Tess of the d'Urbervilles Study Guide

Tess of the d'Urbervilles by Thomas Hardy

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

When *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* appeared in 1891, Thomas Hardy was one of England's leading men of letters. He had already authored several well known novels, including *The Return of the Native,* and numerous short stories. *Tess* brought him notoriety□it was considered quite scandalous□and fortune. Despite this success, the novel was one of Hardy's last. He was deeply wounded by some of the particularly personal attacks he received from reviewers of the book. In 1892, he wrote in one of his notebooks, quoted in *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy,* 1892-1928, compiled by Florence Emily Hardy, "Well, if this sort of thing continues no more novel-writing for me. A man must be a fool to deliberately stand up to be shot at."

In spite of his reputation, Hardy had difficulty finding a periodical willing to publish the book when he offered it for serialization to London's leading reviews. The subject matter□a milkmaid who is seduced by one man, married and rejected by another, and who eventually murders the first one□was considered unfit for publications which young people might read. To appease potential publishers, Hardy took the novel apart, re-wrote some scenes and added others. In due course, a publisher was secured. When it came time to publish the novel in book form, Hardy reassembled it as it was originally conceived.

Early critics attacked Hardy for the novel's subtitle, *"A Pure Woman*," arguing that Tess could not possibly be considered pure. They also denounced his frank□for the time□depiction of sex, criticism of organized religion and dark pessimism. Today the novel is praised as a courageous call for righting many of the ills Hardy found in Victorian society and as a link between the late Victorian literature of the end of the nineteenth century and that of the modem era.

Author Biography

Thomas Hardy was born in 1840 in a small village in Dorset, an area of southern England steeped in history. One of the local landmarks, Corfe Castle, was once home for the kings of the ancient Saxon kingdom of Wessex. Hardy chose the name Wessex for the setting of his most important novels, including *Tess of the dUrbervilles.* Like the Durbeyfields in *Tess* the Hardys fancied themselves descendants of a noble and ancient family line. The Dorset Hardys were presumably a branch of the Le Hardys who claimed descent from Clement Le Hardy, a fifteenth-century lieutenant governor of the British Channel island of Jersey. Remote ties to Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy, who served with the British naval hero Nelson during the decisive battle of Trafalgar in 1805, were also possible.

Besides his family name, Hardy's parents gave their son the love of literature, music (like his father, Thomas played the fiddle), and religion, which are evident in his works. A self-styled "born book-worm," Hardy could read at age three. He might have had a successful career as a scholar, but at age sixteen, his formal schooling ended when he was apprenticed to a local church restorer. He loved knowledge, however, and continued his education by rising early every morning to study Latin and Greek before setting off to work. He read voraciously, especially the Bible and, in 1859, Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species.* In 1862, Hardy became an assistant to a London architect Sir Arthur Bloomfield. He had thought about entering the ministry or becoming a poet, but by his early twenties his reading had converted him to agnosticism and his poetry had met with little success. For economic reasons, he decided to try his hand at prose. His first fictional piece was published in 1865; the manuscript of his first novel "The Poor Man and the Lady" was completed two years later. Although the book was never published, encouraging advice from George Meredith, a poet whom Hardy admired, convinced the aspiring novelist to try again. Hardy's first popular success occurred in 1874 when the first of his Wessex novels, *Far from the Madding Crowd,* was published. As with *Tess,* this work was noted for its spirited female protagonist and Hardy's use of his fictional landscape.

In 1885, Hardy moved, with his wife, Emma, into Max Gate, a home he had built in Dorset. There, only a mile or two from his birthplace, the novelist would live the rest of his life. Coming back to his native land seemed to stir Hardy's creativity, and the next ten years saw the publication of three volumes of short stories as well as five major novels, including *Tess.* His wife died in 1912, and he married again in 1914. As the years passed, he noticed how the encroachment of civilization, especially the coming of the railroad to Dorset some seven years after his birth, had changed forever his beloved rural world. In his novels he poetically recaptures the beauty of the region.

Plot Summary

Part One—An Insignificant Incident and Its Consequences

Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* begins with a seemingly insignificant incident: John Durbeyfield, a middle-aged peddler, is informed during a chance encounter on his way home one May evening that he is the descendent of an "ancient and knightly family," the d'Urbervilles. On learning this "useless piece of information," "Sir John" has a horse and carriage fetched for him so that he can arrive home in a manner more befitting his new station. He then goes out drinking, getting so drunk that he is unable to get up In the middle of the night to make a delivery to a nearby town for the following morning. Tess, his oldest daughter, accompanied by her young brother Abraham attempts to make the delivery instead; but she falls asleep on the way, and the family's horse, unguided, gets into a grotesque freak accident and dies on the road.

Now deprived of their transportation, the family faces hard times. Tess's parents hit on the idea of having her solicit the wealthy Mrs. d'Urberville, whom they incorrectly assume to be a relative, for help. Feeling responsible for their current situation, Tess agrees to go. When she arrives at the d'Urberville estate, she is met by Mrs. d'Urberville's son, Alec. He is attracted to her good looks and soon arranges for her to care for his mother's chickens. He comes to fetch her, and on the ride back makes it clear that his actions were not motivated by charity. Alec's unwanted attention continues throughout the next three months, culminating one night when he coaxes her to accept a ride home from a dance. He intentionally takes an alternate route, gets them lost, and eventually rapes her in her sleep. Hardy was forced to cut this episode from the novel for serial publication, and even in its final form in the novel it is handled with extreme circumspection, as is evident from the following excerpt:

"Tess!" said d'Urberville.

There was no answer. The obscurity was now so great that he could see absolutely nothing but a pale nebulousness at his feet, which represented the white muslin figure he had left upon the dead leaves. Everything else was blackness alike. D'Urberville stooped; and heard a gentle regular breathing. He knelt and bent lower, till her breath warmed his face, and in a moment his cheek was in contact with hers. She was sleeping soundly, and upon her eyelashes there lingered tears.

Darkness and silence ruled everywhere around. Above them rose the primeval yews and oaks of The Chase, in which were poised gentle roosting birds in their last nap, and about them stole the hopping rabbits and hares. But, might some say, where was Tess's guardian angel? Where was the providence of her simple faith? Perhaps, like that other god of whom the ironical Tishbite spoke, he was talking, or he was pursuing, or he was in a journey, or he was sleeping and not to be awaked.

A few weeks after this incident, Tess returns home. Falling into a depression, and pregnant, she remains in seclusion for the better part of the next year. She emerges in the following August to work in the fields, and soon thereafter her baby dies.

Part Two□Angel

After two more "silent reconstructive years" at home, Tess ventures forth again, this time to work as a dairymaid. At the dairy she attracts the attentions of Angel Clare, the youngest son of a vicar who has turned away from his father's faith and has settled on farming as a career. Angel is learning the ins and outs of the dairy business at Talbothays. Over the course of the summer the two are drawn to each other, until Angel finally makes his feelings known to Tess. Soon after he goes home to broach the topic of marriage with his parents, who are resistant to the idea at first but finally give him a qualified "go-ahead."

On his return to Talbothays, Angel wastes no time in proposing to Tess, but she, to his surprise, rejects him, and refuses to tell him why. Several such encounters follow, until her feelings for him overwhelm her shame, and she agrees to marry him. She continues to feel guilty about her past, however, and, unable to bring herself to confide in Angel, she declines for weeks to commit to a wedding date. With the time for his departure from Talbothays fast approaching, Angel finally persuades her and a date of December 31 is set. Shortly before the day arrives, Tess makes a final failed effort to confess her "stain" to him.

The wedding over, they drive on to an old mansion, which Angel informs Tess once belonged to her family. That night several things happen. First, the couple receives a parcel from Angel's parents containing several pieces of diamond jewelry willed to him by his godmother and to be presented to his wife. Soon thereafter their luggage arrives, along with bad news from Talbothays about three of Tess's fellow dairymaids, all of whom (unbeknownst to Angel) were also in love with him. Finally, Angel, recalling Tess's earlier wish to make a confession, himself confesses to a relatively minor past indiscretion, an "eight-and-forty hours' dissipation with a stranger." Thus fortified by her husband's apparent show of good faith and moved by the sudden fall of her three compatriots, Tess "enter[s] on her story of her acquaintance with Alec d'Urberville."

The consequences of her confession are cataclysmic. Angel is unable to accept her, claiming that, far beyond its being a matter of forgiveness, he feels as if she had become a different person. Divorce not being a viable option, they soon settle on a separation. Angel promises to keep her apprised of his whereabouts (his plans being to look for an estate to farm, either in the north of the country or abroad), provides her with what he assumes will be an adequate sum of money to maintain her, and drops her off at her home.

Angel ends up in Brazil. Tess, meanwhile, unable to bear staying at home, takes a series of temporary agricultural jobs, and by the fall of that year finds herself running out of money. Unable to land any more such jobs, she decides to join Marian, one of her

friends from the dairy, at a farm at Flintcomb-Ash. The work there is grueling, and her employer, Farmer Groby, is a brutish man. She perseveres for a while but soon decides to apply to Angel's parents for aid (as he had said she could if she needed to). She walks the several miles to Emminster, where the Cares' vicarage is located, but as a result of two chance encounters there, loses her confidence, and she heads back to Flintcomb-Ash, leaving her mission unaccomplished.

Part Three□Renewing Old Acquaintances

Midway into her return journey, she chances on a "ranter," or Primitive Methodist preacher, addressing the inhabitants of a small village, and recognizes the man to be none other than Alec d'Urberville. Before she withdraws, he recognizes her and later catches up with her on her way home. He tells her about his recent conversion, begs her forgiveness for his past behavior, but continues to show some of his old interest in her as a lover. Though she makes him promise never to see her again, he appears at the farm several days later, and proposes to make up for his past wrongs by marrying her. She declines, and eventually informs him that she is already married (though she refuses to disclose her husband's name). On learning this, Alec proceeds to press her in this and several subsequent meetings, insisting that she is an abandoned wife, and that she is a fool for not allowing him to help her. Soon he has given up his preaching and resumed his role of young dandy. Tess vehemently refuses his advances and writes a letter to Angel pleading with him to return to her. Again, though, circumstances conspire against her. First, on hearing that her mother is seriously ill, she leaves her job and returns home; and while her mother soon recovers, her father dies suddenly, as a result of which her family loses their house. Declining Alec's offer to put them up at his estate, Tess goes along with arrangements made by her mother to move to Kingsbere, the seat of the old d'Urberville family, but on arriving there they learn that their house has already been let. Thus, they are literally stranded, homeless and penniless.

Soon thereafter Angel returns home from Brazil He has recently received Tess's letter, and because of it and his experiences abroad has forgiven her and wishes to rejoin her He looks for her first at Flintcomb-Ash, then at her home village of Marlott, and finally at Kingsbere. There Tess's mother reluctantly directs him to the fashionable seaside resort of Sandbourne, which he heads to that evening. The next morning he looks Tess up at the lodging-house where he is informed she is staying, only to discover that she has married Alec. She begs Angel to leave her, which he very reluctantly does. The bitter irony of her situation soon overcomes her, though, and at a slight provocation from Alec she stabs him to death and leaves the lodging-house. She manages to catch up with Angel on his way out of town, confesses her deed to him, and reaffirms her love for him. This time, he promises to be her protector. The two proceed north along footpaths for the rest of the day and eventually settle in an unoccupied mansion, where they remain for several days. They then continue going north, Angel's plan being to reach a northern port, from which they will be able to safely leave the country. They walk well into the night, reaching Stonehenge, at which point Tess, pleading exhaustion, convinces Angel to let her stop for a while. Dawn soon breaks, and Angel perceives several figures

approaching them from all directions□the local authorities. Tess is arrested, and shortly thereafter executed.

Characters

Mercy Chant

The only daughter of a friend and neighbor of the Clares, Mercy Chant is the girl Angel Clare's parents hope he will marry. She is religious and holds Bible classes but appears cold and unyielding. She ends up married to Angel's brother, Cuthbert.

Angel Clare

Angel is the youngest son of Rev. James Clare and his wife. He appears in the opening chapters of the book as a young man with upper-class bearings that dances with Tess's friends as they celebrate their May festival. He demonstrates immediately the differences between him and his brothers; while they hurry home to their studies, he pauses to dance and admire Tess's beauty. The two meet again at Talbothays Dairy where Angel is in apprenticeship for being a gentleman farmer. Although his father and his two older brothers are members of the clergy, Angel wants no part of their orthodox Christianity. To Tess, he is uneducated, reserved, subtle, sad, [and] differing." He idealizes Tess as a "fresh, virginal daughter of nature' and asks her to marry him. When she hesitates, he asks again and again, and when she puts off a wedding date, he insists. At Talbothays he and Tess are portrayed as Adam and Eve where in the early mornings they notice "a feeling of isolation, as if they were Adam and Eve," and Angel plays his secondhand harp in a garden complete with an apple tree. Three of the other milkmaids at the farm worship Angel from afar and despair at the thought that Angel will never be theirs. Although he defends his choice of her for a wife before his parents, he seems not really to accept her as she is, and is secretly elated when she tells him she is of the dUrberville family. His true feelings are revealed when, after their marriage, he confesses to "eight-and-forty hours' dissipation with a stranger" which Tess promptly forgives. He, however, is unable to forgive Tess when she confesses what had happened with Alec. He gives her some money but leaves her to seek his fortune in Brazil His total lack of concern for Tess is seen when he happens upon one of the milkmaids from the farm, Izz Huett, and asks her to go with him to Brazil. He changes his mind, however, when she tells him no one could love him as much as Tess. When he returns to England from Brazil, he is finally able to accept her as his wife. The two enjoy a few days of happiness together before Tess is captured. After her death, he follows her wishes and marries her sister.

Cuthbert Clare

A classical scholar, and a fellow and dean of his college at Cambridge, Cuthbert Clare is Angel's eldest brother. He seems to think of nothing but his academic work, and has little patience for those not sharing his interests. He marries Mercy Chant.

Felix Clare

Felix is the middle boy in the Clare family, being Angel's older brother, and Cuthbert's younger brother. As curate at a nearby town, he is as much a churchman as his older brother is an academician. When Tess hears Felix and his brother telling in a derogatory fashion about her and Angel's marriage, she decides not to try to contact Angel's parents for help. This, the narrator says, is "the greatest misfortune of her life."

Reverend James Clare

Angel's father, Reverend James Clare, is a respected minister who is known for "his austere and Calvinist tenets." He and his wife live a frugal existence in Emminster. Although he seems cold, "the kindness his heart was such that he never resented anything for long." His compassion is demonstrated when, although he is disappointed that Angel doesn't want to go into the ministry like the rest of the family, he pledges to help his son financially in whatever he does by giving him the money he had saved to pay his university expenses. He and his wife hope that Angel will marry Mercy Chant, the daughter of their neighbor, but are resigned to Angel's choosing a wife for himself. He asks only that she be from "a truly Christian family."

Mrs. Clare

Angel's mother, identified only as Mrs. Clare, helps her husband with his duties as a parson. She believes in living a simple, faith-filled life, but unlike her husband, appearances are important to her. When Angel speaks of wanting to marry, Mrs. Clare wants to know if the woman in question is a "lady"'.

Dairyman Crick

See Richard Crick

Mrs. Crick

Mrs. Crick looks after the help at Talbothays Dairy. She is somewhat snobbish□she considers herself "too respectable" to milk the cows herself. She shows her kind heart when she sends some black pudding and a bottle of mead home with Angel when he visits his parents.

Richard Crick

A master-dairyman, Dairyman Crick runs Talbothays Dairy and is portrayed as a warm, jovial man who is friendly with his help.

Car Darch

Described as "a dark virago," and called "Queen of Spades," Car Darch was the receiver of Alec dUrbervilles attentions until Tess appeared. Tess decides to go with Alec the night he seduces her, partially because she is afraid of what the jealous Car Darch might do to her.

Alec d' Urberville

See Alexander Stoke-d' Urberville

Tess d' Urberville

See Tess Durbeyfield

Abraham Durbeyfield

Tess's nine-year-old brother, Abraham, accompanies her on her early morning ride delivering the bee hives after her father becomes too drunk to take them. In an important scene, the two look up at the stars and Tess explains that most are "splendid:' but some are "blighted:' Then, Abraham asks, "Which do we live on□a splendid one or a blighted one?" Tess answers, "A blighted one," Soon after this, Prince, the family horse dies in an accident.

Eliza-Louisa Durbeyfield

Tess's sister, Eliza-Louisa, is twelve-and-a half when the novel opens. Tess describes Liza-Lu as "gentle and sweet, and she is growing so beautiful:' when she asks Angel to marry Liza-Lu after she dies.

Jack Durbeyfield

See John Durbeyfield

Joan Durbeyfield

Tess's mother, Joan Durbeyfield, is a simple woman, proud of the beauty that her daughter has inherited from her and anxious to have her "claim kin" at the dUrberville estate. She has the common peasant attitude of accepting whatever fate comes her way, but is superstitious and consults the *Complete Fortune-Teller* for advice. When Tess is distraught over her seduction and pregnancy, Joan tells her daughter, Well, we must make the best of it, I suppose. 'Tis nater, after all, and what do please God!

John Durbeyfield

Tess's father, John Durbeyfield, works as a peddler and a wagon driver. He is greatly impressed with the news that he is the last descendant of the once noble dUrbervilles. He immediately orders a carriage to take him home and proceeds to celebrate for the

rest of the evening, bringing about the scene of Prince's death. Durbeyfield seems to do as little work as possible, and the news that he is connected with nobility seems like a good reason to do even less. When Tess returns to Marlott to look after her sick mother, she finds her father ready to send all antiquarians in England a letter asking for a donation to keep the family going as a national treasure. He suffers a heart attack, and dies soon afterwards.

Tess Durbeyfield

Hardy's heroine is the daughter of John and Joan Durbeyfield of Marlott in Wessex; the eldest of seven children. The subtitle to the novel, "A Pure Woman" emphasizes her purity, but critics debate whether a woman who is seduced by one man, marries another one who abandons her, and then kills the first, could be considered "pure." But, purity aside, she is, with rare exception, praised by critics who admire her steadfast hope under adversity. To some, like Donald Davidson in the *Southern Review,* she is like a figure from a folk ballad "the deserted maiden who murders her seducer with a knife, while to others, including Irving Howe in *Thomas Hardy,* she is "a girl who is at once a simple milkmaid and an archetype of feminine strength." To Angel she is "a regular churchgoer of simple faith; honest-hearted, receptive, intelligent, graceful to a degree, chaste as a vestal, in personal appearance, exceptionally beautiful." She has "passed the Sixth Standard in the National School," and thinks about becoming a teacher. While she is unimpressed with the news that she has noble ancestors, she feels so much guilt when she unwittingly causes the death of the family horse, that she follows her parents' wish that she "claim Ian" at the nearby d'Urberville estate. She is shown as a hard worker, working in the fields after her baby is born, working at the dairy, and, later, working in the rutabaga fields at Flintcomb-Ash. But for all her strength, she is like a trapped bird. In her simplicity, she tries to do what is right, but her well-meaning actions often are futile. Her effort to help her family by going to the d'Urberville estate, ends with her seduction; when she tries to ten Angel about what happened between her and Alec, she is unable to until after the wedding. When Alec keeps pursuing her she tells him, "Whip me, crush me, I shall not cry out. Once victim, always victim□that's the law." Later, she murders Alec in desperation, knowing that if he had only gone away when she told him to, she could have been happy with Angel. Before she is taken away by the police, she asks Angel to marry her sisters, Liza Lu. As the book ends, she is hung for Alec's murder.

Farmer Groby

Farmer Groby is the owner of Flintcomb-Ash farm, where Tess finds work after Angel leaves her. A cruel man, he is particularly harsh with Tess because of an incident in which Angel punched him because he thought the fanner had insulted her. Groby's temperament seems to match the harshness of the land he keeps and serves as a contrast to the joviality of Talbothays Dairy.

lzz Huett

"The pale, dark-eyed Izz Huett is one of the three other milkmaids besides Tess who fall in love with Angel Clare at Talbothays Dairy. After Angel leaves Tess, he asks Izz to go with him to Brazil, but her honesty betrays her when she tells Angel that Tess loved him more than anyone else. Hearing this, Angel tells her he can no longer take her with him.

Liza-Lu

See Eliza-Louisa Durbeyfield

Marian

The jolly-faced" Marian is the eldest of the three milkmaids besides Tess who fall in love with Angel at Talbothays Dairy. She IS despondent when Angel and Tess many, and soon afterward loses her job at the dairy because she starts drinking heavily. Her friendship with Tess is strong, however, and when she finds out that Tess is separated from her husband, she asks her to come and work with her at Flintcomb-Ash.

Retty Priddle

The "auburn-haired" Retty Priddle is the youngest of the three milkmaids besides Tess who fall in love with Angel at Talbothays Dairy. When Tess and Angel get married, she tries to drown herself but is rescued.

Queen of Spades

See Car Darch

Mrs. Stoke- d'Urberville

A blind invalid, Mrs. Stoke-d'Urberville is Alec's mother and lives with him at the estate at Tantridge. A note written by Alec m her name, asking for someone to help her with her birds, brings Tess to work at the family's estate.

Alexander Stoke-d'Urberville

In his early twenties when he first appears in the novel, Alec is the son of the late Mr. Simon Stoke, who added "d'Urberville" to Ins name to conceal his real identity when the family moved from southern England He seems immediately taken with his pretty "Coz," when she comes to the estate to claim kin and after she leaves, he sends a letter purported to be from his invalid mother to Tess's mother asking that Tess come to work for her. Tess tries to avoid him, but one night he follows her when she goes to a fair and market at a neighboring town. He cajoles her into accepting his offer of a ride in his buggy, because she fears to be out so late by herself. Taking advantage of the lateness of the hour and her fatigued condition, Alec seduces her. The next time he appears in the novel, he is a preacher, converted by Angel's father. When he and Tess accidentally meet, Alec's softer side is revealed as he seems to be particularly touched when Tess

tells him for the first time of their child. Alec becomes once again obsessed by her and pursues Tess to Flintcomb-Ash where she reveals to him that she is married. She refuses to have anything to do with him, but when she sees him again he no longer wears his parson's frock. Instead he is described as a villain from a melodrama, twirling a gay walking cane." He belittles Tess for being faithful to her absent husband. Infuriated, she hits him in the face with a leather glove. Although they part, when she returns to Marlott to care for her ailing mother Alec pursues her again. As she works in the family garden, m the light of fires of burning weeds, he appears as a devil with a pitchfork in hand and says to her, "You are Eve, and I am the old Other One come up to tempt you in the disguise of an inferior animal." His constant reproaching her for believing in Angel, his bestowal of gifts upon her family, and the family's desperate situation when Tesss father dies and the family is forced to leave their home, all contribute to Tess's final agreement to live with him as his wife. The pair go to Sandbourne, a fashionable resort area, where Tess finally kills him by stabbing him with a knife.

Themes

Victorian society preferred to avoid talking about sex, but Hardy believed the elimination of sex from popular writing produced "a literature of quackery." In *Tess* sex is often associated with nature; it is presented as a natural part of life. The scene of Tess's seduction by Alec takes place in The Chase, an ancient stand of woods that dates from before the time of established societal morality. The valley of the Froom, where Talbothays is located, is described as so lush and fertile that "it was impossible that the most fanciful love should not grow passionate." Tess and Angel fall in love there. Tesss three milkmaid friends toss and turn in their beds, tortured by sexual desire. "Each was but a portion of the organism called sex," Hardy asserts. Later, when Tess forgives Angel his "four and twenty hours dissipation with a stranger;" Angel cannot forgive her similar fault. Hardy condemns such unequal treatment.

Style

Narrator

Tess of the dUrberville tells the story of a girl who is seduced and has a child who dies. When she meets another man whom she wants to marry, she is unable to tell bun about her past until after their wedding. Her husband abandons her, and Tess is driven by despair into the arms of her former seducer. When her husband returns, Tess kills the man she is living with. Hardy uses a third-person (he/she) narrator with an omniscient (all-knowing) point of view to tell Tess's story. Thus the narrator not only describes the characters but reveal their thoughts. Hardy also uses his power as narrator to offer his philosophical insights on the action. The novels closing paragraph, which begins Justice was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Aeschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess is a good example of how Hardy comments on the action. Some critics believe the novel would have been better if Hardy could have remained silent and let the actions of the characters tell the story. At several spots in the novel, Hardy's narrator loses his omniscient ability and comments on the story through the eyes of a storyteller of local history. For example, when he tells the story of Tess and Angel's first meeting, when Angel chooses another girl to dance with him, the narrator says he does not know the lucky girl's name. "The name of the eclipsing girl, whatever it was, has not been handed down," he notes.

Setting

The story takes place in Wessex, an invented territory based on the Dorset countryside where Hardy was born and which fascinated him his entire life. Hardy gives Wessex its own vitality by depicting the regions folk: customs (such as the "clubwalking" in the scene in which we meet Tess), the folklore dia1ect with its colorful expressions like "get green malt in floor" (meaning to get pregnant), and its superstitions (such as the story of the dUrberville coach). Hardy's settings seem to mirror the emotions of his characters. Talbothays Dairy, where Angel and Tess's love grows, is described as "oozing fatness and warm ferments" and there the rush of juices could almost be heard below the hiss of fertilization. Everything about Talbothays drips with the moisture of fertility and sensuality. In stark contrast to the dairy are scenes at Flintcomb-Ash where Tess goes after she is abandoned by Angel. It is "a starve-acre place" where the fields are "a desolate drab" color and the work is exhausting and demeaning. The scene of Tess's capture is Stonehenge, the famous prehistoric ruins on the Salisbury Plain, consisting of large upright stones surrounding an altar stone. Significantly, it is on this altar stone, thought to have been the site of bloody sacrificial offerings that Tess lies when the police come to arrest her for Alecs murder. Through his choice of settings Hardy is able to make additional comment on the action of the story without further narrative intrusions. By placing Tess on the sacrificial altar Hardy makes clear that he believes she is an innocent victim. Time of year is also important in the novel as Hardy uses the changing of the seasons over the period of about five years as representative of the changing

fortunes of his heroin. It is a particularly fine spring when she goes to Talbothays; summer as Angel courts her; and finally winter at Flintcomb-Ash where she tries to once more avoid Alec's advances. Time of day is equally as important: unhappy events usually happen in the evening or night.

Symbolism

The settings in *Tess of the dUrbervilles* function as symbols in that their names have meanings more important than just geographical points. Marlott, Tess's birthplace, for example, alludes to her "marred" or disfigured lot or destiny. Flintcomb-Ash, as its name implies, is a hard, barren place. Several characters have symbolic names as well, including the girl that Angel's parents want him to marry. Mercy Chant, who is depicted as religious to a fault, and Angel Clare, who seems to be an "angel" to Tess and her three milkmaid friends, and even plays a harp. The harp, however, we are told is secondhand, and it symbolizes Angel' s imperfect character. Throughout the novel, Angel and Tess are symbolically associated with Adam and Eve of the Bible. In one of the most commented on scenes in *Tess of the dUrbervilles,* Tess approaches Angel, who is playing his harp, through the wildflowers and weeds in an unkempt garden with an apple tree. As she approaches, she is unaware of the "thistle-milk and slug-slime" and other disagreeable natural secretions that coat her skirts and arms. Even though Talbothays may seem like Paradise, the reader understands that this Garden of Eden is one that has been spoiled. Later in the novel, more references appear that, again, equate Tess with Eve and Angel with Adam. Alec, on the other hand, appears to Tess as she plants potatoes in a Marlott field. Amid the fires of burning weeds, he appears holding a pitchfork and he says, You are Eve, and I am the old Other One come to tempt you. Tess is also repeatedly identified with a captured bird. Other important symbolic images in the novel include a bloodstained piece of butter paper caught in the gate of the Clare residence as Tess attempts to contact Angel's parents in Emminster, the bloody heart-shaped stain on the ceiling at 'The Herons" after Tess kills Alec in the room above, and the capture of Tess on the stone of sacrifice at Stonehenge.

Historical Context

Darwin and Social Darwinism

The last fifty years of the nineteenth century saw innovations in science and technology that changed society to a greater degree than ever before. The theory of evolution popularized by naturalist Charles Darwin in his *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection,* published in 1859, had enormous cultural implications. The idea that humans were descended from apes changed accepted views of religion and society. It shook belief in the Biblical creation story and. therefore, all religious beliefs. It shocked the Victorians (those who lived during the reign of the British Queen Victoria from 1837 to 1901) to think that their ancestors were animals. They glorified order and high-handedness, and thought themselves, as British subjects, the pinnacle of culture.

To make Darwin's theory more palatable, a complementary theory called Social Darwinism was formulated. Proponents of this social philosophy argued that Darwin's ideas of "survival of the fittest" also applied to society. The existence of lower classes could be explained by their inferior intelligence and initiative in comparison to that of the upper classes. Angel refers to this theory when he expresses his surprise that there is no "Hodge" amongst the workers at Talbothays. "The conventional farm-folk of his imagination□personified in the newspaper-press by the pitiable dummy known as Hodge□were obliterated after a few days' residences." He is surprised to discover in Tess "the ache of modernism." For Tess, Angel, and others of their era, the God of their childhood was no longer able to answer their questions. Darwin's book ended forever the security of a society that could offer unalterable answers to every question; like Angel, many began to put their faith m "intellectual liberty" rather than religion.

Industrialization and Rural England

When the railroad came to the area of southwest England where Tess was born, the area still led an isolated, almost medieval existence. The railroad made it easier for country folk looking for work to leave the towns where their families had lived for centuries. The railroad also fostered new types of agricultural use of the land. Large dairies such as Talbothays, where Tess worked as a milkmaid, could flourish only because the rapid trains allowed transport of fresh milk to heavily populated areas. When Tess and Angel take milk cans from the dairy to the nearest train station, Tess reflects that the next morning in London "strange people we have never seen" will drink the milk. The trains converted a closely-knit society into one where consumers never met the producers and where strangers lived together in larger and larger groups.

England entered an agricultural depression in the 1870s, brought on in part by the completion of the first transcontinental railroad across the United States in 1869. (This made it easier and cheaper for American goods to complete with British goods.) Rural workers unable to get jobs, flocked to British cities, causing urban population to double between 1851 and 1881. Less profitable farming, meant farms had to become larger in order to turn a profit, so smaller fauns were bought out by larger farm owners.

Machines, like the steam threshing machine at Flintcomb-Ash, made agricultural workers less in demand. The large landowners felt no connection with the families living on their land, so to not renew their leases□as was done to Tess's family on Old Ladies Day□was a question of ec0nomic good sense, nothing more. Hardy criticized this practice in "The Dorsetshire Labourer," an essay published in *Longman's* magazine in July 1883 quoted in Martin Seymour-Smiths biography of Hardy. But the question of the Dorset cottager, Hardy notes, here merges in that of all the house-less and landless poor and the vast topic of the Rights of Man.

Women in Victorian Society

In *Tess* Hardy considers both the "Rights of Man" and, with equal sympathy, the rights of women. Women of the Victorian era were idealized as the helpmate of man, the keeper of the home, and the weaker sex. Heroines in popular fiction were expected to be frail and virtuous. The thought that Hardy subtitled his novel "A Pure Woman" infuriated some Victorian critics, because it flew in the face of all they held sacred. For while the Victorian era was a time of national pride and belief in British superiority, it was also an age best remembered for its emphasis on a strict code of morality, unequally applied to men and women. The term Victorian has come to refer to any person or group with a narrow, uncompromising sense of right and wrong. Women were not only discriminated against by the moral code, but they were also discriminated against by the legal code of the day. Until the 1880s married women were unable to hold property in their own name; and the wages of rural workers would go directly to the husband, even if he failed to provide anything for his family. The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 granted the right to a divorce to both men and women on the basis of adultery but, in order to divorce her husband, a woman would have to further prove gross cruelty or desertion. Women who sought divorce for whatever reason were ostracized from polite society. Women, like children, were best "seen, but not heard," or as Seymour-Smith observes, "The Victorian middle-class wife ... was admired upon her pedestal of moral superiority only so long as she remained there silently."

Critical Overview

Tess of the d'Urbervilles was a great success, marred only by controversy over its frank treatment of sex and its pessimistic view of life. After a little over a year, more than twenty thousand copies of the book had been sold. Undoubtedly, sales were inflated by the curious who wanted to know what the controversy was about. Several foreign language editions were printed as well. While a popular success, critical opinion was mixed, with commentary ranging from highest praise to deepest contempt. Both the *Athenaeum* and the London *Times* highly recommended the novel, but for different reasons. A critic in *Athenaeum* not only found the novel "well in front of Mr. Hardy' s previous work," but also praised the novelist's creation of Tess, "a credible, sympathetic creature." The same critic, however, did regret Hardy's excessive "use of scientific and ecclesiastical terminology." A reviewer in *Times* was moved by the story and praised Hardy's effective criticism of Victorian moral standards. On the negative side, a critic m *Saturday Review,* while identifying Tess as the most true to life character in the novel, found the other characters "stagy" or "farcical". He objected to what he saw as Hardy's excessive concern with descriptions of Tess's appealing physical attributes and deemed the story improbable. The critic admitted that even with a poor story, good technique could have saved the novel, but "Hardy, it must be conceded, tells an unpleasant story in a very unpleasant way." Public sentiment was such, however, that those who disliked the novel felt outnumbered. In *Longman's* magazine, Andrew Lang found the characters in *Tess* to be "far from plausible," the story "beyond ... belief," and Hardy's use of "psychological terminology," unskillful, but resigned himself to the fact that "on all sides□not only from the essays of reviewers, but from the spoken opinions of the most various kinds of readers one learns that *Tess* is a masterpiece."

According to novelist and critic Albert Guerard, Hardy critics before 1940 seemed to chide Hardy for many of the same points of style that later reviewers found admirable. That year the *Southern Review* celebrated the centennial of Hardy's birth with the publication of an issue devoted entirely to the author. Earlier critics such as Lang and Lionel Johnson, who wrote the first book length critique of Hardy, praise his ability to describe the country folk of Wessex, while condemning his fatalistic view of life. Guerard states in his introduction to *Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays,* that, beginning with the essays in the *Southern Review,* modern reviewers enjoy Hardy because of his pessimism; they find Hardy's "unmatched destinies, the darkness of the physical and moral landscapes, the awareness of dwindling energies, and the sense of man's appalling limitations .. . peculiarly modern." One *Southern Review* contributor, Donald Davidson, discovers in the fatalism of the novel, as well as in Hardy's controversial closing paragraph about 'The President of the Immortals," reflections of Hardy's interest in the folk ballads of his native Dorset. Davidson contends that fateful coincidences are comparable to the supernatural occurrences that frequently occur in the ballads and that Hardy's closing paragraph functions merely as a closing statement to the novel much like a traditional ballad ending. In *Jane Austin to Joseph Conrad,* John Holloway disregards Hardy's use of coincidence, saying that the scenes that might seem unrealistic are out of necessity so in order that their other dimension take meaning, their

relevance to the larger rhythms of work, shall transpire." In *Tess* the "larger rhythm," as Holloway sees it, is repeated identification of Tess with a hunted animal and a Darwinian vision that takes Tess, much like a developing species, from formation, through adaptation, to ultimate extinction. Dorothy Van Ghent notes in *The English Novel: Form and Function,* that "in the accidentalism of Hardy's universe we can recognize the profound truth of the darkness in which life is cast, darkness both within the soul and without "

For Guerard, "Hardy the novelist is a major transitional figure between the popular moralists and popular entertainer of Victorian fiction and the serious, visionary, often symbolizing novelists of today." Other critics also place Hardy in the doorway to modernism. Harold Bloom maintains that this is especially evident in *Tess of the dUrbervilles.* "It can be asserted that Hardy's novel," he writes in his introduction to *Thomas Hardy: Modem Critical Views,* "has proved to be prophetic of a sensibility by no means fully emergent in 1891. Nearly a century later, the book sometimes seems to have moments of vision that are contemporary with us." In particular, critics have reevaluated the novel m the light of new emphasis on women rights and feminist issues. As Hardy's biographer Martin Seymour-Smith concludes, Hardy's novel remains one of riveting validity even one hundred years after publication. "Tess was a *woman* who stabbed her *husband.* Then, as now, in the eyes of most judges, there is one law for men who kill their wives, and quite another for women who kill their husbands." For Seymour-Smith, Tess and her pitiful treatment by the men in her life are at the core of discovering the true importance of the work. "The question raised by the novel is this: what would a woman be if she were released from male oppression and allowed to be herself?"

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
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Critical Essay #1

Walker

In the following essay, Walker, a doctoral candidate at the University of Texas, notes that while some criticisms of Hardy's novel are justified, the view of Tess *as a pessimistic work is not really valid.*

Tess of the d'Urbervilles was Thomas Hardy's penultimate novel, published in 1891 when he was fifty-one years old (*Jude the Obscure,* his final novel, appeared four years later). After *Jude,* Hardy returned to his original love, poetry, producing eight volumes of verse during the last thirty years of his life. In his two-volume autobiography (credited to his second wife, Florence Emily Hardy, but written predominantly by Hardy himself), he claimed to have taken up the writing of novels "under the stress of necessity," and to have "long intended to abandon [it] at some indefinite time." It was the troubles he experienced with the publication of *Tess,* however, that "well-nigh compelled him, in his own judgement at any rate," to abandon novels. These troubles arose chiefly around his attempts to have the novel published serially (that is, in regular installments in a newspaper or magazine).

The cultural climate in England at the time was one of widespread prudery and intolerance, and "family values" were being promoted as the medicine to combat a perceived spread of sexual decadence, according to Elaine Showalter in *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle.* As periodicals were by and large seen as family organs, some of the "adult" scenes in *Tess* were deemed inappropriate. Thus the novel was turned down by two periodicals. It was accepted by a third only after Hardy, with what he described in his autobiography as "cynical amusement," agreed to some significant changes. The novel was restored to its original form when it was published as a book later that year. Ironically, it proved to be perhaps the most popular of his novels with readers, while it was widely, though not universally, admired by critics.

Hardy viewed the writing of novels as being closely akin to the writing of poetry. He aimed, he said in his autobiography, "at keeping his narratives ... as near to poetry in their subject as the conditions would allow." By near to poetry he meant, more or less_ "close to natural life," a condition to which he contrasted the production of stories of modem artificial life and manners showing a certain smartness of treatment. Certainly Hardy is concerned in *Tess* with portraying the natural world: among the most memorable scenes in the novel are those in which he evokes the fields and woods of his beloved Wessex. Yet some critics have argued that on the whole *Tess* is hardly "close to natural life." Hardy's contemporary Andrew Lang wrote in a review in *Longmans* that by his own "personal standard" *"Tess* is not real or credible," and he characterized it as a "morally squalid fairy tale." Robert Louis Stevenson complained in a letter to fellow writer Henry James that Hardy's novel was "not alive, not true, ... not even honest!" In *Nineteenth-Century Fiction,* modern critic Hugh Kenner dismissed

Hardys "situations" as "melodrama" and his characters as "phases in the sociology of fiction."

A quick look at many of the incidents in *Tess,* particularly in the second half of the novel, lends at least some weight to these criticisms. The response of Tess's fellow dairymaids to her wedding Angel Clare; the scene in which Angel sleepwalks with Tess in his arms; the fact that Farmer Groby, Tess' employer at Flintcomb-Ash, was a man with whom Angel and she had had a previous run-in; and the fact that Alec dUrbervilles brief conversion to Primitive Methodism (unlikely in itself) is precipitated by a confrontation with Angel's father, as well as other events, all stretch the boundaries of credibility.

Critics have more generally agreed in their assessment of Hardy as a pessimistic writer. There is ample evidence in *Tess* to support such an assessment. It is clear, for example, that while Hardy honors the practice of truly pious people like Angel Clare's parents, he recognizes little if anything in their creed to support its claims to possessing an exclusive hold on truth. In this Hardy was very much in step with his time: the nineteenth century had witnessed the waning of the Christian faith in the face of end-century discoveries in geology (Charles Lyell) and biology (Charles Darwin), and the rise of comparative linguistics, which had begun treating the Bible "scientifically," as an historical document like any other Hardy does locate a universal principle in nature, yet his Wessex is not the deified nature of poet William Wordsworth and many of the other English Romantics. At tunes, Hardy challenges Wordsworth directly, as when he says, "Some people would like to know whence the poet (Wordsworth) whose philosophy is in these days deemed as profound and trustworthy as his song is breezy and pure, gets his authority to speaking of 'Nature's holy plan.' Nature for Hardy is instead an arena of conflict between the two forces ... at work... everywhere, the inherent will to enjoy, and the circumstantial will against enjoyment " In such an arena, "the call seldom produces the comer, the man to love rarely coincides with the hour for loving;" and we are constantly made to distinguish between the world as we perceive it and the world as it might be said to be in and of itself, and thus to acknowledge finally how relatively insignificant we are in the grand scheme of things.

Hardy himself objected to the charge of pessimism. While the bitterness or depression many readers feel after reading *Tess* may seem to make such an objection indefensible, audiences would do well to remember that there are many moments of joy in the novel. The "circumstantial will against enjoyment" is only half of the equation. And if in the end Tess is the victim of circumstance, the "sport" of the "President of the Immortals," those earlier moments of joy have not been without their value. Indeed, her final fugitive tromp through the countryside with Angel, a sort of extended moment, a suspension of the last turning of the wheels of "Justice," is spiritually recuperative to such a degree that when she is captured, Tess says simply and quietly, "I am ready." Thus perhaps redemption is, in Hardy's view, available to us after all, though not in the places we might have expected (e.g., Christian faith). Rather, it is to be found in these moments□"moments of vision" (the title of his fifth volume of verse), "impressions," to be experienced and valued, in the words of Hardy's contemporary Walter Pater in *Hardy: A Biography,* simply for those moments' sake."

Source: Stan Walker, in an essay for *Novels for Students,* Gale, 1998.

Critical Essay #2

In the following excerpt, Yale University critic Miller discusses interpretations of the novel, focusing on its repetitive structure.

The episodes of *Tess of the dUrbervilles* take place in a line, each following the last. Ultimately they form a row traced out in time, just as Tess's course is traced across the roads of southern England. Each episode in Tess's life, as it occurs, adds itself to previous ones, and, as they accumulate, behold, they make a pattern. They make a design traced through time and on the landscape of England, like the prehistoric horses carved out on the chalk downs. Suddenly, to the retrospective eye of the narrator, of the reader, and ultimately even of the protagonist herself, the pattern is there. Each event, as it happens, is alienated from itself and swept up into the design. It ceases to be enclosed in itself and through its resonances with other events becomes a sign referring to previous and to later episodes which are signs in their turn. When an event becomes a sign it ceases to be present. It becomes other than itself, a reference to something else. For this reason Tess's violation and the murder must not be described directly. They do not happen as present events because they occur as repetitions of a pattern of violence which exists only in its recurrences and has always already occurred, however far back one goes.

In one way or another most analyses of prose fiction, including most interpretations of *Tess of the dUrbervilles,* are based on the presupposition that a novel is a centered structure which may be interpreted if that center can be identified. This center will be outside the play of elements in the work and will explain and organize them into a fixed pattern of meaning deriving from this center. Hardy's insistent asking of the question "Why does Tess suffer so?" has led critics to assume that their main task is to find the explanatory cause. The reader tends to assume that Hardy's world is in one way or another deterministic. Readers have, moreover, tended to assume that this cause will be single. It will be some one force, original and originating. The various causes proposed have been social, psychological, genetic, material, mythical, metaphysical, or coincidental. Each such interpretation describes the text as a process of totalization from the point of departure of some central principle that makes things happen as they happen. Tess has been described as the victim of social changes in nineteenth-century England, or of her own personality, or of her inherited nature, or of physical or biological forces, or of Alec and Angel as different embodiments of man's inhumanity to woman. She has been explained in terms of mythical prototypes, as a Victorian fertility goddess, or as the helpless embodiment of the Immanent Will, or as a victim of unhappy coincidence, sheer hazard, or happenstance, or as the puppet of Hardy's deliberate or unconscious manipulations.

The novel provides evidence to support any or all of these interpretations. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles,* like Hardy's work in general, is over determined. The reader is faced with an embarrassment of riches. The problem is not that there are no explanations proposed in the text, but that there are too many. A large group of incompatible causes or explanations are present in the novel. It would seem that they cannot all be correct.

My following through of some threads in the intricate web of Hardy's text has converged toward the conclusion that it is wrong in principle to assume that there must be some single accounting cause. For Hardy, the design has no source. It happens. It does not come into existence in anyone version of the design which serves as a model for the others. There is no "original version," only an endless sequence of them, rows and rows written down as it were "in some old book," always recorded from some previously existing exemplar.

An emblem in the novel for tins generation of meaning from a repetitive sequence is that red sign Tess sees painted by the Itinerant preacher *THY, DAMNATION, SLUMBERETH, NOT.* Each episode of the novel, or each element in its chains of recurrent motifs, is like one of these words. Each is a configuration which draws its meaning from its spacing in relation to the others. In the strange notation of the sign-painter, this gap is designated by the comma. The comma is a mark of punctuation which signifies nothing in itself but punctuation, a pause. The comma indicates the spacing in the rhythm of articulation that makes meaning possible. Each episode of the novel is, like one of the words in the sign, separated from the others, but when all are there in a row the meaning emerges. This meaning is not outside the words but within them. Such is the coercive power of pre-established syntactic sequences, that a reader is able to complete an incomplete pattern of words. Tess completes in terror and shame the second sign the painter writes: *THOU, SHALT, NOT, COMMIT,* and the reader knows that the relation of Liza-Lu and Angel will repeat in some new way the universal pattern of suffering, betrayal, and unfulfilled desire which has been established through its previous versions in the book.

Tess wanders through her life like a sleepwalker, unaware of the meaning of what she is doing. She seeks a present satisfaction which always eludes her until her final happiness in the shadow of death. Her damnation, however, slumbereth not. This "damnation" lies in the fact that whatever she does becomes a sign, takes on a meaning alienated from her intention. Hardy affirms his sense of the meaning of Tess's story not by explaining its causes but by objectively tracing out her itinerary so that its pattern ultimately emerges for the reader to see.

Hardy's notion of fatality is the reflex of his notion of chance. Out of the "flux and reflux□the rhythm of change" which "alternate[s] and persist[s] in everything under the sky" ... emerges as if by miracle the pattern of repetitions in difference forming the design of Tess's life. Such repetitions produce similarity out of difference and are controlled by no center, origin, or end outside the chain of recurrent elements. For *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* this alternative to the traditional metaphysical concept of repetition emerges as the way the text produces and affirms its meaning.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles, like Hardy's other novels, brilliantly explores the implications for an understanding of human life of a form of repetition which is immanent. Such a sequence is without a source outside the series.

On the basis of this definition of immanent repetition, it is possible to identify what Hardy means by the first half of his definition of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* as "an attempt to give

artistic form to a true sequence of things." The artistic form is the novelist's interpretation of the events. This interpretation does not falsify the events, but it imposes meaning on them by reading them in a certain way, as a sentence may have entirely different meanings depending on how it is articulated. The meaning is there and not there. It is a matter of position, of emphasis, of spacing, of punctuation.

Attention is insistently called to the act of reading, in the broad sense of deciphering, throughout *Tess.* One way is the many examples of false interpretation which are exposed by the narrator. These include the comic example of the bull who thought it was Christmas Eve because he heard the Nativity Hymn, or the more serous dramatization of Angel's infatuation with Tess and his interpretation of her as like Artemis or like Demeter..., or the description of Tess's "idolatry" of Angel, or Tess's false reading of nature as reproaching her for her impurity. All interpretation is the imposition of a pattern by a certain way of making cross connections between one sign and those which come before or after any interpretation is an artistic form given to the true sequence of things. Meaning in such a process emerges from a reciprocal act in which both the interpreter and what is interpreted contribute to the making or the finding of a pattern.

To add a new interpretation to the interpretation already proposed by the author is to attach another link to the chain of interpretations. The reader takes an impression in his turn. He represents to himself what already exists purely as a representation. To one purity the reader adds a subsequent purity of his own. This is Hardy's version of the notion of multiple valid but incompatible interoperations....

In *Tess of the d'Urbervilles,* in any case, the narrator always presents not only the event with its "objective" elements, but also his interpretation of the event. At the same time he shows his awareness that the interpretation is "purely" imposed not inherent, except as it is one possibility among a limited repertoire of others. An example would be the "objective" description of the sun casting its beams on Tess. This is first interpreted as like the act of a god, but that interpretation is then ironically undercut: "His present aspect ... explained the old time heliolatries in a moment."... The narrator's act in not only describing the true sequence of things but also giving it artistic form is shown as what it is by its doubling within the text in the interpretative acts of the characters. The narrator always sees clearly what is "subjective" in Tess's reading of her life, but this insight casts back to undermine his own readings These multiple acts of interpretation are not misinterpretations in relation to some "true interpretation. Each telling, even the most clear-sighted one, is another reading in its turn. The bare "reality" Angel sees when he falls out of love with Tess is as much an interpretation as the transfiguration of the world he experiences when he sees her as a goddess and the world as irradiated by her presence.

The power of readings to go on multiplying means that Tess's wish to be "forgotten quite" cannot be fulfilled. The chain of interpretations will continue to add new links. Tess can die, but the traces of her life will remain, for example in the book which records the impression she has made on the narrator's imagination. Her life has a power of duplicating itself which cancels the ending her failure to have progeny might have

brought. The life of her sister will be, beyond the end of the book, another repetition with a difference of the pattern of Tess's life. Beyond that, the reader comes to see, there will be another, and then another, ad infinitum. If the novel is the impression made on Hardy's candid mind by Tess's story, the candid reader is invited to receive the impression again in his turn, according to that power of a work of art to repeat itself indefinitely to which the novel calls attention in a curious passage concerning Tess's sensitivity to music. Here is a final bit of evidence that Hardy saw the principle of repetition, in life as in art, as impersonal, immanent, and self-proliferating rather than as controlled by any external power, at least once a given repeatable sequence gets recorded m some form of notation or "trace." The "simplest music" has "a power over" Tess which can "well-nigh drag her heart out of her bosom at times."... She reflects on the strange coercive effect church music has on her feelings: "She thought, without exactly wording the thought, how strange and godlike was a composer's power, who from the grave could lead through sequences of emotion, which he alone had felt at first, a girl like her who had never heard of his name, and never would have a clue to his personality."... In the same way, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles,* as long as a single copy exists, will have its strange and god-like power to lead its readers through some version of the sequences of emotion for which it provides the notation.

Source: J. Hillis Miller. *"Tess of the d' Urbervilles'* Repetition as Imminent Design." in his *Fiction and Repetition, Seven English Novels.* Harvard University Press, 1982. pp. 116-42.

Critical Essay #3

Hinde

One of the" Angry Young Men" writers of the 1950s *whose writings expressed bitterness and disillusionment with society, English novelist and critic Hinde examines the ways that Tess's fate mirrors the destruction of the agricultural class in England at the end of the nineteenth century.*

The plot *of Tess of the D'Urbervilles* turns on a succession of accidents and coincidences. Again and again Tess's tragic fate depends on some disastrous mischance. One or two of these may seem possible□after all is full of mischance□but heaped on top of each other they produce a final effect of gross improbability. Does this matter? Are we to see them as blemishes on an otherwise fine novel; or are they such a pervasive part of it that they must either condemn it or form part of its success?

At its face value the novel suggests not only that these accidents and misfortunes are included by intention but that it is the author's view that life does give human beings just such a succession of kicks downhill to disaster. The refrain 'where was Tess's guardian angel?' is more than an attack on the conventional Christian idea of a benevolent and protecting Almighty; it implies the exact opposite. Our problem, if we don't share this view, is that we see Tess as not so much the victim of Fate, nor as the victim of her own character and circumstances, but as Hardy's personal victim.

It is he who appears to make her suffer her improbable sequence of accidents. In criticizing this effect I do not imply that probability is a criterion by which we should universally or invariably judge. A novel sets its own standards, and no one, to take an obvious example, expects the same 'realism' from Kafka as from Tolstoy. The problem with Hardy's novels is that in most other ways they set up expectations of a quite conventional realism. It is against this self-established standard that the plot of *Tess,* as much as that of any of his novels which came before it and which it otherwise excels, at first sight appears equally to offend.

I say at first sight because my purpose is to suggest a way of looking at *Tess* which sees its many accidents and coincidences neither as blemishes, nor as valid samples of Hardy's neither credible nor particularly interesting view of the part played in life by a persecuting fate; if encouragement were needed to search for such a view it would be provided by *Tess's* many admirers who seem undismayed by its improbabilities, though these begin on the very first page and feature regularly throughout the book.

Setting the scene, and necessary if there is to be any novel at all, is the coincidence of names: the rich north country manufacturer Stoke who buys his way into the southern landed gentry has arbitrarily chosen from a British Museum list of defunct families the name d'Urberville to add to his own, and this is the original name of the family from

which Tess Durbeyfield is distantly descended. The story opens with Parson Tringham telling Tess's father about his aristocratic ancestors, which till now he has not known about. John Durbeyfield puts two and two together and makes five, concluding not only that he is related to the Stoke-d'Urbervilles but that he probably belongs to the senior branch.

Up to this point all could be said to be reasonable enough. If it is an accident it is one which sooner or later seems possible if not probable. In any case, even a realistic novelist may, "without offending against his own criterion of probability, precipitate his story with such a single event, then stand back to demonstrate with no further interference the inevitable consequences.

There seems no such inevitability about the next kick downhill which Fate gives Tess. Driving her father's cart to market at night because he is too drunk to go, she is run down by the mail coach, and Prince, the horse on which his livelihood as a haggler depends, is pierced to the heart by the mail coach's shaft. Tess's guilt at what she has done persuades her to agree to her mother's plan that she should visit the *nouveaux riches* Stoke-d'Urbervilles in the hope of making a prosperous marriage.

Here she meets the young and buckish Alec d'Urberville; once again a flavour of managed accident surrounds her seduction by him. Her quarrel, late at night in open country, with the drunken Trantridge village women provides her with just the motive winch makes plausible her acceptance of Alec's offer of a pillion ride when he spurs up at a convenient moment. Criticism is only disarmed by the splendid dramatic quality of this scene, set as it is with sinister omen and diabolic detail.

At Talbothays, where Tess goes a few years later and after the death of her child to become a milkmaid, who should she meet but Angel Clare, the young man who, in a more insidious but surer way, is to lead her to her tragic end.

From this moment the plot turns on Angels plan to marry Tess, and on whether or not Tess can bring herself to confess her sinful past with Alec d'Urberville before their wedding day. Though she can't tell Angel to his face she at last makes herself write to him and late at night pushes the letter under his door. Only on her wedding eve does she discover that Fate has struck again: she has accidentally pushed it under the carpet as well as the door and Angel has never received it.

Her confession after her marriage leads to their separation, Angel to go to Brazil, Tess to return to Marlott. He has left her an allowance but a succession of minor misfortunes□in particular the neediness and impudence of her parents□leaves Tess destitute by the time winter comes. Angel has told her that she should go to his parents if she is ever in need, but Fate, which has already put him personally beyond her reach, closes this escape too. She walks to Emminster and finds Angel's father, the Vicar, out. Before she can try his door again Angel's brothers discover her walking boots which she has hidden on the outskirts of the village and Miss Mercy Chant bears them off for charity. Tess's courage fails her and she turns for home. 'It was somewhat unfortunate,' Hardy writes, 'that she had encountered the sons and not the father, who, despite his

narrowness, was far less starched and ironed than they, and had to the full the gift of Christian charity' Though we may read this as a confession of clumsy plotting, that is far from Hardy's intention. His tone is ironic. The world may consider that Tess here suffered an improbable and untypical stroke of ill-luck, but Hardy, better informed about the working of Fate, knows that such accidents are in fact typical and probable.

Meanwhile Tess has taken on the humblest and most oppressive sort of agricultural labour: work on arable land. The description of her grubbing up swedes for cattle food, creeping across the icy uplands of Flintcomb-Ash in drenching rain, is one of the most memorable in the book. And who should turn out to be her employer but a farmer who knows her past and whom Angel once struck on the jaw when he insultingly hinted at it during the last days before their marriage. Inevitably he takes his revenge on Tess.

Alec dUrbervilles conversion to evangelical Christianity□coincidentally performed by Angel Clare's father□now gives Alec the chance to harass Tess again and, more important, weakens her power to resist him. The scene is set for her final disastrous return to Alec. The various letters Angel ultimately receives from her and from others reach him at moments which time his return exactly too late to save her from the murder of Alec and ultimately the gallows.

Though this is only a brief selection of the blows which Fate strikes Tess, I hope it is sufficient to show that the plot of the novel turns on a succession of disastrous accidents which far exceeds realistic probability But as in all such abstracts, vital elements which seem unrelated to the book's plot have been left out, in particular one to which Hardy persistently returns even though his attention is overtly directed towards Tess and her personal tragedy. This is the equally sure and tragic destruction of the traditional society of the English village.

Twice he shows us mechanized agriculture at work; on the first occasion he describes how the reaping machine, with its red arms in the shape of a Maltese cross, gradually reduces the standing corn.

Rabbits, hares, snakes, rats, mice, retreated into a fastness, unaware of the ephemeral nature of their refuge, and of the doom that awaited them later in the day when their covert shrinking to a more and more horrible narrowness, they were huddled together, friends and foes, till the last few yards of upright wheat fell also under the teeth of the unerring reaper, and they were every one put to death by the sticks and stones of the harvesters.

It needs little intuition to see that Hardy is here describing by parallel the fate of the human inhabitants of such a village as Marlott.

Humans themselves are the victims on the second occasion. Tess and her fellow workers who feed the monstrous itinerant threshing machine at Flintcomb-Ash, with its diabolical master....

Apart from the implications of such incidents, Hardy as author continually comments on the changing and deteriorating condition of rural Wessex. The May Day dance, for

example, where we first meet Tess, is a gay survival from Old Style days when cheerfulness and May were synonyms . The refreshments which the rural labourers of Trantridge drink on Saturday nights are curious compounds sold to them as beer by the monopolizers of the once independent inns. Still more important, it is the tenant farmers, deprived of their independence, who are the natural enemies of bush and brake, and to whom Tess falls victim at the lowest point of her decline at Flintcomb-Ash.

And it is because Tess's family are victims of another aspect of this destruction of rural independence that she is finally exposed once more to Alec dUrberville. As soon as her father dies her mother loses her right to their cottage, and the family must join all those other labourers' families which take to the road on Lady Day, their worldly goods loaded on to hired wagons, to hunt for new jobs and homes. Oppressed by responsibility for her family, she no longer feels she has the moral right to resist his advances when they could bring with them the financial help she so badly needs.

Indeed, a good many of Tess's misfortunes turn out on closer inspection, to have economic causes which seem almost as important as the random vengefulness of Fate to which Hardy attributes them. It is only a short step from realizing this to wondering whether Hardy is not□consciously or unconsciously□concerned throughout the book not so much with Tess's personal fortune as with her fate as a personification of rural Wessex.

Just why Tess should be an appropriate figure to play this part is clearly explained in Chapter LI, in a passage which holds the clue to the book' s social message....

At once much that appeared arbitrary becomes logical. The destruction of the haggler's daughter no longer seems a cruel mischance, but inevitable. And many more of the accidents she suffers, which on a personal level seem so excessive and gratuitous, become those which her class *must* suffer.

The mail coach which runs down the haggler's cart and kills his horse is the vehicle which will destroy the livelihood of all hagglers, whether they are drunkards like John Durbeyfield, or sober and hard-working. Deprived of their former independence, the children of the village middle class will be driven downwards into just the sort of menial labouring jobs that Tess is forced to take. Her downward progress from milkmaid to arable worker of the lowest sort is the path ahead for all of them.

Tess is of course many other things as well. She is, for example, the embodiment of nature and in particular of natural womanhood. Women whose chief companions are the forms and forces of outdoor Nature retain in their souls far more of the Pagan fantasy of their remote forefathers than of the systematized religion taught their race at later date. And however much she may stand for a principle or a passing society, she remains a lost and frightened human being in a world which misleads then persecutes her. Scenes such as the splendid but appalling one is which she baptizes her dying child in her bedroom wash basin may indeed seem to estab1ish her tragedy too clearly as a personal one for the interpretation I am suggesting.

But such a view of Tess becomes less and less satisfactory as Hardy inflicts on her a less and less probable sequence of accidental and coincidental misfortune. It is only when she is seen to some extent also to be a daughter of the doomed rural England which Hardy loved, and in particular of that class in the rural community from which Hardy himse1f came and which was once the backbone of the village life that her fate no longer seems arbitrary and author-imposed but inescapable.

Source: Thomas Hinde, Accident and Coincidence in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles,"* in *The Genius of Thomas Hardy,* edited by Margaret Drabble, Alfred A. Knopf, 1976, pp 74-79.

Adaptations

Tess of the d'Urbervilles was adapted as a film created by Roman Polanski, starring Nastassja Kinski, Leigh Lawson, and Peter Firth, 1980. The film received many Academy Award nominations, including one for best picture, it won Oscars for best cinematography, best art direction and best costume design. It is available from Columbia Tristar Home Video.

It was also recorded on audio cassette, narrated by Davina Porter, published by Recorded Books, 1994.

Topics for Further Study

Imagine Tess's story taking place in today's U.S. society and analyze how her story would have ended up differently or the same, refer to specific scenes from the novel in your analysis.

Research late-19th century British laws then, playing the role of either the prosecuting or defense attorney, plan your defense or prosecution of Tess for the murder of Alec d'Urberville using details from the novel.

Compare American novelist William Faulkner's fictional Yoknapatawpha County with Hardy's Wessex, examining the personality and physical description of each literary environment.

Compare and Contrast

1890s: The rural population was forced to move toward urban areas as low prices and industrialization of farm equipment made smaller farms less profitable.

Today: Family-run farms are disappearing across the United States at the rate of several hundred a year, primarily due to large corporations controlling food production and pricing.

1890s: The advent of rail transportation from rural to the teeming cities of the late nineteenth century made dairy farming more attractive than crop farming, since production was less weather dependent, costs were lower, and an ever-expanding customer-base was within easy reach.

Today: While small dairies still exist, increasing production costs and lower prices have forced many dairy farmers to sell out to larger concerns with an average dairy in the western United States milking one to two thousand cows.

1890s: Women could not divorce their husbands, even for having an affair, unless they could prove their husbands had treated them cruelly or abandoned them.

Today: All fifty states permit couples to divorce by mutual consent, although in twenty, pro-family groups have proposed, and in several cases passed, legislation for making divorce harder to obtain when children are involved.

1890s: State supported education was provided for all children, with education being compulsory to age eleven.

Today: Increasing dissatisfaction with public schooling has led to exploration of alternative educational methods, including independent public charter schools and 1.2 million students in home-schools.

1890s: Teacher, rural worker, domestic helper, and nurse were some of the positions open to women seeking financial independence; those who chose non-traditional career paths, such as medicine, were ridiculed.

Today: Although on the average women still earn less per hour than male workers, unlimited career opportunities are now available to them; in 1997, Madeleine Albright became the first woman to ever serve as U. S. Secretary of State, eliminating yet another barrier to advancement for women.

1890s: Women who bore children out of wedlock were considered "ruined"; they and their children could hope for little more than social marginalizaton.

Today: Single parenting has become commonplace, with more than 30% of U.S. children being born to fathers and mothers who are not married.

Further Study

Byron Cammero-Santangelo, "A Moral Dilemma: Ethics in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles,"* m *English Studies,* Vol 75, No 1, January, 1994, pp. 46-61.

Caminero-Santangelo begins by noting that the world of *Tess* is a post-Darwinian one in which ethics have no basis in nature. He then goes on to argue that the novel's "ethical center" can be located in a "community of careful readers" who will recognize the injustice in the novel and emulate Tess in challenging it.

Peter J. Casagrande, *Tess of the dUrbervilles. Unorthodox Beauty,* Twayne's Masterwork Studies, 1992.

In this book-length study, Casagrande argues that Hardy, in exploring the question of why innocents suffer, finds beauty in Tess's suffering at the same time that he deplores that suffering.

Graham Handley, In *Thomas Hardy, Tess of the dUrbervilles,* penguin, 1991.

Handley analyzes *Tess* in terms of "narrative structures." He gives particular weight to the roles of the characters in the novel, and also examines the novel in terms of such things as its "figurative patterns" and "themes.

Irving Howe, *Thomas Hardy,* Macmillan, 1967.

Howe provides a lengthy discussion of *Tess,* including compassion between Hardy's novel and Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress*

Lionel Johnson, "The Argument," in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles,* by Thomas Hardy, 2nd edition, edited by Scott Elledge, Norton, 1979, pp. 389-400 .

A portion of poet Lionel Johnson's acclaimed early analysis of Hardy's fiction in which he examines Hardy's attitude toward Nature, his depiction of the Wessex country folk, and his fatalistic view of life.

Hugh Kenner, "J. Hillis Miller, *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire,"* in *Nineteenth-Century Fiction,* Vol. 26, No.2, September, 1971, pp. 230-34

In the course of reviewing a book by scholar-critic J. Hillis Miller on Hardy, Kenner provides his own perspective on Hardy's merits and importance

Andrew Lang, review of *Tess of the dUrbervilles,* in *Longman's,* November, 1892.

An early review in which the critic finds little to praise in the novel.

Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry,* University of California Press, 1980

A landmark study focusing mainly on the visual arts in Renaissance Italy, and first published in 1873

Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle,* Viking Penguin, 1990

Showalter's study discusses gender issues in 1890s Britain and draws several parallels with the U.S. the l980s

Peter Widdowson, editor, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles,* Macmillan, 1993

A collection of essays meant to represent a response to Hardy's novel from a range of critical positions, in particular Marxism, feminism, and post-structuralism.

Terence Wright, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles,* Macmillan, 1987

This short book is divided into two parts. In the first, Wright surveys various critical approaches to the novel, which he divides into five basic Categories. In the second, he attempts to synthesize what he considers to be the best elements of all these approaches into a single reading of the novel.

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Florence Emily Hardy, "Background Hardy's Autobiography," in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles,* by Thomas Hardy, 2nd edition, edited by Scott Elledge, Norton, 1979, pp. 343-63.

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John Holloway, "Hardy's Major Fiction," in *Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays,* edited by Albert Guerard, Prentice-Hall, 1963, pp 52-62.

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Review of *Tess of the d'Urbervil1es.* in *Anthenaeum,* January 9, 1892.

Review of *Tess of the d' Urbervilles* in *Times* (London), January 13, 1892.

Dorothy Van Ghent, "On *Tess of the D' Urbervilles,"* in *Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays,* edited by Albert J. Guerard, Prentice-Hall, 1963, pp 77-90.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

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