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Quotes and Scenes from *North and South* related to the different themes:

The below list is by no means comprehensive, and it does not contain quotes for all the themes, as there is some overlap (between Social Action and Society and Class, as an example) The quote is in *italics* and a [brief explanation](#) of the significance is in blue below it.

Society and Class

"Are those the Gormans who made their fortunes in trade at Southampton? Oh! I'm glad we don't visit them. I don't like shoppy people."

(Chapter 2)

- Margaret Hale is anything but perfect. For starters, she's pretty judgmental when it comes to anyone who has made money at business. These "shoppy" people, according to Margaret, are too money-obsessed and self-interested to be interesting.

"I shall have to console myself with scorning my own folly. A struggling barrister to think of matrimony."

(Chapter 3)

- When Margaret turns down Henry Lennox's marriage proposal, he admits that he should have seen this coming. After all, he's only a young lawyer starting out with little money. So who was he to think he could marry a beautiful young woman? What he doesn't realize is that his money-centered way of thinking is probably one of the main reasons for Margaret's refusal.

"Dixon," she said, in the low tone she always used when much excited, which had a sound in it as of some distant turmoil, or threatening storm breaking far away. "Dixon! You forget to whom you are speaking."

(Chapter 5)

- Margaret is all about class equality and love for all humanity—that is until one of her servants starts getting sassy with her. Then she's more than happy to remind everyone that she's their boss.

"To tell you the truth, Margaret, I sometimes feel as if that woman gave herself airs."

(Chapter 5)

- Mr. Hale isn't sure whether the family should bring their maid Dixon with them when they move to Milton, mainly because they don't have much money. But on top of that, Mr. Hale suspects that Dixon sometimes oversteps her bounds as a servant. Margaret has just criticized Dixon for doing the same thing, but when she hears someone else saying this, she falls back on her old "Oh don't be such an elitist" routine.

People thronged the footpaths, most of them well-dressed as regarded the material, but with a slovenly looseness which struck Margaret as different from the shabby, threadbare smartness of a similar class in London.

(Chapter 7)

- One of the first things Margaret notices about her new home in Milton is that the people there have expensive, but tacky clothing. People from the south, on the other hand, have cheaper, but more stylish clothing. The observation is symbolic, since it reflects Margaret's belief that in the end, money can never make up for lack of good breeding.

"Yes! If any one had told me [...] that a child of mine would have to stand half a day, in a little poky kitchen, working away like any servant, that we might prepare properly for the reception of a tradesman, and that this tradesman should be the only—."

(Chapter 9)

- Margaret's mother is mortified at the thought of her own daughter cleaning the house in preparation for a visit from a businessman. After all, the Hale family has always aspired to "higher" things like education and morals. But now they've come down in the world and they need to rely on "shoppy" people like Mr. Thornton.

"Take care you don't get caught by a penniless girl, John."

(Chapter 9)

- The Hales aren't the only ones who can play the class card. Mrs. Thornton, for example, tells her son John to stay away from Margaret Hale because she's poor. Little does Mrs. Thornton know that Margaret thinks she's way too good for John.

"If my son's work-people strike, I will only say they are a pack of ungrateful hounds."

(Chapter 15)

- Like her son, Mrs. Thornton doesn't have much patience for workers who demand higher wages. In her mind, they're just a bunch of ingrates who should spend more time working and less time complaining.

"What wi' hard work first, and sickness at last, hoo's led the life of a dog. And to die without knowing one good piece o' rejoicing in all her days!"

(Chapter 28)

- Nicholas Higgins has a different view of social classes than Mr. Thornton does. All he sees is a world where terrible working conditions have caused his daughter to become terminally ill. For him, it's impossible to live a dignified human life when bosses don't do enough to assure a good quality of life for their workers.

Mr. Hale treated all his fellow-creatures alike: it never entered into his head to make any difference because of their rank.

(Chapter 28)

- Of all the members of the Hale family, Mr. Hale is probably the most egalitarian. In other words, he tends to treat everyone the same way whether they're poor or rich, ignorant or educated. In this sense, Elizabeth Gaskell is on his side.

Love, Marriage, and Family

Family

Mr. Henry Lennox stood leaning against the chimney-piece, amused with the family scene. He was close by his handsome brother; he was the plain one in a singularly good-looking family; but his face was intelligent, keen, and mobile.

(Chapter 1)

- Mr. Henry Lennox isn't as good-looking as his brother. But he makes up for it by being clever and ambitious. In this case, having a handsome brother his whole life has definitely shaped his personality.

This marring of the peace of home, by long hours of discontent, was what Margaret was unprepared for.

(Chapter 2)

- Margaret is used to having a very calm and happy family life. That's why things go so out of whack when chronic unhappiness enters her home. She's totally unprepared for anything other than family peace, and she more or less spends the rest of the book trying to recover this peace.

"Boy and man, he's the noblest, stoutest heart I ever knew. I don't care if I am his mother; I can see what's what, and not be blind."

(Chapter 9)

- It's an understatement to say that John Thornton is the apple of his mother's eye. In her mind, the boy can really do no wrong. She knows that she feels this way because she's his mother, but still, she thinks that even on an objective level, her son's the best thing going.

Mr. Thornton saw her beautiful eyes lifted to her father, full of light, half-laughter and half-love, as this bit of pantomime went on between the two, unobserved, as they fancied, by any.

(Chapter 10)

- When Mr. Thornton sees the look of love that Margaret gives to her father, he badly wishes that she could look at him this way, too. One thing that makes it especially compelling is that fact that it's totally natural, and that Margaret does it as if no one is watching.

The very daringness with which mother and son spoke out unpalatable truths, the one to the other, showed a reliance on the firm centre of each other's souls.

(Chapter 12)

- Mrs. Thornton and her son aren't afraid to tell it like it is to one another. If anything, this brutal honesty is what makes them so close. You probably wouldn't get this kind of closeness between Margaret and her parents, where harsh truths need to be treated delicately.

"Frederick! Frederick! Come to me. I am dying. Little first-born child, come to me once again!"

(Chapter 16)

- Mrs. Hale's dying wish is to see her son Frederick one last time. Of course that's understandable, but you've also got to wonder whether this obsession with Frederick makes Margaret feel a little taken for granted.

Her daughter left her after dinner, sitting in her easy chair, with her hand lying in her husband's, who looked more worn and suffering than she by far.

(Chapter 21)

- It's kind of sweet that Mr. Hale looks even more worn out than his wife when she's dying of an illness. But on the other hand, there's part of you that wants to slap Mr. Hale and tell him to show a little more strength and courage in difficult times. All he ever seems to do is worry and wait for his daughter Margaret to fix everything.

"And, Margaret, if I am to die—if I am one of those appointed to die before many weeks are over—I must see my child first."

(Chapter 25)

- Mrs. Hale knows that she's on the way out. But she still clings to the thought of seeing her son Frederick before it's all over. After all, it only seems fair.

So she looked fixedly at vacancy; a series of visions passing before her, in all of which her son was the principal, the sole object,—her son, her pride, her property.

(Chapter 26)

- Mrs. Thornton doesn't just love her son. She sees him as her most prized possession. Maybe that's why she tends to revel in every single one of his successes and criticizes anyone who dares think differently than him. It's a powerful love, but not necessarily a productive one for anyone outside the Thornton family.

Love

[A]lthough it was below the expectations which many of Edith's acquaintances had formed for her, a young and pretty heiress. But Mrs. Shaw said that her only child should marry for love—and sighed emphatically, as if love had not been her motive for marrying the general.

(Chapter 1)

- Mrs. Shaw regrets the fact that when she was younger, she married for wealth and status instead of for love. Now she hopes that her daughter Edith will marry out of love, although she's worried that Edith picked a man based on status.

"Margaret," said he, looking into her eyes, which met his with their open, straight look, expressive of the utmost faith and reluctance to give pain, "Do you"—he was going to say—"love anyone else?" But it seemed as if this question would be an insult to the pure serenity of those eyes.

(Chapter 3)

- After getting rejected by Margaret, Henry Lennox wants to know if she is in love with any other man. It's a fairly natural thing to ask, although it's not clear whether Henry wants to hear a yes or a no. In any case, he doesn't bother asking... the question is just too hard to ask.

"Margaret, don't despise me; I have a heart, notwithstanding all this good-for-nothing way of talking. As a proof of it, I believe I love you more than ever—if I do not hate you—for the disdain with which you have listened to me during this last half-hour. Goodbye Margaret—Margaret!"

(Chapter 3)

- Henry Lennox might be a practical guy, but love can turn anyone into a poet. In this case, he bids Margaret farewell and prepares to wander the Earth, cold and lonely, for the rest of his heartbroken life. Or, you know, something like that.

Mr. Thornton saw her beautiful eyes lifted to her father, full of light, half-laughter and half-love, as this bit of pantomime went on between the two, unobserved, as they fancied, by any.

(Chapter 10)

- Seeing Margaret exchange a look of love with her father makes John Thornton slightly jealous. At this point in the book, he hasn't yet admitted to himself that he loves her. But here, you can already see some unconscious traces of it.

"There are three people I love: it's missus, Master Frederick, and her."

(Chapter 16)

- The servant Dixon is a loyal woman, and she loves her employers as if they were family. After all, it's not that hard when your employers treat you well and respect you as a human being. Plus Dixon has history on her side, since she's been with Mrs. Hale since before the woman married Mr. Hale.

Her daughter left her after dinner, sitting in her easy chair, with her hand lying in her husband's, who looked more worn and suffering than she by far.

(Chapter 21)

- It's hard to tell who's dying, Mrs. Hale or her husband. By the looks of things, Mrs. Hale's illness has taken more out of her husband than out of her. But all in all, this image of them holding hands is really sweet, since it's the only moment of true tenderness we see between the two of them, and it reminds us just how much they love one another. We're getting a little misty-eyed.

"Oh, my Margaret—my Margaret! no one can tell what you are to me! Dead—cold as you lie there, you are the only woman I ever loved! Oh, Margaret—Margaret!"

(Chapter 22)

- After Margaret takes a rock in the head to protect him from an angry mob, Mr. Thornton is worried that she has been killed. It's at this moment that he realizes he truly loves her and will do anything to be with her. Little does he know that the rock only grazed Margaret's noggin, and that she's fine.

"How dared he say that he would love her still, even though she shook him off with contempt?"

(Chapter 25)

- After she rejects Mr. Thornton's marriage proposal, Margaret feels offended by the fact that the guy promised to keep loving her forever no matter what. Many people would find this gesture romantic, but Margaret actually finds it offensive.

"I think I love [my baby] a great deal better than my husband, who is getting stout, and grumpy—what he calls 'busy.'"

(Chapter 29)

- The shine of marriage is quickly wearing off for Edith Shaw. So she puts all of her frustrated love into her baby, since she finds her husband getting grumpier and pudgier with every new day of marriage.

Although he hated Margaret at times, when he thought of that gentle familiar attitude and all the attendant circumstances, he had a restless desire to renew her picture in his mind—a longing for the very atmosphere she breathed.

(Chapter 33)

- Even though Margaret totally frustrates him at times, John Thornton still dreams of just being near her and breathing the same air that she does. That's real love, folks, triumphing no matter what differences might separate Margaret and Thornton.

Gender and Gender inequality

Her mouth was wide; no rosebud that could open only just enough to let out a "yes" and "no," and "an't please you, sir."

(Chapter 2)

- You can tell by the description of Margaret's mouth that she isn't the type of shy, Victorian woman who'll just be timid and not argue with anyone. Quite the contrary: it seems like Margaret is always looking for a good argument.

How different men were to women! Here was she disturbed and unhappy, because her instinct had made anything but a refusal impossible; while he, not many minutes after he had met with a rejection of what ought to have been the deepest, holiest proposal of his life, could speak as if briefs, success, and all its superficial consequences of a good house, clever and agreeable society, were the sole avowed objects of his desires.

(Chapter 4)

- Margaret can't believe how easy it seems for Henry Lennox to have polite conversation with her parents only minutes after getting his marriage proposal rejected. Margaret, on the other hand, feels totally awkward and doesn't say much at dinner.

In the first place, Margaret felt guilty and ashamed of having grown so much into a woman as to be thought of in marriage.

(Chapter 4)

- Somewhere along the line, Margaret Hale forgot that she was growing up. And now that she's grown up, she has men coming up to her and asking for her hand in marriage. She's actually ashamed by the thought that a man would ask her to marry him, mainly because she thinks she's too good for any man she's ever met. She likes to set her sights on more important things like community and morality.

She did not mind meeting any number of girls, loud spoken and boisterous though they might be. But she alternately dreaded and fired up against the workmen, who commented not on her dress, but on her looks, in the same open fearless manner.

(Chapter 8)

- Once she arrives in Milton, Margaret doesn't mind the fact that many of the town's women are loud and rough around the edges. But she dreads the men, who always seem to be staring at her with sexual looks and comments.

"Perhaps our Milton girls have too much spirit and good feeling to go angling after husbands; but this Miss Hale comes out of the aristocratic counties, where, if all tales be true, rich husbands are reckoned prizes."

(Chapter 9)

- Mrs. Thornton knows that the girls of Milton have the good sense not to be aggressive and try to attract men openly. But she doesn't trust Margaret, whom she fears will use every dirty trick in the book to land a rich husband like her son, John.

She was glad when the gentlemen came, not merely because she caught her father's eye to brighten her sleepiness up; but because she could listen to something larger and grander than the petty interests which the ladies had been talking about.

(Chapter 20)

- Margaret is happy when she's in the company of men, at least when she's at a party. She prefers their talk of politics and philosophy to the women, who just talk about dresses and superficial stuff.

"Th' stone were meant for thee; but thou wert sheltered behind a woman!"

(Chapter 22)

- When Margaret gets hit in the head with a rock, the man who threw it is quick to point out that he wanted to hit John Thornton. Instead of apologizing, though, the guy uses this opportunity to insult John's masculinity by accusing him of hiding behind a woman.

"Are you become so helpless as to have to be defended by a girl?" asked Mrs. Thornton, scornfully."

(Chapter 23)

- The man from the angry mob isn't the only one to question John Thornton's masculinity. His own mother is quick to pounce on him when she hears that Margaret Hale ran to his aid to protect him from the workers' mob. And as you can see, Mrs. Thornton doesn't think much of men who can't defend themselves.

It took up both his hands to carry it; and he had to pass through the busiest part of the town for feminine shopping. Many a young lady of his acquaintance turned to look after him, and thought it strange to see him occupied just like a porter or an errand-boy.

(Chapter 27)

- John Thornton goes out to buy some fruit for Mrs. Hale when he hears that she is very ill. Instead of sending a servant to the market, though, he goes himself. This is strange for a man to be grocery shopping, but Mr. Thornton is too busy thinking of Mrs. Hale (and probably Margaret) to worry about appearing manly at this time.

"You! My dear, women do not generally go."

(Chapter 33)

- One unfortunate custom of Victorian England was that women were generally not supposed to go to funerals. The fear was that women were too emotional and would ruin the solemn occasion by crying too loudly. This is one of those moments where you wish you had a time machine so you could go into the past and punch the people who enforced these kinds of views right in the nose.

Other quotes which could prove useful, but that I have not formatted:

The below quotes and themes are not ones we are studying, but some might have overlap with a theme we are studying or relate to a scene you would want to unpack in an essay. You do not have to use any of them, they are simply here as extras.

Compassion and Forgiveness

[Helstone's] people were her people. She made hearty friends with them; learned and delighted in using their peculiar words; took up her freedom amongst them; nursed their babies. (1.2.5)

Margaret loves and cares about all the people in her home village of Helstone. She likes to speak their language, to hang out with them, and to take care of their kids no matter how much money they have. At this point in the novel, you'd swear that her compassion extends to everyone in the world. Just wait, though.

Margaret made a good listener to all her mother's plans for adding some small comforts to the lot of poor parishioners. (1.5.1)

Even though Margaret's mother complains a lot about having a small house, she still shows a lot of compassion in her own way. She's always thinking of new ways to improve the lives of the poor people in her village, just like Margaret.

The girl looked wistfully at the flowers, and, acting on a sudden impulse, Margaret offered them to her. (1.8.22)

When Margaret sees a sickly and poor young girl in Milton, her first instinct is to give the girl whatever she has, which in this case is a bouquet of flowers. Again, Margaret is showing us that compassion is something she doesn't even need to think about. For her it's a basic reflex.

"You consider all who are unsuccessful in raising themselves in the world, from whatever cause, as your enemies, then, if I understand you rightly. (1.10.23)

It doesn't take Margaret long to pin down Mr. Thornton's views on the world. She thinks that he basically has no compassion and that he blames poor people for being poor.

She lifted the thin soft hair from off the temples, and bathed them with water. Nicholas understood all her signs for different articles with the quickness of love, and even the round-eyed sister moved with laborious gentleness at Margaret's 'hush!' (1.11.45)

Nicholas Higgins and his working class family are stunned at the compassion that the young and higher-class Margaret Hale shows toward Bessy Higgins. They're used to a world where you're on your own if things go wrong. But Margaret is from a strong community where the expectation is for people to look out for one another.

As she went along the crowded narrow streets, she felt how much of interest they had gained by the simple fact of her having learnt to care for a dweller in them. (1.13.1)

The moment she has found someone to look after (Bessy Higgins), Margaret finds that the town of Milton has become much more interesting for her. Margaret seems to be one of those people who doesn't know what to do with herself when she isn't looking after someone else.

"[But] because you are a man, dealing with a set of men over whom you have, whether you reject the use of it or not, immense power, just because your lives and your welfare are so constantly and intimately interwoven." (1.15.100)

When questioned by Mr. Thornton about compassion, Margaret replies that he has a moral obligation to his workers to be kind and understanding. It's not because he's their boss that he has this duty, but because he's a human being.

Margaret's whole soul rose up against him while he reasoned in this way—as if commerce were everything and humanity nothing. (1.19.56)

The moment Margaret hears Mr. Thornton talking as though money ruled the world she starts to feel repulsed by the sight of him. She can't stand this way of thinking. But what she doesn't realize is that at this moment, she's failing to show compassion to Mr. Thornton.

Boucher, the neighbour of whom she had frequently heard mention, as by turns exciting Higgins' compassion, as an unskillful workman with a large family depending upon him for support. (1.19.56)

This neighbor named Boucher has always been a bit of a thorn in Nicholas Higgins' side. But that's never stopped Higgins from looking after Boucher and his family in any way he can. That's where compassion becomes more of an obligation than a hobby.

"Oh! how shocking! how pitiful! [...] Higgins I don't know you to-day. Don't you see how you've made Boucher what he is, by driving him into the Union against his will—without his heart going into it." (2.11.48)

Margaret's compassion toward the worker Boucher goes beyond even that of Higgins, the man who has always tried to look out for Boucher. In Margaret's mind, poor people can really do little wrong. For her, there is always someone else to blame for the actions of someone like Boucher.

Home

[Her] future life in the country parsonage, where her father and mother lived; and where her bright holidays had always been passed, though for the last ten years her aunt Shaw's house had been considered as her home. (1.1.3)

Margaret looks forward to going home to Helstone, even though she's spent the last ten years living in London with her fashionable cousin. She'll always think of Helstone as home, no matter where she goes.

This marring of the peace of home, by long hours of discontent, was what Margaret was unprepared for. (1.2.6)

Margaret is totally unprepared for any prolonged time of unhappiness in her home. Growing up, she always thought of Helstone as a place of uninterrupted happiness. But now things are different, and Margaret has to cope with the adult world of dissatisfaction and regret.

[Frederick's] room was kept exactly as he had left it; and was regularly dusted, and put into order by Dixon. (1.2.15)

You can tell that Helstone exists in some sort of time warp for the Hale family. For starters, the village is inhabited by a bunch of villagers who probably still live the way people did a hundred years earlier. On top of that, the Hales try to keep their exiled son's bedroom exactly as it was when he left. On a symbolic level, this suggests that they're not able to move on and let go of the past.

"I shall never see Helstone again [...] While I was there, I was for ever wanting to leave it. Every place seemed pleasanter. And now I shall die far away from it. I am rightly punished." (1.16.38)

Mrs. Hale is the first to admit that you just don't know what you've got 'til it's gone. Mrs. Hale has spent nearly her whole married life complaining about Helstone. But now the place feels like paradise compared to her new home in Milton.

[Letters] had come, making her dwell on the thoughts of home with all the longing of love. Helstone, itself, was in the dim past. (1.21.36)

Since moving to Milton, Margaret can't get past her fond memories of Helstone. She yearns to get back there someday, although it's unlikely that she'll ever call the place home again. She doesn't realize it yet, but this is all an important part of growing up for her.

"I remember eating sloes and crabs with a relish. Do you remember the matted-up currant bushes, Margaret, at the corner of the west-wall in the garden at home?" (2.2.27)

Margaret is doing her best to move on and make a new home in Milton. But even her dad can't stop reminiscing about how great their life used to be when they lived in Helstone village. It's like he can taste the apples and berries that used to grow around their old home.

Did she not? Did she not remember every weather-stain on the old stone wall; the gray and yellow lichens that marked it like a map; the little crane's-bill that grew in the crevices?" (2.2.28)

And of course Margaret remembers every last detail of her house back in Helstone. She even remembers the weather stains on an old stone wall. That may sound obsessive, but how could she forget, considering that Helstone was the last place her family was happy?

"I go there every four or five years—and I was born there—yet I do assure you, I often lose my way—aye, among the very piles of warehouses that are built upon my father's orchard." (2.19.64)

Mr. Bell, Margaret's family friend, was born in the town of Milton. But unlike Helstone, Milton has completely changed since he was a little boy. Where there used to be farms and meadows, there are now factories and shops. It's pretty clear too that he doesn't like the change.

"I am going down to Helstone to-morrow, to look at the old place. Would you like to come with me? Or would it give you too much pain?" (2.20.6)

Mr. Bell knows that returning to Helstone might cause Margaret some pain, especially since she hasn't been back since she lived there in peace with her parents. Her parents are dead now, and some other family has moved into her old house. It's all very sad, since for Margaret, home is supposed to be something stable and unchanging. But alas, things have changed so much since she left Helstone.

"It hurt her to see Helstone road so flooded in the sun-light, and every turn and every familiar tree so precisely the same in its summer glory as it had been in former years. Nature felt no change, and was ever young." (2.21.1)

When she finally returns to her home in Helstone, Margaret is troubled by two things: how much the place has changed and how much it hasn't. Nature, on the one hand, hasn't changed at all. But some of the people Margaret used to know are now dead, including her mother and father, and it's sad to think that her old home is now barely recognizable.

Pride

They had grown up together from childhood, and all along Edith had been remarked upon by everyone, except Margaret, for her prettiness. (1.1.2)

In just the second paragraph of the entire book, we learn that Margaret isn't willing to talk about how pretty her cousin Edith is, even though everyone else in the world does. Already, we can see her pride coming out in full force.

Her mouth was wide; no rosebud that could open only just enough to let out a "yes" and "no," and "an't please you, sir." (1.2.4)

As we can tell from her appearance, Margaret Hale isn't the kind of woman to say a few polite words and then close her mouth. Instead, we can tell that she will speak her mind whenever she gets the chance, and she won't shy away from conflict just to be nice.

"To tell you the truth, Margaret, I sometimes feel as if that woman gave herself airs." (1.5.74)

Mr. Hale isn't so sure about bringing the servant Dixon along with them when the family moves to Milton. He suspects that Dixon is a little too proud and haughty for a servant. But the only reason Dixon seems this way is because she's treated like a member of the family and she's comfortable with speaking her mind.

[Her] lips, moving so slightly as she spoke, not breaking the cold serene look of her face with any variation from the one lovely haughty curve. (1.7.17)

In her first meeting with Mr. Thornton, Margaret doesn't do much to disguise the contempt she feels for a businessmen like Mr. Thornton. Her pride makes her completely prejudiced against any man who has ever had to hustle or be a salesperson in order to make money.

"What business had she, a renegade clergyman's daughter, to turn up her nose at you!" (1.9.32)

Mrs. Thornton is furious to hear that Margaret Hale has acted haughtily toward her son. In her mind, you're only as worth as much as you have in the bank... and Margaret's family is totally poor. It just goes to show you what happens when two proud people come into contact: they beat each other to a bloody pulp. Naaah. They just get snarky.

"A more proud, disagreeable girl I never saw. Even her great beauty is blotted out of one's memory by her scornful ways." (1.10.32)

Mr. Thornton's first impression of Margaret isn't a great one. He finds her so proud and standoffish that he can't see how anyone would ever like her. That said, he's willing to admit that she's very physically attractive. Ooooh, Mr. Thornton likes a giiiirl.

"I fancy Mrs. Thornton is as haughty and proud in her way as our little Margaret here is in hers, and that she completely ignores that old time of trial, and poverty, and economy, of which he speaks so openly." (1.11.65)

Mr. Hale can certainly see how proud his own daughter is, since he's not nearly as judgmental toward people like Mr. Thornton as she is. He can also see how Margaret's pride would clash with someone like Mrs. Thornton, who is extremely proud in her own way.

"As far as love may go she may be worthy of you. It must have taken a good deal to overcome her pride." (1.23.55)

When she thinks that Margaret wants to marry her son, Mrs. Thornton admits that it must have taken some personal strength for Margaret to overcome her pride. Little does she know that Margaret is totally about to turn down her son's proposal for marriage. And you thought Mrs. Thornton was mad at Margaret before...

She was a liar. But she had no thought of penitence before God; nothing but chaos and night surrounded the one lurid fact that, in Mr. Thornton's eyes, she was degraded. (2.10.57)

Margaret is crushed to find out that Mr. Thornton knows about her lying to the police. She can't bear the thought of seeing him, because now he has the moral high ground over her, and her pride just can't handle it.

"It would tax my pride above a bit; if it were for mysel', I could stand a deal o' clemming fist; I'd sooner knock him down than ask a favour from him." (2.12.52)

Nicholas Higgins is a proud man. Jeepers, who isn't proud in this book? In any case, Higgins has a tough time swallowing the fact that he'll need to personally ask Mr. Thornton for a job if he plans on keeping his family financially afloat. As he says, he'd sooner fight the guy for money than beg him for work.

Man and the Natural World

Margaret used to tramp along by her father's side, crushing down the fern with a cruel glee, as she felt it yield under her light foot, and send up the fragrance peculiar to it [...] reveling in the sunshine, and the herbs and flowers it called forth. (1.2.5)

Margaret loves the sweet fragrances and warm feeling of nature. There's something sinister, though, in the way she crushes flowers with "cruel glee." The phrasing suggests that even though Margaret loves nature, she loves it as something she can use in whatever way gives her pleasure.

[With] the soft violence of the west wind behind her, as she crossed some heath, she seemed to be borne onwards, as lightly and easily as the fallen leaf that was wafted along by the autumnal breeze. (1.2.14)

Margaret feels totally at peace with nature, even though nature sometimes pushes her with "soft violence." Letting nature take control makes Margaret feel like she's nothing more than a falling leaf, which is a welcome alternative to all the responsibility she has around the Hale house.

On such evenings Margaret was apt to stop talking rather abruptly, and listen to the drip-drip of the rain upon the leads of the little bow-window. (1.2.15)

Margaret usually thinks deeply about what she says. But nature has a way of silencing her and making her meditate on its beauty. In this case, Margaret stops talking suddenly to listen to the rain dripping on her window. She's a proud woman, but she can't resist nature's charms.

Here and there a great oblong many-windowed factory stood up, like a hen among her chickens, puffing out black 'unparliamentary' smoke, and sufficiently accounting for the cloud which Margaret had taken to foretell rain. (1.7.4)

In the town of Milton, industry replaces nature. What appears to be a rain cloud is in fact the smoke pouring out of a factory's smokestacks. Yuck. We don't blame Margaret for being disappointed.

"Get the doctor to order it for her. Tell him that it's the smoke of Milton that does her harm." (2.4.2)

Mrs. Hale's health doesn't fare too well in the smoky streets of Milton. To be fair, she was never that healthy to begin with. But having no access to fresh air definitely seems to play a role in her eventual death.

"But people must live in towns. And in the country some get such stagnant habits of mind that they are almost fatalists." (2.12.6)

Mr. Hale admits that the natural beauty of Helstone village is preferable to the smoky streets of Milton. But at the same time, he admits that people need to live in towns sometimes. Besides, he also knows that many people in rural areas become too set in their ways because they don't see enough different people, no matter how beautiful their surroundings might be.

"I go there every four or five years—and I was born there—yet I do assure you, I often lose my way—aye, among the very piles of warehouses that are built upon my father's orchard." (2.19.64)

Mr. Bell assures us that his hometown of Milton used to be a place of farmer's fields and frolicking deer. But now when he goes home, he can barely recognize the place anymore because factories are built over the spot where his father's orchard used to be. Is that progress or is that destruction?

Over babbling brooks they took impossible leaps, which seemed to keep them whole days suspended in the air. (2.20.1)

Good ol' Helstone is just as Margaret left it. The only problem is that *she's* not the same person she was when she first moved to Milton. She no longer has the innocent outlook on life that she did when she was living in the natural wonder of Helstone. Now she's seen a different side to the world and a different side to humanity, and she needs to figure out a new way of approaching the world.

It hurt her to see Helstone road so flooded in the sun-light, and every turn and every familiar tree so precisely the same in its summer glory as it had been in former years. Nature felt no change, and was ever young. (2.21.1)

Margaret is pained by the thought that nature never changes, because it makes her realize just how sad it is that people get older and die (like her parents). Margaret has to deal with a lot of death in this book, and it's hard to face death when nature seems to be so unchanging and happy all the time.

Before they left Margaret stole round to the back of the Vicarage garden, and gathered a little straggling piece of honeysuckle. (2.21.125)

Margaret is ready to leave Helstone—maybe for the last time. But she makes sure to take a piece of honeysuckle as a keepsake. She's not as interested in her old house as she is in the natural world around Helstone. The piece of honeysuckle was no doubt growing there when her parents were still alive, and it symbolizes a happier time.