



**ROMOLA**

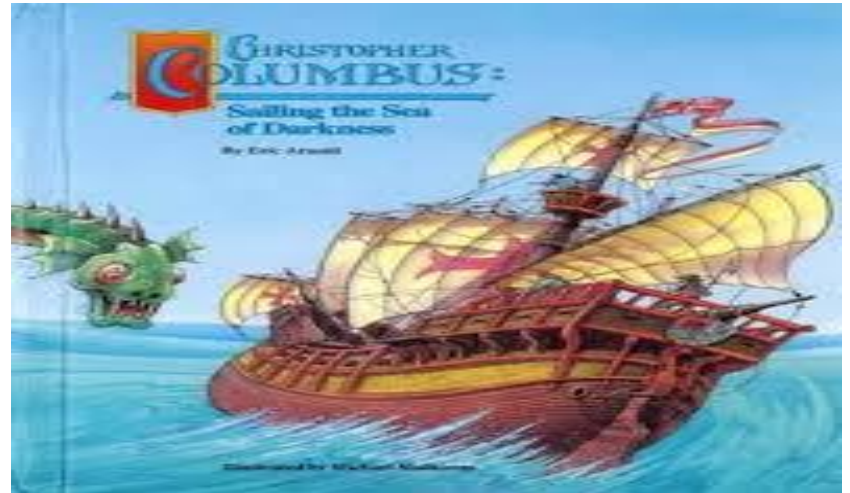
# George Eliot

- Mary Ann Evans (1819-1880), a British novelist, poet, journalist and translator wrote under the pen name George Eliot
- Belonged to the Victorian Era
- Novels deal with Realism and psychological insight
- Famous works:
- *Adam Bede*
- *The Mill on the Floss*
- *Silas Marner*
- *Romola*
- *Middlemarch*



# Background of the Novel *Romola*

- Historical Novel
- Novel set in the 15th century background in the city of Florentine(1492)
- Story based on actual historical events - Italian Renaissance
- Christopher Columbus sailed towards the New World
- Florence mourning over the death of the leader Leonardo de' Medici



# ***Romola***

- The novel first appeared in 14 parts, Published in *Cornhill Magazine* and later published as Book. The character Ramola is based on *The Decameron* of Giovanni Boccaccio



# Main Characters

- **Bardo de' Bardi - Blind Classical scholar in Florence**
- **Romola de' Bardi - Beautiful daughter of Bardo de' Bardi**
- **Dino de' Nardi - Bardo's son - gets separated from family and lives in disguise as Fra Luca, a monk**
- **Tito Melema - A handsome, young Italianate-Greek Scholar comes to Florence after a shipwreck**
- **Baldassarre - adoptive father of Tito Melema**
- **Girolamo Savonarola - Charismatic Dominican Preacher**
- **Tessa - a Young and simple beautiful young girl**
- **Nello - a barber in Florence**

# Plot introduction

- A Florentine trader meets a shipwrecked stranger Tito Melema, a young Italianate-Greek scholar
- Gets friendly with Nello the barber and Tessa and many more people in Florence
- Meets the Blind scholar Bardo de'Bardi and Ramola
- He assists Bardo de'Bardi with classical studies
- Visits Bardo's house quite often and comes to know about the story of his lost son

# Tito's background

- Tito was first penniless when he reaches Florence
- He gets his fortune by selling all his jewels except a ring
- The fortune belonged to Baldassare Calvo, his adoptive father believed to be a slave under the Turks
- He is doubtful if Baldassarre is alive or dead. If alive, he had to spend his fortune on his ransom



# Tito's life in Florence

- Tito establishes himself with the educated society in Florence
- In the festival of San Giovanni, the patron saint of Florence, Tito glances the angry look of a monk
- Tito meets Tessa-rescues her from the revelers
- The monk Fra Luca, who gazes at him in anger hands in a note to Tito
- The note is from Baldassarre asking Tito to rescue him from slavery
- Tito, not interested in spending money on Baldassarre, ignores his plea



# Tito's proposal to marry Romola

- Tito loves Romola. Works as an assistant to Bardo de' Bardi and declares his love for Romola. She too confesses her love for him
- Bardo's cousin mentions the real name of the Dominican monk Fra Luca(Dino)
- Tito fears that Fra Luca would expose him to Baldassarre
- To protect himself, seeks permission from Bardo de' Bardi to marry Romola
- Bardo de' Bardi agrees



# **Tito Melema's waywardness**

- **Fra Luca in his dreadful illness desires to meet his sister Romola**
- **Fear grips Tito that the secret about Baldassarre would be revealed to Romola**
- **Wanders in desperation, meets beautiful Tessa, a milk vendor's daughter and marries her in a mock marriage**
- **Instructs her to keep the marriage as a secret**

# **Tito's decision to marry Romola**

- **Dino dies. Tito's ingratitude to Baldassare was not revealed to Romola**
- **Tito says that Ramola has to ignore her brother's vision, that the stranger she was going to marry might bring about miseries to her and her father as it was a false statement**
- **They both decide to get betrothed at the end of the carnival.**
- **Plan for their wedding at Easter after Tito's return from Rome**

# Socio-political situation in Florence

- The novel skips to two more years (1494). Tito and Romola were married for 18 months then
- War between France and Italy results in the instability of Florence
- Girolamo Savonarola preaches to the Florentines about the corrupt practices of the church and advocates the formation of the Republican Government



- Piero de' Medici, Lorenzo de' Medici's son, successor to Florentine throne is driven from the city as he surrenders Florence to the invading king Charles VIII of France
- The Medici family is formally exiled from the city
- Tito plays a dual role- has a respectable position in Florence and secretly helps the French invaders



# Tito's misfortunes

- Tito meets Baldassarre, the escaped prisoner. Pretends not to recognize him and calls him a mad man
- Baldassarre escapes into Duomo and swears revenge upon the ungrateful Tito
- Tito decides to leave France to escape death



# **Tito's character revealed**

- **Tito sells his father-in-law's classical library in order to get money for his escape**
- **Romola understands the true nature of her husband and secretly leaves Tito and Florence**
- **On Savonarola's advice she once again comes back to fulfil the duties to her marriage and the Florentines**
- **Tito and Romola no longer love each other**

# Historical facts in *Romola*

- Novel moves from Christmas 1484 to October 1496
- League of Venice declares war on the French King and his ally Florence
- Florence faces political instability and famine
- Florence comes under the leadership of Savonarola. It results in the Bonfire of the Vanities
- Romola as a supporter of Savonarola helps the poor and the sick





# **Tito's Dual nature exposed**

- **Tito involves himself in politics. Has secret allegiance with new Florentine government**
- **Baldassarre reveals his past to Romola. He informs Tito's secret marriage with Tessa and his two children for her**
- **Romola decides to get separated from Tito**
- **Baldassarre's attempt to kill Tito becomes a failure**

# Tito's treason and the consequences

- Five supporters of Medici are sentenced to death including, Romola's godfather Bernardo del Nero
- Romola comes to know Tito's treachery
- Savonarola is unable to help her. His life is under threat due to the rising power of the Pope. He is being tried for heresy and burnt at the stake
- The government's next target is Tito
- Tito dives into Arno river to escape, but unfortunately Baldassarre kills him as a revenge for his ingratitude

**Arno River**



**Savonarola at Stake**



## **Romola's nobility**

- **Romola reaches the coast taking a small boat to commit suicide (as Gonstaza in Boccaccio's The Decameron)**
- **Misses death. Reaches a small village affected by plague.**
- **She helps the survivors**
- **She returns to Florence to help the suffering people**
- **Savonarola's death affects her. She gets inspired by him**
- **She takes care of Tessa and her two children and guides Tessa's son narrating her life experiences**

# Themes

- Humanism
- Empathy
- Religion
- Justice
- Deceit

**Thank You**