Chapter 1

1. What do you learn about the trade of weaving from the opening pages of the novel?

2. What reasons does George Eliot give to explain why Silas Marner is viewed with suspicion by the residents of Raveloe even after he has lived there for fifteen years?

3. Put these events in order to explain the circumstances which lead to Silas’s departure from Lantern Yard:

A. The members of the church pray and draw lots to discover whether or not Silas is guilty.

B. During Silas’s shift, the old man dies.

C. One of the members of the church becomes seriously ill and church-goers take turns to sit with him at night.

D. William discovers the empty money bag in Silas’s room.

E. Silas is accused of stealing money while he is in the room, leaving his knife behind as evidence.

F. Silas has a fit in church and is regarded with suspicion by his friend, William Dane.

G. Silas is found guilty and forced to leave the church. He also loses his fiancée, Sarah.

4. What can you find out about **cleromancy** (the drawing of lots) as a method of ‘justice’ in the Bible or in more modern contexts? What does the use of this method reveal about the chapel community in Lantern Yard?

5. Why do you think that Silas accepted the guilty judgement of the chapel community, despite his innocence?
Chapter 2

6. Find two quotations in this chapter in which Silas is compared to a ‘spider’ or a ‘spinning insect’. What does this comparison suggest about Silas and his situation at this point in the novel?

7. In this chapter Silas is depicted as a miser - a character who hoards money. Avarice (the love of money) is regarded in Christian belief as a sinful characteristic; it is one of the seven deadly sins.

Many misers in literature or fables are characters who are seen as selfish, mean, morally corrupt and often universally disliked. They are also portrayed as figures of fun or characters to be derided or mocked. Ebenezer Scrooge in A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens is one such character. Can you think of others in literature?

Which word best describes George Eliot's attitude towards the character of Silas Marner? Find a quotation to support your decision.

- mocking
- compassionate
- sympathetic
- pitying

Chapter 3

8. The ‘glorious war-time’ mentioned in Chapter 3 refers to the Napoleonic Wars. Complete some research about these wars:

- How long did they go on for?
- What effect did they have on Britain?
- Why were they regarded positively by the landed people of Raveloe such as Squire Cass?

9. Make mind maps for the two new characters introduced in this chapter - Godfrey Cass and his brother, Dunstan. You can add information to these as you read on.

10. Can you explain why Godfrey Cass who is described as ‘good-humoured and affectionate-hearted’ was ‘fast becoming a bitter man’?
11. Add to your mind-map about Dunstan's character from the new information from this chapter.

12. Use the information in this chapter and the previous one to complete the following flow diagram of the events which lead Dunstan to steal Silas Marner’s money.

Godfrey asks Dunstan for the £100 which he has lent to him. The money is rent which should have been paid to his father, Squire Cass.

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Dunstan threatens to tell Squire Cass the truth about Godfrey's secret marriage to Molly Farren.

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Godfrey agrees to let Dunstan sell his horse, Wildfire in order to get the money for his father.

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13. How does George Eliot suggest to the reader that Dunstan’s journey, both towards and away from the cottage, is treacherous? What ideas do you have about Dunstan’s fate?
14. How does George Eliot use of language show the shock of Silas’s discovery in this extract from the chapter? Annotate it carefully, considering:

- Narrative voice
- Use of verbs and adverbs
- Sentence structure
- Rhetorical questions

As soon as he was warm he began to think it would be a long while to wait till after supper before he drew out his guineas, and it would be pleasant to see them on the table before him as he ate his unwonted feast. For joy is the best of wine, and Silas’s guineas were a golden wine of that sort.

He rose and placed his candle unsuspectingly on the floor near his loom, swept away the sand without noticing any change, and removed the bricks. The sight of the empty hole made his heart leap violently, but the belief that his gold was gone could not come at once—only terror, and the eager effort to put an end to the terror. He passed his trembling hand all about the hole, trying to think it possible that his eyes had deceived him; then he held the candle in the hole and examined it curiously, trembling more and more. At last he shook so violently that he let fall the candle, and lifted his hands to his head, trying to steady himself, that he might think. Had he put his gold somewhere else, by a sudden resolution last night, and then forgotten it? A man falling into dark waters seeks a momentary footing even on sliding stones; and Silas, by acting as if he believed in false hopes, warded off the moment of despair. He searched in every corner, he turned his bed over, and shook it, and kneaded it; he looked in his brick oven where he laid his sticks. When there was no other place to be searched, he kneeled down again and felt once more all round the hole. There was no untried refuge left for a moment’s shelter from the terrible truth.

15. What course of action does Silas plan to take now?
Chapter 6

16. The following characters are introduced in this chapter. Match them with their professions or roles in Raveloe:

- **Mr Macey**: wheelwright and choirmaster
- **Bob Lundy**: butcher
- **Mr Snell**: farrier
- **Mr Dowlas**: deputy-clerk
- **Mr Winthrop**: tailor and parish-clerk
- **Mr Tookey**: landlord of the Rainbow

17. The minor characters introduced in Chapter 6 discuss the following topics: a cow owned by the Lammeters; Mr Tookey’s future in the choir; the humorous story of Mr and Mrs Lammeter’s mixed up wedding vows and the apparent haunting of the stables at the Warrens by Mr Cliff, the previous owner.

Why do you think George Eliot has included this chapter in the novel? Is it necessary to the development of the plot? What would the book lose if it wasn’t included? Share your ideas with a partner.

Chapter 7

18. How is Silas received by the drinkers at the Rainbow?

19. What do they do to help Silas?

Chapters 8 and 9

20. What do you learn about the character of Squire Cass?

21. What is the nature of the mental struggle suffered by Godfrey in this chapter?

22. Squire Cass and his family represent the landed gentry in the village; the family owns land which has been passed down through generations. What views do you have about the behaviour and attitudes of Squire Cass and his sons? What is George Eliot’s view of them?

23. Why does Godfrey entrust his future to ‘Favourable Chance’? What does this suggest about his character? How does this link him to Silas?
Chapter 10

24. Find short quotations to show the ways that Silas is affected by the loss of his money. Complete the table below to show his reactions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative effect</th>
<th>Positive effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘withering desolation of that bereavement.’</td>
<td>‘the repulsion Marner had always created in his neighbours was partly dissipated’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. Imagine that Dolly Winthrop keeps a diary. Write an account of her first visit to Silas’s cottage. Consider:

- her feelings about his character
- what she learns about his past
- her advice to him about church.

Chapter 11

26. Make a Venn diagram to compare the characters of Nancy and Priscilla Lammeter.

27. Which of the sisters is the most likeable in your opinion? What do you think George Eliot feels about these characters?

28. The New Year’s Eve ball is a significant event in the Raveloe social calendar. Imagine that a journalist from the Raveloe Reporter is present at the ball. Write an article about the evening’s events. You should comment on:

- the guests
- the fashions
- the dances.
Chapter 12

29. Molly Farren is introduced in this chapter and dies in the snow on New Year's Eve as a result of her addiction to the ‘demon Opium to whom she was enslaved.’

Working with a partner, conduct some research into opium and drug abuse during the Georgian and Victorian eras.

30. What are your predictions about the course of events from this point in the story? What impact will Molly's death have on the characters of Godfrey, Nancy, Silas and the child?

31. The child’s arrival on Silas’s hearth takes on a symbolic significance in this chapter. How does George Eliot suggest this through her use of language in this extract from the chapter?

a) Annotate it carefully, considering:
   - narrative style / Silas's thoughts
   - sentence structure
   - descriptive vocabulary.

b) Extension activity: Write an analytical response to the extract in PEEL paragraphs.

Turning towards the hearth, where the two logs had fallen apart, and sent forth only a red uncertain glimmer, he seated himself on his fireside chair, and was stooping to push his logs together, when, to his blurred vision, it seemed as if there were gold on the floor in front of the hearth. Gold!—his own gold—brought back to him as mysteriously as it had been taken away! He felt his heart begin to beat violently, and for a few moments he was unable to stretch out his hand and grasp the restored treasure. The heap of gold seemed to glow and get larger beneath his agitated gaze. He leaned forward at last, and stretched forth his hand; but instead of the hard coin with the familiar resisting outline, his fingers encountered soft warm curls. In utter amazement, Silas fell on his knees and bent his head low to examine the marvel: it was a sleeping child—a round, fair thing, with soft yellow rings all over its head. Could this be his little sister come back to him in a dream—his little sister whom he had carried about in his arms for a year before she died, when he was a small boy without shoes or stockings? That was the first thought that darted across Silas's blank wonderment. Was it a dream?
Chapter 13

32. In this chapter Godfrey is unsure whether Molly is a dead or alive. What do the two possible outcomes mean for Godfrey?

33. Conduct a hot-seating interview with Nancy Lammeter after the New Year’s Eve ball. Refer to this chapter and Chapter 11. Working in groups, decide on the questions that you wish to ask her, for example:
   - Why did you agree to dance with Godfrey Cass when you had clearly made up your mind not to? (‘If Mr Godfrey founded any hopes on her consenting to dance with him, he would soon be undeceived’)
   - What is your opinion of Godfrey’s character?

Chapter 14

34. What is the significance of religion and the church for Silas and Eppie in this chapter?

35. How does George Eliot present Silas as a father figure in this chapter? Why is he unable to punish Eppie in the way that Dolly suggests he should?

36. How does George Eliot use language and imagery to show the healing power of Eppie’s arrival in this extract from the novel?
   a) Annotate the extract, paying close attention to:
      - narrative voice
      - use of similes and metaphors
      - sentence structure.
Silas began now to think of Raveloe life entirely in relation to Eppie: she must have everything that was a good in Raveloe; and he listened docilely, that he might come to understand better what this life was, from which, for fifteen years, he had stood aloof as from a strange thing, with which he could have no communion: as some man who has a precious plant to which he would give a nurturing home in a new soil, thinks of the rain, and sunshine, and all influences, in relation to his nursling, and asks industriously for all knowledge that will help him to satisfy the wants of the searching roots, or to guard leaf and bud from invading harm. The disposition to hoard had been utterly crushed at the very first by the loss of his long-stored gold: the coins he earned afterwards seemed as irrelevant as stones brought to complete a house suddenly buried by an earthquake; the sense of bereavement was too heavy upon him for the old thrill of satisfaction to arise again at the touch of the newly-earned coin. And now something had come to replace his hoard which gave a growing purpose to the earnings, drawing his hope and joy continually onward beyond the money.

In old days there were angels who came and took men by the hand and led them away from the city of destruction. We see no white-winged angels now. But yet men are led away from threatening destruction: a hand is put into theirs, which leads them forth gently towards a calm and bright land, so that they look no more backward; and the hand may be a little child's.

b) When you have finished reading the novel, answer the following question based on the same extract (choose the appropriate exam board).

You should use the extract and your knowledge of the whole novel to answer this question.

Write about Eppie’s role as presented in the novel.

In your response you should:
• refer to the extract and the novel as a whole
• show your understanding of characters and events in the novel
• refer to the contexts of the novel.

(Edexcel style question)

Explore how Eliot presents children in this extract and elsewhere in the novel.

(Edexcel style question)
37. ‘He felt a reformed man, delivered from temptation; and the vision of his future life seemed to him as a promised land.’

Using the above quotation as a starting point, consider Godfrey’s character up to this point in the novel.

What sort of future do you think George Eliot is predicting for him?