Tess of the D’Urbervilles

Chapter 1:

This offhand revelation about the d'Urberville name is the impetus for the rest of action of the book.

Durbeyfield's excitement and feeling of entitlement over a name with no real wealth or power behind it begins Hardy's satire of English Victorian society, starting with the emphasis on ancient names, but also commenting on how the mighty have fallen in modern times.

“Sir John”

“plain Jack Durbeyfield”

“You are extinct”

“Sir John D’Urberville – that’s who I am”

“produced a shilling, one of the comparatively few that he possessed”

Chapter 2:

The description of the village and valley shows a part of society that is more in tune with Nature and seems to exist in a pre-industrial era. Tess herself is first revealed at the fertility ritual of May-Day, which begins her portrayal as a Nature goddess, and the rural women as symbols of pagan innocence.

The scorn of Cuthbert and Felix is a symptom of their middle-class separation from rural life and the natural, pre-Christian innocence of the Marlott women. Angel's shared glance with Tess foreshadows much of what is to come, especially the fact that his spontaneous action has such a lasting effect on her spirits.

“fertile and sheltered tract of country”

“white frock” “White flowers”

“The clubbists tittered”

“He’s tired, that’s all’ she said hastily,”

“I won’t walk another inch with ye, if you say any jokes about him!”

“her eyes grew moist”

“three young men of a superior class,”

“two elder of the brothers were plainly not intending to linger more than a moment”

“girls dancing without male partners seemed to amuse the third”

“that he had not chosen her”

“hurt by his oversight”

“white figures”

“thin white gown”

Chapter 3:

The satire of the Durbeyfield’s/D'Urbervilles continues with the rest of the family celebrating a name with no real meaning or advantages attached to it.

John Durbeyfield's bad diagnosis is a reminder to Tess that his days are numbered and introduces the theme of inevitable doom.

The narrator's musings about the fate of the Durbeyfield children continues the theme of an inevitable destiny that the characters are born into, rather than choosing for themselves.

“heart is enclosed all round there”

“ten years…ten months…ten days”

“she sat…in the same spot during his wooing”

Chapter 4:

“send Tess to claim kin”

“queer”

Durbeyfield's bad health is a reminder of unhappy fate.

Joan’s plan for Tess's marriage, emphasizes the theme of fate and makes Tess's future seem unavoidable.

When Tess hears of her mother's plan, it is in some ways a prophecy of her future. Abraham's questions about the “blighted star” reinforces the theme and bring up the idea that one's fate is preordained by circumstance or destiny and cannot be escaped.

Tess's dream is vaguely prophetic, and her falling asleep before a tragedy is the beginning of her role as the woman as passive victim.

The death of Prince is the start of Tess's misfortunes, and his bloody death both foreshadows her later crime and symbolizes a blow to the idea of Nature, as the farm horse is killed by the sleek modern mail-cart.

The pool of Prince's blood foreshadows the bloody ceiling at the novel's climax.

Tess feeling guilty for something that was only partly her fault begins a recurring plot point. The sad burial of the nobly-named animal is symbolic of how far the once-great d'Urbervilles have fallen

“twould lead to some noble gentlemen marrying her”

“The poor man can’t go”

“Tess awoke”

“splashed from face to skirt with crimson drops”

“huge pool of blood in front of her”

“Tis all my doing – all mine!”

“only a very few shillings”

” bread-winner had been taken away”

Chapter 5:

Alec appears as the novel's antagonist, a figure of corruption set against Tess's female innocence and modesty.

Tess is presented as an unintentionally seductive figure.

“village school, where she had held a leading place”

“The Chase – a truly vulnerable tract of forest land”

“D’Urberville looked and sounded as well as any of them”

“Stokes”

“big Beauty”

“I mean D’Urbervilles”

“in slight distress she parted her lips”

“half-hypnotised state”

“blue narcotic haze”

“appear more of a woman”

“he inclined his face towards her…thought better of it”

Chapter 6:

“pricked her chin”

“ill omen”

“mighty handsome man!”

“beautiful diamond ring”

“he’ll marry her most likely”

“Mrs D’Urbervilles writing seemed rather masculine”

“she had hoped to be a teacher at the school”

“the fates seemed to decide otherwise”

Chapter 7:

“put your best side outward”

“pretence o’t” “private tone”

“white frock”

“slight misgiving”

“white shape”

“killed Prince”

“found out whether the gentlemen is really a good hearted young man”

“trump card” “face”

Chapter 8:

“The kiss of mastery” prefigures the terrible act to come—Alec's rape of Tess—and shows Tess as a victim of male dominance. Tess is portrayed as an animal being teased by a cruel human, and so again stands as an image for the purer natural world.

That the kiss can be “undone” resonates tragically with Alec's later assault, which leaves permanent damage.

“green valley of her birth” “gray country of which she knew nothing”

“recklessness”

“kind to me … protect me, as my kinsman”

“queer…one’s life is hardly safe behind her”

“Hold on round my waist!”

“one little kiss”

“flushed with shame”

“took out her handkerchief…wiped the spot on her cheek” “unconsciously”

“undone the kiss”

“had had blown off into the road”

“No; I shall walk” “five or six miles”

“cursed and swore at her”

Chapter 9:

“blind”

“old lady’s face creased into furrows of repugnance”

“cousin’ Tess” “faint ring of mockery”

“temptation”

Chapter 10:

“she always searched for her fellows at nightfall”

“protection of their companionship”

“black stream…oozing”

“rivalry”

“squared up”

“out of the frying pan into the fire”

Chapter 11:

“I don’t love you”

“she did not perceive that they had long ago passed”

“moment of oblivion she sank gently against him”

“mere chit”

“stolen a hearty kiss”

“father has a new cob…children have some toys”

“painful sense of awkwardness…. Having to thank him”

“don’t you love me ever so little now”

“wept”

“druggist bottle…sputtered and coughed…swallowed as he poured”

“white muslin figure”

“sleeping soundly”

“where was Tess’s guardian angel?”

“spoiler”

“more ruthlessly upon peasant girls”

Phase the second: Maiden no more

Chapter 12:

This begins Tess's unfair condemnation by Christianity and English Victorian society.

what if the sin was not hers, but inflicted upon her? It makes no difference to the world, for now she is a “fallen women,” and Hardy's tragic critique of the sexual double standard and the hypocrisy of society begins.

“life was totally changed for her”

“another girl”

“obeyed”

“she had no fear of him now”

“broken unemotional conversation”

“like a puppet”

“I wish I had never been born”

“didn’t understand”

“that’s what every woman says”

“latent spirit awoke in her” – foreshadows his murder

“I will not take anything” “creature”

“princess”

“mastered” “passive”

“red paint”

“Shout themselves out”

“the words entered Tess with accusatory horror”

“suppose your sin was not of your own seeking?”

“Crushing! killing!”  
“Have you come home to be married?”

“doing some good for your family instead o’ thinking of yourself”

“he had never once said a word”

“more careful”

“child”

“make the best of it”

Chapter 13:

‘whispered when her back was turned”

“her depression was then terrible”

“turned their heads … whispered”

“come to church no more”

“The only exercise that Tess took at this time was after dark”

Chapter 14:

Tess’s actions toward the child show her inner turmoil—both anger and love.

“a field woman is a portion of the field”

“young mother”

“gloomy indifference…. almost dislike”

“violently kissing it”

“offence against society”

“not been baptized”

“shame”

“just the same”

“a child’s child”

“transfiguring effect”

“Sorrow”

“a divine personage”

“Christian burial for the child”

“disposed to say no”

“it will be just the same”

“Then I don’t like you!”

“at the cost of a shilling and a pint of beer to the sexton”

Chapter 15:

Hardy acts as her only advocate against an unfair god or destiny, and an unnecessarily judgmental world.

Society's judgment of her is ingrained within Tess as much as it exists in the external community, so she will not be free until she can forgive herself as well as physically escape.

“complex woman”

“nearly forgotten”

“never be comfortable again”

“waited a long time”

“far enough”

Phase the third: The fully:

Chapter 16:

Tess is moving for her own well-being, but in another way sacrificing herself for her family again. They will be freer without her presence bringing shame into the house.

Tess feels “akin to the landscape.”

“for the best…. harm by her example”

Chapter 17:

“she drank a little milk”

“swaller”

“as usual”

“a new hand”

“Sir”

Chapter 18:

“nearly entrapped by a woman”

“genuine daughter of Nature”

“familiar”

Chapter 19

Tess’s actual trouble is a purer, rawer one than Angel's personal “ache of modernism,” which is linked with his education, maleness, and higher social status.

Tess's wise, pessimistic views on history show her maturity and how her past has affected her. She already understands the power of fate and being punished unfairly. She also hints at the idea that her place in this society is a predetermined role which she must act out, a role that was inflicted upon her, not chosen.

“Dairyman Crick’s rule”

“constant interchange”

“both instrument and execution were poor”

“like a fascinated bird”

“snow-white”

“blood-red”

“tears”

“the ache of modernism”

“unhappy pilgrim”

“one of a long row”

“anything left”

“can’t stomach old families”

Chapter 20:

The image of Tess and Angel as Adam and Eve is first revealed. Tess now becomes to Angel not just a symbol of Nature, but a mythical or religious figure.

“never… been so happy”

“as if they were Adam and Eve”

“Artemis Demeter”

“Call me Tess”

“non-human hours”

Chapter 21:

“the churn”

“somebody in the house is in love”

“deceived”

“faint…better outdoors”

“won’t marry any of us, or Tess either”

Tess feels guilty for drawing his attention from the other, “purer” girls of Talbothays.

Chapter 22:

“pretty”

“good farmers wife”

“self-sacrificing”

“marry one of them… don’t think of marrying me”

“she gave the other three every chance”

“self-controlling”

“never expected to find”

Chapter 23:

This “rescue” is a contrast to Alec's. Angel realizes Tess is at a disadvantage in clinging to him, and he does not abuse his power. Again, he compares Tess to a religious figure, this time Rachel (Jacob's favourite of the two sisters he married. Yet in some ways Angel will come to see Tess as the other sister, Leah, when he feels that Tess has tricked him into marriage just as Jacob was tricked).

“clinging…. like pigeons”

“three Leahs to get one Rachel”

“inclined his face towards hers”

“reminded Angel that he was unfairly taking advantage of an accidental position”

“went no further”

“walked slowly”

“would have kissed”

“fatalism”

“they did not blame her”

“refuse any man”

“chosen by his family”

“don’t care much for her…. sure to marry her”

Chapter 24:

“lovable”

“go no further…it destresses you”

Chapter 25:

“no insignificant creature to toy with and dismiss”

“precious life”

“Dared he to marry her”

“earnest, God-fearing man”

“kindness of his heart”

“difference in his manner”

“lost culture”

“short sighted”

“losing intellectual grasp”

Chapter 26:

Again Reverend Clare's kindness is emphasized over the harshness of his beliefs. He too is lost in his own world

Angel understands the deep divide between his family's world and Tess's, and knows that they might disapprove of her because of external circumstances alone. For now he is blinded by love and so can look beyond the strict roles of convention,

“sum of money”

“a lady”

“Marcy chant is of a very good family”

“certain latent prejudices”

“D’Urberville … in the neighbourhood of Tantridge”

“had a blind mother”

“his father had not once thought of inquiring whether she were well provided for or penniless”

The hint of Alec brings up the dark past and shows that Tess is never really free; her past can always rise up and work against her. Even just the mention of d'Urberville implies that her happiness cannot last.

Again Mr. Clare shows admirable sincerity. Angel realizes that his father is so immersed in his beliefs that he does not care about Tess's worldly situation, but only if her faith is pure. Angel recognizes that this seems like a better way of being than that of his brothers, who are little more than servants to society's whims.

Chapter 27:

“she was yawning., and he saw the red interior of her mouth as if it had been a snake’s. she had stretched one arm so high above her coiled-up cable of hair that he could see its satin delicacy above the sunburn”

“her face was flushed with sleep, and her eyelids hung heavy over their pupils”

“while she regarded him as Eve”

“I cannot be your wife”

“has a mother afflicted with blindness”

Chapter 28:

“not good enough”

“her admiration of him…. led her to pick up his vocabulary, his accent, and fragments of his knowledge”

Chapter 29:

“withheld the kiss”

“widow-woman”

“fifty poun’ a year or so;”

“poor woman gets the worst o’t”

“naked-armed and jacketless”

Again, Dollop appears at an instructive time for Tess, paralleling her own story.

She is reminded that she is an outsider from the other dairymaids, who are actually as pure and honest as Angel thinks Tess is. She can understand the pain of telling the painful truth to someone you love, even within the context of a humorous anecdote.

The end of the chapter, in which Tess once again is about to go on a wagon ride alone with a man (last time she did this was when Alec raped her), suggesting that the next chapter will be more decisive than the couple's many previous interactions.

Chapter 30:

“long-standing question”

“interesting old place”

He asks her for an answer sometime before they get home. At that moment they drive by an old mansion, and Angel says it once belonged to the d'Urberville family.

The d'Urbervilles always seem to pop up at bad times, reminding Tess that she cannot escape the past and is perhaps always doomed.

Tess is explicitly contrasted with the industrial machinery and held up as an example of ancient Nature and purity. They reach the railway station, which is the point where modern society daily touches their “secluded world.”

They unload the milk, and Tess looks totally out of place among the machinery.

“secluded world”

“foreign”

“she had not told”

“my mother… will think so much better of you on account of it”

“odd coincidence”

She can cure Angel of his small prejudice against old families, but not of the large one he and society hold against women like her (who were, in fact, brutally harmed).

Alec again intrudes on Tess's happiness, even from far away, and the d'Urberville name seems like a bad omen. Mrs. Clare's concern with social norms is made more explicit.

“it is unlucky”

“kissed her”

“I sometimes wish I had never been born”

Chapter 31:

“trouble”

“fool”

“I am not worthy of you”

“why didn’t you stay and love me when I – was sixteen”

Angel still cannot understand her turmoil, and Tess again avoids being honest. The thought of her younger, more innocent self upsets her. Her guilt threatens the happiness she has sacrificed so much for, and the tragedy is that it is guilt for a sin Tess did not commit.

“can’t hate her”

Chapter 32:

“carry you off then as my property”

“I don’t like you to be left anywhere away from my influence and sympathy”

“she had caught his manner and habits, his speech and phrases, his likings and his aversions”

“to leave her in some farmland would be to let her slip back again out of accord with him”

“her presentation to his mother”

“the robe should betray her by changing colour”

Angel plans out their future but fears to startle Tess. He wants to “train” her to meet his mother, so she doesn't embarrass him. Angel still cares more for other's opinions than he thinks.

Tess is still steeped in both her mother's superstitions and the judgments of Victorian society. The song and the dress seem like bad omens, and she feels impure again.

Chapter 33:

“Tantridge man”

“struck the man”

“another woman”

“gave the man five shillings to plaster the blow”

“slipped the note under his door”

“nobody was invited from Marlott”

“under the edge of the carpet”

“she destroyed the letter”

“confess all my faults and blunders”

“seen this carriage before”

“the legend of the D’Urberville Coach”

“will you kiss ‘em all”

“afternoon crow”

Hardy here introduces the symbol of the coach, which is itself a foreshadowing of murder. The full legend is not told yet, but it does seem like another bad omen on their wedding day.

Chapter 34:

‘mouldy old habitation… depressed his bride”

“her fine features were unquestioningly traceable in these exaggerated forms”

“I love you best in the wing-bonnet and cotton-frock”

“poor little Retty Priddle hev tried to drown herself”

“Marian…been found dead drunk”

“afraid of endangering my chance with you”

“eight- and forty-hour’ dissipation with a stranger”

“dismiss it at once and for ever… talk of something lighter”

“each diamond on her neck gave a sinister wink like a toad’s”

“a large shadow of her shape rose upon the wall and ceiling”

Phase the fifth

The woman pays

Chapter 35:

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