life. Some critics see Tom as a secondary protagonist, and his story follows the more traditional trajectory of the bildungsroman. Yet there is something ironic about Tom's progress, and as Fraiman points out, his declaration that he is exclusively devoted to work has a tinge of pathology. The narrator says "there was something rather sad in that speech from a young man of three-and-twenty, even to Uncle Deane's business loving ears." Mr. Dean hopes to see Tom married one day, but Tom's progress will be halted by his sister.

Meanwhile Maggie seems to be moving forward in society, living as if she is a middle-class young lady with plenty of time on her hands. This interlude in Lucy's company is somewhat dreamlike. Maggie is finally getting the attention she craves, along with the homage of one particular young man to whom she is physically attracted. The narrator compares Maggie's life to an unmapped river, full and rapid, which like all rivers must find its way home. The channel in which Maggie's emotions flow is swelling, and once again the will for *more and more*, as identified by Edward Schopenhauer's philosophy, will defeat her attempts to renounce all that feeds that river of emotion. The failure of resignation, an important theme in the novel, is inevitable when a false spirituality is used to mask unfulfilled desire.

Book 6, Chapters 7–10

Summary

Chapter 7: Philip Re-enters

Philip arrives the next day, and Maggie greets him with warmth and tears. Lucy leaves so they can talk privately, and Maggie explains that Tom has consented to their meeting. Nonetheless, she plans to go away again and not be dependent on her brother. Philip does not press her too hard on leaving the people she loves because he doesn't want to seem needy. The two are interrupted by Stephen's arrival, and when he and Maggie greet each other coldly, Lucy thinks her cousin is not Stephen's type of woman and that Maggie is annoyed by his conceit. Philip, however, immediately becomes suspicious. Lucy now asks the men to sing a duet, and Philip takes a seat at the piano. Maggie is enchanted by Stephen's voice and cannot help but listen intently to the music, while Stephen cannot help but look at Maggie when he stands to sing. Philip begins the next song alone—one he used to hum in the Red Deeps, and Maggie is "touched, not thrilled" and wishes she had told him more plainly how it must stand between them, given her brother's prohibitions. The singing is interrupted by lunch, and Mr. Deane asks Philip a few questions related to his father's business. Later Mr. Deane shares with Lucy his desire to buy the mill for Tom, and she strongly advises him to take Philip into his confidence. She assures Mr. Deane he can help, although she doesn't tell him how Philip feels about Maggie.

Chapter 8: Wakem in a New Light

Lucy herself talks to Philip about the mill, and he is determined to move forward his own cause as well as the Tullivers'. To this end he confides in his father his feelings for Maggie and their previous relationship in the Red Deeps. At first Mr. Wakem bristles at the idea and threatens to break off contact with his son if he marries Maggie. But then he reconsiders and relents, even agreeing to sell the mill back for his son's sake. Nonetheless, he tells Philip, "I shall have no direct transactions with young Tulliver. If you like to swallow him for his sister's sake, you may; but I've no sauce that will make him go down."

Chapter 9: Charity in Full-Dress

On the day of the charity bazaar, Maggie makes a strong impression, with her beauty and simplicity, on everyone, particularly the young men. Maggie and Stephen have been aloof from each other, but at the bazaar he can't help but speak to her softly in an unguarded moment, but she asks him to go away. He joins Philip, who is sketching Maggie from a distance and has been watching their interaction. Stephen explains Maggie snapped at him when he offered her some refreshment. "There's a natural antipathy between us," he says, to which Philip angrily replies, "What a hypocrite you are!"

When the women come back from the bazaar, Maggie tells Lucy she plans to take a new teaching situation at the end of June, and Lucy is surprised and disappointed. She had told her cousin about Tom's getting back the mill, and in Lucy's mind the rest of the obstacles between Philip and Maggie can also be swept away. But Maggie tells her it is impossible because of Tom's feelings. Lucy says she can talk to Tom and asks her frankly if she doesn't love Philip sufficiently, but Maggie replies that she "would choose to marry him" but cannot divide herself from her brother and asks Lucy to drop the subject.

Chapter 10: The Spell Seems Broken

The cousins attend a dance at the Guest home to which Stephen's sisters have invited all the middle-class young people in town. Although Stephen attempts to stay away from Maggie, he approaches her while the others are waltzing, and they take a walk in which both attempt to repress their passion. However, Stephen at one point begins showering kisses on Maggie's arm, and she pushes him away, admonishing him harshly for insulting her. She is now more determined than ever to quash her attraction to Stephen. Philip visits her at the Deanes the next morning, and she tells him she cannot do anything that will alienate her permanently from her brother. He also asks her if that is the only obstacle between them and she answers definitively that is "the only reason." Although Philip ought to have been happy with that answer, the narrator opines, "jealousy is never satisfied with anything short of an omniscience that would detect the subtlest fold of the heart."

Analysis

Maggie's inability to rein in her emotions as well as her refusal to own up to the truth about herself begin to take its destructive toll on the people around her. When Philip arrives she greets him more warmly than she ought to because she is using him to ward off the strong sexual feelings she feels for Stephen Guest. The narrator says: "For Philip, who a little while ago was associated continually in Maggie's mind with the sense that Tom might reproach her with some justice, had now, in this short space become a sort of outward conscience to her, that she might fly to for rescue and strength." The narrator pardons Maggie, saying Philip's appeal was to her pity and not her "vanity and other egoistic excitability." But the narrator may be mistaken to attribute Maggie's strategy—really a subterfuge—to her pity. If she truly pitied Philip she would be honest with him and not continue to lead him on, time after time. Rather, it is more likely that Maggie cannot face her own sexual desire, and in an attempt to avoid still another transgression—appropriating the blonde girl's lover—she would rather use Philip as a shield.

She tells Philip she cannot tolerate living with her brother, yet she insists on following Tom's command to stay away from Philip, but to what purpose? If she really meant to make Philip happy, she would choose him over her brother, the way he would easily choose her over his father. But she does not love Philip, so she uses her brother as a shield to avoid sharing her true feelings with Philip. "I begin to think there can never come much happiness to me from loving: I have always had so much pain mingled with it. I wish I could make myself a world outside it, as men do," she says. But the need for love is equally felt by men and women. While it is true that men in Maggie's time had a much wider compass to sublimate their desires or do something worthwhile in the world, Philip correctly sees that Maggie wants to use renunciation to "mutilate" and "pervert" her own nature.

Mr. Wakem's attitude toward his son's forbidden love for Maggie makes a strong juxtaposition with Tom attitude toward the Wakems. When the lawyer's son first confides in him, he threatens to break off contact, but his resolution doesn't even last a day. When he learns that his son has a chance with Maggie, he not only agrees to accept her as a daughter-in-law, but he even agrees to sell the mill to Mr. Deane so that Tom can eventually buy it back. This is the sign of a mature love that wants for the loved person what is good for them and what will

make them happy, even if that creates a hardship for the one who is loving. Mr. Wakem was severely beaten by Mr. Tulliver, and he knows that the younger Tulliver carries on the family grudge and hatred of him. Yet he is willing to put aside what is due to his ego for the purpose of assisting his son in obtaining his heart's desire. Tom, on the other hand, neither cares what Maggie feels nor whether she is happy. He treats her not as a person, but as a function—an extension of himself and the Tullivers. He cannot move past his rigid ideas about what is right and wrong and what is owed to the memory of his father. He puts the imagined needs of the dead ahead of the real needs of the living.

Unlike innocent Lucy Deane, Philip immediately sees that there is something between Stephen and Maggie. As her feelings for Stephen get stronger and he continues to pursue her, Maggie plans to escape to a new teaching job. Even so, she continues to lie to both Lucy and Philip, saying the only obstacle to her marrying Philip is her brother's prohibition. Meanwhile, she temporarily feels that the spell on her with regard to Stephen has been broken because he has taken a physical liberty by kissing her arm. What enrages her most, however, is that "Stephen thought more lightly of *her* than he did of Lucy." Thus, she has been unconsciously thinking of her cousin as a rival, and she is angry that the disputed lover seems to treat her with less respect than he does her blonde cousin.

Book 6, Chapters 11–14

Summary

Chapter 11: In the Lane

Maggie has been visiting her aunt, Mrs. Moss, when Stephen suddenly shows up and asks Maggie to walk on the lane with him. When they are alone he confesses he is "mad with love" and apologizes again for taking an "unwarrantable liberty." He is ready to lay everything at her feet, and Maggie says she cannot listen to such avowals. She forgives him but asks him to go away, reminding him of Lucy and admitting she considers herself engaged to Philip. He responds, "we should break all these mistaken ties that were made in blindness, and determine to marry each other." When he asks her if she loves someone better, she remains silent. Stephen continues haranguing Maggie to act on their love, but she remains firm in not putting their own feelings ahead of responsibilities toward others. Stephen seems to relent and asks to kiss her before they part, and Maggie consents.

Chapter 12: A Family Party

At the end of the week, Maggie leaves Mrs. Moss to pay a visit to her other aunt, Mrs. Pullet, and a party is planned to discuss and celebrate the good fortune of the Tullivers. The sale of the mill has been concluded, and now Mrs. Tulliver will go back to her old home to keep house for her son. Both Lucy and the rest of the family are cajoling Maggie to stay in St. Ogg's, either with her mother or aunt. Lucy exerts her charm on Tom, explaining how Philip used his influence with his father to help the Tullivers. Moreover, Mr. Wakem has accepted the idea of Maggie as a daughter-in-law. All that remains is for Tom to relent. His response is that he will never sanction the marriage or have any relations with the Wakems, although Maggie can do what she likes, since she has declared her independence.

Chapter 13: Borne Along by the Tide

Maggie returns to the Deanes a week later, and Lucy insists Maggie spend her evenings with the young people. She now finds herself battling strong emotions, with part of her mind thinking she had suffered her whole life, so why shouldn't she now reach out for "love, wealth, ease, and refinement, all that her nature craved ... brought within her reach."

When Maggie concludes her obligatory visits to Mrs. Glegg, Lucy declares they must go out boating every day until she leaves. Philip happens to be visiting, and she asks him to take her and Maggie out on the river the next day, since Stephen has been moody and not so inclined. Philip watches Maggie and his friend Stephen closely that evening, and by the time he gets home he feels sure there is some understanding between them. This realization makes him miserable, and he wants to wait until his "egoistic irritation" passes before seeing Maggie again. For this reason, he asks Stephen to take his place as the boatman. Since Lucy thinks Philip is coming, she contrives to stay out of the way so that he and Maggie can be alone together. When Stephen shows up the next day instead of Philip, Maggie says they can't go, but she relents without much prompting. Once they are on the river, Maggie goes into a kind of trance of passivity, finally realizing they are well past the

place they were supposed to stop and walk back. Stephen now proposes they run away and elope. Maggie chides him for taking advantage of her "thoughtlessness" but then agrees to go on after he seemingly manipulates her into considering his suffering. They catch up with a larger vessel bound for Mudport, and the two of them get on, taking the rowboat. The journey will take less than two days, and the Dutch crewmen try to make them as comfortable as possible, especially Maggie. For his part, Stephen is rapturous and continues to feed Maggie with words of love.

Chapter 14: Waking

Maggie has a dream of the Virgin of St. Ogg's, except she is Lucy, and the boatman is first Philip and then her brother, who pass by her without looking. Maggie now feels she has done an "irrevocable wrong that must blot out her life ... she had rent the ties that had given meaning to duty, and had made herself an outlawed soul, with no guide but the wayward choice of her own passion." When the couple gets to Mudport, Maggie says she will go no farther. While Stephen insists they should look toward their own happiness, Maggie gives him a long rebuttal about duty and renouncing one's own desires "for the sake of obeying the divine voice within us." Stephen finally realizes that he cannot sway her and tells her to leave him. Thus Maggie mistakenly takes a coach to York but eventually makes her way home.

Analysis

In the events leading up to the climax of the novel—Maggie's aborted elopement with Stephen—she reenacts with Stephen the same game of cat and mouse she played with Philip, leading him on and then rejecting him, repeating the cycle. More recent critics agree that George Eliot as novelist failed to grasp the implications of Maggie's behavior because she was too closely identified with her fictional character. Nonetheless there are a range of opinions about how the main protagonist of *The Mill on the Floss* should ultimately be understood. When Stephen makes his avowal of love at Mrs. Moss's farm, Maggie does admit she loves him, something she never actually said to Philip. But she uses her declaration to get Stephen to agree that they cannot act on their love: "I must not, cannot, seek my own happiness by sacrificing others," Maggie says, although Stephen argues it is wrong to pretend love for Lucy and Philip, which will likely create misery for both the parties they deceive as well as themselves. Thus Stephen echoes Philip's protestations against self-mutilation, an impulse stemming from Maggie's misreading of Thomas à Kempis. As critic Barbara Guth suggests, Maggie's renunciation nullifies the need for individual happiness. Yet, the followers of à Kempis would have sought happiness in spiritual transcendence. Maggie can obtain transcendence only through human connection, but she believes her philosophy will not allow it.

Critic Nina Auerbach, who reads *The Mill on the Floss* as something of a Gothic tale, says à Kempis's doctrine becomes a "fetish" in Maggie's hands "that explodes communities and blights lives." Maggie's behavior toward Stephen is another manifestation of the narcissistic rage never resolved in childhood, according to Peggy Fitzhugh Johnstone. Maggie has returned to St. Ogg's only to be reminded of her low status as the daughter of a failure, and Stephen's attention gives her the opportunity to predominate. But Maggie is infatuated with Stephen and experiences with him a return to the Eden-like wholeness she felt when she and Tom stood beside the Round Pool, says Johnstone. According to Johnstone, Maggie's cruelty toward Stephen is a "repetition-compulsion which causes her to reenact her sense of injury by repeatedly injuring others." This repetition-compulsion can be seen in her rejection of Stephen at Aunt Moss's and then consenting to being kissed by him since they have agreed to part; the continued exchange of glances and snatches of conversation during the evenings at the Deanes, confirming Philip's worst suspicions; her consent to get into the boat with Stephen and then blaming him for taking advantage of her "thoughtlessness" (deliberate passivity); and her agreement to go to Mudport and then declaring she will go no further. Indeed before the elopement, the "demonic" side of Maggie has moments of "cruel selfishness" in which she thinks, "why should not Lucy—why should not Philip suffer? She had had to suffer through many years of life; and who had renounced anything for her? ... Why was she to forgo ... [happiness], that another might have it—another, who perhaps needed it less?" In the end, her decision not to go through with an elopement brings much suffering to Stephen as well.

Eliot, in the guise of the narrator, repeatedly makes excuses for Maggie's behavior, claiming her heart is always in the right place, but this is clearly not true. Maggie's need for love and the mistakes she makes in attempting to get it elicit tremendous sympathy from the reader. But what grates on the reader is the false persona the fictional Maggie creates as an à Kempis-like renouncer. Her attempt to put the doctrine of à

Kempis into practice as a way of saving herself in her terrible first grief, after she loses all affection from her family when Mr. Tulliver goes bankrupt, is understandable. But her continued obstinacy (much like her brother and her father) in insisting she can live by what becomes in her hands a bankrupt philosophy—even as she is guided in a different direction by Philip, Lucy, Stephen, and even Tom—cannot be justified. Maggie also overrates her unwillingness to hurt others. This deliberate blindness, a product of narcissism masquerading as selflessness, keeps Maggie in the dark about her own motives and proves to be the undoing of the people she claims to care about.

As critic Barbara Guth points out, it is Philip Wakem who speaks for the wise side of Eliot: he "acquires knowledge from experiencing temptation, succumbing to it, and suffering." Philip and Maggie are twin souls in the sense they are both handicapped outsiders—he by virtue of his humpback and she because of her depth of feeling and enormous need to be loved. Neither fits into the bourgeois society of St. Ogg's, and both value the life of the mind and the heart rather than material possessions. Philip is refined by his suffering and doesn't fall into bitterness, unlike Maggie, who in the final analysis doesn't change in her crucible of sorrow. Philip's strong imagination and ability to empathize with the suffering of others allow him to correctly imagine what has been going on between Stephen and Maggie, and in Chapter 13, he admits to himself he has forced her into a premature commitment. He knows Maggie is in distress and would like to talk with her, but he doesn't trust himself to do so until he feels sure he can put aside his own self-interest. This is why he does not keep the appointment with Lucy and Maggie. The maturity of Philip's love will become even more evident in his response to the aborted elopement in the final chapters of the novel.

Book 7, Chapters 1–3

Summary

Chapter 1: The Return to the Mill

Five days later Maggie shows up at the mill, asking Tom to take her in, but he turns her away. "You have been base—deceitful; no motives are strong enough to restrain you. I wash my hands of you forever. You don't belong to me." Mrs. Tulliver now steps forward to go with her daughter, and Tom gives her some money. Maggie and her mother go to Bob Jakin, and his family takes them in; fortunately, their lodging is vacant. Maggie now asks Bob to go to the kindly pastor, Dr. Kenn, and ask him to come see her while her mother is visiting Tom.

Chapter 2: St. Ogg's Passes Judgment

Not much time passes before it is all over town that Maggie is back and has not married Stephen Guest. The narrator notes that if the couple had eloped and come back a few months later, "the world's wife" would have forgiven the handsome couple and moved on. But Maggie returns in a "degraded and outcast condition to which error is known to lead," and thus the women of the town pile on, and Maggie's actions are discerned in the worst light. Stephen has sent a letter taking all the blame on himself, but that doesn't change public opinion of a girl cast out by her own brother. Lucy is ill—in a state of "feeble passivity."

While Mrs. Tulliver is gone, Maggie decides to go to the rectory to see Dr. Kenn. He is sympathetic to her, believing Stephen's letter explaining that they did not consummate their passion and understanding the restraint and sacrifice involved in Maggie's coming back to town. Dr. Kenn offers to help her get work at a distance, but she is determined to stay in St. Ogg's. He then says he will see what he can do to help her get work at home.

Chapter 3: Showing That Old Acquaintances Are Capable of Surprising Us

Surprisingly, Mrs. Glegg chides Tom for turning his sister out without knowing whether she wholly disgraced herself, and when Stephen's letter arrives she is ready to fight for Maggie. After Mrs. Tulliver visits her sister, she tells Maggie that Mrs. Glegg is ready to take her in and defend her against all comers. Maggie is grateful but tells her mother she must support herself and is waiting to hear from Dr. Kenn. When Maggie expressed sorrow that she has brought her mother so much trouble, she says: "I must put up wi' my children—I shall never have no more; and if they bring me bad luck, I must be fond on it—there's nothing else to be fond on, for my furnitur' went long

ago."

Maggie continues to worry about Philip, who people say may have gone out of town. She finally gets a letter in which Philip makes allowances for her, saying that he believes she meant to "cleave" to him and that only one part of her nature was strongly attracted to Stephen Guest, who would not give her up. He says that despite all that has happened, his love for Maggie has been a blessing in his life and that he remains hers, "not with selfish wishes, but with a devotion that excludes such wishes." Maggie breaks down in tears after she reads this letter, thinking there is not happiness in love that can make her forget the pain of others.

Analysis

While Maggie has refused to live with her brother since her father's death, she now shows up at the mill and asks Tom to make good on his promise to take care of her. Tom has fulfilled his father's dying wish, the narrator says, and has more than regained the "old respectability which had been the proud inheritance of the Dodsons and Tullivers." But once again, Maggie has committed an act to cast a pall on his happiness. The narrator says she returns to Tom "as the natural refuge that had been given her," but in fact, Tom had left Maggie years ago when he first uncovered her subterfuge in the Red Deeps. She has kept alive in her mind the closeness of their childhood and the oneness she felt with him, but this is merely an illusion. Maggie feels Tom's hate "rushing through her fibers," and yet she insists on demanding his acceptance. Perhaps she returns to the mill to punish herself in what has become for her, according to Peggy Fitzhugh Johnstone, a "pattern of impulsive and/or aggressive action and flight, followed by guilt and reparation." This repetitious behavior grows out of her unresolved narcissistic rage.

When Tom turns her out, Mrs. Tulliver steps up to protect her daughter in an uncharacteristic display of maternal care. Maggie immediately goes in search of another father figure in the form of Dr. Kenn, a kindly pastor who had recognized Maggie's need when he first met her at the fair in Book 6, Chapter 9, and extended the promise of being of service to her. Dr. Kenn gives Maggie credit for weathering her crisis of conscience and making the right decision, and, unlike most of the townspeople, he believes Stephen's letter, which says the elopement was not completed, and, in that sense, Maggie has nothing to be ashamed of. But when Dr. Kenn advises Maggie to make a start somewhere else, she suddenly cannot bear being cut off from the people she knows even though she has now become a pariah. While the narrator speaks with some virulence about the world's wife—specifically the women of the town who have passed judgment on Maggie—they have some reason to be angry about the way things turned out. If Maggie had gone through with the elopement, she would have caused less damage, and Philip and Lucy would have eventually moved on with their lives. Now that Maggie is determined to stay in town, she is making it impossible for Stephen to have a possible reconciliation, either with herself or with Lucy. Moreover, her presence in town will keep the wound open in Philip's heart.

Maggie's guilty conscience preys upon her, but when she gets a letter from Philip, her narcissism causes her to focus primarily on her situation and congratulate herself for not going through with the elopement at the expense of others. In fact, she has caused people considerable pain and has not done anybody good by refusing to marry Stephen and insisting on staying in town. Philip's letter reflects his new ability to love her without desiring to possess her, and he confides that in his despair, he was kept from suicide by the knowledge that she would remain in the world and might at some point need him. Philip's love for Maggie has enlarged him to such a degree that it is almost as if he no longer even requires that person named Maggie to benefit from this love. This transcendence through love is something that Maggie is very far from understanding.

Book 7, Chapters 4–5 and Conclusion

Summary

Chapter 4: Maggie and Lucy

After his exertions on Maggie's behalf, Dr. Kenn must admit that no one will hire her. He is recently widowed, so he hires her to take care of his own children. Meanwhile, Stephen's sisters believe Maggie has returned to town only because she means to eventually marry their brother. Thus, they feed Stephen as much bad gossip as possible and intend to take Lucy to the coast, away from the August heat, as soon as she

is well enough to travel. They also plan to engineer a reconciliation between Stephen and Lucy. To Maggie's surprise, Lucy secretly comes one evening to visit her, throwing her arms around her cousin's neck. Lucy also forgives Maggie and says she knows she never meant to destroy her happiness. Maggie on her part begs Lucy to forgive Stephen and prays to never bring her sorrow again. The two girls hug each other again before Lucy departs.

Chapter 5: The Last Conflict

In the second week of September, Maggie is sitting in her room well past midnight as the rain pounds on the windows. It has been raining for days, first in the counties higher up on the river and now where Maggie lives. Maggie has been let go from her job at Dr. Kenn's because of the virulent gossip, which was interfering with his duties as a clergyman. He again asks Maggie to consider leaving town when he can find her a place.

Maggie has received a letter from Stephen, recently returned from Holland and living in Mudport. He again reproaches her for injuring him and begs her to join her life with his. Maggie is tempted, in large part because she feels Stephen's misery and doubts her own resolve. Nonetheless, she burns the letter and recalls the words of Thomas à Kempis: "I have received the Cross, I have received it from Thy hand; I will bear it till death, as Thou has laid it upon me." As Maggie kneels and prays to the "Unseen Pity," she feels the flood waters and raises the alarm to the Jakin family. Maggie gets into one of the boats, and before Jakin can get his family, both vessels are swept into the flood. She soon finds herself on flooded fields and steers her boat into the river current, thinking about Tom and her mother. She is able to get near the house and mill and finds her brother alone, since Mrs. Tulliver had gone to her sister's house. Tom comes down from the attic, getting in the boat and taking the oar, and soon they are in the river current again, rowing toward Tofton and Lucy's house. But there are many large pieces of debris in the water, and when Tom sees it is too late to save himself and Maggie, he clasps his sister as debris rushes toward them, capsizing the boat and killing them.

Conclusion

Five years after the flood, the wharves and warehouses have been rebuilt, and everyone survives the catastrophe except for brother and sister. Dorlcote Mill is rebuilt, and Maggie and Tom are buried in a tomb in the churchyard next to their father. Stephen visits this monument with his wife Lucy after many years have passed, and Philip visits alone. On the tomb is inscribed these words: "In their death they were not divided."

Analysis

Tender-hearted Lucy also forgives Maggie, and poor Dr. Kenn risks his own livelihood in hiring her because no one else will. When he must dismiss her because the gossip is threatening to ruin him, Maggie has reached a final dead end, and there is no place for her to retreat to nor find solace. She cannot live in St. Ogg's, but she cannot leave because isolation from familiar surroundings seems unendurable. When Stephen writes to her once again and gives her the opportunity to change her mind and make a grab for happiness, she stubbornly holds onto her resolve. As critic Robert P. Lewis notes, Eliot's efforts to turn Maggie into a saint of self-sacrifice strikes a discordant note, as does her call to the "Unseen Pity that would be with her to the end." In Lewis's view, "This 'Unseen Pity' remains a gratuitous hypothesis, unwarranted by the moral dynamics of the novel to this point." More specifically, no references have been made to a transcendent God, and the narrator's reference to personified pity seems forced.

Even in Eliot's time critics found the ending of the story unsatisfying, with some saying that the author had not prepared the reader sufficiently for the tragedy. Modern critics have noted that the novel never resolves Maggie's spiritual or moral crisis, and some have said the ending abruptly shift the novel from realism to symbolism. Freudian interpretations have explained the ending as a device to finally unite Maggie with Tom, the man who no other man can replace, according to Peggy Fitzhugh Johnstone. In such interpretations, Maggie's inability to separate from Tom (who symbolizes the parents that never met her needs) gives rise to a desire to return to the womb. This regression is accomplished in death, which unites brother and sister in a watery embrace. From another perspective it can be said that, given Maggie's inability to change and grow (in her emotions she never moves far beyond her nine-year-old self), the author creates a dead end in her characterization, necessitating the protagonist's dramatic destruction. After Maggie rejects Stephen for the final time, there is nothing much she can do to change her situation except die. Perhaps the best interpretation of the ending is the one provided by critic Nina Auerbach, who views Maggie as a powerful and demonic force who leaves a trail of blood behind

her. She seems to almost magically navigate through the floodwaters and successfully reach her brother. She "lures Tom out of the house where he has found temporary protection—for the waters have stopped rising." Nonetheless, Tom has no other choice than to get in the boat with "Magsie," as he calls her at last. Maggie is transformed into the opposite of the lifesaving Virgin of the legend, and Tom becomes a hapless St. Ogg whose vessel capsizes almost immediately after he takes the oars. Maggie thus accomplishes her long hoped-for reconciliation with the brother who too often rejected her even though he never stopped being the center of her world.

“” Quotes

"An over-'cute woman's no better than a long-tailed sheep—she'll fetch none the bigger price for that."

— Mr. Tulliver, Book 1, Chapter 2

Mr. Tulliver says this about Maggie. He is telling Mr. Riley she is very smart, unlike her brother, and while he is proud of her, he notes that intelligence in a woman is superfluous, much like a long tail on a sheep—it won't fetch a greater price for the animal. Thus, he devalues women by comparing his daughter to an animal to be sold at market—one who will be prized for her docility (like his wife) rather than her intelligence.

"We live from hand to mouth ... little else than snatch a morsel to satisfy the hungry brood, rarely thinking of seed-corn or the next year's crop."

— Narrator, Book 1, Chapter 3

The narrator is pointing out the thoughtlessness of people in reflecting on Mr. Riley's motives for recommending Rev. Stelling as a tutor. Although he is doing a good turn to a relative of a useful and powerful man in his parish by recommending the clergyman, he is not actually conscious of this motive. For the most part people do not plot their actions ahead of time, whether for good or ill, and are more likely to think only of their immediate need and not much further. This statement also applies to Mr. Tulliver and Maggie, who do not think ahead about the consequences of their rash actions.

"O Tom, please forgive me—I can't bear it—I will be good—always remember things—do love me—please, dear Tom!"

— Maggie Tulliver, Book 1, Chapter 5

Maggie addresses this speech to Tom after she tells him she forgot to feed his rabbits and they have died as a result. Tom angrily punishes her by saying he doesn't love her and she can't go fishing with him. The naked need that is reflected in her prayer to her brother illustrates her relationship with Tom and the neediness that will overshadow her life as she grows older.

"In these fits of susceptibility every glance seemed to him charged either with offensive pity or ill-repressed disgust."

— Narrator, Book 2, Chapter 4

The narrator says that "Philip felt indifference as a child of the south feels the chill of a northern spring." For this reason he is overly sensitive and finely tuned to any appearance of rejection. When Tom patronizes him because of his disability, he sometimes would "turn upon the well-meaning lad quite savagely," the narrator says. Thus, although Philip is generally an empathetic person, he sometimes misreads other people's

signals and intentions because of his sensitivity.

"I think it was that her eyes were full of unsatisfied intelligence, and unsatisfied, beseeching affection."

— Narrator, Book 2, Chapter 5

The narrator is explaining why Philip is immediately drawn to Maggie. Her eyes remind him of the stories of princesses who had been turned into animals, the narrator says. Philip knows what it is like to feel lonely and unloved; therefore, he readily sees Maggie's need to love and receive love, which is reflected in her glance, and he instinctively reaches out to that need.

"They had entered the thorny wilderness, and the golden gates of their childhood had forever closed behind them."

— Narrator, Book 2, Chapter 7

This is the last sentence in Book 2. Maggie has come to fetch Tom back home because her father has lost his lawsuit and is now gone bankrupt. Even worse, he has fallen off his horse and lies insensible in his bed. This is a turning point in the lives of the Tulliver children, and they will now have to go forward and face a life of hardship. The days of their innocent childhood are over.

"She thought it was part of the hardship of her life that there was laid upon her the burthen of larger wants than others seem to feel."

— Narrator, Book 4, Chapter 3

The narrator refers to Maggie. She has just received a packet of books from Bob Jakin. She has had few books to read up until now and wished she had more. She had hoped to find wisdom and an understanding of the meaning of her life in books, but upon reflection admits that they have not been much help. She finds herself always wanting something, but she cannot pinpoint what she yearns for. She thinks that perhaps she carries the burden of desiring more than the average person.

"The first thing I ever remember ... is standing with Tom by the side of the Floss ... everything before that is dark to me."

— Maggie Tulliver, Book 5, Chapter 1

Maggie says this to Philip in the Red Deeps, when he regretfully says that she will never love him as much as she loves her brother. She doesn't deny it but gives this explanation instead. The first moment of consciousness she remembers is standing with Tom by the side of the river while he held her hand. This shows that she considers Tom to be in essence her parent. Because she has not been properly nurtured, she invests too much love in Tom, which thwarts her ability to love others.

"I shall be contented to live, if you would let me see you sometimes."

— Philip Wakem, Book 5, Chapter 1

Philip is madly in love with Maggie and comes to meet her for the first time in the Red Deeps. She says they may not see each other because a relationship between them has been forbidden by her father and brother. Philip uses all his wiles to convince Maggie otherwise and at one point says he would find life worthwhile if she would only let him see her now and again.

"I was never satisfied with a little of anything. That is why it is better for me to do without earthly happiness altogether."

— Maggie Tulliver, Book 5, Chapter 3

Maggie says this when she meets Philip a second time in the Red Deeps. He is trying to convince her to be his friend and meet him periodically, and she has explained to him her philosophy of renunciation. She says she seems to want too much—too much of everything—and thus can never be contented with what she has. Thus, she has determined to forgo earthly happiness altogether in an effort to curb her wanting.

"At one time you take pleasure in a sort of perverse self-denial, and at another you ... [cannot] resist a thing that you know to be wrong."

— Tom Tulliver, Book 6, Chapter 4

Tom says this to Maggie after she asks him for permission to see Philip as a friend in Lucy's company. He agrees but expresses his doubt that she has given up the idea altogether of being with Philip. He expresses his bewilderment about his sister's behavior, which vacillates between extreme self-denial and a disregard for everything in fulfilling her desires.

"We should break all these mistaken ties that were made in blindness, and determine to marry each other."

— Stephen Guest, Book 6, Chapter 11

Stephen says this to Maggie at her aunt Moss's house when he comes to apologize for kissing her arm and declares his undying love for her. She admits that she does love him. At the same time, she says they cannot act on their love because they would hurt Lucy and Philip. He disagrees, saying these former ties are a mistake and should be broken to fulfill the true feelings of love they now feel for each other.

"She had rent the ties that had given meaning to duty, and had made herself an outlawed soul, with no guide but the wayward choice of her own passion."

— Narrator, Book 6, Chapter 14

The narrator is referring to how Maggie feels when she realizes the implications of agreeing to elope with Stephen. She awakens on the boat bound for Mudport, after she dreams of St. Ogg's boat passing, with Lucy as the Virgin and St. Ogg first appearing as Philip and then as Tom. She realizes that if she goes through with the elopement, she will have broken her own code of renunciation. She will have turned her back on duty, which in her view is to not hurt Lucy and Philip or her brother simply to satisfy her own desires.

"I must put up wi' my children ... and if they bring me bad luck, I must be fond on it—there's nothing else to be fond on ..."

— Mrs. Tulliver, Book 7, Chapter 3

Mrs. Tulliver makes this statement after she uncharacteristically stands up for Maggie by leaving Tom's house with her daughter after Tom disowns her. Maggie sorrowfully notes that she has caused her mother a lot of grief, and Mrs. Tulliver responds that she has no choice but to put up with it, since she only has her children to love now that her

possessions are gone. This quote shows that Mrs. Tulliver has not really changed in her view and still values possessions more than people. She loves her children because she has no things left to love.

> *"Brother and sister ... living through again in one supreme moment the days when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together."*

— Narrator, Conclusion

The narrator makes this statement about the death of Maggie and Tom in the flood. Tom calls his sister "Magsie" when he comes down and says, "It's coming, Magsie," clasping her at the moment when he knows they are doomed. Thus he seems to forgive her, and the siblings are reconciled. But this is hardly a moment of heavenly bliss, and the comparison to the Edenic moments of the Tullivers' childhood seems forced and unnatural. This quote points up the unsatisfying ending and the author's blindness in understanding the full meaning of the story she told.

Symbols

The River

The river is the central symbol and motif of the novel, and it variously represents life and the journey of life as well as Maggie's emotions. The river motif is echoed throughout the novel in the narrator's numerous references to metaphorical channels. People travel in their own channels, and they form habits that are like deep channels in their minds, forcing them to repeat certain actions and patterns, almost independent of their wills. The river is Eden (paradise) when two children, Maggie and Tom, play beside it and watch the eagre (tidal wave) make its way down the Floss in the spring; when they fish in the Round Pool created by the river, they are completely at ease and contented. The river makes life possible when millers harness its power to turn the wheel that grinds the grain or when the farmer uses its water to irrigate the fields. The river becomes the face of the Grim Reaper at the end of the novel, flooding the land around it and threatening lives—finally taking the lives of Maggie and Tom. At the end the river overflows, like Maggie's destructive emotions, which cannot be contained. She uses the river to get to her brother in an effort to save him, but in fact the river kills him. He probably would have survived if he had stayed in the attic and not come down to meet Maggie for the final reconciliation that she demanded.

The Pilgrim's Progress

The Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan, a well-known and beloved Christian classic, is "background music" for Pilgrim Maggie's journey through life. Maggie is both the pious Christians in the Bunyan story, Christian and Christiana, as well as the demon Apollyon. She attempts to follow a strict path of Christian renunciation, yet her unmet unconscious desires wreak havoc on the people around her. Maggie's dual nature is seen early on, when Mr. Riley counsels her to put aside a text by English writer Daniel Defoe (most well-known for the adventure story *Robinson Crusoe,* 1719) and read a more appropriate book, and she grabs the Bunyan text. But the first thing she shows him is Christian battling the devil, who has been so nicely painted by her brother. Book 4 is called "The Valley of Humiliation," recalling the same valley that Christian and Christiana separately traverse. This is also where Christian meets the demon Apollyon and escapes from him. But in this section of the novel, Maggie is exposed to another exemplary text, *The Imitation of Christ*, and twists its message of renunciation into a pernicious gospel, which ends up hurting her as well as the people she loves. The pilgrimage for Maggie is as treacherous as those described in Bunyan's classic, and she succumbs to many pitfalls along the way. It is difficult to say how the author viewed the ending of *The Mill on the Floss* in the light of Bunyan's allegory, but for the reader the tragic ending closes off all possibility of Maggie's reaching any significant spiritual realization. In truth, she doesn't change from the beginning to the end of the novel.

The Red Deeps

The Red Deeps, woods near Maggie's house, symbolize sexual passion. Maggie asks Philip in their first meeting if he likes how she looks, and she is gratified when he responds that she is more beautiful than he had expected. This is the beginning of a yearlong friendship charged with sexual passion on Philip's side, even as Maggie pretends to not understand how Philip feels until he tells her directly. Even if she is not sexually attracted to him, she enjoys his worship as well as his intellectual companionship. She wants to be loved wholly and unconditionally, and this is what Philip offers. When Philip confesses his love, Maggie equivocates but leads him to believe she would be his mate if her brother did not have such strong objections. In fact, she convinces herself of this, thinking the "sacrifice" in this love would make it that much more "richer" and "satisfying." The scenes in the Red Deeps turn out to be a dress rehearsal for the sexual feelings she develops for Stephen Guest.

Maggie's Hair

Maggie's hair symbolizes her otherness, her "uncanniness," and the demonic side of her nature, which manifests unconsciously. In Book 1, Chapter 10, when Tom rejects Maggie and plays exclusively with Lucy, the narrator refers to Maggie as a little Medusa, referencing her shorn black locks. Medusa is the snake-haired demon goddess of Greek mythology whose look turns people to stone. Maggie's hair is heavy and unmanageable, like Maggie's emotions. When she first meets Rev. Stelling, she fears he might not like her and think her hair ugly because it hung straight down her back. After Maggie temporarily masters herself under the tutelage of Thomas à Kempis, Mrs. Tulliver braids up her long black hair and turns it into a thing of beauty as a crown upon her head, but this corralling of her "massy" locks is a temporary solution. In the Red Deeps, Maggie tells Philip that she would like to avenge the dark-haired women who always lose out in novels, and he playfully opines that she might live out that fantasy someday by stealing blonde-haired Lucy's beau. In fact, that is exactly what happens. Stephen is surprised by Maggie's "jet-black coronet of hair," since he was led to believe she is blonde, and, in fact, her otherness is attractive to Stephen. In the last scenes of the novel, Maggie's hair is unplaited as she steps into Bob Jakin's boat and then paddles to the mill to "rescue" Tom. Thus, Maggie in her demonic aspect goes down into the deeps with her brother while her hair is streaming.

The Legend of St. Ogg

The story of St. Ogg and the Virgin symbolically prefigures the destiny of Maggie and Tom. According to the legend, Ogg is a ferryman who agrees to take a woman dressed in rags across the river during a bad storm. The woman is carrying a child. He agrees because he sees her "heart's need." When he gets her to the other side, she is transformed into a beautiful woman in flowing white robes, emanating light and glory. The lady blesses the ferryman and says that whoever steps into his boat will be safe from any storm. After Ogg dies his boat is said to appear during floods, with the Blessed Virgin (the mother of Jesus) at the prow shedding light to help desperate rowers find their way in the darkness. The story of Maggie and Tom is a perverse recasting of the legend. For Maggie, the Virgin is both the mother she never had as well as herself, attempting to save her brother from the storm. Tom becomes Ogg when he steps into the boat with his sister, but gets no opportunity to guide them, since the boat is almost immediately capsized by debris. Maggie and Tom have no child because they are siblings, but neither has been able to find love and happiness with a partner.

Themes

Sorrows and Ecstasies of Childhood

Strong emotions people feel in childhood often determine the way character develops and are often more powerful than the emotions they will later experience as adults. This is because in childhood a lot of thoughts and ideas about how a person

should act and feel have not yet been developed, and a child has fewer defense mechanisms than an adult. Book 1 of the novel, in particular, dramatizes these strong feelings. For example, Maggie's unbridled rage is described, as she beats the head of a wooden doll in the attic and grinds its face on the rough bricks. She has already put three nails in this doll's head, which sometimes stands in for the people she hates and perhaps stands in for herself and her own self-hatred. Tom's rage is also unbridled, although he doesn't have temper tantrums. He revenges himself on Maggie by telling her he doesn't love her and saying he would prefer his cousin Lucy as a sister. Once the siblings make up, the narrator describes their idyllic interlude while fishing—their own little piece of heaven. Maggie is in a state of ecstasy as she fishes with her brother at the Round Pool and has to be told by Tom that there is a fish on the line. Maggie carries these strong feelings from childhood, particularly her intense attachment to her brother, into adult life, although she learns how to modulate her feelings to some degree, and for periods of time she even represses them.

Necessity of Human Connection

The novel examines the importance of having meaningful relationships with other human beings in which one can give and receive love. Maggie suffers in childhood because she has received insufficient love and acceptance from her mother as well as her aunts, and this creates in her a narcissistic rage that follows her into adulthood and is behind many of the bad choices she makes. She is not conscious of the fact that her anger issues are unresolved, and this causes her to unconsciously hurt people, even while remaining hungry for love. Philip Wakem suffers from rejection because of his humpback, and although his father loves him, he grows up without the love of a mother. He is in danger of growing bitter, but his love for Maggie saves him from this fate, despite the fact that she does not return his romantic feelings. Tom is an example of someone who becomes smaller as a person because of the lack of love in his life. Although Maggie loves him, he has a hard time accepting that love because his sister is so different from him, and he spends most of his time being angry with her. He is in love with Lucy, but she is in love with another, so Tom retreats into his work. He shoulders the financial responsibility for his family at a young age, but the fact that he neglects his emotional needs makes him even more rigid and unyielding. He is incapable of forgiving his sister when she returns to St. Ogg's; if he had reached out to her instead with love and compassion, the novel would not have ended in their twin deaths.

Limits of Empathy

The centerpiece of George Eliot's moral creed is empathy and compassion for one's fellow beings, and in *The Mill on the Floss*, she shows how people miss each other and lack the ability to empathize with those who are not like them because they lack imagination. But even characters who have deep empathy often fail in their ability to extend their imagination and often end up putting their own selfish needs ahead of others. Tom Tulliver has no empathy for anyone who is not like himself and does not share his values. This is the most serious problem between Tom and Maggie: he has no understanding of her passionate nature and deep emotional need, and he believes that his value system is superior to hers and imposes it on her. Neither does Mrs. Tulliver have any capacity for empathy; she softens toward her daughter only after Maggie becomes outwardly malleable—like herself.

While Maggie has a large capacity for empathy, her ability to empathize fails her in the end, not so much because she nearly elopes with Stephen, but rather because she doesn't see how her rigorous adherence to misunderstood ascetic principles is simply another form of ego. Her refusal to go through with the elopement and insistence on staying in St. Ogg's actually does more damage to the people she claims to love than if she had gone through with a marriage to Stephen or at least had agreed to leave town. Throughout the novel, Maggie continually hurts Philip and later Stephen by not being honest about her feelings and adhering to a code of renunciation that becomes a weapon in her hands. Philip Wakem is the only character who finally goes beyond his own empathetic limits. He recognizes his own selfish appropriation of Maggie and is willing to let her go. By the end of the novel he loves Maggie unconditionally, and nothing she can do will change the way he feels about her. While he perhaps doesn't see her clearly, he sees what is best and beautiful in her and rededicates himself

to her. In his letter of forgiveness he calls her "large-souled" and says he never doubted the heart he recognized in her when they first met.

Failure of Renunciation

Renunciation often fails when a soul is not ready for such a hard and lofty path. When Maggie first discovers *The Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis, she feels she has found a lifeline and a solution to her suffering and longing for *more and more*. The 14th-century monk prescribes putting aside self-love and personal desires and advises the spiritual aspirant to think of the suffering of others to feel their own adversity less. But as the narrator notes, Maggie does not realize "renunciation remains sorrow, though sorrow borne willingly." Maggie wants to be happy, and she wants to be loved and cherished in the material world. She has neither the background nor the temperament nor the wisdom to walk the monk's path of nonattachment to the world. Rather, she outwardly renounces and inwardly represses her desire, so it is not surprising that her need eventually breaks through to the surface and wreaks havoc. Because Maggie will not own her desire, she ends up hurting the people she claims to love: Tom, Philip, Stephen, and Lucy. She pretends to obey Tom, which is worse than outwardly defying him when he learns the truth about her secret meetings with Philip. She hurts Philip by leading him on and making him think she loves him romantically. She hurts Stephen by eloping with him and then rejecting him. She hurts Lucy by betraying her—pretending to love Philip when she really loves Stephen. Maggie's insistence on a reconciliation with her brother leads her to "rescue" him from the flood when, in fact, he likely would have lived if she had left him at the mill.

Tyranny of Society

The tyranny of society is evident in the Dodson creed of conventionality, as well as in the way in which "the world's wife" denounces and ostracizes Maggie at the end of the novel. The Dodson clan are a kind of mini-society that imposes its will on kin as well as the people they marry. "The religion of the Dodsons consisted in revering what was customary and respectable," the narrator notes. Thus, as respectable bourgeois, they believe it their duty and purpose for living to accumulate wealth and leave their money to family members. When Mr. Tulliver fails to follow this creed and ends up bankrupt, they punish the family quite severely, giving them as little help as possible and reviling Mr. Tulliver for disgracing their name. Mrs. Glegg tells her sister, Mrs. Tulliver, that "it's right you should feel what your state is, and what disgrace your husband's brought on your family, as you've got to look to for everything—and be humble in your mind." She objects to buying back anything but the necessities for the Tulliver family, noting that her money should not be "squandered on them as have had the same chance as me, only they've been wicked and wasteful." Thus the Dodsons pass judgment of the Tullivers, who have not lived up to their standards of virtuous mercantilism.

Society also falls on Maggie with a vengeance when she returns from her aborted elopement. Although it soon becomes clear that Maggie has not consummated her relationship with Stephen, she is ostracized by everyone except for Dr. Kenn, who tries unsuccessfully to get her work. As the narrator notes, the hypocritical "world's wife" could have forgiven a handsome married couple who returned to town and would have expected Philip and Lucy to move on. But Maggie returns in a "degraded and outcast condition to which error is known to lead," putting her actions in the worst possible light. The town passes judgment on Maggie for not adhering to conventional values—which is to be concerned about the way things "look" rather than the way things are. Society passes judgment on Maggie because she has upset the apple cart of the status quo. In the view of the "world's wife," she should have either gone through with the elopement and allowed time to cover up her transgression, or she should have left town and started over somewhere else, so that society did not have to cope with her as an anomaly of misguided righteousness.

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