

## Investigate!

*Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Volume I (chapters 1-20)*❖ **Hardy's Wessex**

- What is the significance of horses in *Tess*?
  - What power do the people who own them have?
- Are Tess's journeys on foot happy?
- When Tess uses a horse to travel, how often does she achieve her destination?
- Two places lie outside South Wessex in the story: Sandbourne and Stonehenge
  - What do they represent?

❖ **Chapter 1**

- First chapters are always very important and need studying closely.
  - What are your first impressions of the characters in chapter 1?
  - What events might be anticipated?
- What is the effect of the Bible quotation?
- Hardy may be thinking of some of his own forbears as having done well here, for example, Captain Hardy who was with Lord Nelson at Nelson's death
  - How does Tess's father react to the news of his more famous ancestors?
- What does this chapter tell us about the English class system and nineteenth century class consciousness?
- How does the chapter lead us in to the story?
  - Think in terms of plot, setting and character.

❖ **Chapter 2**

- From what perspectives does Hardy describe the Vale of Blackmoor?
  - What are the significant

features of each perspective?

- What do you understand by fertility?
  - What seem to be the most significant features of the Vale?
- Is there any significance in Hardy mentioning the legend of the White Hart?
- What are your first impressions of Tess?
  - It would seem she is 16 or perhaps just 17 at this stage. Do you feel able to *visualise* her, or do you rather get an *idea* of her femininity?
  - Are the narrative descriptions more sensuous, psychological, or moral in their emphasis?
    - Are any parts of her body emphasised more than others?
- What is our first impression of Angel?
  - What associations do you have with his name?
- Why does Hardy introduce comments from Angel's brothers?
- Angel and Tess almost meet
  - What do we anticipate from this?
- Tess's father appears briefly in the chapter
  - What point does the narrative seem to be making?
- How does the chapter convey the idea of change in what could otherwise seem a timeless and ideal pastoral world?
- Hardy uses colour symbolism frequently:
  - List the colours described in this chapter, especially those applied to Tess.

❖ **Chapter 3**

Hardy focuses on the social dimensions of Tess's family

- List some examples of the family responsibility and organisation Tess undertakes.
- Hardy stresses the use of dialect and received pronunciation in Tess's family
  - What points do you think he is making?
- How does the modern sit with the traditional in the chapter?
- Compare the folk-song at the beginning of the chapter and Hardy's reference to Wordsworth's poem at the end
  - With which does he seem more sympathetic, and why?
- Think about the metaphor he uses of 'the Durbeyfield ship'
  - What is the force of the image?
- What further do we learn about Tess in this chapter?
  - How does it complement what we learned from the previous chapter?

❖ **Chapter 4**

- Colour symbolism plays an important part in the novel
  - Begin to construct notes on the colours Hardy uses in his descriptions of people and episodes
- Look at the description of Marlott
  - What does its layout suggest about the sort of place it is?
- In what ways is the thinking behind Joan's 'project' naive?
- Examine the conversation Abraham and Tess have together

- What does it show of Tess's philosophy

of life?

- What perspective does it introduce?
  - Do you think Hardy putting his own views into Tess's mouth?
- How else does Hardy show Tess' spiritual side?
- In many novels, certain episodes are used to prefigure significant happenings later on
  - What does Prince's death prefigure?
- Mark the phrases that show Tess' sense of responsibility
  - How might this sense of responsibility influence her decisions?

❖ **Chapter 5**

- How does Hardy use geography to describe Tess's awareness of the world?
- What is Tess's second journey a journey towards?
- Hardy makes a great deal about layers of time
  - Collect together the references to time and history in this chapter and arrange into:
    - Pre historical time
    - Historical time
    - Modern time (modernity)
  - In what ways does Hardy suggest modernity and falsity run together?
- Compare the names Durbeyfield and d'Urberville
  - Can you see anything significant in the differences?
- What parts of Tess's and Alec's bodies are described?
  - What is the significance?
- How does Hardy make us aware that Alec is a threat to Tess?

# Investigate!

## *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*: Volume I (chapters 1-20)

# Investigate! *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

## Volume I (chapters 1-20)

- Notice Tess went about 'as in a dream'
  - What does this suggest to you about Tess's state of mind?
- Look at Hardy's comments in the last few paragraphs
  - Hardy often does stop to comment on his story, nearly always at the end of a chapter. Consider:
    - What the remarks say about Hardy's method of plot construction
    - How they help readers to anticipate how the plot will develop
    - How this anticipation helps create a sense of impending doom or tragedy
  - From these remarks, does Hardy seem to believe in progress?
- Think about the phrase 'not by a certain other man'
  - Who would be meant here?
  - Does he actually turn out to be the 'exact and true one'?

### ❖ Chapter 6

- What do you think is 'prefigurative' about the rose-thorns piercing Tess's chin?
- What is it that makes Tess so indecisive?
- Why is Joan described as 'witless'?
- In what ways does Hardy continue to undermine the d'Urbervilles' credibility?

### ❖ Chapter 7

- List the references in this chapter to margins and borders
  - Which are symbolic?

- Pick out words and phrases that have to do with passivity
  - Does Hardy seem to suggest this is a dangerous attitude?
- A great deal is made about the clothes Tess and Alec are wearing
  - What do you think Hardy is trying to establish?
- What do you think are Tess's 'bitter sentiments' that she does not utter?
- From whose perspective do we see much of the chapter?
  - What is the effect of Hardy shifting the perspective?
- What would you say are the ultimate failures of Tess's parents towards her?

### ❖ Chapter 8

- What could you see the bird's eye view at the beginning of the chapter as symbolising?
- 'It was my fate':
  - Is it really 'fate' or is it Alec's character?
    - What does the whole chapter show us of Alec's character?
- How does Hardy create a sense of danger for Tess?
- Discuss the meaning of the sentence: 'This dressing her up so prettily by her mother had been to lamentable purpose'?
- Hardy writes that Tess was 'hardly yet aware of her own modesty':
  - How does his description stand in opposition to what Alec thinks of 'cottage girls'?
- How physically possible is it to undo a kiss?
  - How does this attempt anticipate other acts of Tess later on?

### Investigate!

#### *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*: Volume I (chapters 1-20)

- What is the implication behind Tess agreeing to ride with Alec, then refusing to?
  - Is there an inner conflict, and if so, what exactly is it?
    - How does this situation anticipate future events?

#### ❖ Chapter 9

- Why does Tess have misgivings when she hears Mrs d'Urberville is blind?
- List the different ways in which Hardy shows Tess's powerlessness?
- What adjectives would you use to describe Mrs d'Urberville's relationship with her son?
- How would you characterise Tess and Alec's relationship?

#### ❖ Chapter 10

- Compare the description of the villagers at the beginning of the chapter with that at the end
  - Do you see any significant difference in Hardy's attitude towards them in the two descriptions?
  - Can you account for any such difference?
- The poet Wordsworth had a great admiration for country people as being close to nature, a closeness which gave them a certain 'sublimity'
  - How does Hardy depict them in terms of their sublimity?
- Why do you think Hardy uses so many classical mythological references in his descriptions of the barn dance and walk home?

- N.B. Make sure you understand who Pan and Dionysius are
- Compare the barn dance here with the club walking dance in chapter 2.
  - What significant differences do you see?
- Examine Tess's isolation
  - What causes it?
- Is there any significance in the nicknames given to the two Darch girls?
- What causes Tess to accept Alec's help at the third offer?

#### ❖ Chapter 11

- Gather up all the references to Tess's powerlessness.
  - Are they balanced by anything that suggests she has any control?
- List the geographical features that act as symbols
  - What do they symbolise?
- Look at Tess's behaviour towards Alec
  - Does Hardy suggest she is actively encouraging or discouraging him?
- How is Tess described physically?
  - Look at the colours and parts of the body described
- On this third journey, how is Tess's vulnerability brought out and her danger?
- Look at Hardy's comments at the end of the chapter
  - Collect words that have to do with higher powers
    - Do they suggest protection, enmity or indifference?
  - To what extent is Hardy suggesting some external force is to blame and to what extent Alec himself?
  - Does he ever suggest Tess must bear some blame?

# Investigate!

## *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*: Volume I (chapters 1-20)

- 'There lay the pity of it.'
  - Do we know what is to be pitied?

### ❖ Chapter 12

- Look at the journey home:
  - Gather up words of ascent and descent
  - How does Hardy characterise this journey?
  - How does it compare with previous journeys?
- List the colours mentioned
  - Can you see any significant patterns?
- Why is the landscape 'terribly beautiful to Tess'?
- How does Hardy describe Tess's behaviour and attitude when she meets Alec again?
  - What are the biggest differences from her previous encounters?
- Do we get any clues to the sort of relationship Tess and Alec had over the past few weeks?
- Look at the condemnation and blame Tess is given
  - How much is given by people and how much is self-condemnation?
    - Which is worse for Tess?
- How does Tess defend herself from others' condemnation?
  - Are we sympathetic to her reasons?
- What is the significance of her mother's final remark?

### ❖ Chapter 13

- Go through the chapter and list words and phrases that show Tess's isolation
  - How does Hardy show Tess is living on the margins or borders of her society?

- Is this isolation self-induced or the result of society ostracising her?
- What inner resources does Tess seem to have?
  - What hinders her from drawing upon them?
- Explain the sentences beginning:
  - 'She had no fear of the shadows...'
  - 'A wet day was the expression....'
- Do we believe Hardy when he says Tess's feelings of guilt have come from social convention?
  - If not, where else might they have come from?
- Should a novelist just *tell* us about important states of mind of his main characters, or should he actually *show* it?
  - Does Hardy really *show* us that Tess is not a 'figure of Guilt', or just tell us?

### ❖ Chapter 14

- Hardy delays introducing Tess in this chapter.
  - What does he open the chapter with?
  - What is the effect of delaying Tess's appearance?
  - Is the introduction of Tess's baby surprising?
- Examine words and phrases that suggest mechanisation.
  - To what extent is Tess included in this language?
- How does Hardy distinguish between the men and women labourers?
- How do the labourers relate to Tess?
  - How does she relate to them?

## Investigate!

*Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Volume I (chapters 1-20)*

- Pick out the colour words
  - Do you notice any significance?
- Pick out words and phrases that suggest borders and marginalisation
  - In what way are these words connected with victimisation and entrapment?
- In ch. 10, Tess is described as 'on the momentary threshold of womanhood'. She is now 18, an age when many girls did get married and have babies.
  - Why do you think Hardy insists she is still a girl?
- How are Tess's younger siblings described?
- What does Hardy achieve in the baptism scene?
- In what way is formal religion characterised in the chapter?
- What qualities does Tess display in the chapter?
- Hardy suggests Tess has 'a slight incautiousness of character'
  - Is this fair?
- Is Hardy laughing a little at Tess when he mentions the marmalade jar at the end?

❖ **Chapter 15**

- What is Hardy's attitude about learning through experience?
  - Does Hardy make it sound possible that Tess can recover from her bad experience?
  - In the phrase 'but for the world's opinion', which world is Hardy talking about?
    - Are you inclined to believe him?
- Weigh Tess's thoughts of death against her hope of

something springing from working near to the d'Urbervilles

- Does one outweigh the other?
- Are they passing moods or real emotional attitudes?
- Hardy is very interested in Tess crossing various borders
  - What border does she finally cross here?
    - What has been the crucial factor to thrust her over?
- Collect together references to memory and bygone.
  - What questions does Hardy shape from them?
  - What sort of answers can we anticipate?

❖ **Chapter 16**

- What does Hardy suggest about this new journey in terms of:
  - Previous journeys?
  - Tess's emotions and attitudes?
  - What she sees on the way?
- Collect Hardy's comments throughout the chapter that suggest Tess's absence or presence will not be noticed
  - How does this stand in contrast to our seeing this new landscape through Tess's eyes?
- Compare the two valleys that Hardy mentions
  - In what ways is the contrast symbolic?
- Compare the bird's-eye and the worm's-eye view of the Frome Valley
  - What significant differences are there?
- As if you were a film director, mark the chapter with the different types of camera shots

# Investigate!

## *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*: Volume I (chapters 1-20)

# Investigate! *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

## Volume I (chapters 1-20)

- you would use to represent the different perspectives Hardy conveys
- Look at Hardy's comments about women. Discuss whether they are:
    - Sympathetic?
    - Patronising?
    - Chauvinistic?
      - Do you think Hardy's attitudes are valid?
  - Make notes on the colour symbolism in this chapter
  - Note words that suggest fertility
    - Why should Hardy be stressing this?
  - What to you are the most significant images in the chapter?
  - Why does Hardy think that Tess is pagan at heart?

### ❖ Chapter 17

- What is the first impression Tess makes on the others?
  - How much of it is to do with her looks?
- What are the grounds for Tess's optimism?
  - Do you think they are well-founded?
- Collect together the remarks about the past
  - Does Hardy seem to view the past positively?

### ❖ Chapter 18

- Look at Hardy's description of Angel
  - How does the physical description give insight into Angel's character?
  - What changes in Angel's character does Hardy suggest he has undergone?
- How does Hardy portray Angel as someone also on the

margins of his society?

- In what ways can he be compared to Alec and to Tess as outsiders to the farming community?
- What does Angel Clare's name suggest symbolically?
- What is it about Tess that first draws Angel's attention to her?
  - What, by contrast, does Alec first notice about her?
- What more do we learn about Tess' spiritual experiences?
  - How is her 'otherness' highlighted?

### ❖ Chapter 19

- What do Tess and Angel notice about each other physically?
  - What attracts them to each other?
- Look carefully at the garden episode
  - How does Hardy present Angel to us?
  - How does Tess perceive him?
    - What are Tess' sensations at hearing and seeing him?
  - What can you see that is symbolic in the episode?
    - Consider the place, the fruit, the colours, the harp, the imagery
  - How does Hardy bring a double perspective to the scene?
- How does Angel undermine the authority of the dairy?
- What do these phrases mean:
  - 'Tess's passing corporeal blight had been her mental harvest'?
  - 'she little recked the strength of her own vitality'?
    - Does Hardy mean these ironically?

### Investigate!

*Tess of the d'Urbervilles*: Volume I (chapters 1-20)

- Give some illustrations of Tess's apparent pessimism
  - How deeply do you think she means them?
- Consider the views of history and the past that both Angel and Tess express
  - Can we anticipate future difficulty from them?

#### ❖ Chapter 20

- How does Hardy continue to stress:
  - The fertility of the dairy and the surrounding countryside?
  - The dairy as ideal community?
- Examine again Hardy's use of borderline states of being. How does this apply to
  - The relationship of Angel and Tess?
  - The time of day when they are most together?
    - How does Hardy describe this early morning state?
    - What does he achieve by such detailed descriptions of the early light?
- Pick out words and phrases to show how Angel sees Tess.
  - How does Hardy produce tension for his readers regarding these perceptions of Angel?
- What are the implications for the novel of the phrase 'under an irresistible law'?