

Investigate!

Tess of the d'Urbervilles: Volume III (chapters 40-59)❖ **Chapter 40**

- What does Angel mean by 'snaps the continuity of existence'?
 - What particular 'snapping' has he been guilty of?
- Hardy creates two encounters with women in the chapter
 - What is Hardy's purpose?
 - How does he portray Angel's emotional state?
 - Does Angel treat the two women well and in character?
 - How is it that Angel manages to do so much harm to the women with whom he comes into contact?
- Look at Angel's 'if only' ('If you had only told me sooner')
 - Does this stand up to close examination?
 - In what ways is Angel trying to make himself a victim?
 - Are you convinced by these efforts?
- What positive thing emerges for Angel out of the temptation to take Izz with him?
 - What does the encounter fail to do?

❖ **Chapter 41**

- 'whatever it may be called': Hardy is not usually so lost for a precise meaning when it comes to describing Tess and her motives
 - What do you think it is that prevents Tess from contacting Angel's parents?
 - Would you say this is a character defect?
- Why does Tess not seek work:

- As a domestic servant?
- At Talbothays?
 - What do these reasons show about her character?
- Tess's journeys continue to expose her to danger
 - What point is Hardy making about her chance encounter with the man from Trantridge?
 - Compare this with the chance encounter with Alec in chapter 45
- What is the symbolic significance of the pheasant incident?

❖ **Chapter 42**

- In what ways has Tess become 'a figure which is part of the landscape'?
 - What is the significance of Hardy's phrase?
- Make sure you understand the symbolism of the landscape
 - What are the main features of the landscape, and how do they match up to Tess's inner state of being?
- A sort of destination has been reached at the end of this journey
 - How would you characterise it?

❖ **Chapter 43**

- List the main difficulties or tests that Tess faces in the chapter
 - How does she cope with them?
 - Which one affects her most deeply?
- Do you think Hardy designed this chapter to describe a place of testing or not?

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- If not, what other reason do you feel the chapter serves in the novel?
- If you do, what sort of testing is it?
 - What does it achieve for Tess?
- What qualities emerge in Tess?
- Look at the paragraph beginning 'The swede field...'
 - What are the images that strike you most forcibly?
 - Compare it with the description of the valley in chapter 16.
 - Compare the image of flies in both
 - What else forms a contrast and what else is similar?
- Look at the paragraph beginning 'After this season...'
 - How does this compare with the previous paragraph studied in terms of Hardy's use of the bird's-eye perspective?
 - What is the point Hardy is making about grandeur and awareness?
 - Do you see the birds as symbolic of Tess?
 - If so, in what way?
 - Who else are 'temporary sojourners'?
- What images does Hardy use to describe entrapment in this chapter?
 - Has he used similar images previously?
- ❖ **Chapter 44**
 - How does the first paragraph establish Tess's independence?
 - Why does she decide to visit Angel's parents?
 - Does she herself think she will succeed?
 - What does Hardy suggest are her chances of success?
 - What does Hardy suggest would work in her favour?
 - Does she realise this?
 - List all the things that prevent Tess's mission from succeeding.
 - Looking at the list, is there a bias towards either of:
 - A particular character flaw?
 - A malevolent fate, working against Tess?
 - Would you say Hardy is manipulating the plot too arbitrarily against Tess, or has he carefully prepared us to expect the outcomes?
 - Do you feel Tess has still some control over her fate, or that whatever she does is bound to turn out badly?
 - What gives you your impression?
 - Do you get a sense of 'if only' in this chapter?
 - If so, where exactly is this focused?
 - Discuss whether you think Tess is a pilgrim or a victim?
 - Explain the sentence beginning 'Then she wept for...'
 - What exactly does this sentence show the reader?
 - What plot elements does Hardy tie together in the last two paragraphs?
 - In what ways is there a reversal of Alec and Angel?
 - Looking over the Phase the Fifth chapters, list the ways in which Tess has 'paid.'

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- Look at the description of Alec
 - Pick out words and phrases that emphasise contrast or contradiction.
 - What is the main thrust of such contrasts?
 - Is the reader meant to trust Alec any more now than before?
 - Does Tess?
 - What are her reasons?
- What do words like 'her seducer' (end of chapter 44) and 'her old lover' tell us about their previous relationship?
 - Why does he now say he is afraid of her?
- Look at the use of 'paralysing', 'paralysis', 'atrophy' to describe both Tess and Alec.
 - Has Hardy used similar terminology before?
 - What does his usage say about their relationship and behaviour?
- What are Tess's first feelings when she confronts Alec again?
 - Do you notice any significant change in her behaviour or words when she talks to Alec compared to the early part of the novel?
 - What is Tess particularly bitter about in speaking of Alec's conversion?
 - Do you think she is justified?
- Look at the sentence 'And there was revived in her...'.
 - What does it say about Tess's feelings of guilt?
 - How does Alec try to blame her?

- Is he justified?
- Is Tess's loyalty to Angel something to be commended in her?
 - Is it part of her purity?
- Look at Hardy's use of the Cross-in-Hand
 - What purposes does it serve?
 - Is it in any way a sign of the future?
- Compare the two journeys which occur in chapter 12 and this chapter
 - What would be the biggest similarity and the biggest difference?

❖ **Chapter 46**

- Look at the paragraph beginning 'For hours nothing relieved...'.
 - What characterises agricultural labour here?
 - How does this work compare to that at Talbothays?
 - Are such differences symbolic in any way?
- How is Alec's approach described?
 - What effect does such a description achieve?
- In what ways does Alec's proposal of marriage seem incongruous? (If you have read Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, you may like to compare St. John River's proposal to Jane.)
- What is the nature of Tess's 'faith'?
 - Would you say the naivety of her belief in Angel is a strength or a weakness?
- How does Hardy present Tess as being pure at this stage?
 - How much of her situation is down to her naivety?

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- List the words and phrases by which Alec seeks to excuse his behaviour.
 - In what ways could it be said that he is victimising Tess?
- Are you convinced by Hardy's explanation at the end of the chapter concerning the shallowness of Alec's conversion?
 - Give your reasons
- What seem to you the main ironies of the chapter?

❖ Chapter 47

- Go through the chapter picking out images or references to hell or the underworld
 - How does this tie up with chapter 43 and its discussion of 'places of testing'?
 - In what ways could Alec be seen as devilish?
- List Alec's arguments that he is indeed Tess's first husband
 - How valid do you consider them?
 - How do the arguments add to Tess's torment?
- Look closely at the way Tess is made to take the blame by Alec
 - What does this show about him?
 - In general, how has Alec deteriorated from the previous chapters of this phase?
- In what ways does the chapter promote the view of Tess as a victim?
 - Consider particularly Tess's vulnerability, her lack of protection, and her exposure.
 - Collect images of entrapment

- Look at Hardy's explanations of why Tess is unable to argue with Alec
 - Is he being fair to her, or is there a hint of male chauvinism?
- How does Hardy portray nature and agriculture in this chapter?
 - How does this compare with the Talbothays chapters?
 - What do you think Hardy is conveying by juxtaposing two such different accounts?

❖ Chapter 48

- Select the images Hardy uses to describe the machine.
 - What seems to be the main picture that emerges of it?
 - To what extent does the machine symbolise Fate?
- List words and images relating to colour
 - In what way do they fit with previous patterns of colour images and descriptions?
- Investigate the interplay of power and powerlessness in this chapter and the previous one
 - To what extent is Tess trapped into the situation?
 - Where does her letter fit into this interplay?
- Is Alec now a better or worse man than in the first chapters?
 - Do Jesus' words of Luke 11: 24-26 refer to him rather than to Tess?
 - How genuine do you think his offer of help is?
- Look closely at Tess's letter
 - She often uses religious language. In what does she place her faith?

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- If the letter arouses pathos, what does this centre on?
 - What other responses do you think Hardy is trying to create in the reader?
- ❖ **Chapter 49**
 - What more does the chapter tell us about the relationship of Angel's parents with him?
 - In what ways does Angel go through a purgatorial experience whilst in Brazil?
 - Is his suffering and re-education in any way comparable to Tess's?
 - Does the reader at any time get the experience of this change being too late?
 - Explain 'not among things done but among things willed'
 - Look at the paragraph beginning 'But the reasoning is somewhat musty....'
 - Is this Hardy's commentary or Angel's thinking?
 - Whose voice is it?
 - If it is Hardy's, what does it say about Hardy's philosophy of life?
 - What would this suggest about the outcome of the novel?
 - Explain the distinction Angel makes between the 'political value' and the 'imaginative value' of Tess's family line
 - Hardy is fond of personifying time
 - How would you explain 'So does Time ruthlessly destroy his own romances'?
- In what ways does Tess rehearsing the folk-songs evoke pathos?
- ❖ **Chapter 50**
 - Examine the description of Tess's night journey
 - What seem to you to be the most striking images?
 - Do you see any clusters of images or diction that could have symbolic significance?
 - Collect references to Tess helping her family both earlier in the novel and here.
 - What benefit has been derived from her help?
 - What benefit will Tess's preparation of the ground for planting be to them?
 - What do your answers suggest about the family and any future efforts to help them?
 - In what way are future efforts likely to be dangerous for Tess?
 - Do you see anything ironical in all this?
 - Does Hardy set up any parallels in this chapter between Alec, his words and his actions, and Angel, his words and his actions?
 - Were you expecting Alec to re-appear?
 - What is your reaction to his re-appearance and the form it takes?
 - What does Hardy lead us to expect to happen at this juncture?
- ❖ **Chapter 51**
 - What is the full significance of Old Lady-Day for the Durbeyfields?

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- Consider their past and their future. How are these changing?
 - Consider their security and support network. What will happen to these?
 - Why does Joan choose to relocate to Kingsbere?
 - Do you think it is a wise choice?
 - Make a list all the repercussions arising out of Parson Tringham's discovery in chapter 1.
 - There seems to be some discrepancy about whether the family has to move out at once or whether they could have been allowed to stay on a while longer.
 - Can you explain the discrepancy?
 - For what does Tess still blame herself?
 - Is she justified?
 - For what does she now refuse to take any further blame?
 - In what way is the spider symbolic?
 - How is the coach story prophetic or anticipatory?
 - Look at the paragraph beginning 'To her and her like....'
 - What does it mean?
 - Is it true to the story?
 - Is this really what Hardy has shown us about Tess?
 - What seems to be at the heart of Hardy's protest?
- ❖ **Chapter 52**
- Look at the two letters mentioned in the chapter.
 - In what way do they fit into the pattern of previous letters?
 - The family has returned to their ancestral home, completing a process that began in chapter 1.
 - What do they find when they get there?
 - In what way is this fall in circumstance centered on Tess?
 - What does Tess mean when she cries, 'Why am I on the wrong side of this door!'
 - If Alec represents the new and the modern, what does Hardy seem to be saying about that?
 - What to you seems the most tragic element or episode of the whole chapter?
 - The name of this phase, 'The Convert', suggests it has been largely about Alec
 - Summarise the main features of his progress (or regress)
 - How has this affected Tess?
 - Would you say Alec is on a pilgrimage, or are his actions more like those of a raiding party?
- ❖ **Chapter 53**
- How does Hardy further demonstrate that Angel's experiences have been a form of purgatory?
 - What is the irony in Angel's mother saying 'It is not my son...'?
 - Examine the order of the letters Angel receives:
 - How does it determine his actions?
 - Do you think Hardy means the reader to feel it is all going to be too late?
 - What is the effect of Hardy shifting the perspective over to Angel and the Clare family?

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- What is the irony of Angel telling his parents about Tess's ancestry at this moment?
- Explain the long sentence at the end beginning 'From his remarks his parents ...'

❖ Chapter 54

- What does Angel learn about Tess on his journey?
 - When Angel claims to Joan 'I know her better than you do', would you agree with him?
- The family in the old Durbeyfield cottage 'had never known her'.
 - What point is Hardy making here?
- It appears the Durbeyfields never make it to Kingsbere, either dead or alive.
 - Again, what point is Hardy making here?
- What do we know about Tess that Angel still has not discovered by the end of the chapter?
 - What clues are we given that Alec has had his way and that Angel is too late?
 - Find examples of how Hardy uses dramatic irony in the chapter.

❖ Chapter 55

- Examine the detailed contrast between the modern city and the ancient heathland surrounding it.
 - What points is Hardy trying to make through this contrast?
 - How do Hardy's comments on modernity tie in with previous comments on this subject?

- Find one or two examples of dramatic irony in the chapter.
 - Can you say exactly what is ironic about them?
- Compare the physical descriptions of Tess and Angel at their meeting.
 - In what ways do they contrast?
 - In what ways are their roles reversed?
 - How has Hardy prepared us for Tess's new appearance?
- Discuss whether it really is 'too late'.
 - What makes Tess think it is?
- Explain what Hardy means by the sentence beginning, 'But he had a vague consciousness of one thing ...'

❖ Chapter 56

- Make notes on the colour symbolism in the chapter.
 - Comment particularly on the shape of the patch of blood on the ceiling.
- 'The wound was quite small': where else in the novel has this been the case?
- Can you anticipate exactly why Tess has killed Alec?
 - Why did she not just walk out on him?
- Do you feel horrified by the murder?
 - How does Hardy lessen its immediate impact?

❖ Chapter 57

- 'of something seemed to impel him to the act': what is being suggested by the 'something'?
- Discuss the use of coincidence in the chapter, and the forces working in Angel and Tess' favour

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- How is this chapter different from the last number of chapters?
 - Do you feel this is the tide turning in Tess's favour, or is it only a temporary reprieve?
 - What, in Hardy's writing, gives you the feeling?
- 'a moving spot, 'a white vacuity': where else have you come across these phrases?
- What is the significance of perspective here?
- Examine Hardy's references to purity in the chapter
 - How do they add to the ideas you have already gained from Hardy?
- How does Hardy create an other-worldly feeling, a removal from everyday reality, within the chapter?
- In what ways is the first night at the house a redemption of their abortive wedding-night?

❖ **Chapter 58**

- Hardy sets up a strong contrast between outside and inside as Tess speaks
 - List phrases that convey this
 - What seems to you the most striking feature about how Tess speaks?
 - How does her 'inside' language relate to time?
- In what way does the mention of the stone coffin episode anticipate future events?
- The reader sees the lovers from an outside perspective just once
 - Why do you think Hardy chooses to use this perspective?

- What is particularly significant about Stonehenge, that Hardy should climax his story there?
 - What do you see as symbolic in the landscape and their journey to Stonehenge?
- What do you make of Tess's request for Angel to marry Liza-Lu?
- Notice the perspective of the officers' approach
 - In which other situations has Hardy employed this perspective?
- What is Tess's consolation in dying?
 - And what is she denied?
- Do you think that the climax of the novel is marked more by a sense of fulfilment or by a sense of loss?

❖ **Chapter 59**

- Compare the beginning of chapter 1 with this chapter in terms of perspective and the direction of the pedestrians.
 - What are the cinematographic qualities of Hardy's description here?
- In what sense are the two pedestrians 'pilgrims'?
 - Are they returning from a holy place or are they still seeking for some destination?
- How does Liza-Lu differ from Tess, and in what ways is she the same?
 - In the previous chapter, Tess claimed she had, 'All the best of me without the bad of me'
 - What 'bad' qualities has she not got, do you think?
- What does Hardy *not* tell the reader about Tess and Angel?

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- Why does Hardy put quotation marks round 'Justice'?
 - Do you think Hardy meant to connect this phrase with that about 'ended his sport'?
- What is the impact on you of words 'not knowing' and 'speechless' at the end?
- What is the effect of 'and went on' right at the end?
- Discuss whether you find the ending convincing and satisfactory
- In what sense is the Phase a 'Fulfilment'?

