

**By comparing the work of two Victorian writers that you have studied, discuss their presentation of the relationship between human behaviour and social environment.**

### IN SUMMARY:

JE: How an individual triumphs over social circumstance

- 5 locations that Jane moves through each a different manifestation of her social conditions
  - Outlining her movement from isolation at Gateshead, to dependence in Lowood, to independence in Thornfield

MWP: How individuals cannot escape from social circumstances

- How well individuals navigate them is dependent on either:
  - a. How well they know social convention (e.g. Praed, Frank)
  - b. How the manipulate and transcend them (e.g. Crofts)

SM: Humbling effect social circumstance has on people

- Importance of adopting the right attitude and social circumstances

\*Choice texts: SM and MWP

1. [Society on the individual] Authors demonstrate the **negative, constricting effect** of social environment on individuals

JE	MWP	SM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As demonstrated in Jane's social circumstances at Gateshead, Lowood and Thornfield; where she is measured in terms of her compatibility with the social environment and its accompanying expectations</li> <li>- Reveal the oppressive nature of social labels that have been placed on her. Jane's class, dependency and poverty distract her from her inherent self-worth</li> <li>&gt; Gateshead: Mrs Reed</li> <li>&gt; Lowood: Brocklehurst</li> <li>&gt; Thornfield: Blanche</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The abstract notion of respectability is first held up as the social ideal – but is subsequently torn down and exposed for the empty and meaningless ideal that it is</li> <li>- Kitty Warren's account of the loss of autonomy and self-respect that comes with the pursuit of respectability reinforces how social expectations not only restrict options, particularly for women in poverty, but needlessly so</li> <li>- [...]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Communities which Silas is a part of have clear social expectations and obligations, although Eliot makes clear at what cost</li> <li>- Lantern Yard: The narrow religious sect has deprived individuals like Silas of all rational thought, as it is submerged under divine will</li> <li>- Raveloe: Social obligations which Silas does not fulfil, together with stereotypes and perceptions which work against him, make it difficult for Silas to fully assimilate into society</li> <li>&gt; Silas does not partake in activities deemed social convention – going to church, drinking at the Rainbow [...]</li> <li>&gt; Raveleans' prejudices against foreigners, and any level of unwarranted skill</li> </ul>

2. [Individual on the society] They then move on to examine how individuals **adapt and respond** to their social environment

JE	MWP	SM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Jane holds steadfastly against her own values</li> </ul>		

3. [Overall effect and message] While MWP offers a bleak prognosis on the state of affairs in society, SM calls upon individuals to embrace community and

JE	SM	MWP
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<b>Mrs Warren's Profession</b>	<b>Jane Eyre</b>	<b>Silas Marner</b>
All three texts talk about the negative constricting effect social environments have on individuals.		
<p>Pursuit of false respectability leads only to degradation and poverty</p> <p>Manners: How people navigate social environment on a superficial level</p>	<p>Jane's class, dependence and poverty</p> <p>How she initially cannot marry Rochester</p>	<p>The narrow religious sect of Lantern Yard strips individuals of human rationality and autonomy.</p> <p>Raveloe, a cloistered, sheltered community. Eg. The Casses who are on the road to ruin and demise, but they don't know it.</p>
<p>How individuals cannot escape from their social environment. Either they navigate them (Mrs Warren) or transcend them by divorcing oneself from society and all human interaction altogether (Vivie severing ties with Mrs. Warren)</p> <p>Circumstances: Either you are one of the poor, or you are one of the clever managing people</p> <p>Social frameworks: Social conventions subject characters, even though they are meaningless</p>	<p>Most orthodox? Tells the story of how an individual (Jane) triumphs over social forces through personal effort e.g. Jane Eyre facing different challenges in different settings—dependency in Gateshead, being stripped of identity in Lowood, class barriers in Thornfield.</p> <p>Individual can transcend her circumstances</p>	<p>Begins by introducing the harmful effect social environment can have on the individual, and therefore the importance of having the right social circumstances</p>
<p>Conformity: The ubiquity of the capitalistic system of values, the unavoidability of complicity in exploitation, and therefore Crofts' rejection of "picking and choosing" one's acquaintances.</p>		<p>Conformity: Silas' difference (physical appearance, behaviour, occupation) leads to his alienation by Ravelow</p>
<p>Impossibility of living one life and believing in another. How individuals attain fulfillment and success</p>		<p>(?) the glue - embrace the community as epitome of goodness ??</p>



**In what ways, and with what effects, do two writers of the Victorian period you have studied explore the relationship between illusion and faith?**

\*Comparison between illusion and faith in something

Introduction

'Illusion':

- A distortion of reality/perceptions
- *An act/deed that appears faithful and genuine, but is not*

Faith:

- Religion, personal connection with God, spiritual guidance/spirituality, human reason

> All 3 texts are tests on "moral absolutes" – whether there exists a structured moral universe with clear notions of right and wrong – and the extent to which they are grounded in faith or illusions

**Overview of 3 texts in relation to question**

<b>Mrs Warren's Profession</b>	<b>Jane Eyre</b>	<b>Silas Marner</b>
<p><u>No order in moral universe</u>; no central faith (religious/moral)</p> <p>All references to moral behaviour a façade. Superficial set of moral codes (e.g. notions of respectability) inform how individuals should operate in society</p> <p>- E.g. Religious: Rev Gardner and his inability to rise above conventional platitudes, snobbery and spiritual pretensions – words not grounded in any form of genuine belief</p> <p>- E.g. Moral: Emptiness of respectability – <i>"a pretense to keep to cowardly slavish common run of people quiet"</i>. Crofts of the world projecting a façade of respectability while profiting at the expense of exploited workers in poverty. Notion of <i>"as long as you don't fly openly in the face of society"</i> and conventional notions of respectability are not flouted, individual sin will not be exposed</p> <p><i>Any outward good is an illusion (e.g. MW thinking what she did for Vivie was right). Thus, the only logical solution is selfishness as there is no such thing as doing right</i></p>	<p><u>Ordered moral universe</u> because of an <u>omniscient God</u></p> <p>What appears to be error, e.g. unjust suffering, is ordered by a just and benevolent God</p> <p>E.g. Abandonment of Rochester a vehicle through which Rochester is able to repent for his sins and helps sanction his union with Jane (i.e. saving Bertha and losing an eye); Jane being cheated of her inheritance by Mrs Reed allows her to find her family connections</p> <p>Faith in 'moral absolutes' and notions of right and wrong</p> <p>God's intervention is never illusory, and always real</p>	<p><u>Ordered moral universe</u> <i>reliant not on action of God, but that of people</i></p> <p><i>Presence of different beliefs and manifestations of God's will which are fundamentally unknowable and illusory (though necessary in giving citizens "light enough to trusten by") – whenever Silas believes God has acted in his life, revealed to be an illusion and leads to his loss of faith in God</i></p> <p>Eliot offering an alternative absolute, which is faith in the communal spirit</p>

## Overall Essay Plan

NB: Both SM and JE talk about faith with specific regard to religious faith

- Need to draw comparisons and parallels at every level
- Need to link both key terms together: illusion and faith

Topic Sentence	Silas Marner	Jane Eyre
Both texts appear to reject faith as no more than illusion	<p>Clear instances of divine intervention (e.g. drawing of the lots, loss of his gold) appear to work against Silas Marner, leading him to believe that there is no just God, only a "God of lies"</p> <p>Revelation that all bases of faith and belief in God's will/action are illusory, as events are merely logical consequences of the aggregate of human desires, motivations and actions</p>	<p><i>Presence of characters like Rochester, who disdains "customs and conventionalities" and declares that "uncalled for circumstances [...]", appropriates God's will to fit his own conception of moral justice – belief that God has forsaken him</i></p> <p><i>What happens to characters is presented as the direct interference of God</i></p>
However, they resolve this in different ways	<p>Having pointed out the illusory nature of God's will, Eliot offers an alternate source of faith – the religion of humanity and the strength of communal spirit</p> <p>E.g. How Silas is only redeemed when he assimilates into community, how they were the ones who helped him in trying times, etc. etc.</p>	<p>An orthodox resolution: A reaffirmation that just and benevolent God exists. What appears to be error, e.g. unjust suffering, is ordered by divine intervention</p> <p>E.g. Abandonment of Rochester a vehicle through which Rochester is able to repent for his sins and helps sanction his union with Jane (i.e. saving Bertha and losing an eye); Jane being cheated of her inheritance by Mrs Reed allows her to find her family connections</p> <p>Refer to Jane's maturity and spiritual development: Jane's early incomprehension of justice, Helen's counsel to Jane and her subsequent trust in Providence</p>
Both texts also explore the relationships between faith and illusion	<p>Eliot highlights the importance of faith <u>in spite of</u> illusion:</p> <p>Though faith in God is illusory, it is still necessary, however illusory, as it gives citizens "light enough to trusten by". It is this communal spirit, coupled with experiences of loving and being loved as well as an implicit faith in the will of God, form the centre of an individual's faith</p>	<p>Bronte argues that <u>there are no</u> illusions: Though signs from God and manifestations of divine providence appear illusory, they are always real</p> <p>Affirming the presence of a God orders the outcome of the universe</p>

**Compare the ways in which two writers of the Victorian period explore the relationship between ordinary and extraordinary experience.**

### 1. Extraordinary experiences precipitate changes in ordinary life (LISTING?)

- Though nature of these effects are different

Jane Eyre	Silas Marner
<p>Positive:</p> <p>Negative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Hallucinations in the Red Room</li> </ul>	<p><u>Positive:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Arrival of Eppie: Allowing Silas to assimilate into Raveloe</li> </ul> <p><u>Negative:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cause for conflict and confusion:</li> <li>- Silas' loss of gold, accusations of William Dane</li> <li>- Silas' fits: Rendering him unable to actively respond to situations</li> </ul>

### 2. Extraordinary experiences tend to be grounded in understandable, ordinary and explicable ones

Jane Eyre	Silas Marner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is only Jane's heightened sensitivity that compels her to view these occurrences as extraordinary: Jane's recognition of God's will in every aspect of individuals' lives through the immensity of creation</li> <li>- Ghost is actually a lantern</li> <li>- Candle</li> <li>- Gytrash, which Jane thinks is [...], is actually just Roch knowing her well</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Eliot's notion of 'divine interference': God cannot be expected to have a direct, physical role in humans' lives</li> <li>- All extraordinary experiences are grounded in rational human explanations</li> <li>- Silas' loss of gold: Dunsey's greed</li> <li>- Appearance of Eppie: Molly's weakness</li> </ul>

### 3. Significance of extraordinary experiences: Authors' final decree on how characters should mediate ordinary and extraordinary experiences

Jane Eyre	Silas Marner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Extraordinary experiences as moments of clarity and inspiration</li> <li>- Guiding Jane at every point to make the correct decision at every possible juncture, where her judgment is clouded and she is</li> <li>- Because human judgment is ultimately fallible – Jane's ideal path towards earthly bliss is made possible due to her keen sensitivity to God's role in the universe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- While they are underpinned by logical human explanations, extraordinary experiences ground their simple, sincere faith in the actions of a divine God</li> <li>- Since extraordinary experiences are rooted in ordinary ones, we should strive to be good: Because the aggregate effects of our actions will have a bearing on the community around us</li> </ul>

- Won't these be a repetition?