



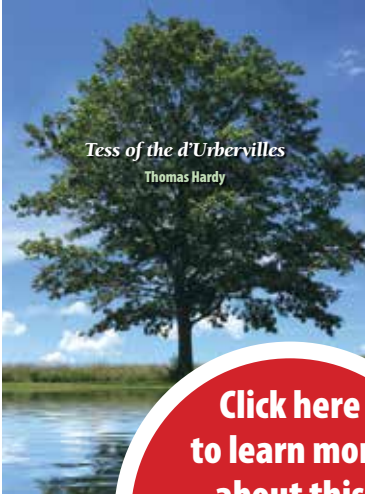
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Tess of the d'Urbervilles
Thomas Hardy



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ISBN 978-1-60389-658-0

Item No. 202181

Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

Phase the First

The Maiden

1. Jack Durbeyfield is surprised and delighted when Parson Tringham informs him that he is descended from the distinguished, but almost extinct, d'Urberville family. In spite of his impoverished circumstances, Jack soon puts on airs, giving orders to a passerby and summoning a carriage from the inn. Have you experienced someone putting on airs, pretending to be something other than he or she really is? Was the pretense funny or sad? Describe the person and the pretense and your reaction to what was being done as well as any consequences of the performance.
2. As the narrator describes the young girls of Marlott in their annual “club-walking” ritual in the bright May sunshine, he writes that “each had a private little sun for her soul to bask in; some dream, some affection, some hobby, at least some remote and distant hope which, though perhaps starving to nothing, still lived on, as hopes will.” Can you identify with his description of these young girls? Does your private sun shine on some interior hope or dream? If so, describe in a journal entry or, if you prefer in a poem, how you came by it, and how it might some day come to fruition in a journal.
3. Tess is embarrassed in front of the other girls as her father drives by in his rented carriage. Children, and more especially teenagers, often feel embarrassed by their parents. Have you had that experience? Can you remember what caused you to feel that way and how you feel looking back on it now? Write about your experience. Try to describe how you felt at the time and how you feel about it now.
4. Abraham reveals the plan that Tess’ parents have hatched to try and marry her off to a rich man without any consideration of her opinion in the matter. As Tess, write a letter to a friend detailing your thoughts on the plan and how you feel about what your parents propose to do with your life.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles

10. Heavy drinking by Tess's father had produced painful consequences for her and her family. Returning home from the Saturday trip to Chaseborough, she experiences further difficulties as a result of the excessive drinking of her companions. Occurrences such as these led to the passage of the Prohibition Amendment to the United States Constitution in an effort to eliminate the scourge of "Demon Rum," but prohibition proved to be a failed remedy. What has been your experience of the use and abuse of alcohol? Has it proven to be a problem among your own social circle? Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper reflecting on the problem as you experience it in your community today with your suggestions as to how the problem might be addressed.

11. Tess experiences a continuing uneasiness about d'Urberville's attentions to her and his sexual advances. In her sleeping innocence, he takes advantage of her and forever alters her future. Date rape, often fueled by excessive drinking, is a much discussed problem today. Imagine that you are a twenty-first century Tess. Write a recap of your experience that night and your feelings. Describe the options open to you and the course that you intend to follow as a result of your experience.

Response Journal

19. Tess is the product of an ancient family lineage much reduced from its glory days. Angel harbors a strong prejudice against such families, thinking them to be drained of vitality and not worthwhile. Do you think that family lineage is such an overwhelming determinant to an individual's future, or are there other factors that are more critical? State your opinion and make the case for which side you feel more reasonable, based on your experience.

20. Angel and Tess seem increasingly attracted to one another; indeed, they are falling in love, although they both seem to be unaware of their feelings. Does that seem to be a realistic picture or an overly romanticized view of how two people fall in love? Give your opinion and defend it based on your own first or secondhand experience.

21. When Dairyman Crick discovers that the butter won't form, he entertains thoughts of going to a Conjuror, even though he doesn't really believe in them. Do you know of any superstitions people hold today? Describe some of them, and explain why you feel they are merely superstitious or if they might, in fact, have some basis in reality.

22. Tess realizes that Angel is more attracted to her than to the other milkmaids, but she "could never conscientiously allow any man to marry her now, and... had religiously determined that she never would be tempted to do so." She even attempts to stir Angel's interest in the other milkmaids. Why does Tess feel that way? Do you think she should feel differently? Write a letter to Tess and express your thoughts to her about the attitude she has taken.

Tess of the d'Urbervilles

49. In far off Brazil Angel has begun “to discredit the old appraisements of morality. He thought they wanted readjusting.... The beauty or ugliness of a character lay not only in its achievements, but in its aims and impulses; its true history lay not among things done, but among things willed.” What would you have said to him in response to this new understanding on his part? Write a letter to him in response to his new line of thinking as it affects on his relationship to Tess.
50. Jack Durbeyfield has hatched a misbegotten plan to secure financial assistance for himself by soliciting money from antiquarians interested in the preservation of English history. Imagine that you are such a person and have received a letter of request from him. Write a letter in reply with your response and the reasons for it.
51. Given the desperate nature of the family circumstances and the small hope of Angel's returning for her, how would you have advised Tess to respond to Alec's offer of a home for her mother and siblings if she had asked for your advice? Write a note to her with your thoughts as to what she should do.
52. After the Durbeyfields have been driven away from their cottage, you hear that some of their neighbors had come to wish them well, “though in their secret hearts hardly expecting welfare possible to such a family, harmless as the Durbeyfields were to all except themselves.” You ask the neighbor what was meant by the remark. Write down the explanation you think would have been given.