

# EXPLORING MIDDLEMARCH

Ambition, love, and moral refinements in nineteenth-century England

## COURSE #:

22F-EMM

## FORMAT:

Seminar

## MODERATOR:

Nancy Coiner  
Helen Regan

## DATE & TIME:

Mon - 1:30 - 3:30 PM  
10 Weeks  
Starting on 9/26/2022

## LOCATION:

Zoom

## MAX NO. OF PARTICIPANTS:

18

## AUDITORS ACCEPTED:

Yes

## MAX NO. OF AUDITORS:

2

## PURPOSE:

We will explore one of the most perceptive and philosophic novels of the nineteenth century, George Eliot's *Middlemarch*. Together, we will bemoan the characters' mistakes, cheer their victories, and applaud their growth (or lament their lack of it).

## DESCRIPTION:

Widely accepted as among the most mature and sophisticated of British nineteenth-century novels, *Middlemarch* (1871-72) was hailed by Virginia Woolf as "one of the few English novels written for grown-ups." The novel focuses on a few middle-class families caught in the shifting political, economic, and religious currents of the 1830s. Readers watch—usually with sympathetic but horrified fascination—as several ambitious young people (male and female) try to carve out satisfying lives for themselves in the confined setting of an ordinary provincial town.

Born Mary Ann Evans in a rural village, George Eliot gives us moving, beautifully crafted portrayals of ardent, aspiring young people responding to life's inevitable temptations, disappointments, and failures. You do not need to be a literary scholar to love this novel, just someone who prizes emotional insight and the exploration of human weaknesses.

## ROLE OF PARTICIPANTS:

Participants will read the novel and lead a discussion or give a presentation on a relevant topic. Topics could include Eliot's life, intellectual circle, critical responses to her novels, and aspects of English life of the period: politics, class stratification, medicine, religious controversies, marriage laws, and London versus the provinces.

## RESOURCES:

Since no standard edition of the novel is being published right now, participants may read whatever version they choose. Used copies are easily available. The Norton Critical Edition has good notes.

## ABOUT THE MODERATORS:

Nancy Coiner has read and taught literature of all sorts for most of her life. She has loved moderating two previous LIR seminars. Helen Regan, an undergraduate science major, spent her career in teaching and administration. Now, at last, she is enjoying a deep dive into literature.