

Far from the Madding Crowd by Thomas Hardy

SYNOPSIS: After inheriting her **prosperous** uncle's farm, Hardy's **protagonist**, Bathsheba Everdene, becomes an independent woman. But her beauty attracts many admirers: farm worker Gabriel Oak, landowner William Boldwood, and handsome soldier Frank Troy, whom she later marries. However, Troy is a selfish man who allows his earlier love, Fanny Robin, to die in poverty while giving birth to his child. Boldwood is madly jealous of Troy, and later in the novel this is the reason for his **downfall** when, in a jealous rage, he kills Troy. Gabriel asks for **mercy** to be shown him, and, on the grounds of **insanity**, Boldwood escapes death but is sent to prison. The novel ends with Bathsheba marrying Gabriel.

COMMENTARY: Incidents such as Fanny's pregnancy and **pitiful** death, and Boldwood's act of murderous violence, **convey** Hardy's growing taste for tragedy. But **unlike** Tess in the later *Tess*

of the *D'Urbervilles*, **fate** still favours Bathsheba. She finally finds contentment with Gabriel, who **embodies** the best qualities of the rural community in the fight against the growth of industrialism, which Hardy finds so **alien**.

Another theme in the novel is the danger and destruction **inherent in** romantic love and marriage. Hardy **exposes** the irrationality and **betrayals** of romantic relationships, and implies that the true basis of a happy marriage is **companionship** and a common interest. For some it is also an early example of feminist literature. Bathsheba is **portrayed** as an independent woman with the courage to **defy** convention and run a farm herself. Her passionate nature leads her into errors of judgement, but Hardy **endows** her with the **resilience**, intelligence, and good luck to overcome the mistakes of youth.

Glossary

synopsis	a short summary of the plot of a book, film, etc.
prosperous	rich and successful. SYN affluent. prosperity N.
protagonist	the main character in a book, film, etc.
downfall	A person's downfall is the complete loss of their money, power, etc.
mercy	a kind or forgiving attitude towards sb you have the power to harm or punish. merciful ADJ. OPP merciless.
insanity	the state of being seriously mentally ill. insane ADJ. OPP sane.
commentary	a written explanation or discussion of sth such as a book.
pitiful	deserving, or causing you to feel, pity.
convey sth	communicate ideas and feelings.
unlike	used to contrast one person or thing with another.
fate	a power that is believed to control everything and that cannot be changed.
alien	strange, difficult to understand, and often unacceptable.
inherent (in sth)	If sth is inherent in sth , it is a natural part of it and cannot be removed from it. SYN intrinsic.

expose sth	tell the true facts about sth and show it to be bad or wrong.
betrayal	the act of being disloyal to sb who trusts you. betray V.
companionship	a friendly and comfortable relationship between people.
portray sb/sth	describe sb/sth in a piece of writing. SYN depict sb/sth. portrayal N.
defy sth/sb	refuse to obey a law or rule, or a person. defiance N. defiant ADJ.
resilience	the ability to recover and become strong again after a difficult or unpleasant situation. resilient ADJ.

spotlight *embody/represent sth, endow sb with sth*

If a character in a book **embodies** or **represents** something, they show or express a particular idea or quality (**embodiment** N). If the writer **endows** a character **with** something, they give the character a particular quality or feature.

*He **embodies** the spirit of hopefulness.*

*She is the **embodiment** of beauty.*

*The author **endows** the hero **with** great powers.*



1 Add the related words.

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| 1 betray _____ N | 4 embody _____ N | 7 resilience _____ ADJ |
| 2 portray _____ N | 5 prosperous _____ N | 8 mercy _____ ADJ |
| 3 defy _____ N | 6 insane _____ N | 9 pity _____ ADJ |

2 Circle the correct word(s).

- 1 A commentary on a novel is a synopsis / an explanation of the main events.
- 2 If something is alien to you, it is easy / difficult to understand.
- 3 If you expose someone, you tell the truth / lies about them.
- 4 A pitiful story is likely to make you feel sad / proud.
- 5 Resilience is the ability / inability to recover from a big disappointment.
- 6 If you are defiant, you agree / refuse to do something.

3 Replace the underlined word(s) with another word that has a similar meaning in the context.

- 1 Could you just give me a summary of the novel? _____
- 2 She is portrayed as a very virtuous character. _____
- 3 In the end she died a rather sad death. _____
- 4 He was one of the more affluent landowners. _____
- 5 Generosity was one of her intrinsic qualities. _____
- 6 There were fears he might be mad. _____
- 7 In the novel she embodies the forces of change. _____
- 8 She misses the enjoyment of being with other people. _____

4 Complete the synopsis of the novel with words from the box, in the correct form.

fate represent downfall mercy protagonist depict unlike
endow convey defy betray embodiment

Tess is the (1) _____ in Hardy's novel that bears her name, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. She is (2) _____ in the novel as a daughter of nature, and Hardy (3) _____ her with so many noble qualities that she is one of his most sympathetic characters. But time and again she has to endure suffering and the brutality of the industrial age. This brutality is (4) _____ in the character of Alec D'Urberville, who is the (5) _____ of evil in the novel. The other man in her life is Angel Clare, an intelligent young freethinker, who (6) _____ convention and is happy to work on a farm rather than go to university. He and Tess fall in love and marry, but when Tess tells him that she has previously had a child, Angel feels (7) _____ and leaves her. (8) _____ is sometimes kind to Hardy's heroines, but not in this case. Tess goes back to Alec, but when Angel returns from Brazil and forgives her, she brings about her own (9) _____ by stabbing Alec to death. But (10) _____ Boldwood at the end of Hardy's earlier novel *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Tess is shown no (11) _____. She is executed for her crime, although the final incident is only (12) _____ to us by a black flag being waved over the prison.

5 ABOUT YOU What was the last novel you read? Can you give a synopsis of it? Write it down, or tell another student.