

TESS OF D'UBERVILLES

THOMAS HARDY

INTRODUCTION OF THOMAS HARDY:

Thomas Hardy was an English novelist and poet. A Victorian realist in the tradition of George Eliot, he was influenced both in his novels and in his poetry by Romanticism, including the poetry of William Wordsworth.

Born: June 2, 1840, Stanford, United Kingdom

Died: January 11, 1928, Dorchester, United Kingdom

Thomas Hardy is best known for his novels, all of which were published in the mid- to late-19th century. His last novels, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, are generally considered his finest. These works challenge societal mores with their sympathetic portrayals of the hardships of working-class people. His realism, prose style, characterization and social criticism in his novels are works of social commentary. He was a fierce critic of poverty with social stratification.

Full Title: Tess of the d'Urbervilles Author: Thomas Hardy

Type of work: Novel

Genre: Victorian, tragic

Date of first publication: 1891

Tone: Realistic, pessimistic

Setting (time): The 1880s and 1890s

Setting (place): Wessex, the southwest of England Protagonist: Tess Durbeyfield

Chapter: 59 chapters

Themes:

- The injustice of existence
- Changing ideas of social class in Victorian England
- Men dominating women
- The Injustice of Existence.

TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES CHARACTER LIST

Tess Durbeyfield

The young daughter of a rural working class family at the start of the novel, Tess Durbeyfield is sent to claim kinship with the wealthier side of her family, the d'Urbervilles, when her family faces imminent poverty. After being seduced by Alec d'Urberville, she bears his child, which dies in infancy, and must leave her home to start a new life elsewhere. Although Tess is dutiful and obedient as the novel begins, she gains great strength and fortitude through her suffering, but remains unwavering in her love for Angel Clare and is prepared to do anything that Angel might wish.

Angel Clare

The son of a parson and the youngest of three brothers, Angel did not enter college as his siblings, despite his superior intellect, but rather diverged from the career path his father intended for him, the ministry, to study agriculture so that he might become a farmer. Despite holding more liberal opinions than his father and brothers, Angel Clare is nevertheless equally dogmatic and obstinate. He has a deeply theoretical mindset; it is this quality that causes him to reject Tess when he learns information about her past that contradicts his idealistic view of her.

Alec d'Urberville

The sophisticated, urbane son of the elderly, blind Mrs. Stoke-d'Urberville, Alec is rapacious and possessive, believing that his status in society and his financial situation gives him power to possess and control Tess after he gives her a job caring for his mother's chickens. After seducing Tess, Alec reforms his hedonistic ways to become a fundamentalist preacher, but soon deviates from his newfound spirituality once he sees Tess again.

Mrs. Brooks

She is the householder at The Herons, the boarding establishment at Sandbourne where Alec and Tess stay together. She discovers Alec after Tess stabs him in the heart.

Mercy Chant

Reverend Clare and his wife intend this young woman from Emminster to marry Angel, despite his affection for Tess, for she holds proper religious views, according to the Clares.

Reverend Clare

A fundamentalist parson in the style that has nearly died out when the novel begins, Reverend Clare does not send his son, Angel, to college because the two disagree on religious philosophy. Reverend Clare is responsible for Alec d'Urberville's conversion after he confronts Alec.

Cuthbert Clare

He is one of Angel's older brothers.

Felix Clare

He is one of Angel's older brothers.

Mrs. Clare

Angel's mother is a conservative woman who dislikes the idea that Angel has married Tess, believing her to be a simple country girl unsuitable for her more refined son.

Richard Crick

The dairyman and owner of Talbothays Dairy, he employs both Tess and Angel. Dairyman Crick is a gregarious, jovial man who treats Tess well as an employer.

Abraham Durbeyfield

The younger brother of Tess, Abraham accompanies his sister when she must deliver a cart of bees in place of their father.

Joan Durbeyfield

Tess's mother is a bawdy, irresponsible woman who views her daughter only in exploitative terms, believing that she can send Tess to the d'Urbervilles explicitly to marry a gentleman and thus raise the fortunes of her family. Tess returns home when Joan is deathly ill, but she makes a sudden recovery just as her husband's health worsens.

John Durbeyfield

A jovial, irresponsible man, John Durbeyfield sets the plot of the novel in motion when he learns that the Durbeyfield family is descended from the renowned d'Urbervilles. John suffers from heart disease, and when he dies his family is evicted from their home and forced to move to Kingsbere.

Liza-Lu Durbeyfield

Tess's younger sister travels to Flintcomb-Ash to request that her sister return home when her parents are ill. Before Tess is caught, she asks Angel to marry Liza-Lu after Tess has died.

Car Darch

Nicknamed the Queen of Spades, this woman nearly fights Tess when Tess laughs at Car when she stains her dress with treacle. Tess is only saved from a brawl when Alec saves her. Tess later meets Car again when the two work together at Flintcomb-Ash.

Nancy Darch

Nicknamed the Queen of Diamonds, Nancy is the sister of Car and accompanies her sister to Flintcomb-Ash to work.

Farmer Groby

When Angel and Tess are in town before their wedding, this former Trantridge Cross resident identifies Tess as a woman of ill repute, causing Angel to defend her honor. Later he nearly accosts Tess as she travels to Flintcomb-Ash, and appears a third time as her employer at Flintcomb. Because of her early cold treatment of him, Farmer Groby is a difficult taskmaster who treats Tess poorly.

Izz Huett

One of the dairymaids at Talbothays Dairy with whom Tess stays, Izz Huett is also in love with Angel Clare, but after his separation from Tess when he invites her to accompany him to Brazil, Izz refuses because of Tess's love for Angel. Izz later works with Tess at Flintcomb-Ash and sends a letter to Angel telling him to forgive Tess.

Jonathan Kail

A servant at Talbothays' dairy, he delivers news of the other works to Tess and Angel during their honeymoon.

Marian

One of the dairymaids at Talbothays with whom Tess stays, Marian is also in love with Angel Clare and becomes an alcoholic after Tess and Angel marry. Marian invites Tess to come to Flintcomb-Ash where she works, and with Izz Huett sends a letter to Angel telling him to forgive Tess.

Retty Priddle

One of the dairymaids at Talbothays with whom Tess stays, Retty is also in love with Angel Clare. After Tess and Angel marry, Retty attempts to drown herself, but soon joins her former dairymaids at Flintcomb-Ash.

Mrs. Stoke-d'Urberville

An elderly, blind woman and the mother of Alec, she employs Tess to look after her chickens. She dies not long after Tess leaves Trantridge Cross.

Parson Tringham

This clergyman in Marlott tells John Durbeyfield that his family is descended from the noted d'Urberville family.

FULL PLOT SUMMARY

Part One: The Beginning of Tess's Journey

The story begins with Tess Durbeyfield, a poor, beautiful young woman from the village of Marlott. One day, Tess's father, **John Durbeyfield**, learns from a local parson that his ancestors were once an aristocratic family, the **d'Urbervilles**. With this new knowledge, Tess's mother, **Joan Durbeyfield**, encourages Tess to seek out the d'Urberville family, hoping they will offer help to the family.

Tess goes to the d'Urberville estate, where she meets **Alec d'Urberville**, the son of the wealthy family. Alec is charming but also predatory. He soon begins to take advantage of Tess's innocence and, through manipulation, he persuades her into a sexual relationship. Tess becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son, whom she names **Sorrow**. However, the baby dies shortly after birth, and Tess returns home, devastated by the loss and the scandal.

Part Two: Tess's Return to Normalcy

Tess tries to move on from her traumatic experience and works as a dairymaid at **Talbothays Dairy**, where she meets **Angel Clare**, a young man from a respectable family who has rejected the traditional expectations of his class. Angel falls in love with Tess, admiring her beauty and innocence, and they soon become engaged. Tess, however, is reluctant to marry him, fearing that he will reject her once he learns about her past with Alec.

Part Three: The Rejection and Return to Alec

Tess eventually confesses her past to Angel before their wedding, expecting his understanding and forgiveness. However, Angel is unable to accept her “fall from grace” and reacts with anger and disappointment. He abandons Tess and goes to **Brazil**, leaving her heartbroken and alone.

While Angel is away, Tess struggles to support herself and finds herself increasingly vulnerable. Eventually, she returns to the now-wealthy **Alec d'Urberville**, who has become a more manipulative and controlling figure. He convinces Tess to live with him, despite her emotional distress and desire to remain true to Angel. Tess feels trapped by her circumstances and her feelings of guilt.

Part Four: The Tragic Return of Angel

After a few years, Angel returns from Brazil, having failed to make a success of his life there. He seeks Tess out, hoping to rekindle their relationship. When he finds Tess living with Alec, his reaction is one of betrayal and outrage. Tess, overwhelmed by guilt and the complexities of her life, becomes emotionally torn. She decides to leave Alec and run away with Angel, but their time together is short-lived, as Tess struggles with the weight of her past.

In a final, desperate act, Tess murders Alec in a fit of anger and frustration. She is arrested and sentenced to death for the crime. Angel, still in love with her, tries to save her, but he is too late. Tess is executed by hanging.

Question 1: Is Tess a Pure Woman? Justify the Subtitle of the novel: Tess: A Pure Woman

When *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* was first published, it caused a storm. Many people found the sub-title of the book offensive. They did not understand how Tess could be subtitled a pure woman when her sexual and criminal guilt were beyond dispute. In a note Hardy regretted the fact that his critics had ignored the meaning of the word “pure” in nature, together with all aesthetic claims upon it, not to mention the spiritual interpretation afforded by the finer side of their own Christianity.

Hardy regarded Tess as a pure woman, and rightly so. It is clear from events preceding the seduction that Tess in no way encourages Alec in his amorous advances. From the beginning she shows a natural modesty and a chaste independence of mind and body. She is distressed when Alec feeds her with strawberries. She wipes off the kiss he gives her on her second journey to “The Slopes.” She strongmindedly decides to walk the last few miles, rather than sit next to him on the carriage. Owing to her dependence on Alec’s mother, and his mother’s dependence on

him because of that lady's blindness, Tess becomes more pliable under Alec's hands than a mere companionship would have made her.

Alec D'Urberville is a man skilled in the arts of seduction. Even though he could never have led Tess to a wholehearted surrender, his tactics bewilder her, and undermine the security of her defence. It seems likely also that she was not very well aware of the physical act to which it was all leading. She was illprepared to fight culpable passions, the existence of which she did not know about. Later she puts much of the blame on her mother: "Why didn't you, warn me?"

Alec had subtly worn down her mental defenses, though certainly the point of conscious submission. On the journey home on Alec's horse after the fight with one of her companions, Tess, is in a physical exhaustion. She is indescribably weary. She had risen at five every morning of that week and had been at work the whole of each day. On this evening she had, in addition, walked the three miles to Chasehorborough, waited three hours for her neighbours without eating or drinking, then walked a mile of the way home and had undergone the excitement of quarrel. It was now nearly one o'clock. Tess naturally falls into a sleep when Alec returns and attempts the seduction, she is neither physically mentally in a condition to resist, and she hardly understands what, he is doing till it is too late.

There is some ambiguity on the fact why Tess stayed "some few weeks" after her seduction though some critics are of the opinion that during this period she had no sexual relationship with Alec. But the language used by Hardy to describe this stay offers a basis for the assumption that the sexual relationship did exist even after the first seduction. If she had not surrendered at all even on the first occasion, she would surely have run away immediately.

Mrs. Durbeyfield reacts in the "natural" way to Tess's sad expen "Tis nature after all, and what do please God!" Sex is a natural activity Tess is a child of Nature. We see her growth to womanhood, her "luxuriance of aspect", and "fullness of growth" not as isolated facts, but as part of the "brimfulness of Nature itself." Throughout the novel Hardy emphasis the neutrality or innocence of Nature, Nature is neither benevolent nor malevolent. Nature is not a force for good or for evil. In this sense, Tess is innocent. The physical surrender of a passionate girl is natural, innocent in the simple animalistic course

of events. She did not surrender her heart: indeed her heart was almost unaware of what was happening. Hardy takes many opportunities to point out the strangeness of society's artificial, unnatural code. Tess is weighed down by a consciousness of guilt. But Hardy asserts that she is deluded by the conventional attitudes of society,

Tess's purity with regard to the murder of Alec d'Urberville is a more difficult problem. She kills him willingly and knowingly. Alec has been instrumental in bringing about Tess's destruction. His

actions have caused her untold suffering and have completely wrecked her happiness. Tess has begun to believe that Angel Clare would never return, and also because of the overpowering feeling that Alec is her only true husband in any substantial sense. Only by Alec's death could that physical claim be obliterated: only by killing him could she finally repudiate all that he had done.

We are firmly convinced that morally and spiritually Tess is absolutely stainless and pure. Purity is of the spirit, and with a spiritual reference, the word "pure" may be unconditionally applied to her. Purity is not to be taken in the narrow sense of the body, it is the spirit that really matters. Tess has a strong conscience which she always hearkens to. Her inner voice tells her of the dangers going to the new family in The Chase. Her final surrender to Alec is beyond her control. She is not her true self, the sufferings of her family have destroyed all the willpower and strength that she possesses.

"She is as moral as any prude. Her behaviour, her thoughts, her desires, on all perilous occasions – with d'Urberville, early had late, with Clare, with her other admirers – are unimpeachable, considered from the most critical code and point of view. Moreover, her shame and remorse are infinite...."

Question 2: Describe Foreshadowing in the *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

Answer:

- In Chapter 2—**Tess the Vessel**:

In the following passage from Chapter 2, the narrator uses a metaphor to better depict Tess's childlike innocence, as well as to foreshadow that this innocence will be lost:

Tess Durbeyfield at this time of her life was a mere vessel of emotion untinged by experience.

Tess is likened to a vessel that is open to new experiences but also vulnerable. Experience has not yet entered into this "vessel" at the beginning of the novel, and no one protects her in her state of childish vulnerability. Class inequality and poverty both strip Tess of her childhood, violating her and permitting her to be violated. This violation—not only of Tess, but of all impoverished children and the entire working class—is something Hardy heavily criticizes in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

From a stylistic perspective, it is crucial to note that the narrator precedes his metaphor with the phrase "at this time," suggesting that Tess will, at some point, acquire knowledge and experience that will "tinge" the vessel of her mind. Though the foreshadowing here is subtle, early comments like this lay the groundwork for the more overt foreshadowing in later

passages, building anticipation in the mind of the reader as the narrator recounts the series of tragic events that make up young Tess's life.

- In Chapter 6—**Tess is Pricked by a Rose:**

At the beginning of Chapter 6, Tess reflects on a thorny rose that, affixed to her breast, pricks her and draws blood. She views this as a bad omen, and the narrator takes this moment to foreshadow the tragic events that will soon befall her:

[Tess] fell to reflecting again, and in looking downwards a thorn of the rose remaining in her breast accidentally pricked her chin. Like all the cottagers of Blackmoor Vale, Tess was steeped in fancies and prefigurative superstitions; she thought this an ill-omen—the first she had noticed that day.

There are many literary elements at play in this particular passage. The roses given to Tess by Alec symbolize his harmful, romantic intentions, as he's more likely to "prick" her and draw blood than to bring anything positive into her life. This injury foreshadows the more direct injury Alec will do to Tess later on in the novel, both directly—as he physically harms her when he rapes her—and indirectly, as he damages her chances of finding happiness and love in a married state. It is ironic that in this situation the rose pricking Tess is more of a red flag than Alec's suspicious behavior upon their first meeting. The combination of irony, metaphor, and foreshadowing highlight Tess's innocence and naiveté.

Question 3: Write Character Analysis of Tess in Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles

"Among Hardy's woman Tess claims attention first, not only by reason of popularity, but more specially in that her creator distinguished her by the appellation of a pure woman".

Tess's Physical Grace

Tess is described early in the novel as a cute and handsome girl whose mobile mouth and large innocent eyes added eloquence to colour and shape. Phases of childhood lurked in her aspect still. When she meets Alec for the first time, her attractiveness of face and figure cause his eyes to rivet themselves on her. "It was a luxuriance of aspect, a fullness of growth, which made her appear more of a woman than she really was". Angel Clare is also greatly attracted by her physical charms, her "real vitality" and her "real warmth". He had seen nothing to equal the beauty of her mouth which, to any young man with least fire in him, would have been distracting, infatuating, maddening. Her lips and teeth could be compared to roses filled with snow. In spite of the "animalism," however, Angel Clare finds something unearthly in her. On certain occasions Tess was no longer the milk-maid,

“but a visionary essence of woman a whole sex condensed into one typical form. He called her Artemis, Demeter add other fanciful names.....”

Contrast with Her Mother

Tess is not an illiterate girl. She has passed the sixth standard in the national school under a Londontrained mistress, and she speaks two languages: the dialect at home, more or less; and ordinary English outside and to persons of quality. Although she has a tendency to believe in omens, she is not superstitious like her mother. She is considerably ahead of her mother as regards knowledge and outlook. Between Tess’s mother and Tess, says Hardy, there was a gap of two hundred years:

“when they were together, the Jacobean and the Victorian ages were juxtaposed”.

Tess : Her Devotion to Her Family

One of Tess’s most outstanding traits of character is her steadfast and unfaltering devotion to her family. She is keenly conscious of her duty as the eldest child in the family. She feels constantly solicitous throughout the story about the welfare of her brothers and sisters. In fact, Alec succeeds in exploiting Tess partly because of this trait in her character. His gifts to her parents and to her brothers and sisters both at the outset and at the later stages of the story produce in her a feeling of gratitude towards him which he does not fail to make use of for his own nefarious purpose. Tess’s sense of duty to her father and mother is as deep as her devotion to her brothers and sisters.

At the same time Tess is fully conscious of the weakness of both her father and her mother. She knows that her father is only making a fool of himself by feeling vain his ancient lineage, and she feels quite a Malthusian towards her mother thoughtlessly producing so many children. She is always ready to give financial help with the last penny she has got. When she receives the news of her mother’s serious illness, she gives up her job at Flintcomb-Ash and goes back to Marlott to be by her mother’s side and remains with the family.

Tess : Her Melancholy Nature

Tess is by nature a melancholy person. There is a morbid element in her thinking. When still a young girl, she tells her little brother Abraham that they are living, not on a splendid and sound planet, but on a blighted one, the evidence for this being that their father is generally ill and often gets too drunk to be able to attend to his work, and that their mother is “always washing and never getting finished”. And she says this before any real misfortune has descended upon the family, even before the accident in which Prince the horse gets killed. Angel Clare later on discovers this melancholy streak in her nature. Angel feels surprised to find in her a tendency to

such “sad imaginings” and feelings which might almost have been called “the ache of modernism”. It seems strange to Angel that these feelings should have come to her while still so young. Referring to her “woebegone” look! Tess tells Angel,

“My life looks as if it had been wanted for want of chances. I feel what a nothing I am ! I’m like the poor Queen of Sheba who lived in the Bible. There is no more spirit in me”.

Tess’s Relationship with Alec

Tess’s very initial reaction to Alec D’Urberville is one of strong dislike. She is repelled by his advances when he tries to kiss her while driving her to Trantridge. When working at Trantridge she constantly feels suspicious about his intentions and refuses to let him take any liberties with her. Her sexual experience with him in the wood has been called a rape. However, we must recognize the fact that she does acquiesce in what he does to her. The acquiescence should not be called a willing surrender. As she afterwards tells him, she hardly knew what was happening till it was too late.

Tess: Her Tragic End

Deserted by Angel, Tess goes back to her family and, after a short stay with them, becomes a wageearner at a place called Flintcomb-Ash. But her love for Angel does not diminish, and she has an inward faith that he will come to her. Her attempt to meet Angel’s parents proves futile. Her long wait for Angel’s return proves unrewarding. Her desperate letter to Angel brings no reply. Chance throws her again in Alec’s path, and her love for Angel into ashes. When Angel returns to her it is too late, but not too late for her murder Alec and enjoys a brief interlude of happiness in Angel’s arms before she is overtaken by the long arm of the law. Thus Tess proves herself to be woman with an exceptional capacity for love and for self-sacrifice. Tess is splendid woman, if ever there was one. In this peasant girl there is the stuff and the substance of which true heroines are made. Her love is of a sublime quality, and her death is a martyrdom in the cause of that love.

Tess: Her Heroic Endurance of Her Misfortunes

What makes Tess a truly tragic figure is her heroic endurance of her misfortunes. Her seduction early in the story is, of course, her greatest misfortune. Then comes the death of her baby aptly named “Sorrow”. The chapter describing Tess’s hasty baptism of the child, the child’s death, and its burial makes painful reading. Then comes the heart-rending episode of Angel’s desertion of her. At the end of her confession of her past she waits for Angel to speak words of comfort and good cheer to her but instead hears the following words. “The woman I have been loving is not you.” She bursts into a flood of self-sympathetic tears, but they have no effect on Angel. She is

now overcome by a feeling of the injustice and cruelty that she has been subjected to. She wishes that she were dead. Then there follows for her a life of despair, hard toil, helplessness, and mental torture. One of the most painful chapters in the book describes Tess's work at the threshing-machine. Alec's importunities aggravate her affliction, and the eviction of the family from the cottage at Marlott comes as the final blow. Her brief stay at Sandbourne as Alec's mistress is a shameful episode in her life, but her state of mind there one of stupor, as if she were heavily drugged. The wrecking of this sensitive girl's happiness and the blighting of her hopes are unbearable for the reader but Tess endures her fate with a rare fortitude.

Question 4: Paganism and Christianity in Tess of the D'Urbervilles

Thomas Hardy struggled with his own religious beliefs, and that struggle comes through in his work. He idealized the paganism of the past but was also attached to his family's Christianity, and generally he accepted some sort of supernatural being that controlled fate. Tess herself is usually portrayed as an embodiment of that pagan innocence, a sort of English Nature goddess. She first appears performing the fertility ritual of May-Day, then bedecked in flowers from Alec, whistling to Mrs. d'Urberville's birds, and mercifully killing the wounded pheasants. Angel describes her as a "new-sprung child of nature" and compares her to mythical women like Eve, Artemis, and Demeter. There is another side of Tess's "divinity" as well, however: the role of sacrificial victim, which is a figure associated with both paganism and Christianity. Like Jesus, Tess is punished for the sins of another, assuming the weight of guilt for Alec's crime. When the police finally come to arrest her for murder, she is lying asleep at Stonehenge like a sacrifice on an altar. Stonehenge was thought at Hardy's time to be a heathen temple.

The Christian end of the spectrum is particularly associated with the Clare family and Alec d'Urberville. Each character seems to have a different form and expression of faith, and Hardy critiques them all with empathy from his own religious wrestling. Most of his respect goes to the intense but charitable Mr. Clare, while Alec's conversion is depicted more as a product of his fickle thrill-seeking than any deep emotion, and the conformist Clare brothers are mocked for blindly following every fashionable doctrine. Angel's skepticism and Tess's vague beliefs take the most prominence, and neither moves much past Hardy's own state of doubt.

In chapter 2

The forests have departed, but some old customs of their shades remain. Many, however, linger only in a metamorphosed or disguised form. The May-Day dance, for instance, was to be discerned on the afternoon under notice, in the guise of the club revel, or "club-walking," as it was there called.

ROLE OF FATE AND CHANCE IN TESS OF THE DE URBERVILLES

Role of fate and chance:

The most striking element in the story is role of fate and chance over the lives of certain characters. It is strange thing that in the world fate or destiny of poor is always considered predestined while rich are always able to do what they want. Tess the protagonist of the novel is surrounded with uncontrollable circumstances and fate, chance and circumstances all stood against her. Her sufferings do not let her escape and Hardy also mentioned that there is external force which plays role and controls our lives. Every effort of man to change his fortune and seek happiness is futile and useless because this evil force rules the world. There is irony of circumstances in the novel. Incident of horse death is the beginning of Tess's tragedy. She was carrying load of beehives to be delivered in a distant market but a mail van was coming from opposite side of her and there happened an accident and horse died. Second incident occurs when she tries to tell Angel everything about her past but she fails and after marriage when she reveals the truth he rejects her and says that:

"Oh Tess if you had only told me sooner I would have forgiven you"

She also says at once that:

"Why did not you stay and love me when I was sixteen"

She was not willing to leave her home but fate forced her and she left her home and went to D'Urbervilles house to seek some favor for her family. Here when she leaves her home she says:

"She had hoped to be a teacher at the school, but fate seemed to decide otherwise"

Fate against plays its role and when after two years she accidentally meets with Alec and his lust again awakens and he uses his money to again seduce Tess and for this time she is again forced to do what he is willing to do her. She follows her because her father has died and she says to him that:

"Now command me. What shall I do?"

There are many other incidents of fate and chance which force Tess and Lead her to miserable end. She faces all sufferings deliberately and does not detest. It is true that fate and chance plays a vital role in every man's life but it is limited while in Hardy's work overstatement and exaggeration is also seen.

ROLE OF NATURE IN TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES

In "Tess of the d'Urbervilles," nature plays a pivotal role as both a backdrop and a symbolic force. Thomas Hardy employs nature to mirror Tess's emotional states and highlight the injustice she faces. The idyllic landscapes initially reflect Tess's innocence, but as her life takes a tragic turn, nature becomes a harsh, indifferent force, underscoring the harsh realities of her existence. The novel's natural settings also serve as a commentary on societal norms, emphasizing Tess's struggle against a rigid, unforgiving environment. Ultimately, nature in the novel symbolizes Tess's fate, serving as a backdrop that mirrors her joys, sorrows, and the relentless forces shaping her tragic journey.

Symbolism of Nature: In Phase the First, titled "The Maiden," Hardy describes the May-Day dance scene as a representation of Tess's purity and connection to nature. The "freshly-churned soil," "white frocks," and "vivid green" symbolize Tess's innocence and the idyllic harmony with nature. **Foreshadowing and Natural Elements:** When Tess meets Alec d'Urberville in the Chase, the setting is described as "a blue mist, pearled with the dust of innumerable rubies." This atmospheric change hints at the impending tragedy and the disruptive influence of Alec in Tess's life.

Nature Reflecting Tess's Emotional State: After Alec's betrayal, the description of Flintcomb-Ash farm as a "vast tract of unenclosed wild" mirrors Tess's internal turmoil. The desolate landscape reflects her shattered dreams and the societal judgment she faces.

Harsh Nature Mirroring Tess's Fate: The description of Stonehenge as "gigantic skeletons of animals" during Tess and Angel's encounter signifies the harshness of Tess's destiny. Nature becomes a silent witness to her suffering, emphasizing the inevitability of her tragic end.

Contrast of Nature's Beauty and Tess's Tragedy: In the scene where Tess confesses her past to Angel, the lush landscape of Talbothays Dairy provides a stark contrast to the confession. The beauty of nature intensifies the tragedy, accentuating the societal injustices faced by Tess.

These textual examples showcase how Hardy intricately weaves nature into the narrative, using it as a symbolic tool to convey Tess's experiences and the societal challenges she encounters throughout the novel.

TESS AS A TRAGIC CHARACTER OR PROTAGONIST

TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES AS A TRAGEDY

The classical concept about the reason of the fall and suffering in the life of a tragic character is that he or she falls victim of his, her Hamartia or tragic flaw which means error of judgment. This Aristotelian theory of tragic flaw is introduced to cause the tragic end in life of heroic character.

Tomas Hardy as a simple country girl, Tess as his heroine of Hardy's novel "Tess of the D'Urbervilles". Hardy has given his heroine a new dimension. Here Tess is not alone responsible for her fatal catastrophe, some other factors also liable to bring her downfall namely the economic hardship of her family, socio-economic system of the society, Alec's seduction, Angel's conventional and blind concept of purity.

The tragedy of Tess begins with her contact with D'Urberville family where she goes to work. From the very beginning Tess is unwilling to go to D'Urberville family and, unlike her mother. She has no illusion about marrying one of the D'Urbervilles. But finally she goes there being poverty of her family and at that place she is seduced by Alec.

During the time of the actual seduction, she is physically and mentally exhausted after long days labour. She does not understand what is happening with her. The tragedy of Tess runs in motion by the consequence of the economic distress of her peasant family.

Though Tess had no part of seduction, she begins to think that she herself is responsible. Her sense of guilt haunts her and she undergoes a period of suffering and isolation. She feels her mother:

"Why didn't you tell there was danger in men Folk?"

Then she begins a fresh start a life and takes a job in a dairy farm. Here she further meets Angel Clare who proposes to her and wishes to marry her. At first sight or time she refuses to proposal of Angel Clare. But at one point both decide to marry. Before their marriage Tess writes a letter to Angel informing him about her past life. But somehow he does not get the letter and he deserts her.

Now her hope crumbles. Her falling in love with Angel is as inevitable as fate. Yet she always feels the need to tell him about her past. A girl of impure heart would hide the whole fact but Tess can not do. So as it is against her nature. Tess discloses everything to Angel. But Angel rejects her and her last hope of happiness is gone. Yes she accepts her fate.

Her final surrender to Alec is caused but the extreme emotional and economical pressure. It is Clear when we find that after Angel's return She stabs Alec and run after Angel. Thus in the whole novel there is sense that Tess' tragedy is happened by the cruel and unsympathetic society.

Tess becomes Alec's mistress. Angel returns from Brazil, reprinting his harshness but finds her living with Alec. Tess kills Alec in desperation, she is arrested and hanged. Hardy writes of three dairymaid that they were "Simple and Innocent girls" and "had deserved better at the hand of fate". The final comment of this novel is

"Justice was done and the president of the immortal had ended his sports with Tess".

IMPORTANT SHORT QUESTIONS

Thomas Hardy as a Great Novelist

Thomas Hardy was born in 1840 A.D. in the Dorset which is the part of South-western area of England (known as Wessex). Most of the Hardy's novels are set in his homeland, which, he says, has railways, mowing and reaping, machines illiterate laborers etc. Following are the main features of the works of Thomas Hardy.

Regionalism

Regional novel writing was one of the features of England in the 19th century that was trending and thus the scope of 19th century English Novels is quite narrow as compared to the works of Russia. Hardy wrote regional novels-they are confined to his district. This is because he was well aware of this area.

Importance of Wessex

Hardy's novels were confined to Wessex as for Hardy what happens in Wessex is what happens everywhere in the world. The problems faced by the people of his district are common to the whole of mankind. Thus his novels, though confined to Wessex, have universal application.

Another reason for confining the outlook of his novels was that his district is timeless and unchangeable. It has its own history, culture, superstitions, and dialect. Thus Wessex is itself a character.

Unity of Time and Place

As Hardy's novels have been set in a small area, the characters live near one another and often meet each other. They do not meet accidentally but because they desire to meet each other. Thus one witness various co-incidences in Hardy's novels which have often been criticized by

the readers. By limiting the action of the novel to a small and confined area he creates a unity of place. Hardy has even provided the map of the area the here plot of his novels is set. He also wants a unity of time because the action was to take a year and a day.

His Idea of Writing

Hardy, in his novels, does not try to prove anything. He believes that a novel should not argue a case for or against something. But instead, it should be an impression i.e. the writer's impression of life.

The impression of Hardy in *The Return of the Native* is that family relationships are tragic and that the people who try to rise above their class have to suffer.

Human Relations and Aspirations

Instead of criticizing society, Hardy is interested in human aspirations and relationships. Love, marriage, and family form the central themes of his novels. Hardy was the first novelist to explore the man-woman relationship out of the marriage that caused a scandal in the Victorian Age.

Other Features

His novels were mostly read in the Victorian Age as they portrayed the life and culture of the middle class who had acquired money and had the leisure to read. We also find ample references to Classical writers like Homer, Oedipus, and Sophocles.

Hardy as Naturalist

Naturalism is the depiction of the physical environment, especially landscape or the rural environment. It is the treatment of forms, colors, space and words, as they appear in Nature. Hardy presents an emotional connection between Nature and human beings. Sometimes Nature is affected by human emotions and sometimes man is affected by Nature's feelings. In *Tess*, we see a change in Nature's feelings in accordance with the emotional change in Tess's life with the progressive work of Tess's happiness, there is also symbolic change in the climate and atmosphere of the place where she goes, from the secluded value of Black moor to the silent value of the Great Dairies the bleak land of Flintcomb-Ash... and at last the temple of Stonehenge. The hostile weather is perfectly in harmony with Tess's mental state of depression, despair, gloominess, misery and melancholy. Nature may be regarded as a chorus to the human tragedy in Hardy's novel. Nature does not come Tess's or Eustacia's help at any stage. Nature is indifferent. Thus Nature becomes a tool in the hands of destiny in inflicting sorrows and sufferings on human beings. Hardy has left innumerable descriptions of birds, grass, flowers,

gardens, bridges and sunset in his novels. Hardy is the micro observer of nature and he has an acute sense of nature.

Tess as victim of social standards and male domination and self-mortification

Hardy conveys male dominance through his portrayal of men and their dominance over women in society, primarily Tess. Their dominance is shown in how the men act as the masters of society, but it is also seen in how the women in Tess unquestionably view the men as the dominant gender. The first male to cause Tess injustice is her father, John Durbeyfield. An incident occurs when Tess is forced to take the family's horse to market after her father comes home drunk and doesn't fulfill his gender role of going to work, and the horse dies after a collision. As a result, Tess feels heavily responsible for the death of the horse, "Nobody blamed Tess as she blamed herself." Alec's dominance over Tess is obvious from his 'insisting. This portrays Alec as forceful and assertive. The strawberry episode is obvious foreshadowing on Hardy's part, Alec bold sexual advances. Another man who lets her down is the priest, as after her baby dies, she begs him to give her baby a Christian burial even though Tess is fully aware that her baby was born out of wedlock. The priest refuses, and this further supports the argument that females struggle to find justice under the rulings of male dominance, as Tess believes she can depend on the priest but he disappoints her.

Character of Angel Clare

The intelligent, idealistic son of the parson James Clare. He rejects his father's and brothers' profession to instead study agriculture, and remains skeptical of religion. Tess, Izz, Retty, and Marian all fall in love with him at Talbothays, but he chooses Tess. He loves an idealized, "child of nature" version of Tess, however, and is shocked to learn about her past sexual experiences (even if they were done to her rather than of her own volition). Angel cares more than he would like about the approval of his family and society, and he rejects Tess despite his own sexual transgressions in his past.

PAST PAPERS QUESTIONS

Q: Give two examples of the technique called foreshadowing' in "Tess of d'Urbervilles"?

A: Followings are the two examples of the technique called foreshadowing' in "Tess of d'Urbervilles":

Example 1: In the following passage from Chapter 2, the narrator uses a metaphor to better depict Tess's childlike innocence, as well as to foreshadow that this innocence will be lost:

Tess Durbeyfield at this time of her life was a mere vessel of emotion untinged by experience.

Example 2: At the beginning of Chapter 6, Tess reflects on a thorny rose that, affixed to her breast, pricks her and draws blood. She views this as a bad omen, and the narrator takes this moment to foreshadow the tragic events that will soon befall her:

Tess fell to reflecting again, and in looking downwards a thorn of the rose remaining in her breast accidentally pricked her chin. Like all the cottagers of Blackmoor Vale, Tess was steeped in fancies and prefigurative superstitions; she thought this an ill-omen—the first she had noticed that day.

Q: How does Hardy portray Tess as “a pure woman”?

A: Thomas Hardy sees her as a pure woman, from the point of view in which she never wants to hurt someone, he understands what she thinks, her feelings and how a countryside, a simple girl can through all of this pains of life. Actually, she fought for love until her love caught her and killed her.

Hardy regarded Tess as a pure woman, and rightly so. It is clear from events preceding the seduction that Tess in no way encourages Alec in his amorous advances. From the beginning she shows a natural modesty and a chaste independence of mind and body. She is distressed when Alec feeds her with strawberries. She wipes off the kiss he gives her on her second journey to “The Slopes.” She strong-mindedly decides to walk the last few miles, rather than sit next to him on the carriage. Owing to her dependence on Alec’s mother, and his mother’s dependence on him because of that lady’s blindness, Tess becomes more pliable under Alec’s hands than a mere companionship would have made her.

Q: Coincidence and chance destroy the credibility of Hardy’s narrative structure. Discuss briefly?

A: Chances and coincidences play a vital role in all the novels of Hardy. In the work of no other novelist do chances and coincidences exercise such a conspicuous influence on the course of events. The unexpected often happens and always it is the undesirable and unwanted. Such chance events are heavy blows aimed at the head of Hardy's protagonists and they send them to their doom.

While a character is certainly responsible to a large extent, chances and coincidences often operate as the deciding factor. Hardy believed that there is some malignant power that controls the universe, and which is out to thwart and defeat men in their plans. It is especially hostile to them who try to assert themselves and have their own way. He couldn’t believe in a benevolent Providence; events were too plainly ironical so they must have been contrived by a supernatural

power. He found it difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile the idea of a beneficent and benevolent, omnipotent, and omniscient deity with the fact of omnipresent evil and the persistent tendency of circumstances toward unhappiness.

Hardy certainly makes his story implausible by his excessive use of chance and coincidence. He is intent to show that the stars in their courses fight against the aspiring.

Q: How does the novel *Tess of D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy reflect a naturalistic theme?

A: Naturalism is based on the belief that everything real comes from nature, and that humans behave as if they were animals responding to their environment without control or understanding of their situation. If this is the definition of naturalism, then *Tess of D'Urberville* is a naturalistic novel. Naturalism focuses on the progression from organism to environment, struggle, adaptation, fertility, survival, resistance, and extinction.

Produced in the period of naturalism, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* inevitably displays some features of naturalism typically characterized by determinism. For example, Tess derives her passionate feeling and flashing temper from her d'Urbervilles ancestry, and her pretty face and figure come from her peasant mother.

Nature has nothing good to offer to Tess but only destruction and suffering. Hardy paints the bitter picture of life. He regards human beings as puppets in the hands of nature. All the misery and sorrows that we see in the world are there because of some external power called fate or nature.

Q: How is the novel *Tess of d'Urbervilles* an indictment of class system of English society near the end of 19th century?

A: Thomas Hardy challenges the sexual principles of the late nineteenth century in his novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Tess Durbeyfield, a young woman, looks for work at Trantridge, where she meets the charming Alec Stoke-d'Urberville. Alec becomes attracted to Tess and later rapes her in a forest. This drives Tess to look for work elsewhere, and she meets Angel Clare at Talbothays Dairy, where they fall in love with each other and marry.

However, when Tess tells Angel what happened to her at Trantridge, he leaves her and goes to Brazil. Hardy presents two men who inflict different types of pain on Tess; while Alec harms Tess physically, Angel harms Tess psychologically. Hardy establishes that people are victims of fate and, although both men have many faults, Angel is the better man.

Hardy uses juxtaposition to contrast Alec and Angel. Alec causes Tess's ultimate downfall, since his act brings about many misfortunes for her, including her sickly child and her failed marriage. While Angel commits the seemingly inexcusable act of leaving Tess in her time of need, the context of the time period gives him some excuse, since Victorian women had to remain "pure" until their wedding nights. Angel's greatest fault, hypocrisy, becomes evident when he rejects Tess once he learns of her past, despite his earlier statements of his unconventional way of thinking. However, Angel and Tess could have married and lived happily if Alec had not committed his heinous act. Ultimately, Alec's actions have the lasting impact on Tess's life, resulting in her final decision to kill him.

By juxtaposing Angel and Alec, Hardy shows that while both men have their faults, Angel is the lesser of two evils. If Tess's attempt at informing Angel through the confessional letter had succeeded, their marriage might have lasted. Hardy reinforces the idea that fate trumps all, a recurring theme throughout the novel.

Although Angel and Alec both harm Tess in their own ways, Angel's actions are more justifiable. A product of the Victorian era, Angel has a conservative way of thinking, despite what he thinks of himself. He somewhat redeems himself when he realizes that Tess can still fit the role of his ideal woman, regardless of her past. Contrarily, Alec acts purely for his own benefit. He then tries to earn redemption through religion, but he abandons his faith when he sees Tess again. Hardy highlights the similarities and differences

between the two men and emphasizes the underlying theme of the novel that people are victims of fate.

Depiction of 19th century English society: Since Tess was raped and Angel found out the fear of what society would think of him for marrying her dwells in Angel's mind. Angel is not socially accepting of what happened to Tess and not only is he afraid of what everyone will think of them he is afraid of how it will affect his children and parents even. Angel and society considers Tess Alec's property for losing her virginity to him. Since Tess is a girl it was considered more unwholesome and socially incorrect.

The society sees Tess as a disgrace and looks down upon her after they realize what has happened to her. In this quote the society is looking at her with disgust but they do not ask her about what has happened or try to understand her side of the story. They are also placing the blame on Tess and not focused on who the man was that she was with. They do this because she is both poor and a woman and they feel no guilt in shaming her without knowing what happened to her. Even the people of her own social class view her as less than she was before and they feel the need to gossip about her misfortune.

Q: Discuss Hardy's attitude towards life in reference to "Tess of d'Urbervilles"?

A: In Tess of D'Urbervilles, we are told that,

"Justice was done, and President of Immortals (in Aeschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess."

In The Return of the Native, Hardy again reminds us that,

"What a sport for Heaven this woman Eustacia was!"

In Hardy's novels, then, Fate appears in the form of chance and coincidence, nature, time and woman. None is Fate itself, but rather all of these are manifestations of the Immanent Will. Fateful incidents are the forces working against men in their efforts to control their destinies. In addition, Fate appears in the form of nature as a powerful agent, that affects the lives of the characters. Those who are most in harmony with their environment can find some solace, but those who are indignant and rebellious, it destroys all their happiness. Eustacia suffers in The Return of the Native, because of her direct confrontation with Edgong Heath, which symbolizes nature. In the end Eustacia laments:

"How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me. I do not deserve my lot...I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control."

Hardy remarks:

"What of Immanent Will and its designs? It works unconsciously as heretofore, Eternal artistries in circumstance."

In Hardy's considered view, all life is suffering. Man suffers from the moment of his birth up to his death. Happiness is only occasional; it is never the general rule:

"Happiness is but an occasional episode in a general drama of pain".

There is none who gets more than he deserves but there are many who get much less than what they deserve. Not only man suffers, but all life suffers. Suffering is writ large on the face of nature. A ruthless, brutal struggle for existence is waged everywhere in nature. All nature is red in tooth and claw and life lives upon life. Thus all life, including human life, is subject to this law of suffering and none can escape the operation of this law.

Hardy's characters are also a prey to irony of circumstance. Right things never happen at the right time: they happen either not at all, or too late, when their happening brings nothing but misery and suffering in their train. The heroines of Hardy, like Tess and Eustacia, as well as his male characters, like Clym, Henchard, Angel, Alec are all the victims of the irony of

circumstance. In ill-conceived scheme of things there is nothing but “**strange orchestra of victim shriek and pain.**”

Almost all of the Hardy's characters are susceptible to this omnipresent evil power.

In *The Return of the Native*, Hardy suggests the philosophy of Rustic Resignation. Man must be resigned to one's lot. It is useless to complain or resist for nothing can reform “**ill-conceived scheme of things.**” If he is rash, hot-headed and obstinate, like Henchard or Eustacia, he can bring about his own downfall. On the other hand, if he is contented and resigned to his own lot like Thomasin, he can make much of his limited opportunities.

Summing up, Hardy's philosophy in *The Return of the Native* is certainly 'twilight' and gloomy one but it is not too much pessimistic or nihilistic, for nihilism implies negation of life, a wish not to have been born at all. It is only in his last novel “*Jude of Obscure*” that some cynicism enters, and Hardy becomes pessimistic otherwise he is an acute realist. “**My practical philosophy**”, says Hardy, “**is distinctively meliorist**”, an honest facing of human suffering.

“If a way to the better there be, it implies good look at the worst.”

Q: How much is Tess to blame for what happens to her in the novel. “Tess of d'Urbervilles”?

A: From Hardy's point of view, Tess is not responsible for what she has done. She is a victim of a series of misfortunes which slowly destroy her personality. The novel is written in seven chapters; each chapter representing a phase of Tess's life after which Tess becomes more mature.

Tess blames herself for losing the family's means of livelihood. Tess's sense of responsibility for her family is one of the book's most important elements.

Here fate is first to come for as enemy and forces her to tragedy gradually. At almost every stage of her life, her actions are influenced by this fact.

This affection for her family leads to get in contact with the concupiscent, dishonest and cruel young man, Alec. He is attracted by her eyes. Her innocence and naivety allows her to be seduced by this dishonest man. Her honor is slightly blown upon because she is expecting a baby. In the course of the novel as well until this point we can always find hints of foreshadowing of what is to come: the misfortunes and the tragedy. For instance, Tess mentions the possibility of the pregnancy and the fact that Tess regards herself as a "murderess" - which she actually to become.

There are moments where it may have been possible for Tess to alter her future; for example, when Angel leaves Tess, the narrator comments 'the

greatest misfortune of her life was this feminine loss of courage at the last and crucial moment' Tess may have been capable of changing the course of her life by acting more decisively; the narrator alludes to her faults, and indicates that she herself may be responsible.

When angel came back to her after a long gap when everything turns to her favor that time she could stay at Alice. But she murdered Alice and went back to Angel. That bring the final tragedy of her life.

Hardy gives a detailed description of Tess's character and somehow her character is in parallel with her fate. We can find many things in her character which helps her to be a tragic heroine. She is a beautiful girl and there is a continual stress on her beauty throughout the novel. The two man were attracted by her beauty. Alec was attracted by her eyes while Angel was attracted by her fluty voice.

There are contradictory qualities in her character of pride and independence of spirit with a passivity and submissiveness towards other people and her fate: Her determination in leaving Alec, her unwillingness to tell her parents about her marriage, or to approach Angel's parents. She is a credible character; her flaws are not obscured. Tess's tragedy results mainly because she endures the conventional values on her by other people, but the intensity of her suffering is because she acknowledged those values.

She is always afraid of what others will say or think, she suffers under the prejudices of the society. Tess's suffering is repeatedly associated with animal suffering as well at the end of the novel when Tess is arrested and her breathing is "like that of a lesser creature than a woman". I think Tess is a tragic heroine because she accepts the imposition on conventional values on her by other people and that she accepts her fate.

Readers of 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' may, at times feel that Tess is responsible for her suffering. Tess does not seem entirely aware of herself, and is not sufficiently careful in her decision making. However, as Beach reports, the story is primarily one which encourages readers to examine Tess and 'say, how pitiful!' (JW Beach, 1962, p 217); it is expected for readers to feel pity for Tess. The narrator is no doubt in allegiance with Tess, portraying her as the sad object of men's desire, and the product of blind acceptance of social rules. Although Tess makes mistakes in her conduct, these are often as a direct result of her naivety and good nature. It seems Hardy's narration is designed to encourage readers to hold others accountable for the downfall of 'a pure woman'.

Q: Discuss the themes of suffering in “Tess of the D’Urbervilles”?

A: Tess is compared to a weak plant, fragile yet unyielding. Although life is harsh and tough, Tess never gives up, she keeps on fighting for a better life. The destructions which life brought upon her can be converted into a mysterious spirit which helps her to overcome all kinds of difficulties and hardships. Followings are the themes of suffering in “Tess of the D’Urbervilles”:

The Injustice of Existence: Unfairness dominates the lives of Tess and her family to such an extent that it begins to seem like a general aspect of human existence in Tess of the d’Urbervilles. Tess does not mean to kill Prince, but she is punished anyway, just as she is unfairly punished for her own rape by Alec. Nor is there justice waiting in heaven. Christianity teaches that there is compensation in the afterlife for unhappiness suffered in this life, but the only devout Christian encountered in the novel may be the reverend, Mr. Clare, who seems more or less content in his life anyway. For others in their misery, Christianity offers little solace of heavenly justice. Mrs. Durbeyfield never mentions otherworldly rewards. The converted Alec preaches heavenly justice for earthly sinners, but his faith seems shallow and insincere. Generally, the moral atmosphere of the novel is not Christian justice at all, but pagan injustice. The forces that rule human life are absolutely unpredictable and not necessarily well-disposed to us. The pre-Christian rituals practiced by the farm workers at the opening of the novel, and Tess’s final rest at Stonehenge at the end, remind us of a world where the gods are not just and fair, but whimsical and uncaring. When the narrator concludes the novel with the statement that “‘Justice’ was done, and the President of the Immortals (in the Aeschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess,” we are reminded that justice must be put in ironic quotation marks, since it is not really just at all. What passes for “Justice” is in fact one of the pagan gods enjoying a bit of “sport,” or a frivolous game.

Changing Ideas of Social Class in Victorian England: Tess of the d’Urbervilles presents complex pictures of both the importance of social class in nineteenth-century England and the difficulty of defining class in any simple way. Certainly the Durbeyfields are a powerful emblem of the way in which class is no longer evaluated in Victorian times as it would have been in the Middle Ages—that is, by blood alone, with no attention paid to fortune or worldly success. Indubitably the Durbeyfields have purity of blood, yet for the parson and nearly everyone else in the novel, this fact amounts to nothing more than a piece of genealogical trivia. In the Victorian context, cash matters more than lineage, which explains how Simon Stokes, Alec’s father, was smoothly able to use his large fortune to purchase a lustrous family name and transform his clan into the Stoke-d’Urbervilles. The d’Urbervilles pass for what the Durbeyfields truly are—authentic nobility—simply because definitions of class have changed. The issue of class confusion even affects the Clare clan, who’s most promising son, Angel, is intent on becoming a farmer and

marrying a milkmaid, thus bypassing the traditional privileges of a Cambridge education and a parsonage. His willingness to work side by side with the farm laborers helps endear him to Tess, and their acquaintance would not have been possible if he were a more traditional and elitist aristocrat. Thus, the three main characters in the Angel-Tess-Alec triangle are all strongly marked by confusion regarding their respective social classes, an issue that is one of the main concerns of the novel.

Men Dominating Women: One of the recurrent themes of the novel is the way in which men can dominate women, exerting a power over them linked primarily to their maleness. Sometimes this command is purposeful, in the man's full knowledge of his exploitation, as when Alec acknowledges how bad he is for seducing Tess for his own momentary pleasure. Alec's act of abuse, the most life-altering event that Tess experiences in the novel, is clearly the most serious instance of male domination over a female. But there are other, less blatant examples of women's passivity toward dominant men. When, after Angel reveals that he prefers Tess, Tess's friend Retty attempts suicide and her friend Marian becomes an alcoholic, which makes their earlier schoolgirl-type crushes on Angel seem disturbing. This devotion is not merely fanciful love, but unhealthy obsession. These girls appear utterly dominated by a desire for a man who, we are told explicitly, does not even realize that they are interested in him. This sort of unconscious male domination of women is perhaps even more unsettling than Alec's outward and selfconscious cruelty.

Even Angel's love for Tess, as pure and gentle as it seems, dominates her in an unhealthy way. Angel substitutes an idealized picture of Tess's country purity for the real-life woman that he continually refuses to get to know. When Angel calls Tess names like "Daughter of Nature" and "Artemis," we feel that he may be denying her true self in favor of a mental image that he prefers. Thus, her identity and experiences are suppressed, albeit unknowingly. This pattern of male domination is finally reversed with Tess's murder of Alec, in which, for the first time in the novel, a woman takes active steps against a man. Of course, this act only leads to even greater suppression of a woman by men, when the crowd of male police officers arrest Tess at Stonehenge. Nevertheless, for just a moment, the accepted pattern of submissive women bowing to dominant men is interrupted, and Tess's act seems heroic.

Q: "She was in love with her own ruin". Discuss the theme of SelfMortification in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*?

A: Tess's increasing self-consciousness about her looks, to the point of selfmortification so that she will be less attractive to men, is clearly a response to leers and comments by other

characters in the book, but the narrator's obsessive attention to her physicality makes the reader feel complicit, as well.

Tess is certainly a difficult character to understand, both for characters in the novel and for readers. So let's take a closer look at a few passages to try and clarify a few things. Tess's physicality is referred to so frequently in the novel that it's hard not to think of her attractiveness as her defining characteristic. And a bunch of characters in the novel aren't able to see past her smokin' good looks.

The "luxuriance of aspect" and "fullness of growth" is a polite way of saying that Tess is curvaceous, and surprisingly developed for her age. Okay, let's do away with euphemisms: she's rocking a pretty large cup size.

Later on, when Alec runs into Tess again, he can't stop talking about her mouth: "Surely there never was such a maddening mouth since Eve's!". Why does Hardy mention this? Because it's important to point out that Alec's obsession with Tess is purely physical, and his physical attraction to her has to do with her beauty.

But Angel is physically attracted to Tess, too.

Angel is generally an ethereal, spiritual person—less interested in physical realities than he is in the spiritual or ideal aspects of things. And in general, that's how he views Tess—until he really looks at her face, and especially her mouth. Notice the "yet" in the second sentence. The "yet" suggests that her face is "lovable to him" in spite of the fact that it's physical, and not ethereal. So, yes, he's sexually attracted to her, because no "young man with the least fire in him" could help it, but she is lovable to him in spite of it, and not because of it.

Tess herself views her own physical beauty with pride, only to think that Angel is proud to have a pretty wife. At other times, she is self-conscious and embarrassed about her good looks. When she travels alone after Angel has left her, she goes so far as to disguise herself so that she'll be able to avoid the unwanted remarks and leers of men on the road. She snips off her eyebrows and ties a bandage around her chin. She somehow sees her own physical attractiveness as a sin—it's something she cannot help, but her physicality tempts men, and causes them to accuse her of deliberately tempting them, as Alec does: "Your temptress, Tess; you dear witch of Babylon!"

The descriptions of Tess's physicality, and the different attitudes towards it taken by the three main characters, lead to another question about Tess's character: is she a kind of mythic "every woman," who can stand in for some universal female experience, or is her experience unique?

Some characters see her as ideal and mythic, but she insists that she's not—she's just a regular girl.

Part of what early critics of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* objected to was Tess's lack of traditional Christian doctrine. If she blamed herself for being raped, and spent the rest of her life shunning men and trying to atone for her "sin," they might not have objected to her so much. In that case, the novel would have become a cautionary tale about the dangers of being just too sexy.

But Tess realizes that what happened to her really wasn't her fault—she didn't even know what sex was before she went to Trantridge. She had no way of defending herself against Alec because she didn't fully understand what he wanted. She realizes that she's the victim and, in a moment of mental anguish, she asks herself why she should suffer so much:

Never in her life – she could swear it from the bottom of her soul – had she ever intended to do wrong; yet these hard judgments had come. Whatever her sins, they were not sins of intention, but of inadvertence, and why should she have been punished so persistently?

So Tess doesn't blame herself—which early readers saw as problem number one. In addition, she's not all that well schooled in Christian doctrine. She goes to church regularly, but doesn't always understand what she hears there. Her faith pertains more to what she sees in Nature (with a capital "N") than what she hears in church. Angel teasingly calls her a pagan when they're at the dairy together, and Tess recalls his remarks when they're at Stonehenge just before her arrest.

Tess feels a connection to the ancient, primeval, mysterious stone circle, and says, "One of my mother's people was a shepherd hereabouts, now I think of it. And you used to say at Talbothays that I was a heathen. So now I am at home". Tess feels connected to the pagan history of Britain through her mother's family, and that's an association that Hardy has stressed from the beginning of the novel.

Q: What is the role of fate in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*? What does Hardy mean by "fate"? To what extent does Tess's tragedy hinge on improbable coincidence?

A: In the novel "*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*" the author tells the tragedy of Tess, which ends with her death. Hardy reveals the problems of rural life, the conflict of different classes, shows criticism of traditional and including liberal values (in the characters of Angel). Throughout the work on Tess drops a large number of problems which she cannot stop. The entire work and all the events determine her choices, which eventually leads to a tragic conclusion.

Her father learns that he belongs to the noble family of the genus d'Urbervilles and begins to drink a lot. Now Tess must assume responsibility for the family. Still, on the way to the fair Tess

falls asleep and her horse dies on the road. Tess feels guilty about that. It is because of this incident that she agrees to go to her possible relative to ask for help. In the result, she meets Alec, who further seduces her. She warned her family about harassment on his part, but nobody listened to her. "These accidental matters, mysterious and incapable of foretelling, which like an invisible hand give Tess a serious attack, and pushes the development of story". Tess is born a son who dies almost immediately. Tess is going to work elsewhere because of the such incident. There she meets Angel, who has great sympathy for her. Still, when he asks her to marry her, Tess happiness is not complete, because she cannot tell him the truth about her past.

When she reveals the truth to Angel, he goes to Brazil to understand how he feels about this. Tess has to marry Alec, the one who ruined her life earlier because Angel did not answer her letters and because of the difficult circumstances in her family. Angel returns from Brazil, but poor Tess refuses him because now she is married to another. However, she is married to Alec, on the person who ruined her life. She kills him and returns to Angel.

After a week of idyll with her beloved, she is accused of murder. When she is going to be executed she says: "I am ready," she said quietly". Such an end to the story shows that Tess takes her destiny.

In conclusion, Thomas Hardy is one of the classics of English literature. He was a native of the village and, as a rule, in his writings described rural life. In the work of "Tess of the d'Urbervilles," he reveals the tragic story of Tess. Hardy considered as a fatalist.

He describes everyday life and problems of his characters and most of his works end in a tragic manner. Hardy understands fate as something more than an individual. In his view, life is caused not only by the society he criticizes but also by a certain higher force. It is such a development of the plot shown in the "Tess of the d'Urbervilles." Tess is going through problems that she cannot withstand.

There is no improbable coincidence in this work because from the very beginning every instance and every action of the protagonist leads a chain of events that she cannot control. Tess takes his destiny at the end of the story. It became a relief for her character.

Q: Analyze and evaluate Hardy's indictment of contemporary social values in "Tess of the D'Urbervilles"?

A: Thomas Hardy's "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" is a powerful indictment of the contemporary social values prevalent during that time. Hardy skillfully exposes the hypocrisy, double standards, and injustices of Victorian society through the experiences of the protagonist, Tess.

One of the key themes explored in the novel is the rigid class structure and its oppressive effects on individuals. Tess, being from a lower social class, is constantly reminded of her perceived inferiority and faces discrimination and judgment from those in higher positions. Hardy criticizes this social hierarchy that perpetuates inequality and restricts upward mobility.

Furthermore, Hardy challenges the prevailing moral code of the time, particularly the notion of purity and virginity. Tess becomes a victim of societal expectations and is unjustly blamed and punished for her sexual encounter, while the man involved faces little to no consequences. This highlights the unfair treatment of women and the unequal standards applied to their behavior.

Hardy also critiques the influence of religion and its oppressive nature. The character of Alec d'Urberville represents the corrupting influence of wealth, power, and false piety. The religious institutions in the novel are portrayed as hypocritical and judgmental, further exacerbating Tess's suffering.

Through his vivid descriptions of the natural landscape, Hardy contrasts the beauty and purity of nature with the moral decay and corruption of society. This serves as a commentary on the destructive effects of societal norms and values on individuals.

Overall, Hardy's "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" is a searing critique of the social values of his time, exposing the injustices, inequalities, and hypocrisies that permeated Victorian society. By highlighting the struggles and tragic fate of Tess, he invites readers to question and challenge these prevailing social norms.