

Bildungsroman in the novel Mill on the Floss

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Abstract: *One of the most frustrating and useful additions that German literature has contributed to the global lexicon of literary studies is still the word Bildungsroman, or story of formation. The term Bildungsroman, or novel of formation, has been one of the most enduring and controversial contributions made by German literature to the international lexicon of literary studies. In the realm of narrative long fiction, the term "bildungsroman" has seen more debate, defence, acceptance, and general muddying than any other genre group, including, to mention a few, romance, picaresque, historical novels, and novels of manners.*

Keywords: *Bildungsroman, novel, and psychological development.*

Sometimes, especially in English departments, the phrase is used so widely that it seems as though any novel (and in very rare instances, even verse epics, like *The Prelude*), could fall under its purview. German literary experts, however, have taken a near-masochistic pleasure in destroying their own canon, occasionally even eliminating supposedly unquestionable works like Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* from their ranks. A "novel of education" or "novel of formation," the Bildungsroman (plural: Bildungsromane) originated in Germany in the late 18th century. Over time, the English term "coming-of-age" has evolved to be synonymous with Bildung (Castle 7; Redfield 191). In relation to Bild and Bildnis, Bildung can refer to both "shaping" or "formation" and "picture" or "portrait" (Buckley 13). German philologist Karl Morgenstern is credited with coining the term "bildungsroman" in his early 19th-century university lectures, referring to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1795). When Thomas Carlyle translated Goethe's works into English in 1824, it was the first time that English and American literary critics came across the word (Burt 106; Jeffers 49).

The story of a girl and her family during the early years of Queen Victoria's rule over England is told in *The Mill on the Floss*. In those days, women's responsibilities were confined to taking care of the home and raising children, thus girls, particularly those from Maggie's social class, had just a basic education. Maggie's story is a protest against this kind of limitation since it shows the reader right away that despite having a sharp mind and a vivid imagination, Maggie isn't given any challenges or outlets for them. When she was a girl, she would continually fight against the limitations placed on her, reading any literature she could get her hands on instead of sewing her sampler, and continuously ruining her clothes and teasing her hair in an attempt to stay up with Tom. Even worse, she finds her mother's and Tom's condemnation of her extravagant flights of fancy, restless demands, and "wild" behaviour—which she adores—to be unbearably painful because of her sensitive and loving nature. She finds some serenity as a young woman despite her confining career as a sewing instructor at a girls' school, but when her longing for more explodes into love for Stephen Guest, the long-standing struggle between duty and passion intensifies. Maggie Tulliver is the brash and astute younger daughter of the Dorlcote Mill Tullivers of St. Ogg's. Maggie's unusual dark colouring, unusual intelligence and unusual activity irritate her shallow mother. Maggie is emotionally reliant on her elder brother Tom, even though Maggie's father frequently supports her. Tom's devotion is Maggie's greatest source of delight, and his criticism causes Drin a letter, Stephen begs Maggie once more for her hand in marriage and expresses his displeasure at the suffering she has brought him. Maggie promises to carry the weight of the suffering she has brought upon others and to live with herself until the end, but she questions how long this ordeal—her life—will last. Right now, the adjacent river Floss is flooding, and water is starting to surge under the Jakin's door. After waking the Jakins, Maggie steals one of their boats and uses incredible power to row it down the river towards Dorlcote Mill. After Maggie frees Tom from his captivity within the

home, they row down the river in Lucy's direction. The boat is overturned by debris in the river before they can get to Lucy's house, and Tom and Maggie drown in each other's arms. After several years, Philip, Stephen, and Lucy all go to the grave.

Conclusion: Character analysis and the protagonist's psychological growth through several life stages are depicted in *Mill on the Floss*.

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