

Sylvia's Lovers Points to Ponder, Session One October 2023

1...the old families kept aloof from the unsavoury yet adventurous trade which brought wealth to generation after generation of certain families in Monkshaven. The magnates of Monkshaven were those who had the largest number of ships engaged in the whaling-trade.

What impressions of the Monkshaven Community do we get from the opening Chapters of *Sylvia's Lovers*? Why is the location so important to the events of the narrative?

2 What are first impressions of Sylvia from this section?

3 Why do you think ECG uses so much political comment in this book ? How is it important to the story?

*When I gived my vote to Measter Cholmley to go up to t' Parliament House, I as good as said, 'Now yo' go up theer, sir, and tell 'em what I, Dannel Robson, think right, and what I wish to have done.' Else I'd be darned if I'd ha' gi my vote to him or any other man*

*Philp Hepburn:- 'But, asking pardon, laws is made for the good of the nation, not for your good or mine.'*

4 What are your views on Daniel Robson from the opening Chapters and how far do you agree with the narrator's summation of Daniel and his situation.

*Sylvia's father... was a man who had roamed about a good deal—been sailor, smuggler, horse-dealer, and farmer in turns; a sort of fellow possessed by a spirit of adventure and love of change, which did him and his own family more harm than anybody else. He was just the kind of man that all his neighbours found fault with, and all his neighbours liked. Late in life (for such an imprudent man as he, was one of a class who generally wed, trusting to chance and luck for the provision for a family), farmer Robson married a woman whose only want of practical wisdom consisted in taking him for a husband.*

5 Why do you think ECG pays so much attention to domestic detail and daily life in this novel. How does it add to the story?

6 Philip and Charlie are first introduced as the opposing lovers in this tragic story. What are your first impressions of these men? Why might Sylvia be more attracted to Kinraid?

*Philip:- My aunt said I were to give you lessons this winter i' writing and ciphering. ...Sylvia did not like learning, and did not want him for her teacher; so she answered in a dry little tone,— 'It'll use a deal o' candle-light; mother 'll not like that.*

*'They shot him through t' side, and dizzied him, and kicked him aside for dead; and fired down t' hatches, and killed one man, and disabled two, and then t' rest cried for quarter, for life is sweet, e'en aboard a king's ship; and t' Aurora carried 'em off, wounded men, an' able men, an' all: leaving Kinraid for dead, as wasn't dead, and Darley for dead, as was dead, an' t' captain and master's mate as were too old for work; and t' captain, as loves Kinraid like a brother, poured rum down his throat, and bandaged him up, and has sent for t' first doctor in Monkshaven for to get t' slugs out; for they say there's niver such a harpooner in a' t' Greenland seas; an' I can speak fra' my own seeing he's a*

*fine young fellow where he lies there, all stark and wan for weakness and loss o' blood. But Darley's dead as a door-nail; and there's to be such a burying of him as niver was seen afore i' Monkshaven, come Sunday. And now gi' us t' iron, wench, and let's lose no more time a-talking.'*

7 How does Darley's death influence the story?

8 What does the incident of metal buttons tell us about character and attitudes in Monkshaven?

*'They're all again these metal buttons,' said he. 'Silk weavers has been petitioning Ministers t' make a law to favour silk buttons; and I did hear tell as there were informers goin' about spyin' after metal buttons, and as how they could haul yo' before a justice for wearing on 'em.'*

*'A were wed in 'em, and a'll wear 'em to my dyin' day, or a'll wear noane at a'. They're for making such a pack o' laws, they'll be for meddling wi' my fashion o' sleeping next, and taxing me for ivery snore a give. They've been after t' winders, and after t' vittle, and after t' very saut to 't; it's dearer by hauf an' more nor it were when a were a boy: they're a meddlesome set o' folks, law-makers is, an' a'll niver believe King George has ought t' do wi' 't. But mark my words; I were wed wi' brass buttons, and brass buttons a'll wear to my death, an' if they moither me about it, a'll wear brass buttons i' my coffin!'*