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## Review of Middlemarch: A Student's Companion to The Novel

Bert G. Hornback

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## **MIDDLEMARCH: A STUDENT'S COMPANION TO THE NOVEL**

**by Bert G. Hornback**

published in Twayne's Masterwork Series by G.K. Hall, 1988

Price \$6.95

Advanced undergraduate or graduate students, as well as general readers who are quite familiar with Middlemarch, should find Hornback's book interesting reading. It is well documented with frequent references to the Norton Critical Edition of Middlemarch, which Hornback edited, and to other sources.

This volume follows the standard format of the Masterwork series, including a chronology, a discussion of the historical context, a review of the critical reception, a discussion of key themes and ideas, and a bibliography and an index.

Thematic discussions take place under such chapter titles as "Seeing," "Feeling and Knowledge," "Being Heroic and Constructive," and "Reform." In "Making Life Beautiful," for example, Hornback includes an explanation of his concept of selflessness, which he then applies to various characters in Middlemarch. Although one might disagree with his analysis of the novel at some points, his discussions of characters and ideas are thoughtful and well constructed. His vocabulary and use of allusions, however, put the book beyond the easy reach of many undergraduates or others with limited acquaintance with Eliot's works.

The index contains only names of people and titles of Eliot's works other than Middlemarch. The bibliography includes a brief publication history of primary sources and a good selection of 1872 - 73 reviews of Middlemarch. However, Hornback lists only the Cross and Haight biographies of Eliot, and the most recent book of criticism included was published in 1982. The bibliographic entry citing a six volume edition of the Letters published by Yale in 1984 - 85 is inexplicable. An interesting addition to Hornback's analysis of the novel is a selection of particularly perceptive comments made by his students.