

Sylvia's Lovers, Session Four Points to Ponder

- 1) This is EG contrasting the local/parochial and the national view of the riots. How does EG present this incident in terms of fairness and justice?
- 2) What are your responses to Philip's behaviour here?

*The town itself was, so to speak, in mourning. The rescue of the sailors was a distinctly popular movement; the subsequent violence (which had, indeed, gone much further than has been described, after Daniel left it) was, in general, considered as only a kind of due punishment inflicted in wild justice on the press-gang and their abettors. The feeling of the Monkshaven people was, therefore, in decided opposition to the vigorous steps taken by the county magistrates, who, in consequence of an appeal from the naval officers in charge of the impressment service, had called out the militia (from a distant and inland county) stationed within a few miles, and had thus summarily quenched the riots that were continuing on the Sunday morning after a somewhat languid fashion; the greater part of the destruction of property having been accomplished during the previous night. Still there was little doubt but that the violence would have been renewed as evening drew on, and the more desperate part of the population and the enraged sailors had had the Sabbath leisure to brood over their wrongs, and to encourage each other in a passionate attempt at redress, or revenge. So the authorities were quite justified in the decided steps they had taken, both in their own estimation then, and now, in ours, looking back on the affair in cold blood. But at the time feeling ran strongly against them; and all means of expressing itself in action being prevented, men brooded sullenly in their own houses. Philip, as the representative of the family, the head of which was now suffering for his deeds in the popular cause, would have met with more sympathy, ay, and more respect than he imagined, as he went along the streets, glancing from side to side, fearful of meeting some who would shy him as the relation of one who had been ignominiously taken to Bridewell a few hours before. But in spite of this wincing of Philip's from observation and remark, he never dreamed of acting otherwise than as became a brave true friend. And this he did, and would have done, from a natural faithfulness and constancy of disposition, without any special regard for Sylvia.*

- 3) The Rebellion against the press gangs plays a crucial role in the story in other ways. How does EG use the riot and Daniel's death to drive forward the narrative?
- 4) What is Kester's role in this part of the drama and why does he not like Philip? Is this view justified.

*Yet although Kester sent this message through Philip—although he saw and recognized all that Philip was doing in their behalf, in the behalf of Daniel Robson, the condemned felon, his honoured master—he liked Hepburn not a whit better than he had done before all this sorrow had come upon them.*

- 5) What are Sylvia's options after Daniel's death? What could she do? What are your feelings about the reasons she gives for her marriage.

*Kester, what could I do? What can I do? He's my cousin, and mother knows him, and likes him; and he's been so good to us in a' this time o' trouble and heavy grief, and he'll keep mother in comfort all t' rest of her days.'*

*'Ay, and thee in comfort. There's a deal in a well-filled purse in a wench's eyes, or one would ha' thought it weren't so easy forgettin' yon lad as loved thee as t' apple on his eye.'*

6) By the end of this section, what are your feelings about the characters of Philip and Charley and have your feelings for them changed from the opening section?

7) How does EG manipulate our view of these characters?

8) Philip has got what he always wanted, but at what price?

*In general, Sylvia was gentle and good enough; but Philip wanted her to be shy and tender with him, and this she was not. She spoke to him, her pretty eyes looking straight and composedly at him. She consulted him like the family friend that he was: she met him quietly in all the arrangements for the time of their marriage, which she looked upon more as a change of home, as the leaving of Haytersbank, as it would affect her mother, than in any more directly personal way. Philip was beginning to feel, though not as yet to acknowledge, that the fruit he had so inordinately longed for was but of the nature of an apple of Sodom.*

9) From the marriage at the end of Chapter 29, what feelings do we get about Sylvias future life as a married woman? What evidence does EG give to support your view?