

The

George Eliot

# MIL on the FLOSS



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### University Questions

1. Discuss Maggie Tulliver as "the unifying principle" of *The Mill on the Floss*.
2. In Maggie Tulliver, as characterised by George Eliot, is a "permanent criticism of ordinary life anywhere and in any time". Discuss.
3. "She longs and yearns for the unattainable, and she is born in uncongenial circumstances". Is this an apt summing up of Maggie Tulliver's character?
4. How far is Maggie Tulliver an illustration of George Eliot's stated purpose of truthfully representing "character essentially noble but liable to great error that is anguish to its own nobleness"?
5. George Eliot's characters are never wholly good or wholly bad. Discuss the character of Tom Tulliver in the light of this statement.
5. Tom is "commonplace, self-righteous, trustworthy, never tempted to any excess, quite uncomplicated by emotions at all". Is that a correct estimate of Tom Tulliver? Illustrate your answer from *The Mill on the Floss*.
7. "The reader winces at the picture of this bejewelled and perfumed young spark, and everything that follows is unfortunately tainted by the introductory image". Justify or refute this opinion about Stephen Guest.
8. "Stephen is certainly more honest about his love than Maggie who is deeply committed to Philip and far less candid with herself and others in acknowledging it." Discuss the character of Stephen Guest in the light of this statement.
9. "Certainly he is only seen from outside and is a local dandy: a vain, complacent, trivial young man." Discuss with reference to Stephen Guest.
10. "I flutter all ways and fly in none". How far is this true of Philip Wakem?
11. "Though the Dodsons are a clan, each aunt and each uncle has a precise individuality". Discuss.

12. Show how the aunts and uncles in *The Mill on the Floss* have been skilfully individualised and how they contribute to the novel.
  13. Write a critical note on the minor characters in *The Mill on the Floss* and their role in the novel.
  14. "Bob is the only complete human being in the book". Do you agree? Discuss in detail.
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#### University Questions

1. From your reading of *The Mill on the Floss* what can you deduce about English family?
2. George Eliot is at pains to acquaint us with the background, the traditions, and the heritage of the families she is dealing with in *The Mill on the Floss*. Discuss and illustrate this statement.
3. The aim of George Eliot in giving a detailed picture of the various families in *The Mill on the Floss* is to convey to us the oppressive narrowness which adversely affected the lives of Tom and Maggie. Elaborate this statement.
4. The story is often halted to enable the novelist to comment upon the different families in *The Mill on the Floss*. Do you think this is relevant to the effect of the novel? Give reasons for your answer.
5. George Eliot's portrayal of English life in *The Mill on the Floss* is a source of great humour and shows the author's shrewd insight into human psychology. Discuss.

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#### **The Form and Structure of "The Mill on the Floss"**

Or

#### **"The Mill on the Floss" : Merits and Defects of Plot Construction**

Or

#### **"The Mill on the Floss" : A Great Flawed Novel**

#### University Questions

1. Give a critical estimate of the plot and structure of *The Mill on the Floss*.
2. "The Mill on the Floss is a great flawed novel."

- Consider this dictum and substantiate or refute it giving reasons for your answer.
3. The plot construction *The Mill on the Floss* suffers from some defects. Discuss and illustrate these defects and point out their effect on the novel as a whole.
  4. "The second half of *The Mill on the Floss* is less closely autobiographical and much weaker." Consider the plot of the novel in the light of the above statement.
  5. "The chief defect—indeed, the only serious one—in *The Mill on the Floss* is its conclusion. Substantiate this statement.

8. **Characterization in "The Mill on the Floss"**  
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**George Eliot's Skill in the Delineation of Character in "The Mill on the Floss"**

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**University Questions**

1. "George Eliot was the first novelist to lay stress wholly upon character rather than incident, to make her stories spiritual rather than physical dramas." Discuss this statement with reference to *The Mill on the Floss*.
2. George Eliot had a wide range of observation and generous sympathies which helped to give breadth and variety to her canvas. Substantiate this statement from your knowledge of the characterization in *The Mill on the Floss*.
3. The characters delineated by George Eliot, whether simple or deep, comic or serious, thoughtful or foolish, are always convincing. Illustrate the truth of this statement from *The Mill on the Floss*.
4. "The characters are individualized by their mental complexions; their evolution is a mental one; they change, develop, deteriorate, in consequence of seeing things differently." How far does this dictum describe George Eliot's delineation of characters in *The Mill on the Floss*?
5. George Eliot was chiefly concerned with exploring and trying to understand human motives. How far do you think she has succeeded in doing this in *The Mill on the Floss*?
6. "Her portraits are primarily portraits of the

- inner man." Substantiate from what you know of *The Mill on the Floss*.
7. Discuss George Eliot's method of characterization in *The Mill on the Floss*.
  8. Is it true to say that George Eliot's delineation of female characters is admirable but her portrayal of men is not successful? Illustrate your answer from *The Mill on the Floss*.
  9. "In drawing women, George Eliot was rarely at fault; her male characters are not so convincing." Substantiate or refute this view, illustrating your answer from *The Mill on the Floss*.
  10. "Character is not cut in marble" said George Eliot implying that character can change and develop or deteriorate. How far is this statement substantiated in *The Mill on the Floss*?
  11. "Her characters are not simply passive, and they do not stand still; they are shown making their own history, continually changing and developing or degenerating..." Discuss George Eliot's method of characterization in *The Mill on the Floss* keeping in mind the above observation.

9. **Psychological Elements and Complexity of Characters in "The Mill on the Floss"**

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*Or*  
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*Or*  
**"George Eliot's Grip on Psychological Essentials is Reflected in the Complexity of Characters"**

*Or*  
**George Eliot's Psychological Realism in "The Mill on the Floss"**

**University Questions**

1. "George Eliot's sphere was the inner man; she exposed the internal clockwork." Discuss *The Mill on the Floss* in the light of the above statement.
2. George Eliot's psychological insight into the springs of human action, the subtle analysis of character and motive accompanying the external action, makes her stand out among the Victorian novelists. Make a study of these qualities with reference to *The Mill on the Floss*.

3. George Eliot is the first of the great modern novelists who are prone to the probing of the human psyche, to the subtle analysis of the subconscious and even the unconscious. Substantiate the above observation from your reading of *The Mill on the Floss*.
4. "She exposes all the complex writhings of a spirit striving to make itself at ease on the bed of a disturbed conscience", says David Cecil of George Eliot. Elucidate the observation with reference to *The Mill on the Floss*.
5. "George Eliot sought to do in her novels what Browning attempted in his poetry, that is, to represent the inner struggle of a soul, and to reveal the motives, impulses and hereditary influences which govern human actions." Elaborate with reference to *The Mill on the Floss*.
6. With the intellectual scalpel and the intellectual microscope George Eliot "lays bare the brain and heart, examines every nerve vibration,.....and counts the heart beats". Elucidate with reference to *The Mill on the Floss*.

**Child Psychology in "The Mill on the Floss"**  
**Or**  
**George Eliot's Unique Portrait of Children in "The Mill on the Floss"**

**Or**  
**"The Mill on the Floss" A Masterly Analysis and Revelation of the Child's Mind**

**University Questions**

1. "What Victorian novel gives a more truthful picture of childhood than the first two Books of *The Mill on the Floss*?" Substantiate with illustrations from the text.
2. In what respects can you call George Eliot's portrayal of childhood in *The Mill on the Floss* unique?
3. Consider *The Mill on the Floss* as a picture of the sufferings of a child.
4. "No one has yet ventured to paint the child life in all its prosaic reality," as well as George Eliot has done in *The Mill on the Floss*. Do you agree? Substantiate your answer with illustrations from the text.
5. "The fresh directness of a child's vision that we have in the autobiographical part of *The Mill on the Floss*...is enchanting but it does not idealize or soften with a haze of sentiment."

says F.R. Leavis. Discuss the depiction of childhood in the novel in the light of the above observation.

6. "English novels abound in pictures of child life. I know none more truthful and touching than the early pages of *The Mill on the Floss*," declared Henry James. What is your opinion about the childhood scenes in the novel?
7. "In *The Mill on the Floss*, the reader sees in two dimensions, a mature view of life placing the child's view in perfect perspective." Discuss in detail with illustrations.

11. **Analysis of Human Motivations in George Eliot's "The Mill on the Floss"**

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Or

**George Eliot : "A Giant Among Nineteenth Century Novelists for her Ability to Probe into Human Motivations"**

Or

**"The Mill on the Floss" : One of the First Victorian Novels to Explore Human Motivations**

Or

**"The Mill on the Floss" : The First Modern English Novel**

**University Questions**

1. "A giant among nineteenth century novelists for her ability to probe into human motivations" Would that be a correct estimate of George Eliot's abilities as a novelist with reference to *The Mill on the Floss*?
2. The aim of George Eliot was to present not only the appearances of her characters but also the inmost secrets and battles of their hearts. How far does she succeed in this aim in *The Mill on the Floss*?
3. George Eliot's grip on psychological essentials impelled her to draw complex characters better than her predecessors. Do you agree? Give a well reasoned answer illustrating from *The Mill on the Floss*.
4. George Eliot's understanding of her characters gives her an advantage over Victorian novelists, for it enables her to describe those aspects of human nature which remained hidden to them. Elaborate the statement illustrating your answer from *The Mill on the Floss*.
5. "The drama is internal; it is the drama of

- moral conflict"—how far does the statement describe George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*?
6. George Eliot's 'vivid insight into the perplexities and delusions which beset even the strongest minds' has been much admired. Discuss exploration of human motivations in *The Mill on the Floss* in the light of the above statement.
  7. "George Eliot was concerned with great moral struggles beneath the surface of an existence which to the casual observer would seem dull and commonplace." Substantiate with reference to *The Mill on the Floss*.
  8. "George Eliot can follow the windings of motives through the most tortuous labyrinths. Keeping this fact in mind, give a detailed analysis of the exploration of human motivations in *The Mill on the Floss*."

## 2. Autobiographical Elements in "The Mill on the Floss"

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Or

### Inner Life of George Eliot in "The Mill on the Floss"

Or

### "The Mill on the Floss": An Autobiographical Novel which had been Secreted in George Eliot's Consciousness

#### University Questions

1. "This is George Eliot's most searching study of the instinctive and impulsive self which happened in this instance to be her own self". Consider *The Mill on the Floss* in the light of this statement.
  2. Nicol describes *The Mill on the Floss* as "the best, the truest, and the most authoritative account of her own (George Eliot's) complex character". Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.
  3. "That Maggie Tulliver is essentially identical with the young Mary Ann Evans we all know" says F.R. Leavis. How will you substantiate this dictum?
  4. To what extent is *The Mill on the Floss* an autobiographical novel? Elucidate.
13. Portrayal of English Social Life in "The Mill on the Floss"

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Or

### "The Mill on the Floss": A Delightful Picture of English Social Life

### University Questions

1. Consider *The Mill on the Floss* as a picture of contemporary life.
2. "Maggie is a criticism of ordinary life in any age and country." Substantiate with reference to *The Mill on the Floss*.
3. Discuss the merits of *The Mill on the Floss* as a realistic novel in portraying the society of nineteenth century England.
4. "It is a society in which generosity itself is a vice" Discuss the portrayal of society in *The Mill on the Floss* in the light of the above statement.
5. "It has a superb setting of English life, narrated as always by George Eliot with humour and shrewd observation." Elaborate this statement on *The Mill on the Floss*.

#### 14. George Eliot's Tragic Vision in "The Mill on the Floss"

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Or

The Various Aspects of George Eliot's Tragic Art and Artifice in "The Mill on the Floss"

Or

"The Mill on the Floss": An illustration of Tragedy of Fate, Character and Social Pressures

### University Questions

1. Discuss George Eliot's tragic vision exemplified in *The Mill on the Floss*.
2. Write a critical note on the tragic quality of *The Mill on the Floss* and discuss how it illustrates George Eliot's conception of tragedy.
3. Do you think *The Mill on the Floss* presents a depressing view of life? Give reasons for your answer.
4. "The tragedy is not adequately prepared"—was George Eliot's own confession about *The Mill on the Floss*. What is your opinion? Discuss in detail.
5. *The Mill on the Floss* is devoted to a study of the collaboration of character with circumstances in the fulfilment of fate." Discuss George Eliot's tragic vision as embodied in *The Mill on the Floss* in the light of the above statement.
6. "Maggie, since she is the girl, she is living in the society in which she does, is a figure doomed

- to tragedy". Comment on this statement drawing from your knowledge of *The Mill on the Floss*.
7. "...the tragedy of our lives is not created entirely from within", says George Eliot in *The Mill on the Floss*. Keeping this in mind, consider in detail the various aspects of her tragic vision as embodied in this novel.
  8. "...the pathos of her (Maggie's) story springs inevitably from her character and surroundings." Discuss *The Mill on the Floss* as a tragedy in the light of the above statement.

### George Eliot's Moral Vision in "The Mill on the Floss"

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#### Or George Eliot : Philosopher Turned Novelist University Questions

1. "She might not believe in heaven and hell and miracles but she believed in right and wrong and man's paramount obligation to follow right, as strictly as if she were Bunyan himself". Discuss George Eliot's moral vision illustrated in *The Mill on the Floss* in the light of the above statement.
2. "She admired truthfulness and chastity and industry and self-restraint; she disapproved loose living and recklessness and deceit and self-indulgence." From your reading of *The Mill on the Floss*, can you substantiate the above observation on George Eliot?
3. "By our deeds we are saved or lost; by them we create in our own hearts a hell or a heaven." Do you think that sums George Eliot's moral vision in *The Mill on the Floss*?

### 16. River Floss : Its Symbolic Significance

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#### Or River Imagery as a Means of Foreshadowing in "The Mill on the Floss"

#### Or Moral Consequences are Deeply Related with the River Imagery in "The Mill on the Floss"

#### University Questions

1. "The River Floss is the source both of life and death". Substantiate and illustrate this statement with reference to George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*.

2. "The river in this novel.....to a larger extent governs the lives and desire of all the characters in the novel." Discuss this dictum with reference to *The Mill on the Floss*.
3. "Maggie's destiny, then, is at present an unmapped river. We only know that the river is full and rapid, and that for all rivers there is the same final home" says George Eliot in Book IV, Chapter VI of *The Mill on the Floss*. Keeping this statement in view, discuss the symbolic significance of the river in the novel.
4. "The river is present throughout the novel, both literally and symbolically." Elaborate on this statement in the context of what you know of *The Mill on the Floss*.
5. The river "suggests a larger dimension than the Dodsons and the Tullivers were accustomed to move in, and it soon becomes a symbol of those ungoverned impulses and vague, profound aspirations which bear Maggie to her doom". Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.
6. The River Floss is a source of tragic irony in the novel, *The Mill on the Floss*. Consider the river imagery in the light of this statement.
7. In *The Mill on the Floss*, often the two meanings—the literal course of the river and the choice of action—coalesce into the one phrase, Substantiate and illustrate the statement.

17. **"The Mill on the Floss" : Representation of Various Kinds of Love**

**University Questions**

1. The charm of *The Mill on the Floss* lies in the realistic treatment of love.
2. Write a note on the various kind of the love treated by George Eliot in *The Mill on the Floss*.
3. Love plays an important part in the conflict and suffering undergone by Maggie. Discuss and illustrate.

18. **George Eliot : A Modern Novelist**

Or

**George Eliot : The First Modern Novelist**

Or

**George Eliot : A Victorian of Modern Outlook**

**University Questions**

1. Examine critically the statement that George Eliot is "the first modern novelist".

2. George Eliot has a "list". Do you agree? Discuss.
3. Examine the view that George Eliot, although a Victorian, was modern in her outlook.
4. "She was something very unlike the typical Victorian novelist". Discuss with reference to George Eliot's novels.

**An Assessment of "The Mill on the Floss"—  
Critics' Symposium  
Select University Questions with Answers**

1. Comment on the organic form of George Eliot's novels with special reference to *The Mill on the Floss*. 163

Or

Discuss the form and technique of George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*. 167

2. Examine critically the ending of *The Mill on the Floss*. 168

Or

Are you satisfied with the ending of *The Mill on the Floss*. Give reasons for your answer.

Or

Do you agree with Henry James that the conclusion of *The Mill on the Floss* is a serious defect?

Or

Do you think that the flood which ends *The Mill on the Floss* was a hasty after thought, or part of George Eliot's original design?

Or

The ending and the denouement of *The Mill on the Floss* has been called "moral melodrama." Do you agree? Discuss.

Or

Do you share the view of Leavis that the flood is the "dreamed of perfect accident"?

Or

How far is the ending of *The Mill on the Floss* motivated by a desire for poetic justice?

Or

The ending of *The Mill on the Floss* is "something fated and waited for, but not...inevitable." What is your opinion?

Or

Would you agree with the view that George Eliot spoils the novel *The Mill on the Floss* by ending it tragically?

3. The beauty of *The Mill on the Floss* lies in its characterization.

Or

Critically assess George Eliot's characterization in *The Mill on the Floss* and examine the view that she is more successful in her portrayals of female characters than in those of male characters."

Or

From your reading of *The Mill on the Floss* substantiate or refute with reasoned arguments the view : "In drawing women, George Eliot was rarely at fault; her male characters are not so convincing.

Or

Examine the view that the male characters in George Eliot's novels are "flagrant examples of a woman's man", with special reference to *The Mill on the Floss*

4. 'Mr. Tulliver is the embodiment of pugnacity.' Elucidate with comments.

Or

Assess George Eliot's success in portraying men characters in the light of what she has achieved in Mr. Tulliver.

Or

Bring out the salient features of Mr. Tulliver's character.

Or

How far is Mr. Tulliver to be held responsible for the trials and sufferings which he and his family experience ?

Or

Write a note on the tragedy of Mr. Tulliver and consider how far he is a victim of fate.

5. Critically assess the minor characters in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and comment on their significance.

Or

Write a critical note on George Eliot's treatment of the minor characters in *The Mill on the Floss* and discuss their role in the novel.

Or

"The minor characters in *The Mill on the Floss* are as distinct as Scott's minor characters and as amusing as those of Dickens". Discuss.

- Q. 6. "Though the Dodsons are a clan, each aunt

and each uncle has a precise individuality." Substantiate.

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Or

Show that the aunts and uncles in *The Mill on the Floss* have been skilfully individualised and distinguished from one another.

7. Bring out the contrast between Lucy and Maggie.

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Or

Discuss the character and role of Lucy Deane as a foil to Maggie.

8. Bring out the contrast between Tom and Philip.

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9. George Eliot says : "I aspire to give no more than a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind." How far has this aspiration been fulfilled in *The Mill on the Floss* ?

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Or

Discuss George Eliot's realism with reference to *The Mill on the Floss*.

Or

Consider in detail the merits of *The Mill on the Floss* as a realistic novel.

Or

1. The most striking quality of George Eliot's novels is psychological realism, say critics. What is your opinion about the psychological realism in *The Mill on the Floss* ?

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Or

"The novel is a perfect example of George Eliot's power of interpreting human nature dramatically". How apt is this remark applied to *The Mill on the Floss* ?

Or

"George Eliot's sphere was the inner man ; she exposed the internal clockwork." Discuss with reference to *The Mill on the Floss* ?

Or

"George Eliot sought to do in her novels what Browning attempted in his poetry, that is, to represent the inner struggle of a soul, and to reveal the motives, impulses, and hereditary influences which govern human action." Justify or repudiate this statement with reference to *The Mill on the Floss*.

Or

George Eliot has "more

any English novelist writing before Freud of the under-currents of mind and heart" Substantiate from your reading of *The Mill on the Floss*.

Or

- Q. 11. In what way can you call George Eliot a "pioneer" in the field of the English novel?  
"It is the habit of my imagination to strive after as full a vision of the medium in which a character moves, as of the character itself." Consider *The Mill on the Floss* in the light of this remark by George Eliot

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Or

"Maggie is a criticism of ordinary life in any age and country". Substantiate this statement.

Or

Discuss George Eliot's vision of the medium in which her characters move.

- Q. 12. Critically examine the perspective that *The Mill on the Floss* offers on the clash between the agrarian and the industrial value system.

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- Q. 13 "What Victorian novel gives a more truthful picture of childhood than the first two books of *The Mill on the Floss*?" Discuss the significance of this remark with illustrations from the text.

194

Or

"No one has yet ventured to paint the child's life in all its prosaic reality." Do you think that this is an apt remark for George Eliot's depiction of children in *The Mill on the Floss*.

Or

Henry James praised the first part of *The Mill on the Floss* as the most truthful and touching portrayal of childhood in English fiction. What is your opinion?

Or

How far is it true to say that George Eliot's portrayal of childhood in *The Mill on the Floss* is unique?

Or

"We live through all the immediate intensity of feelings of the child and adolescent, but it is all seen from a mature, adult perspective,

from an overall view of tolerant sympathetic irony". Substantiate with reference to *The Mill on the Floss*.

- Q. 14. The novels of George Eliot are marked by an intellectual and moral passion. If you agree illustrate your answer from *The Mill on the Floss*.

Or

George Eliot exemplifies the case of the philosopher turning into novelist. Discuss with illustrations from *The Mill on the Floss*.

Or

Comment on George Eliot's philosophic treatment of her subject in fiction, with reference to *The Mill on the Floss*.

Or

Elaborate George Eliot as a novelist of ideas, focussing attention on *The Mill on the Floss*.

Or

- Q. 15. Write a note on the different points of view about Duty and Human life as presented through the four major characters in *The Mill on the Floss*.

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- Q. 16. Bring out the moral issues involved in *The Mill on the Floss*.

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Or

"*The Mill on the Floss* is an engrossing story of conflicting duties and desires, loyalties and loves. Comment on the truth of this statement.

Or

"*The Mill on the Floss* is an absorbing story of a gifted girl's struggle against constraining forces within and without her and towards personal and social, toward cultural and spiritual emancipation." Substantiate.

Or

Write a critical note on *The Mill on the Floss* as a story of inner and outer conflicts.

- Q. 17. Critically assess the Maggie—Stephen episode in *The Mill on the Floss*.

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