

Characters

Besides Silas Marner and Eppie, there are a number of other important characters in the novel. Read the information below and firstly decide which description goes with which character:

A	Dolly Winthrop	1	'... a fine, open-faced, good-natured young man ...'
B	Godfrey Cass	2	'... the entrance of that cheerful-looking lady herself, with a face made blowsy by cold and damp. ... the square-shouldered, clumsy, high-featured ...'
C	Dunstan Cass	3	'... she was in all respects a woman of scrupulous conscience, so eager for duties that life seemed to offer them too scantily unless she rose at half-past four, though this threw scarcity of work over the more advanced hours of the morning, which it was a constant problem with her to remove. Yet she had the vixenish temper which is sometimes supposed to be a necessary condition of such habits: she was a very mild, patient woman, whose nature it was to seek out all the sadder and more serious elements of life, and pasture her mind upon them.'
D	Nancy Lammeter	4	'... in her dingy rags, with her faded face, once as handsome as the best.'
E	Priscilla Lammeter	5	'... a thickset, heavy-looking young man entered, with the flushed face and the gratuitously elated bearing, which mark the first stage of intoxication.'
F	Molly	6	'Everything belonging to [her] was of delicate purity and nattiness: not a crease was where it had no business to be, not a bit of her linen professed whiteness without fulfilling its profession; the very pins on her pincushion were stuck in after a pattern from which she was careful to allow no aberration; and as for her own person, it gave the same idea of perfect unvarying neatness as the body of a little bird. It is true that her light-brown hair was cropped behind like a boy's, and was dressed in front of a number of flat rings, that lay quite away from her face; but there was no sort of coiffure that could make [her] cheek and neck look otherwise than pretty; and when at last she stood complete in her silvery twilled silk, her lace tucker, her coral necklace, and coral drop ear drops, [they] could see nothing to criticize except her hands, which bore the traces of butter-making, cheese-crushing, and even still coarser work.'

A __

B __

C __

D __

E __

F __

Once you have decided which description matches which character talk with a partner about the different ways Eliot describes her characters, using the questions and statements below to guide you:

1. Consider why some are just described in a few sentences whilst others have a paragraph or more.
2. Think about what impression Eliot is trying to give us, her readers. What sort of details are we given about each character?
3. Look at which parts of a physical description Eliot focuses on: often it is hands and faces, as it is with the description of Marner himself; why do you think she picks these characteristics out in particular?
4. Are descriptions always about physical attributes or do some have more than that?
5. Which character here is described less in physical terms and more with reference to her personality? Why might Eliot have made this distinction?
6. Do you think the difference in Eliot's descriptions of the characters is related to their social status or class? What might Eliot be implying by this?

After you have had your discussion, feedback to the rest of the class with your ideas and compare them to others'.

Next, choose one character (your teacher might decide this for you) and create a more detailed profile of their personality and appearance; find quotations from the novel to support your ideas and include other characters' opinions of them. Try to track the character's description through the novel as you might find that both Eliot's attitudes and the way they are viewed by others changes.

Use the space below to jot down your initial ideas: