

Session 5 -*Ruth and Adam Bede*

In Chapter 3 of *Adam Bede*, before we know much about the girl Hetty, she is described by Dinah as ‘that poor wandering lamb Hetty Sorrel. I’ve been much drawn out in prayer for her of late, and I look on it as a token that there may be mercy in store for her.’

1. Why so early in the book does Dinah make these comments, what does she see?
2. From reading Section One, what do you consider EG and GE are suggesting as the reasons why women fall?
3. What similarities and differences can you see in the presentation of Hetty Sorrel, Ruth and Aunt Esther?

Adam Bede

Chapter 6

Having taken off her gown and white kerchief, she [Hetty] drew a key from the large pocket that hung outside her petticoat, and, unlocking one of the lower drawers in the chest, reached from it two short bits of wax candle—secretly bought at Treddleston—and stuck them in the two brass sockets. Then she drew forth a bundle of matches and lighted the candles; and last of all, a small red-framed shilling looking-glass, without blotches. It was into this small glass that she chose to look first after seating herself. She looked into it, smiling and turning her head on one side, for a minute, then laid it down and took out her brush and comb from an upper drawer. She was going to let down her hair, and make herself look like that picture of a lady in Miss Lydia Donnithorne’s dressing-room. It was soon done, and the dark hyacinthine curves fell on her neck. It was not heavy, massive, merely rippling hair, but soft and silken, running at every opportunity into delicate rings. But she pushed it all backward to look like the picture, and form a dark curtain, throwing into relief her round white neck. Then she put down her brush and comb and looked at herself, folding her arms before her, still like the picture. Even the old mottled glass couldn’t help sending back a lovely image, none the less lovely because Hetty’s stays were not of white satin—such as I feel sure heroines must generally wear—but of a dark greenish cotton texture.

Oh yes! She was very pretty. Captain Donnithorne thought so. Prettier than anybody about Hayslope—prettier than any of the ladies she had ever seen visiting at the Chase—indeed it seemed fine ladies were rather old and ugly—and prettier than Miss Bacon, the miller’s daughter, who was called the beauty of Treddleston. And Hetty looked at herself to-night with quite a different sensation from what she had ever felt before; there was an invisible spectator whose eye rested on her like morning on the flowers. His soft voice was saying over and over again those pretty things she had heard in the wood; his arm was round her, and the delicate rose-scent of his hair was with her still. The vainest woman is never thoroughly conscious of her own beauty till she is loved by the man who sets her own passion vibrating in return.

But Hetty seemed to have made up her mind that something was wanting, for she got up and reached an old black lace scarf out of the linen-press, and a pair of large ear-rings out of the sacred drawer from which she had taken her candles. It was an old old scarf, full of rents, but it would make a becoming border round her shoulders, and set off the whiteness of her upper arm. And she would take out the little ear-rings she had in her ears—oh, how her aunt had scolded her for having her ears bored!—and put in those large ones. They were but coloured glass and gilding, but if you didn’t know what they were made of, they looked just as well as what the ladies wore. And so she sat down again, with the large ear-rings in her ears, and the black lace scarf adjusted round her shoulders. She looked down at her arms: no arms could be prettier down to a little way below the elbow—they were white and plump, and dimpled to match her cheeks; but towards the wrist, she thought with vexation that they were coarsened by butter-making and other work that ladies never did.

Captain Donnithorne couldn’t like her to go on doing work: he would like to see her in nice clothes, and thin shoes, and white stockings, perhaps with silk clocks to them; for he must love her very much—no one else had ever put his arm round her and kissed her in that way. He would want to marry her and make a lady of her; she could hardly dare to shape the thought—yet how else could it be? ...after a momentary start, [she] began to pace with a pigeon-like stateliness backwards and forwards along her room, in her coloured stays and coloured skirt, and the old black lace scarf round her shoulders, and the great glass ear-rings in her ears.... No eyelashes could be more beautiful than Hetty’s; and now, while she walks with her pigeon-like stateliness along the room and looks down on her shoulders bordered by the old black lace, the dark fringe shows to perfection on her pink cheek. They are but dim ill-defined pictures that her narrow bit of an imagination can make of the future; but of every picture she is the central figure in fine clothes; Captain Donnithorne is very close to her, putting his arm round her, perhaps kissing her, and everybody

else is admiring and envying her...

Hetty Sorrel often took the opportunity, when her aunt's back was turned, of looking at the pleasing reflection of herself in those polished surfaces, for the oak table was usually turned up like a screen, and was more for ornament than for use; and she could see herself sometimes in the great round pewter dishes that were ranged on the shelves above the long deal dinner-table, or in the hobs of the grate, which always shone like jasper.

Chapter 8

While she adjusted the broad leaves that set off the pale fragrant butter as the primrose is set off by its nest of green I am afraid Hetty was thinking a great deal more of the looks Captain Donnithorne had cast at her than of Adam and his troubles. Bright, admiring glances from a handsome young gentleman with white hands, a gold chain, occasional regimentals, and wealth and grandeur immeasurable—those were the warm rays that set poor Hetty's heart vibrating and playing its little foolish tunes over and over again. We do not hear that Memnon's statue gave forth its melody at all under the rushing of the mightiest wind, or in response to any other influence divine or human than certain short-lived sunbeams of morning; and we must learn to accommodate ourselves to the discovery that some of those cunningly fashioned instruments called human souls have only a very limited range of music, and will not vibrate in the least under a touch that fills others with tremulous rapture or quivering agony.

Hetty was quite used to the thought that people liked to look at her. She was not blind to the fact that young Luke Britton of Broxton came to Hayslope Church on a Sunday afternoon on purpose that he might see her; and that he would have made much more decided advances if her uncle Poyser, thinking but lightly of a young man whose father's land was so foul as old Luke Britton's, had not forbidden her aunt to encourage him by any civilities. She was aware, too, that Mr. Craig, the gardener at the Chase, was over head and ears in love with her, and had lately made unmistakable avowals in luscious strawberries and hyperbolic peas. She knew still better, that Adam Bede—tall, upright, clever, brave Adam Bede—who carried such authority with all the people round about, and whom her uncle was always delighted to see of an evening, saying that "Adam knew a fine sight more o' the natur o' things than those as thought themselves his betters"—she knew that this Adam, who was often rather stern to other people and not much given to run after the lasses, could be made to turn pale or red any day by a word or a look from her. Hetty's sphere of comparison was not large, but she couldn't help perceiving that Adam was "something like" a man; always knew what to say about things, could tell her uncle how to prop the hovel, and had mended the churn in no time; knew, with only looking at it, the value of the chestnut-tree that was blown down, and why the damp came in the walls, and what they must do to stop the rats; and wrote a beautiful hand that you could read off, and could do figures in his head—a degree of accomplishment totally unknown among the richest farmers of that countryside. Not at all like that slouching Luke Britton, who, when she once walked with him all the way from Broxton to Hayslope, had only broken silence to remark that the grey goose had begun to lay. And as for Mr. Craig, the gardener, he was a sensible man enough, to be sure, but he was knock-kneed, and had a queer sort of sing-song in his talk; moreover, on the most charitable supposition, he must be far on the way to forty.

Hetty was quite certain her uncle wanted her to encourage Adam, and would be pleased for her to marry him. For those were times when there was no rigid demarcation of rank between the farmer and the respectable artisan, and on the home hearth, as well as in the public house, they might be seen taking their jug of ale together; the farmer having a latent sense of capital, and of weight in parish affairs, which sustained him under his conspicuous inferiority in conversation. ...Hetty had been in the habit of hearing her uncle say, "Adam Bede may be working for wage now, but he'll be a master-man some day, as sure as I sit in this chair. Mester Burge is in the right on't to want him to go partners and marry his daughter, if it's true what they say; the woman as marries him 'ull have a good take, be't Lady day or Michaelmas," a remark which Mrs. Poyser always followed up with her cordial assent. "Ah," she would say, "it's all very fine having a ready-made rich man, but mayhappen he'll be a ready-made fool; and it's no use filling your pocket full o' money if you've got a hole in the corner. It'll do you no good to sit in a spring-cart o' your own, if you've got a soft to drive you: he'll soon turn you over into the ditch. I allays said I'd never marry a man as had got no brains; for where's the use of a woman having brains of her own if she's tackled to a geck as everybody's a-laughing at? She might as well dress herself fine to sit backards on a donkey"... And always when Adam stayed away for several weeks from the Hall Farm, and otherwise made some show of resistance to his passion as a foolish one, Hetty took care to entice him back into the net by little airs of meekness and timidity, as if she were in trouble at his neglect. But as to marrying Adam, that was a very different affair! There was nothing in the world to tempt her to do that. Her cheeks never grew a shade deeper when his name was mentioned; she felt no thrill when she saw him passing along the causeway by the window, or advancing towards her unexpectedly in the footpath across the meadow; she felt nothing, when his eyes rested on her, but the cold triumph of knowing that he loved her and would not care to look at Mary Burge. He could no more stir in her the emotions that make the sweet intoxication of young love than the mere picture of a sun can stir the spring sap in the subtle fibres of the plant. She saw him as he was—a poor man with old parents to keep, who would

not be able, for a long while to come, to give her even such luxuries as she shared in her uncle's house. And Hetty's dreams were all of luxuries: to sit in a carpeted parlour, and always wear white stockings; to have some large beautiful ear-rings, such as were all the fashion; to have Nottingham lace round the top of her gown, and something to make her handkerchief smell nice, like Miss Lydia Donnithorne's when she drew it out at church; and not to be obliged to get up early or be scolded by anybody. She thought, if Adam had been rich and could have given her these things, she loved him well enough to marry him....

Ruth

And why not such a night as this, Jenny?" answered Ruth. "Oh! at home I have many a time run up the lane all the way to the mill, just to see the icicles hang on the great wheel; and when I was once out, I could hardly find in my heart to come in, even to mother, sitting by the fire;—even to mother," she added, in a low, melancholy tone, which had something of inexpressible sadness in it. "Why, Jenny!" said she, rousing herself, but not before her eyes were swimming with tears, "own, now, that you never saw those dismal, hateful, tumble-down old houses there look half so—what shall I call them? almost beautiful—as they do now, with that soft, pure, exquisite covering; and if they are so improved, think of what trees, and grass, and ivy must be on such a night as this."

Jenny could not be persuaded into admiring the winter's night, which to her came only as a cold and dismal time, when her cough was more troublesome, and the pain in her side worse than usual. But she put her arm round Ruth's neck, and stood by her, glad that the orphan apprentice, who was not yet inured to the hardship of a dressmaker's workroom, should find so much to give her pleasure in such a common occurrence as a frosty night.

Ruth's place was the coldest and the darkest in the room, although she liked it the best; she had instinctively chosen it for the sake of the wall opposite to her, on which was a remnant of the beauty of the old drawing-room, which must once have been magnificent, to judge from the faded specimen left. ...What was the matter with Ruth? She was crying in her sleep as if her heart would break. Such agitated slumber could be no rest; so Jenny awakened her.

"Oh, Jenny!" said Ruth, sitting up in bed, and pushing back the masses of hair that were heating her forehead, "I thought I saw mamma by the side of the bed, coming, as she used to do, to see if I were asleep and comfortable; and when I tried to take hold of her, she went away and left me alone—I don't know where; so strange!"

"It was only a dream; you know you'd been talking about her to me, and you're feverish with sitting up late. Go to sleep again, and I'll watch, and waken you if you seem uneasy."

Chapter 4

A gig had been slowly toiling up the sandy hill behind, unperceived by the young couple, and now it reached the table-land, and was close upon them as they separated. Ruth turned round, when the sound of the horse's footsteps came distinctly as he reached the level. She faced Mrs Mason!

They were not ten—no, not five yards apart. At the same moment they recognised each other, and, what was worse, Mrs Mason had clearly seen, with her sharp, needle-like eyes, the attitude in which Ruth had stood with the young man who had just quitted her. Ruth's hand had been lying in his arm, and fondly held there by his other hand.

Mrs Mason was careless about the circumstances of temptation into which the girls entrusted to her as apprentices were thrown, but severely intolerant if their conduct was in any degree influenced by the force of these temptations. She called this intolerance "keeping up the character of her establishment." It would have been a better and more Christian thing, if she had kept up the character of her girls by tender vigilance and maternal care.... "Come here directly, Miss Hilton," she exclaimed, sharply. Then, dropping her voice to low, bitter tones of concentrated wrath, she said to the trembling, guilty Ruth:

"Don't attempt to show your face at my house again after this conduct. I saw you, and your spark, too. I'll have no slurs on the character of my apprentices. Don't say a word. I saw enough. I shall write and tell your guardian to-morrow."

The horse started away, for he was impatient to be off, and Ruth was left standing there, stony, sick, and pale, as if the lightning had torn up the ground beneath her feet. She could not go on standing, she was so sick and faint; she staggered back to the broken sand-bank, and sank down, and covered her face with her hands.

Mary Barton -description of Aunt Esher

"Then you've heard nothing of Esther, poor lass?" asked Wilson.

"No, nor shan't, as I take it. My mind is, she's gone off with somebody. My wife frets, and thinks she's drowned herself, but I tell her, folks don't care to put on their best clothes to drown themselves; and Mrs. Bradshaw (where she lodged, you know) says the last time she set eyes on her was last Tuesday, when she came down stairs, dressed in her Sunday gown, and with a new ribbon in her bonnet, and gloves on her hands, like the lady she was so fond of thinking

herself.”

“She was as pretty a creature as ever the sun shone on.”

“Ay, she was a farrantly [comly] lass; more’s the pity now,” added Barton, with a sigh. “You see them Buckinghamshire people as comes to work in Manchester, has quite a different look with them to us Manchester folk. You’ll not see among the Manchester wenches such fresh rosy cheeks, or such black lashes to gray eyes (making them look like black), as my wife and Esther had. I never seed two such pretty women for sisters; never. Not but what beauty is a sad snare. Here was Esther so puffed up, that there was no holding her in. Her spirit was always up, if I spoke ever so little in the way of advice to her; my wife spoiled her, it is true, for you see she was so much older than Esther she was more like a mother to her, doing everything for her.”

Section 2 -First meetings of Hetty and Arthur Donnithorne, Ruth and Bellingham.

4 From the passages below, how does each author present these first meetings?

5 What impressions do we get of the male characters?

6 For whom do we have the most sympathy and why?

7 Think about the style of these passages. How is EG’s style different from Eliot’s and what effect does that have on the presentation?

Chapter 7

Hetty blushed a deep rose-colour when Captain Donnithorne entered the dairy and spoke to her; but it was not at all a distressed blush, for it was inwreathed with smiles and dimples, and with sparkles from under long, curled, dark eyelashes; and while her aunt was discoursing to him about the limited amount of milk that was to be spared for butter and cheese so long as the calves were not all weaned, and a large quantity but inferior quality of milk yielded by the shorthorn, which had been bought on experiment, together with other matters which must be interesting to a young gentleman who would one day be a landlord, Hetty tossed and patted her pound of butter with quite a self-possessed, coquettish air, slyly conscious that no turn of her head was lost.

There are various orders of beauty, causing men to make fools of themselves in various styles, from the desperate to the sheepish; but there is one order of beauty which seems made to turn the heads not only of men, but of all intelligent mammals, even of women. It is a beauty like that of kittens, or very small downy ducks making gentle rippling noises with their soft bills, or babies just beginning to toddle and to engage in conscious mischief—a beauty with which you can never be angry, but that you feel ready to crush for inability to comprehend the state of mind into which it throws you. Hetty Sorrel’s was that sort of beauty. Her aunt, Mrs. Poyser, who professed to despise all personal attractions and intended to be the severest of mentors, continually gazed at Hetty’s charms by the sly, fascinated in spite of herself; and after administering such a scolding as naturally flowed from her anxiety to do well by her husband’s niece—who had no mother of her own to scold her, poor thing!—she would often confess to her husband, when they were safe out of hearing, that she firmly believed, “the naughtier the little huzzy behaved, the prettier she looked.”

It is of little use for me to tell you that Hetty’s cheek was like a rose-petal, that dimples played about her pouting lips, that her large dark eyes hid a soft roguishness under their long lashes, and that her curly hair, though all pushed back under her round cap while she was at work, stole back in dark delicate rings on her forehead, and about her white shell-like ears; it is of little use for me to say how lovely was the contour of her pink-and-white neckerchief, tucked into her low plum-coloured stuff bodice, or how the linen butter-making apron, with its bib, seemed a thing to be imitated in silk by duchesses, since it fell in such charming lines, or how her brown stockings and thick-soled buckled shoes lost all that clumsiness which they must certainly have had when empty of her foot and ankle—of little use, unless you have seen a woman who affected you as Hetty affected her beholders, for otherwise, though you might conjure up the image of a lovely woman, she would not in the least resemble that distracting kitten-like maiden. I might mention all the divine charms of a bright spring day, but if you had never in your life utterly forgotten yourself in straining your eyes after the mounting lark, or in wandering through the still lanes when the fresh-opened blossoms fill them with a sacred silent beauty like that of fretted aisles, where would be the use of my descriptive catalogue? I could never make you know what I meant by a bright spring day. Hetty’s was a spring-tide beauty; it was the beauty of young frisking things, round-limbed, gambolling, circumventing you by a false air of innocence—the innocence of a young star-browed calf, for example, that, being inclined for a promenade out of bounds, leads you a severe steeplechase over hedge and ditch, and only comes to a stand in the middle of a bog.

And they are the prettiest attitudes and movements into which a pretty girl is thrown in making up butter—tossing movements that give a charming curve to the arm, and a sideward inclination of the round white neck; little patting

and rolling movements with the palm of the hand, and nice adaptations and finishings which cannot at all be effected without a great play of the pouting mouth and the dark eyes. And then the butter itself seems to communicate a fresh charm—it is so pure, so sweet-scented; it is turned off the mould with such a beautiful firm surface, like marble in a pale yellow light! Moreover, Hetty was particularly clever at making up the butter; it was the one performance of hers that her aunt allowed to pass without severe criticism; so she handled it with all the grace that belongs to mastery.

“I hope you will be ready for a great holiday on the thirtieth of July, Mrs. Poyser,” said Captain Donnithorne, when he had sufficiently admired the dairy and given several improvised opinions on Swede turnips and shorthorns. “You know what is to happen then, and I shall expect you to be one of the guests who come earliest and leave latest. Will you promise me your hand for two dances, Miss Hetty? If I don’t get your promise now, I know I shall hardly have a chance, for all the smart young farmers will take care to secure you.”

Hetty smiled and blushed, but before she could answer, Mrs. Poyser interposed, scandalized at the mere suggestion that the young squire could be excluded by any meaner partners.

“Indeed, sir, you are very kind to take that notice of her. And I’m sure, whenever you’re pleased to dance with her, she’ll be proud and thankful, if she stood still all the rest o’ th’ evening.”

“Oh no, no, that would be too cruel to all the other young fellows who can dance. But you will promise me two dances, won’t you?” the captain continued, determined to make Hetty look at him and speak to him.

Hetty dropped the prettiest little curtsy, and stole a half-shy, half-coquettish glance at him as she said, “Yes, thank you, sir.”

Chapter 13

Hetty walked hastily across the short space of pleasure-ground which she had to traverse, dreading to meet Mr. Craig, to whom she could hardly have spoken civilly. How relieved she was when she had got safely under the oaks and among the fern of the Chase! Even then she was as ready to be startled as the deer that leaped away at her approach. She thought nothing of the evening light that lay gently in the grassy alleys between the fern, and made the beauty of their living green more visible than it had been in the overpowering flood of noon: she thought of nothing that was present. She only saw something that was possible: Mr. Arthur Donnithorne coming to meet her again along the Fir-tree Grove. That was the foreground of Hetty’s picture; behind it lay a bright hazy something—days that were not to be as the other days of her life had been. It was as if she had been wooed by a river-god, who might any time take her to his wondrous halls below a watery heaven. There was no knowing what would come, since this strange entrancing delight had come. If a chest full of lace and satin and jewels had been sent her from some unknown source, how could she but have thought that her whole lot was going to change, and that to-morrow some still more bewildering joy would befall her? Hetty had never read a novel; if she had ever seen one, I think the words would have been too hard for her; how then could she find a shape for her expectations? They were as formless as the sweet languid odours of the garden at the Chase, which had floated past her as she walked by the gate.

Chapter 12

It was along the broadest of these paths that Arthur Donnithorne passed, under an avenue of limes and beeches. It was a still afternoon—the golden light was lingering languidly among the upper boughs, only glancing down here and there on the purple pathway and its edge of faintly sprinkled moss: an afternoon in which destiny disguises her cold awful face behind a hazy radiant veil, encloses us in warm downy wings, and poisons us with violet-scented breath. Arthur strolled along carelessly, with a book under his arm, but not looking on the ground as meditative men are apt to do; his eyes would fix themselves on the distant bend in the road round which a little figure must surely appear before long. Ah! There she comes. First a bright patch of colour, like a tropic bird among the boughs; then a tripping figure, with a round hat on, and a small basket under her arm; then a deep-blushing, almost frightened, but bright-smiling girl, making her curtsy with a fluttered yet happy glance, as Arthur came up to her. If Arthur had had time to think at all, he would have thought it strange that he should feel fluttered too, be conscious of blushing too—in fact, look and feel as foolish as if he had been taken by surprise instead of meeting just what he expected. Poor things! It was a pity they were not in that golden age of childhood when they would have stood face to face, eyeing each other with timid liking, then given each other a little butterfly kiss, and toddled off to play together. Arthur would have gone home to his silk-curtained cot, and Hetty to her home-spun pillow, and both would have slept without dreams, and to-morrow would have been a life hardly conscious of a yesterday.

Arthur turned round and walked by Hetty’s side without giving a reason. They were alone together for the first time. What an overpowering presence that first privacy is! He actually dared not look at this little butter-maker for the first minute or two. As for Hetty, her feet rested on a cloud, and she was borne along by warm zephyrs; she had forgotten her rose-coloured ribbons; she was no more conscious of her limbs than if her childish soul had passed into a water-lily, resting on a liquid bed and warmed by the midsummer sun-beams. It may seem a contradiction,

but Arthur gathered a certain carelessness and confidence from his timidity: it was an entirely different state of mind from what he had expected in such a meeting with Hetty; and full as he was of vague feeling, there was room, in those moments of silence, for the thought that his previous debates and scruples were needless.

"You are quite right to choose this way of coming to the Chase," he said at last, looking down at Hetty; "it is so much prettier as well as shorter than coming by either of the lodges."

"Yes, sir," Hetty answered, with a tremulous, almost whispering voice. She didn't know one bit how to speak to a gentleman like Mr. Arthur, and her very vanity made her more coy of speech....Do you always come back this way in the evening, or are you afraid to come so lonely a road?"

"Oh no, sir, it's never late; I always set out by eight o'clock, and it's so light now in the evening. My aunt would be angry with me if I didn't get home before nine."

"Perhaps Craig, the gardener, comes to take care of you?"

A deep blush overspread Hetty's face and neck. "I'm sure he doesn't; I'm sure he never did; I wouldn't let him; I don't like him," she said hastily, and the tears of vexation had come so fast that before she had done speaking a bright drop rolled down her hot cheek. Then she felt ashamed to death that she was crying, and for one long instant her happiness was all gone. But in the next she felt an arm steal round her, and a gentle voice said, "Why, Hetty, what makes you cry? I didn't mean to vex you. I wouldn't vex you for the world, you little blossom. Come, don't cry; look at me, else I shall think you won't forgive me."

Arthur had laid his hand on the soft arm that was nearest to him, and was stooping towards Hetty with a look of coaxing entreaty. Hetty lifted her long dewy lashes, and met the eyes that were bent towards her with a sweet, timid, beseeching look. What a space of time those three moments were while their eyes met and his arms touched her! Love is such a simple thing when we have only one-and-twenty summers and a sweet girl of seventeen trembles under our glance, as if she were a bud first opening her heart with wondering rapture to the morning. Such young unfurrowed souls roll to meet each other like two velvet peaches that touch softly and are at rest; they mingle as easily as two brooklets that ask for nothing but to entwine themselves and ripple with ever-interlacing curves in the leafiest hiding-places. While Arthur gazed into Hetty's dark beseeching eyes, it made no difference to him what sort of English she spoke; and even if hoops and powder had been in fashion, he would very likely not have been sensible just then that Hetty wanted those signs of high breeding.

But they started asunder with beating hearts: something had fallen on the ground with a rattling noise; it was Hetty's basket; all her little workwoman's matters were scattered on the path, some of them showing a capability of rolling to great lengths. There was much to be done in picking up, and not a word was spoken; but when Arthur hung the basket over her arm again, the poor child felt a strange difference in his look and manner. He just pressed her hand, and said, with a look and tone that were almost chilling to her, "I have been hindering you; I must not keep you any longer now. You will be expected at the house. Good-bye."

[S]he thought of nothing that was present. She only saw something that was possible: Mr. Arthur Donnithorne coming to meet her again along the Fir-tree Grove. That was the foreground of Hetty's picture; behind it lay a bright hazy something—days that were not to be as the other days of her life had been. It was as if she had been wooed by a river-god, who might any time take her to his wondrous halls below a watery heaven. There was no knowing what would come, since this strange entrancing delight had come. If a chest full of lace and satin and jewels had been sent her from some unknown source, how could she but have thought that her whole lot was going to change, and that to-morrow some still more bewildering joy would befall her? Hetty had never read a novel; if she had ever seen one, I think the words would have been too hard for her; how then could she find a shape for her expectations? They were as formless as the sweet languid odours of the garden at the Chase, which had floated past her as she walked by the gate.

Ruth

Chapter 1

Miss Sutton, Miss Jennings, Miss Booth, and Miss Hilton, you will see that you are ready to accompany me to the shire-hall by eight o'clock..."to Ruth it was inexplicable. She had yawned, and loitered, and looked off at the beautiful panel, and lost herself in thoughts of home, until she fully expected the reprimand which at any other time she would have been sure to receive, and now, to her surprise, she was singled out as one of the most diligent!...

"Tiresome girl!" muttered Mrs Mason; "I've half a mind to keep her at home for plaguing me so." But, looking up, she was struck afresh with the remarkable beauty which Ruth possessed; such a credit to the house, with her waving outline of figure, her striking face, with dark eyebrows and dark lashes, combined with auburn hair and a fair complexion. No! diligent or idle, Ruth Hilton must appear to-night.

"Miss Hilton," said Mrs Mason, with stiff dignity, "I am not accustomed (as these young ladies can tell you) to have my decisions questioned. What I say, I mean; and I have my reasons. So sit down, if you please, and take care and be

ready by eight. Not a word more," as she fancied she saw Ruth again about to speak.

"Jenny! you ought to have gone, not me," said Ruth, in no low voice to Miss Wood, as she sat down by her.

Dress, young ladies, you know, is a very secondary consideration. Conduct is everything. Still, Miss Hilton, I think you should write and ask your guardian to send you money for another gown. I am sorry I did not think of it before."

"I do not think he would send any if I wrote," answered Ruth, in a low voice. "He was angry when I wanted a shawl, when the cold weather set in."

Mrs Mason gave her a little push of dismissal, and Ruth fell into the ranks by her friend, Miss Wood.

"Never mind, Ruthie; you're prettier than any of them," said a merry, good-natured girl, whose plainness excluded her from any of the envy of rivalry.

"Yes! I know I am pretty," said Ruth, sadly, "but I am sorry I have no better gown, for this is very shabby. I am ashamed of it myself, and I can see Mrs Mason is twice as much ashamed. I wish I need not go. I did not know we should have to think about our own dress at all, or I should not have wished to go."

Chapter 2

"Oh, Mr Bellingham! I'm ashamed to detain you so long. I had no idea any one could have spent so much time over a little tear. No wonder Mrs Mason charges so much for dress-making, if her work-women are so slow."

It was meant to be witty, but Mr Bellingham looked grave. He saw the scarlet colour of annoyance flush to that beautiful cheek which was partially presented to him. He took a candle from the table, and held it so that Ruth had more light. She did not look up to thank him, for she felt ashamed that he should have seen the smile which she had caught from him.

"I am sorry I have been so long, ma'am," said she, gently, as she finished her work. "I was afraid it might tear out again if I did not do it carefully." She rose.

"I would rather have had it torn than have missed that charming galop," said the young lady, shaking out her dress as a bird shakes its plumage. "Shall we go, Mr Bellingham?" looking up at him.

He was surprised that she gave no word or sign of thanks to the assistant. He took up a camellia that some one had left on the table.

"Allow me, Miss Duncombe, to give this in your name to this young lady, as thanks for her dexterous help."

"Oh—of course," said she.

Ruth received the flower silently, but with a grave, modest motion of her head. They had gone, and she was once more alone. Presently, her companions returned.

"What was the matter with Miss Duncombe? Did she come here?" asked they.

"Only her lace dress was torn, and I mended it," answered Ruth, quietly.

"Did Mr Bellingham come with her? They say he's going to be married to her; did he come, Ruth?"

"Yes," said Ruth, and relapsed into silence.

The Rescue

At last, one little man, envious of the reputation that his playfellow was acquiring by his daring, called out:

"I'll set thee a craddy, Tom! Thou dar'n't go over yon black line in the water, out into the real river."

Of course the challenge was not to be refused, and Tom paddled away towards the dark line, beyond which the river swept with smooth, steady current. Ruth (a child in years herself) stood at the top of the declivity watching the adventurer, but as unconscious of any danger as the group of children below...Tom stood in childish dignity for a moment, facing his admirers; then, in an instant, his washing-tub boat was whirled round, and he lost his balance, and fell out; and both he and his boat were carried away slowly, but surely, by the strong full river which eternally moved onwards to the sea.

The children shrieked aloud with terror; and Ruth flew down to the little bay, and far into its shallow waters, before she felt how useless such an action was, and that the sensible plan would have been to seek for efficient help. Hardly had this thought struck her, when, louder and sharper than the sullen roar of the stream that was ceaselessly and unrelentingly flowing on, came the splash of a horse galloping through the water in which she was standing. Past her like lightning—down in the stream, swimming along with the current—a stooping rider—an outstretched, grasping arm—a little life redeemed, and a child saved to those who loved it! Ruth stood dizzy and sick with emotion while all this took place; and when the rider turned his swimming horse, and slowly breasted up the river to the landing-place, she recognised him as the Mr Bellingham of the night before. He carried the unconscious child across his horse; the body hung in so lifeless a manner that Ruth believed it was dead, and her eyes were suddenly blinded with tears. She waded back to the beach, to the point towards which Mr Bellingham was directing his horse..."One of you go for a doctor at once," said Mr Bellingham, authoritatively, "and bring him to the old woman's without delay. You must not hold him any longer," he continued, speaking to Ruth, and remembering her face now for the first time; "your dress is dripping wet already. Here! you fellow, take him up, d'ye see!"

But the child's hand had nervously clenched Ruth's dress, and she would not have him disturbed. She carried her heavy burden very tenderly towards a mean little cottage indicated by the neighbours; an old crippled woman was coming out of the door, shaking all over with agitation.

"Dear heart!" said she, "he's the last of 'em all, and he's gone afore me."

"Nonsense," said Mr Bellingham, "the boy is alive, and likely to live."

But the old woman was helpless and hopeless, and insisted on believing that her grandson was dead; and dead he would have been if it had not been for Ruth, and one or two of the more sensible neighbours, who, under Mr Bellingham's directions, bustled about, and did all that was necessary until animation was restored.

"What a confounded time these people are in fetching the doctor," said Mr Bellingham to Ruth, between whom and himself a sort of silent understanding had sprung up from the circumstance of their having been the only two (besides mere children) who had witnessed the accident, and also the only two to whom a certain degree of cultivation had given the power of understanding each other's thoughts and even each other's words.

"It takes so much to knock an idea into such stupid people's heads. They stood gaping and asking which doctor they were to go for, as if it signified whether it was Brown or Smith, so long as he had his wits about him. I have no more time to waste here, either; I was on the gallop when I caught sight of the lad; and, now he has fairly sobbed and opened his eyes, I see no use in my staying in this stifling atmosphere. May I trouble you with one thing? Will you be so good as to see that the little fellow has all that he wants? If you'll allow me, I'll leave you my purse," continued he, giving it to Ruth, who was only too glad to have this power entrusted to her of procuring one or two requisites which she had perceived to be wanted. But she saw some gold between the net-work; she did not like the charge of such riches.

"I shall not want so much, really, sir. One sovereign will be plenty—more than enough. May I take that out, and I will give you back what is left of it when I see you again? or, perhaps I had better send it to you, sir?"

"I think you had better keep it all at present. Oh! what a horrid dirty place this is; insufferable two minutes longer. You must not stay here; you'll be poisoned with this abominable air. Come towards the door, I beg. Well, if you think one sovereign will be enough, I will take my purse; only, remember you apply to me if you think they want more."... They were standing at the door, where some one was holding Mr Bellingham's horse. Ruth was looking at him with her earnest eyes (Mrs Mason and her errands quite forgotten in the interest of the afternoon's event), her whole thoughts bent upon rightly understanding and following out his wishes for the little boy's welfare; and until now this had been the first object in his own mind. But at this moment the strong perception of Ruth's exceeding beauty came again upon him. He almost lost the sense of what he was saying, he was so startled into admiration. The night before, he had not seen her eyes; and now they looked straight and innocently full at him, grave, earnest, and deep. But when she instinctively read the change in the expression of his countenance, she dropped her large white veiling lids; and he thought her face was lovelier still.

The irresistible impulse seized him to arrange matters so that he might see her again before long.

"No!" said he. "I see it would be better that you should keep the purse. Many things may be wanted for the lad which we cannot calculate upon now. If I remember rightly, there are three sovereigns and some loose change; I shall, perhaps, see you again in a few days, when, if there be any money left in the purse, you can restore it to me."

"Oh, yes, sir," said Ruth, alive to the magnitude of the wants to which she might have to administer, and yet rather afraid of the responsibility implied in the possession of so much money.....

"Is there any chance of my meeting you again in this house?" asked he.

"I hope to come whenever I can, sir; but I must run in errand-times, and I don't know when my turn may be."

"Oh"—he did not fully understand this answer—"I should like to know how you think the boy is going on, if it is not giving you too much trouble; do you ever take walks?"

"Not for walking's sake, sir."

"Well!" said he, "you go to church, I suppose? Mrs Mason does not keep you at work on Sundays, I trust?"

"Oh, no, sir. I go to church regularly."

"Then, perhaps, you will be so good as to tell me what church you go to, and I will meet you there next Sunday afternoon?"

"I go to St Nicholas', sir. I will take care and bring you word how the boy is, and what doctor they get; and I will keep an account of the money I spend."

"Very well; thank you. Remember, I trust to you."

He meant that he relied on her promise to meet him; but Ruth thought that he was referring to the responsibility of doing the best she could for the child. He was going away, when a fresh thought struck him, and he turned back into the cottage once more, and addressed Ruth, with a half smile on his countenance:

"It seems rather strange, but we have no one to introduce us; my name is Bellingham—yours is—?"

"Ruth Hilton, sir," she answered, in a low voice, for, now that the conversation no longer related to the boy, she felt shy and restrained.

He held out his hand to shake hers, and just as she gave it to him, the old grandmother came tottering up to ask some question. The interruption jarred upon him, and made him once more keenly alive to the closeness of the air, and the squalor and dirt by which he was surrounded.

"My good woman," said he to Nelly Brownson, "could you not keep your place a little neater and cleaner? It is more fit for pigs than human beings. The air in this room is quite offensive, and the dirt and filth is really disgraceful."

By this time he was mounted, and, bowing to Ruth, he rode away.

Then the old woman's wrath broke out.

"Who may you be, that knows no better manners than to come into a poor woman's house to abuse it?—fit for pigs, indeed! What d'ye call yon fellow?"

"Nay, Ruth, you are not going to have secrets from me, are you? Don't you remember your promise to consider me as a brother? Go on telling me everything that happens to you, pray; you cannot think how much interest I take in all your interests. I can quite fancy that charming home at Milham you told me about last Sunday. I can almost fancy Mrs Mason's workroom; and that, surely, is a proof either of the strength of my imagination, or of your powers of description."

Ruth smiled. "It is, indeed, sir. Our workroom must be so different to anything you ever saw. I think you must have passed through Milham often on your way to Lowford."

"Then you don't think it is any stretch of fancy to have so clear an idea as I have of Milham Grange? On the left hand of the road, is it, Ruth?"

"Yes, sir, just over the bridge, and up the hill where the elm-trees meet overhead and make a green shade; and then comes the dear old Grange, that I shall never see again."

"Never! Nonsense, Ruthie; it is only six miles off; you may see it any day. It is not an hour's ride."

"Perhaps I may see it again when I am grown old; I did not think exactly what 'never' meant; it is so very long since I was there, and I don't see any chance of my going for years and years, at any rate."

"Why, Ruth, you—we may go next Sunday afternoon, if you like."

She looked up at him with a lovely light of pleasure in her face at the idea. "How, sir? Can I walk it between afternoon service and the time Mrs Mason comes home? I would go for only one glimpse; but if I could get into the house—oh, sir! if I could just see mamma's room again!"

He was revolving plans in his head for giving her this pleasure, and he had also his own in view. If they went in any of his carriages, the loitering charm of the walk would be lost; and they must, to a certain degree, be encumbered by, and exposed to, the notice of servants.

"Are you a good walker, Ruth? Do you think you can manage six miles? If we set off at two o'clock, we shall be there by four, without hurrying; or say half-past four. Then we might stay two hours, and you could show me all the old walks and old places you love, and we could still come leisurely home. Oh, it's all arranged directly!"

"But do you think it would be right, sir? It seems as if it would be such a great pleasure, that it must be in some way wrong."

"Why, you little goose, what can be wrong in it?"

"In the first place, I miss going to church by setting out at two," said Ruth, a little gravely.

"Only for once. Surely you don't see any harm in missing church for once? You will go in the morning, you know."

"I wonder if Mrs Mason would think it right—if she would allow it?"

"No, I dare say not. But you don't mean to be governed by Mrs Mason's notions of right and wrong. She thought it right to treat that poor girl Palmer in the way you told me about. You would think that wrong, you know, and so would every one of sense and feeling. Come, Ruth, don't pin your faith on any one, but judge for yourself. The pleasure is perfectly innocent; it is not a selfish pleasure either, for I shall enjoy it to the full as much as you will. I shall like to see the places where you spent your childhood; I shall almost love them as much as you do." He had dropped his voice; and spoke in low, persuasive tones. Ruth hung down her head, and blushed with exceeding happiness; but she could not speak, even to urge her doubts afresh. Thus it was in a manner settled.

How delightfully happy the plan made her through the coming week! She was too young when her mother died to have received any cautions or words of advice respecting the subject of a woman's life—if, indeed, wise parents ever directly speak of what, in its depth and power, cannot be put into words—which is a brooding spirit with no definite form or shape that men should know it, but which is there, and present before we have recognised and realised its existence. Ruth was innocent and snow-pure. She had heard of falling in love, but did not know the signs and symptoms thereof; nor, indeed, had she troubled her head much about them. Sorrow had filled up her days, to the exclusion of all lighter thoughts than the consideration of present duties, and the remembrance of the happy time which had been. But the interval of blank, after the loss of her mother and during her father's life-in-death, had made her all the more ready to value and cling to sympathy—first from Jenny, and now from Mr Bellingham. To see her home again, and to see it with him; to show him (secure of his interest) the haunts of former times, each with its little tale of the past—of

dead and gone events!—No coming shadow threw its gloom over this week's dream of happiness—a dream which was too bright to be spoken about to common and indifferent ears. Chapter 2

Chapter 4

They sauntered through the fragrant lanes, as if their loitering would prolong the time, and check the fiery-footed steeds galloping apace towards the close of the happy day. It was past five o'clock before they came to the great mill-wheel, which stood in Sabbath idleness, motionless in a brown mass of shade, and still wet with yesterday's immersion in the deep transparent water beneath. They clambered the little hill, not yet fully shaded by the overarching elms; and then Ruth checked Mr Bellingham, by a slight motion of the hand which lay within his arm, and glanced up into his face to see what that face should express as it looked on Milham Grange, now lying still and peaceful in its afternoon shadows. ... "And who's yon?" asked the old labourer at last. "Is he your sweetheart? Your missis's son, I reckon. He's a spruce young chap, anyhow."

Mr Bellingham's "blood of all the Howards" rose and tingled about his ears, so that he could not hear Ruth's answer. It began by "Hush, Thomas; pray hush!" but how it went on he did not catch. The idea of his being Mrs Mason's son! It was really too ridiculous; but, like most things which are "too ridiculous," it made him very angry. He was hardly himself again when Ruth shyly came to the window-recess and asked him if he would like to see the house-place...

Section 3 -Marriage

8 Finally, what is being said about gender and class in the extracts below?

9 How is Eliot's presentation similar to or different from Gaskell's?

Donnithorne

He was feeling much more strongly than he had done in the morning: it was as if his horse had wheeled round from a leap and dared to dispute his mastery. He was dissatisfied with himself, irritated, mortified. He no sooner fixed his mind on the probable consequences of giving way to the emotions which had stolen over him to-day—of continuing to notice Hetty, of allowing himself any opportunity for such slight caresses as he had been betrayed into already—than he refused to believe such a future possible for himself. To flirt with Hetty was a very different affair from flirting with a pretty girl of his own station: that was understood to be an amusement on both sides, or, if it became serious, there was no obstacle to marriage. But this little thing would be spoken ill of directly, if she happened to be seen walking with him; and then those excellent people, the Poysers, to whom a good name was as precious as if they had the best blood in the land in their veins—he should hate himself if he made a scandal of that sort, on the estate that was to be his own some day, and among tenants by whom he liked, above all, to be respected. He could no more believe that he should so fall in his own esteem than that he should break both his legs and go on crutches all the rest of his life. He couldn't imagine himself in that position; it was too odious, too unlike him.

And even if no one knew anything about it, they might get too fond of each other, and then there could be nothing but the misery of parting, after all. No gentleman, out of a ballad, could marry a farmer's niece. There must be an end to the whole thing at once. It was too foolish.

Bellingham

...it was time enough to be married ten years hence; and so he was dawdling through some months of his life—sometimes flirting with the nothing-loath Miss Duncombe, sometimes plaguing, and sometimes delighting his mother, at all times taking care to please himself—when he first saw Ruth Hilton, and a new, passionate, hearty feeling shot through his whole being. He did not know why he was so fascinated by her. She was very beautiful, but he had seen others equally beautiful, and with many more agaceries calculated to set off the effect of their charms.

There was, perhaps, something bewitching in the union of the grace and loveliness of womanhood with the naïveté, simplicity, and innocence of an intelligent child. There was a spell in the shyness, which made her avoid and shun all admiring approaches to acquaintance. It would be an exquisite delight to attract and tame her wildness, just as he had often allured and tamed the timid fawns in his mother's park.