



Middlemarch (Penguin Classics)

George Eliot

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George Eliot's Victorian masterpiece: a magnificent portrait of a provincial town and its inhabitants

George Eliot's novel, *Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*, explores a fictional nineteenth-century Midlands town in the midst of modern changes. The proposed Reform Bill promises political change; the building of railroads alters both the physical and cultural landscape; new scientific approaches to medicine incite public division; and scandal lurks behind respectability. The quiet drama of ordinary lives and flawed choices are played out in the complexly portrayed central characters of the novel—the idealistic Dorothea Brooke; the ambitious Dr. Lydgate; the spendthrift Fred Vincy; and the steadfast Mary Garth. The appearance of two outsiders further disrupts the town's equilibrium—Will Ladislaw, the spirited nephew of Dorothea's husband, the Rev. Edward Casaubon, and the sinister John Raffles, who threatens to expose the hidden past of one of the town's elite. *Middlemarch* displays George Eliot's clear-eyed yet humane understanding of characters caught up in the mysterious unfolding of self-knowledge. This Penguin Classics edition uses the second edition of 1874 and features an introduction and notes by Eliot-biographer Rosemary Ashton. In her introduction, Ashton discusses themes of social change in *Middlemarch*, and examines the novel as an imaginative embodiment of Eliot's humanist beliefs.

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