

## George Eliot

Mary Ann (sometimes spelt Mary Anne, Marianne or Marian) Evans in Nuneaton, Warwickshire on November 22, 1819.

Her father Robert Evans (1773-1849) was the manager of the Arbury Hall for the Newdigate family (baronetage).

She boarded in two different schools from nine to sixteen with her sister Chrissey.

In 1836 her mother died, so she left school to keep her father's house.

After she left school, she was mainly self-taught. She was allowed to use the Arbury Hall library.

In 1841, Robert Evans retired; he and Mary Ann moved near Coventry.

In Coventry, she became acquainted with Charles and Cara Bray, industrialists and philanthropers.

She began writing reviews [*critiques, comptes rendus*], published by Bray in the *Coventry Herald and Observer*.

In 1844-46, she completed an English translation of David Friedrich Strauss's critical *Life of Jesus* (1835), published by John Chapman.

Her father objected to her religious doubts but she placated him and kept his house until his death in 1849.

In 1850 she settled in London. From January 1851, she stayed with John Chapman, who had just bought the left-wing *Westminster Review*, founded by Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. From 1851 (January 1852 issue) until 1854, Marian Evans was assistant editor, although she actually had more input as both editor [*rédacteur en chef*] and contributor.

In October 1851, Chapman had introduced her to George Lewes (1817-1878). By 1854, Evans and Lewes, who was already married but amicably separated from his wife, were living together.

Lewes's marital arrangement made it impossible for him to divorce his wife and marry Evans.

In 1854, she translated Ludwig Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* (1841) into English.

She completed her translation of Spinoza's *Ethics* in 1856.

She then decided to write fiction. One of her last essays for the *Westminster Review* was titled 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists', in which she extolled [=praised] the realism of recent European novels.

She settled on the pen-name George Eliot, as a tribute to Lewes (George Eliot = "George L – I owe it"; in this case 'owe' is a synonym for 'own,' meaning 'admit,' 'acknowledge').

In 1857 she published her first fiction, three stories, in [John] Blackwood's *Magazine*. The stories received praise and in 1858 were published together in book form as *Scenes of Clerical Life*.

1859: *Adam Bede* (novel), *The Lifted Veil* (novella).

1860: *The Mill on the Floss*, novel

1861: *Silas Marner*, novel

1862-1863: *Romola*, historical novel set in Florence in the late fifteenth century

1866: *Felix Holt, the Radical*, political novel

1868: *The Spanish Gypsy* (dramatic poem)

1871-1872: *Middlemarch, A Study of Provincial Life*, psychological novel often considered Eliot's masterpiece

1876: *Daniel Deronda*, novel

Lewes died in 1878. In the following two years, she edited Lewes's final, unfinished work, *Problems of Life and Mind*, and published her own *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (1879).

In May 1880, Eliot married John Walter Cross, who was twenty years younger than she was. She died on December 22<sup>nd</sup> of the same year.