

The Return of the Native



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF THOMAS HARDY

Thomas Hardy was the son of a stonemason and a well-educated woman who served as his teacher throughout his early childhood. Hardy's family wasn't particularly wealthy, and though he received some schooling, his parents did not have the means to send their son to college. Instead, Hardy became an architect's apprentice; he worked as an architect into the 1860s, when he began his writing career. He started off writing poetry but remained unsuccessful. In 1868, he finished his first novel, *The Poor Man and the Lady*, but couldn't find anyone to publish it. Hardy's next attempt was 1871's *Desperate Remedies*, which did find a publisher, although it wasn't successful. Hardy finally achieved success in 1874 with *Far from the Madding Crowd*, which allowed him quit his day job and focus entirely on writing. Over the next two decades, Hardy published a number of works that are now considered classic works of English literature, including *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891), and *Jude the Obscure* (1895). Although Hardy never found success as a poet in his lifetime, he never stopped writing poetry. After his death, poets such as Ezra Pound and W. H. Auden revived Hardy's poetry, and it played an important role in shaping the landscape of modernist poetry.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A crucial feature of Egdon Heath, the setting of *The Return of the Native*, is that it has not been touched by civilization. As such, most of the characters in the novel are not affected by notable historical events. The one exception is Clym, who does get a taste of the outside world by traveling to Paris. The novel takes place in the middle of the 19th century, during which time Paris was considered one of the cultural capitals of the world. Along with London, Paris was where one would go to start a business, take in great works of art, and marvel at technological advances. Clym shuns Paris, however, and prefers the simple life of the heath to the hustle and bustle of a big city. Another important historical context to consider when reading *The Return of the Native* is that it was published in Victorian England, which was noted for its sexual repression. Although it may seem relatively tame today, *The Return of the Native* was shocking to many of its initial readers because it features passages about adultery.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

The Return of the Native is a work of literary naturalism, a movement that is similar to literary realism, although with a

number of key differences. In particular, literary naturalism is interested in determinism and the overwhelming power of nature in comparison to humankind. The leader of literary naturalism is French author Émile Zola, and other notable authors include Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, Jack London, and Edith Wharton. Important naturalist works include London's *The Call of the Wild*, Wharton's *The House of Mirth*, and Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*. Many of the important literary naturalists are American, which makes Hardy something of an outlier. Hardy was also influenced by the British realist tradition, notably the novels of George Eliot. Additionally, *The Return of the Native*'s relatively frank portrayal of adultery paved the way for modernist novels like Henry James's *The Golden Bowl* and D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, which featured frank depictions of sexuality and infidelity.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Return of the Native
- **When Written:** 1878
- **Where Written:** Sturminster Newton, Dorset, England
- **When Published:** 1878
- **Literary Period:** Naturalism, Realism
- **Genre:** Naturalism
- **Setting:** Egdon Heath
- **Climax:** While attempting to find each other in a storm, Wildeve and Eustacia drown and die.
- **Point of View:** Third Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Funeral Arrangements. Thomas Hardy had two funerals: one for his ashes, which were buried in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey, and another for his heart, which was buried in Stinsford, his birthplace.

Belgravia. *The Return of the Native* was originally published in monthly installments in *Belgravia*, a magazine. *Belgravia*'s reputation for publishing sensationalistic writing initially gave *The Return of the Native* a more controversial reputation that it perhaps deserved.



PLOT SUMMARY

The Return of the Native opens with Venn, a reddleman, transporting Thomasin Yeobright back to Egdon Heath. Thomasin is upset because she was supposed to wed Damon Wildeve earlier that day but couldn't due to an issue with her

marriage license. Meanwhile, the residents of Egdon Heath are lighting bonfires to celebrate Guy Fawkes Day. The locals dance, sing, and gossip about the latest news on the heath, including the fact that Clym Yeobright is set to return from **Paris** at Christmas time. Clym is Thomasin's cousin, and the locals always assumed that the two of them would marry before Clym left for Paris. The locals also discuss how Mrs. Yeobright, Clym's mother, has openly objected to Thomasin's marriage to Wildeve, whom she considers socially inferior.

When Mrs. Yeobright learns that Thomasin didn't marry Wildeve after all, she gets even angrier. She knows that the aborted marriage will be the talk of the town, further embarrassing the Yeobright family. Though Wildeve insists that he still plans to marry Thomasin and will do so as soon as possible, he's not being entirely truthful: the same night he was supposed to marry Thomasin, he pays a visit to Eustacia Vye, whom he has been courting in secret. Eustacia likes Wildeve, though she is angry about his plans to marry Thomasin. Both Eustacia and Wildeve share a mutual hatred of Egdon Heath and dream about escaping; in particular, Eustacia longs to travel to Paris.

Despite Wildeve's promises, he continues to postpone his marriage to Thomasin. In the meantime, he repeatedly meets with Eustacia in private and promises her that he still loves her. Unbeknownst to Wildeve and Eustacia, Venn has been spying on them and caught wind of their tryst. Venn loves Thomasin, though she rejected him when he asked her to marry him. Nonetheless, Venn remains faithful to Thomasin and wants what's best for her, so he visits Eustacia and asks her to stay away from Wildeve. Unfortunately, this only makes Eustacia want Wildeve more.

Eustacia's infatuation with Wildeve ends once she hears that Clym Yeobright is returning from Paris. She considers Clym a knight in shining armor who can take her away from Egdon, so she sets her sights on him instead. No longer able to marry Eustacia, Wildeve goes through with his marriage to Thomasin. Meanwhile, Clym and Eustacia strike up a romance. However, Clym isn't exactly the person Eustacia thought he'd be: Eustacia thought that Clym could help her escape to Paris, but Clym wants to stay put and start a school in Egdon. Ultimately, they reach a compromise, and Clym promises to move them to Budmouth, a fashionable, seaside city not far from Egdon. Though Mrs. Yeobright disapproves of the Vye family, Clym and Eustacia get married.

Clym and Eustacia's happiness is short-lived. Clym lacks the funds to move them to Budmouth, and his plans to open a school prove difficult. To make matters worse, Clym starts to go **blind**, which forces him to abandon his studies. He then becomes a furze-cutter, much to the chagrin of Mrs. Yeobright and Eustacia, who consider this a low-class profession. Clym's relationship with his mother deteriorates after Mrs. Yeobright accuses Eustacia of cheating on Clym with Wildeve, though this

never happened. For a long time, Clym and his mother don't speak to each other.

One hot, summer day, Mrs. Yeobright decides to visit Clym and make amends. When Mrs. Yeobright arrives, Eustacia is inside talking to Wildeve. Not wanting Mrs. Yeobright to think any worse of her than she already does, Eustacia does not open the door for Mrs. Yeobright. Instead, she sneaks Wildeve out the back and assumes that Clym, who is taking a nap, will get up and answer the door. However, Clym does not answer. By the time Eustacia returns, Mrs. Yeobright has left. Meanwhile, Mrs. Yeobright walks home depressed—she thinks Eustacia and Clym have deliberately rejected her, and she shares this fear with a young boy named Johnny who accompanies her as she walks. After Mrs. Yeobright parts ways with Johnny, a venomous snake bites her.

Clym later wakes from his nap and decides to visit his mother, despite Eustacia's protests. However, on his way to his mother's house, he discovers her lying unconscious in the grass. Clym takes Mrs. Yeobright to the nearest cabin. The locals fetch a doctor to try to save Mrs. Yeobright, but they are too late, and she dies. To make matters worse, Johnny tells Clym that his mother was angry with him before she died. This news devastates Clym, and Eustacia is too scared to tell him the truth.

After Mrs. Yeobright's funeral, Clym starts asking around to figure out why his mother was so mad at him. Eventually, Johnny tells Clym that Mrs. Yeobright was walking back from Clym's house after Clym turned her down. Johnny also tells him that Eustacia was inside with Wildeve when. Enraged, Clym confronts Eustacia and the two of them have a big fight. Eustacia leaves Clym and moves back in with her grandfather. In the meantime, Thomasin gives birth to her first child, which she names baby Eustacia, and Wildeve inherits a fortune.

Wildeve feels bad for Eustacia, whom he still loves, and tells her that he will help her in any way he can. In response, Eustacia asks him to take her to Budmouth, where she can find a ship to Paris. Wildeve agrees to do so, though he does not tell Thomasin about his plans. One night, Thomasin follows Wildeve, realizes that he is going to see Eustacia, and assumes the two of them are having an affair. Shortly afterward, Thomasin arrives at Clym's house and tells him that she thinks Wildeve and Eustacia are planning to run away together. Concerned, Clym begins searching for Eustacia and Wildeve, who are indeed planning to depart for Budmouth. Clym leaves in the middle of a terrible storm, as do Eustacia and Wildeve.

Thomasin parts ways with Clym. On her way home, she encounters Venn and tells him about Eustacia and Wildeve; Venn offers to escort her home. On their way to the Quiet Woman Inn (Wildeve's inn), Venn and Thomasin come across a distressing scene: Wildeve and Clym have jumped into a pond to rescue Eustacia, who has fallen in. However, the storm has turned the pond into a whirlpool. With the help of some of the

locals, Venn manages to get Clym, Wildeve, and Eustacia out of the pond. However, by the time he does so, Eustacia and Wildeve are dead.

In the months following Wildeve and Eustacia's funeral, Venn becomes a dairy farmer and begins courting Thomasin; they eventually marry. Clym, overcome with grief, becomes a traveling preacher. However, the deaths of Eustacia and Mrs. Yeobright never stop haunting him.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Eustacia Vye – Eustacia Vye is an aloof young woman who has dreams of escaping Egdon Heath and going to **Paris**. Eustacia was born in Budmouth, a fashionable seaside town, but she was forced to move to Egdon Heath after the deaths of her parents. Now, she lives with Captain Vye, her grandfather, who allows Eustacia her independence. At the start of the novel, Wildeve is secretly courting Eustacia, though he is engaged to marry Thomasin. Eustacia loses interest in Wildeve after she learns that Clym is returning from Paris—she thinks that if she marries Clym, he will take her to Paris with him. Eustacia and Clym begin a romance and eventually marry. Clym tells Eustacia that he has no desire to return to Paris, but agrees to move the couple to Budmouth within the first six months of their marriage. However, Clym's **eyesight** fails, and the couple is forced to stay in Egdon. This makes Eustacia miserable. One day, Mrs. Yeobright comes to visit Clym and Eustacia, but Eustacia doesn't let her into the house because Wildeve has come to visit (previously, Mrs. Yeobright had wrongly assumed that Eustacia and Wildeve were having an affair, and Eustacia does want her to get any wrong ideas). However, Mrs. Yeobright dies on her way home after Eustacia didn't let her in. When Clym learns what Eustacia has done, he ends their marriage, and Eustacia returns to live with Captain Vye. Wildeve still loves Eustacia, though, and he promises to help her escape to Budmouth. A violent storm breaks out on the night they plan to leave, however, and Eustacia falls into a pond and drowns. Wildeve also dies while trying to save her.

Clym Yeobright – Clym Yeobright is an intelligent young man who returns to Egdon Heath after living in **Paris**, where he worked as a jeweler for several years. Much to the dismay of Mrs. Yeobright, his mother, Clym did not enjoy living in Paris and is happy to return to Egdon Heath, where he plans to start a school for the locals. Shortly after Clym's arrival, he begins a romance with Eustacia, though Mrs. Yeobright disapproves of the romance. Before long, Clym and Eustacia marry, and Clym promises that he will move the two of them to Budmouth, the fashionable seaside town where Eustacia was born. However, Clym soon becomes blind, which complicates his dream of opening a school. No longer able to study, Clym becomes a

furze-cutter instead. Though Clym is happy with this job, Mrs. Yeobright and Eustacia disapprove, as they believe that harvesting crops is beneath Clym's status. Clym's brief happiness comes to an end after his mother dies from a snake bite. What's more, due to a misunderstanding for which Eustacia was responsible, Mrs. Yeobright dies believing that Clym turned her away from his house. When Clym learns of Eustacia's involvement in the misunderstanding, he ends their relationship. Although he tries to reconcile his relationship with Eustacia via a letter, she dies before he can do so. Clym eventually becomes a traveling priest, though he never gets over the deaths of Eustacia and Mrs. Yeobright.

Thomasin Yeobright – Thomasin Yeobright is the niece of Mrs. Yeobright and the cousin of Clym Yeobright. Before Clym moved to **Paris** to work as jeweler, most locals believed he would marry Thomasin. However, Thomasin becomes engaged to Wildeve instead. The novel opens on the day they are supposed to wed, though an issue with their marriage license postpones the wedding. Humiliated by the failed wedding, Thomasin refuses to show her face around town. And though she still wants to marry Wildeve, his strained relationship with Mrs. Yeobright makes things difficult. And, unbeknownst to Thomasin, Wildeve is secretly courting Eustacia, as well. Eventually, Wildeve and Thomasin do marry. The marriage is rocky from the start: Wildeve spends much of his time away from Thomasin and withholds money from her. Eventually, Thomasin gives birth to her first child, baby Eustacia, not knowing that Clym and Eustacia's marriage has fallen apart. Later, Thomasin's doubts about Wildeve prove warranted when she discovers that he has resumed his affair with Eustacia. Not long afterward, she goes to Clym and warns him that Wildeve and Eustacia are planning to run off together. After Clym goes off looking for them in the rain, Thomasin also runs into Venn and informs him of the situation. At the end of the novel, after Wildeve's death, Thomasin decides to marry Venn.

Mrs. Yeobright – Mrs. Yeobright is the mother of Clym Yeobright and the aunt of Thomasin Yeobright. At the start of the novel, she opposes Thomasin's marriage to Wildeve, whom she believes is not high class enough for Thomasin. Eventually, Mrs. Yeobright accepts the marriage, though her initial disapproval creates permanent tension between herself and Wildeve. Mrs. Yeobright later tries to talk Clym out of marrying Eustacia. Despite the Vye family's wealth, Mrs. Yeobright does not respect them and considers Eustacia a "hussy." Ultimately, Clym marries Eustacia despite Mrs. Yeobright's disapproval, which causes Clym and Mrs. Yeobright to drift apart. The rift between them worsens after Mrs. Yeobright falsely accuses Eustacia of seeing Wildeve on the side for money. For a long time, Mrs. Yeobright and Clym do not speak to one another, although both of them miss each other. One day, Mrs. Yeobright decides to visit her son to make amends. When she gets there, nobody lets her inside and, due to a misunderstanding, believes

that Clym has abandoned her (in reality, Clym was napping and wasn't even aware that his mother had tried to contact him). On Mrs. Yeobright's walk home from Clym's, a poisonous snake bites her; she dies believing that her son has rejected her.

Damon Wildeve – Damon Wildeve runs the Quiet Woman Inn. The novel begins on what's supposed to be his wedding to Thomasin, though an issue with the marriage license forces them to postpone the wedding. Although Wildeve publicly maintains that he still wants to marry Thomasin, he is carrying out a secret romance with Eustacia. After his failed wedding, Wildeve regularly visits Eustacia and promises her that he is still interested in her. However, Eustacia eventually decides that prefers Clym instead and so ends her affair with Wildeve. This prompts Wildeve decides to marry Thomasin after all, though he proves to be a bad husband. He spends much of his time away from home and does not give Thomasin any money of her own. Additionally, once Eustacia and Clym's marriage falls apart, Wildeve once again starts pursuing Eustacia behind his wife's back. He promises Eustacia that he can take her away from Egdon Heath and fantasizes about making her his mistress. Indeed, Wildeve does try to help Eustacia escape Egdon, but a violent storm breaks out the night they plan to leave, and they drown to death after getting sucked into a pond.

Diggory Venn (The Reddleman) – Diggory Venn is a reddleman (a peddler of red dye for sheep) who is in love with Thomasin Yeobright. Previously a dairy farmer, Venn became a reddleman after Thomasin rejected his marriage proposal sometime before the events of the novel take place. The novel opens with Venn transporting Thomasin home after her failed attempt to wed Wildeve. Venn still loves Thomasin and always wants what's best for her. This motivates him to try to break up Wildeve and Eustacia so that Wildeve will still marry Thomasin. Later in the novel, after Thomasin and Wildeve are married, Venn keeps an eye on Wildeve to make sure he remains faithful to Thomasin. He also wins back Thomasin and Clym's inheritance from Wildeve after Wildeve wins it off of Christian Cantle in a game of dice. Thomasin encounters Venn during a violent storm that takes place the night that Wildeve and Eustacia go missing, presumably to run away with one another. Venn leads Thomasin to safety and helps pull Clym, along with the bodies of Eustacia and Wildeve, out of the pond. After Wildeve's death, Venn returns to dairy farming. He courts Thomasin and eventually marries her.

Captain Vye – Captain Vye is the grandfather of Eustacia Vye. He used to be a sailor and often entertains the locals with his stories about his former life at sea. He takes Eustacia in after both of her parents die. Although Captain Vye allows Eustacia a great deal of freedom, his blunt and unhelpful way of speaking often annoys Eustacia. Eustacia lives with Captain Vye for most of the novel until she marries Clym. After her marriage fails, Eustacia returns to live with Captain Vye, who is happy to let her back into his home. Captain Vye is one of the people who

sounds the alarm that Eustacia is missing on the night of her death.

Johnny Nunsuch – Johnny is the son of Susan Nunsuch. He encounters Mrs. Yeobright on her way back from Clym's house, making him the last person to see her alive. During this encounter, Mrs. Yeobright told Johnny that she was angry with Clym, believing that Clym knowingly refused to see her (though Mrs. Yeobright's claim is untrue and the result of a misunderstanding). Clym is devastated when Johnny later informs him that Mrs. Yeobright died angry at him.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Grandfer Cantle – Along with Timothy Fairway, Grandfer Cantle acts as a leader to the general laborers in Egdon Heath. Grandfer loves to party, sing, and gossip. He is the grandfather of Christian Cantle.

Timothy Fairway – Timothy Fairway (along with Grandfer Cantle) acts as a leaders to the general laborers in Egdon Heath. Timothy is prone to gossip, storytelling, and general revelry.

Susan Nunsuch – Susan Nunsuch is a meanspirited and superstitious woman who is convinced that Eustacia is a witch. At one point, she stabs Eustacia with a needle in church, and she later burns an effigy of Eustacia. Susan Nunsuch is the mother of Johnny Nunsuch.

Christian Cantle – Christian Cantle is the grandson of Grandfer Cantle. Mrs. Yeobright asks Christian to bring Clym and Thomasin their inheritance, but he gambles it away in a game of dice against Wildeve.

Charley – Charley works for the Vye family. He is infatuated with Eustacia and promises her his role in the Christmas play if she will hold his hand. Clym gives Charley a lock of Eustacia's hair after she dies.

Baby Eustacia – Baby Eustacia is the daughter of Thomasin Yeobright and Damon Wildeve.

Olly Dowden – Olly is a local broom maker. She celebrates Guy Fawkes Day with Grandfer Cantle and escorts Mrs. Yeobright to the Quiet Woman Inn.

Sam – Sam is a local who performs various odd jobs for the Vyes and the Yeobrights.

Humphrey – Humphrey is a furze-cutter who is often seen with Grandfer Cantle and Timothy Fairway.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in

black and white.



HUMANS VS. NATURE

The Return of the Native is part of the Naturalism literary movement, which generally elevated and revered the natural world but also portrayed it as fearsome and immensely powerful. As such, the book's setting, Egdon Heath, acts as a character in and of itself. Many passages, including the entire opening chapter of the novel, feature vivid descriptions of the heath. It's vast and beautiful, and it demands the respect of those who live on it. After all, the heath is a dangerous place: wildlife, weather, and darkness all pose a threat. Most of the inhabitants of the heath respect Egdon; they know how dangerous the heath can be and choose to take precautions. For instance, in the beginning of the novel, Mrs. Yeobright asks Oly to walk with her because she knows it is unsafe to walk alone at night.

However, other characters, particularly Eustacia and Wildeve, choose to disrespect the heath. Eustacia regularly expresses her desire to move away from Egdon because she cannot stand it. She also often walks alone in the darkness, even though she knows it is dangerous. Similarly, Wildeve wants nothing to do with the heath and also chooses to walk alone in the dark. Notably, neither character makes their living off of the land, unlike most of the residents of Egdon. Additionally, both characters share an unearned respect for the modern world, despite never living anywhere except the heath in their lives. Following her failed marriage to Clym, Eustacia decides that she cannot stand the heath any longer and asks Wildeve to help her escape. Wildeve agrees, and the two of them choose a particularly dark and stormy night to travel, once again disregarding the rules of the heath. This decision leads to both of their deaths, as Eustacia and Wildeve find themselves at the bottom of a whirlpool. Ultimately, then, *The Return of the Native* cautions against disrespect or arrogance toward the natural world, as humans are no match for nature's sublime power.

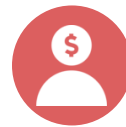


MODERNITY VS. TRADITION

There is a conflict staged in *The Return of the Native* between Egdon Heath and the modern world. Egdon Heath is described in the beginning of the novel as a timeless place that modernity has yet to touch, making it a rather unusual location. It's a place that's still steeped in history, as many of its inhabitants believe in old folklore and perform traditional work that some might view as antiquated. Venn, for example, is a reddleman (someone who sells red coloring that farmers use to mark their sheep). The book describes him as "one of a class rapidly becoming extinct in Wessex, filling at present in the rural world the place which, during the last century, the dodo occupied in the world of animals. He is a curious, interesting and nearly perished link between obsolete forms of life and those which generally

prevail." In other words, Venn persists in his work despite the fact that the trade—and the entire way of life it represents—is becoming "obsolete" in the face of industrialization. Moreover, the several community celebrations that take place throughout the novel (like the Guy Fawkes Day bonfire and the May Day festival) are important, long-held rituals that connect characters with one another and with their shared heritage.

That said, Clym's return from **Paris** (a modernized city) poses a threat to the traditional way of life in Egdon Heath. Although Clym does not like Paris well enough to return to it, he does want to open a school in Egdon and educate its inhabitants—in effect, he wants to modernize them. However, Egdon and its inhabitants refuse to be modernized. When Clym suggests to Fairway, one of the locals, that he wants to start a school in Egdon, Fairway remarks that "he'll never carry it out." Indeed, Fairway turns out to be correct; Clym begins to lose his **eyesight** and never manages to recover. Instead, like the other residents of Egdon, he makes his living off the land as a furze-cutter—that is, someone who harvests furze, a plant to feed livestock. As such, Egdon remains untouched by the modern world. Not only that, but it also claims a so-called "modern man," in the form of Clym, as one of its own. In this way, *The Return of the Native* advocates for the continued existence of places like Egdon Heath, a rural town that's managed to resist modern influences and hold onto its time-honored traditions.



CLASS AND MORALITY

One's occupation and class are crucial factors when considering marriage proposals on Egdon Heath. Much of the drama of the first half of the novel revolves around Mrs. Yeobright's feelings that her son, Clym, and her niece, Thomasin, are not marrying people who are of a high enough social standing. Mrs. Yeobright's displeasure with Thomasin and Wildeve's marriage leads Wildeve back to Eustacia. Meanwhile, her problem with Clym and Eustacia's marriage drives a permanent wedge between herself and her son. However, a peculiar feature of Mrs. Yeobright's character is that she actually married a dairy farmer who would've been below her rank in the social hierarchy, at least according to Captain Vye. It is unclear whether she is being hypocritical or if she just doesn't want her relatives to make the same mistake that she did. Of course, though Mrs. Yeobright's classism is responsible for many issues in the novel, she also ends up being correct about her relatives' marriages, as both start and end in disasters.

However, *The Return of the Native* does not go so far as to reward Mrs. Yeobright's classist attitude. In fact, it shows how a single-minded focus on wealth and social status can be harmful. Eustacia, for instance, manipulates and betrays her lovers throughout the book: she chooses Wildeve over Venn because he's of a higher social class, but then she abandons Wildeve for Clym because she (falsely) believes that Clym can give her a

refined **Parisian** lifestyle. Another example of this sort of moral corruption happens toward the end of the book, when Wildeve inherits a fortune from a deceased relative. However, his sudden acquisition of wealth does not make him more virtuous, nor does it make him treat Thomasin any better. If anything, his money makes him *more* of a problem, because he now feels justified in keeping Thomasin as his wife and Eustacia as his mistress. As such, *The Return of the Native* ultimately argues that wealth is a useful tool, but not one that is synonymous with virtue.



DECEPTION

Deception is an important feature of *The Return of the Native*, which sees several of its characters suffer the negative consequences of lies and deceit.

In particular, Wildeve and Eustacia build their relationship on a faulty foundation. Both play with each other's emotions and withhold how they truly feel: Wildeve refuses to let Eustacia know how he feels about her compared to Thomasin, and, in return, Eustacia doesn't tell Wildeve that she still loves him. Eustacia and Wildeve's unhealthy relationship comes to a head when their feelings for each other indirectly contribute to the death of Mrs. Yeobright (Eustacia's husband, Clym's, mother). Eustacia refuses to let Mrs. Yeobright inside the house because she and Wildeve are talking inside, and she doesn't want Mrs. Yeobright to think they're having an affair. And, as a result, Mrs. Yeobright is forced to walk home and suffers a fatal snakebite on the way. In hopes that she can keep Clym from learning the truth about his mother's death, Eustacia withholds the fact that she did not open the door for Mrs. Yeobright—and when the truth comes out, Clym divorces Eustacia. As such, Eustacia's deception ends up hurting everyone involved, including herself.

In addition to deceiving others, Eustacia also struggles with self-deception. Often, Eustacia has a difficult time disentangling fantasy from reality. For instance, it does not appear that she meant to trick Clym into taking her to **Paris** (her dream of escaping to Paris what attracts her to Clym in the first place). Rather, it seems she genuinely believed he would eventually take her there, despite all signs pointing the opposite way. Like with her deception of others, Eustacia's self-deceptive ways only result in more misery for her and those she loves. Her sham relationship with Clym hurts Wildeve and, in the end, hurts Eustacia herself, since the marriage ends in divorce. Although dishonesty and delusion perhaps save Eustacia from disappointment or other people's disapproval in the short term, this sort of behavior always backfires in the end. All in all, then, the novel shows how lying and withholding information can destroy lives, and it implicitly suggests that facing the truth and communicating openly with others would be a better long-term strategy.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



PARIS

Paris is an idealized wonderland for Eustacia; it represents everything that Egdon Heath is not. She sees it as a modern, stylish, and sophisticated place that is home to people who are higher class than the residents of Egdon Heath. On the whole, however, Eustacia's assumptions about Paris are idealized, shallow, and unexamined. Eustacia imagines that Paris will solve all of her problems—that it is a place where she will be among people who think and act like her. She even dreams that Clym is a literal knight in shining armor who has come to take her to Paris. However, it turns out that Clym's impression of Paris is much different from Eustacia's. For Clym, Paris is not a symbol—it is a place where he actually lived, and his lived reality there is significantly different from the paradise Eustacia imagines. Clym finds Paris to be an inhospitable environment for someone who was raised on the heath, and he refuses to return. However, Eustacia refuses to listen to her husband. No matter what he tells her about Paris, she still wishes to go there, believing that it will grant her an escape from a life she resents to something better.



EUSTACIA'S HOURGLASS

Eustacia's hourglass represents the time she spends on Egdon Heath, as a well as a countdown to when she might escape to somewhere else. Eustacia often carries around her hourglass when walking around the heath. She likes watching the hourglass; there is something meaningful to her about watching time slip away. Eustacia resents life on Egdon Heath and longs to live somewhere more exciting and refined; when she watches the hourglass, thus, she's also reflecting on how much time she has spent in a place she hates—and how much longer she must wait until she can leave this place behind. The hourglass also symbolizes Eustacia's tendency to fantasize, and she uses it while waiting for Clym to return from **Paris**. Additionally, the hourglass can be seen as a *memento mori* (a reminder of death). Although Eustacia doesn't know it while she is using it, the hourglass is counting down the moments to her death, which occurs at the end of the novel.



CLYM'S EYESIGHT

Clym's declining eyesight is a physical representation of his imperceptiveness. Clym has left Paris for Egdon, where he hopes to open a school despite lacking the necessary skills and funds. Numerous characters

mention that Clym's school is a bad idea, including Eustacia and Mrs. Yeobright, but he continues with the project anyway. Eventually, his studies put too much of a strain on his eyes, and he starts to lose his sight. This loss of sight represents a key trait of Clym's character: that is, a lack of awareness of what is going on around him and a lack of concern for other people's opinions.


Clym's shortsightedness isn't limited to his career—it also extends to his relationship with his wife. From the start, Eustacia makes her wishes clear to Clym: she wants to go to Paris. Despite this fact, and despite many warnings from his mother, Clym thinks he can make Eustacia happy in Egdon. Additionally, he is the last one to realize that Eustacia is secretly seeing Wildeve (who she's in love with). In fact, there is very little information in the novel that Clym learns on his own. In this way, he stands in sharp contrast to someone like Mrs. Yeobright or Venn, who are generally quite perceptive. The fact that Clym is losing his eyesight while all of this is going on emphasizes just how undiscerning he is—he's both figuratively and literally shortsighted.

Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from the first chapter of the novel, which is entirely dedicated to describing Egdon Heath. It is dense with allusions to other places including the Vale of Tempe (a beautiful Greek vale), Heidelberg (a German city), Baden (also a German city), and the Alps (a mountain range that stretches across Europe). Although Hardy makes many allusions, his point is simple; "the more thinking among mankind" are beginning to prefer spots of isolated, natural beauty—such as the Alps or Egdon Heath—to urban, industrialized places like Heidelberg or Baden. Thus, this passage argues for a return to the natural world as opposed to increased urbanization. As such, the novel begins with the inverse goal of Eustacia, who wants to escape Egdon Heath for Paris. Meanwhile, the novel seems to side with Clym, who has tried to live in Paris but believes he belongs in Egdon.

☞ The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages, and the people changed, yet Egdon remained.

Related Characters: Clym Yeobright

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 12

Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from the first chapter of the novel, which is entirely dedicated to describing Egdon. It illustrates a major theme in the novel, nature's indifference to humankind. The novel's descriptions of Egdon in this opening chapter emphasize how little it has changed. Though many may try, Egdon Heath is immune to unnatural changes. Throughout the novel, those who attempt to bend its rules or alter it are punished. For instance, Clym attempts to start a school on Egdon, the effect of which would be to educate the heath's citizens with new ideas. However, Clym doesn't accomplish his goal—when he becomes partially blind, it forces him to abandon his plans to build a school, and this means he must live off the land like everyone else in Egdon Heath. This passage also suggests author Thomas Hardy's predictions for the future. Though Egdon is fictional, it is based on a real heath, and here Hardy suggests that such heaths will endure longer than the humans who attempt to change and modernize them. In other words, Hardy is not only against modernization for such areas, but he also suggests that modernization is impossible.




QUOTES


Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Penguin Classics edition of *The Return of the Native* published in 1999.

Book 1, Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ Indeed, it is a question if the exclusive reign of this orthodox beauty is not approaching its last quarter. The new Vale of Tempe may be a gaunt waste in Thule; human souls may find themselves in closer and closer harmony with external things wearing a sombreness distasteful to our race when it was young. The time seems near, if it has not actually arrived, when the chastened sublimity of a moor, a sea, or a mountain will be all of nature that is absolutely in keeping with the moods of the more thinking among mankind. And ultimately, to the commonest tourist, spots like Iceland may become what the vineyards and myrtle gardens of South Europe are to him now; and Heidelberg and Baden be passed unheeded as he hastens from the Alps to the sand dunes of Scheveningen.

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye, Clym Yeobright

Related Themes: 



Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 10-11

Book 1, Chapter 2 Quotes

☛☛ The only intelligible meaning in this sky-backed pantomime of silhouettes was that the woman had no relation to the forms who had taken her place, was sedulously avoiding these, and had come thither for another object than theirs. The imagination of the observer clung by preference to that vanished, solitary figure, as to something more interesting, more important, more likely to have a history worth knowing than these newcomers, and unconsciously regarded them as intruders. But they remained, and established themselves; and the lonely person who hitherto had been queen of the solitude did not at present seem likely to return.

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye, Damon Wildeve, Diggory Venn (The Reddleman)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 18



Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from the end of Book 1, Chapter 2, as Venn is staring up at the heath. There, he watches Eustacia fleeing her fellow townsfolk who have come to build a bonfire to celebrate Guy Fawkes Day. At the time, neither Venn nor the reader knows who the silhouettes belong to; however, in retrospect, this moment is critical in its characterization of Eustacia. Of all of the silhouettes, only Eustacia moves on her own, separate from the other members of the heath. Not only does she move alone, but she does not even want to be seen by the others. There are likely two reasons for this. First, Eustacia is largely anti-social and does not enjoy fraternizing with the lower-class members of her community. Second, the novel later reveals Eustacia went to that spot to see if Wildeve was coming to her, which she would want to keep secret. Ironically, though Eustacia means to avoid others' attention, she actually draws attention to herself, which is evidenced in how Venn sees and takes an interest in her.

Book 1, Chapter 5 Quotes

☛☛ “As a matter of justice it is almost due to me,” said Wildeve. “Think what I have gone through to win her consent; the insult that it is to any man to have the banns forbidden—the double insult to a man unlucky enough to be cursed with sensitiveness, and blue demons, and Heaven knows what, as I am. I can never forget those banns. A harsher man would rejoice now in the power I have of turning upon your aunt by going no further in the business.”

Related Characters: Damon Wildeve (speaker), Thomasin Yeobright, Mrs. Yeobright

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 47


Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from a conversation between Wildeve and Thomasin after Thomasin and Mrs. Yeobright visit the Quiet Woman Inn on the night of Thomasin and Wildeve's aborted marriage. Wildeve is annoyed by how Mrs. Yeobright treats him and says so to Thomasin. Mrs. Yeobright's elitism particularly annoys Wildeve—he has a good job and doesn't think he deserves her looking down upon him. However, even though Wildeve's anger is understandable and relatable, his reaction is not. Wildeve's suggestion here is that he should call off his marriage to Thomasin as a way of getting back at Mrs. Yeobright. It is a nasty plan, and it is even worse that he says it to Thomasin's face. This is the first of two times Mrs. Yeobright will insult Wildeve's pride—she will later refuse to trust him with Thomasin's money—and in both cases, the manner in which he seeks revenge has negative implications for Thomasin. This is an important moment for Wildeve's character because it is an early example of his selfishness and his vengeful attitude.

Book 1, Chapter 7 Quotes

☛☛ Eustacia Vye was the raw material of a divinity. On Olympus she would have done well with a little preparation. She had the passions and instincts which make a model goddess, that is, those which make not quite a model woman. Had it been possible for the earth and mankind to be entirely in her grasp for a while, she had handled the distaff, the spindle, and the shears at her own free will, few in the world would have noticed the change of government. There would have been the same inequality of lot, the same heaping up of favors here, of contumely there, the same generosity before justice, the same perpetual dilemmas, the same captious alteration of caresses and blows that we endure now.

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye

Related Themes:  


Page Number: 68


Explanation and Analysis

This quote features the novel's first in-depth description of Eustacia. It comes after Eustacia's interaction with Wildeve on Guy Fawkes Day. Throughout *The Return of the Native*, Hardy often uses Greek iconography to describe his characters and landscape. This is notable because Hardy was writing for a rather conservative Christian audience. In this case, the reason Hardy describes Eustacia as a "goddess,"—rather than an angel, for instance—requires an understanding of Greek myth. Unlike the God, saints, and angels of Christianity, the Greek gods were flawed, often relying on "passions and instincts," instead of exemplary, Christian morals. As such, Hardy characterizes Eustacia as a character who, while not fully lacking in morals, does not abide by them either. He presents her as neither a force of good nor a force of evil—she is not someone who will fix the evils of the world, but she will not substantially add to them either.

☛ To be loved to madness—such was her great desire. Love was to her the one cordial which could drive away the eating loneliness of her days. And she seemed to long for the abstraction called passionate love more than for any particular lover.

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye, Clym Yeobright, Damon Wildeve

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 71

Explanation and Analysis

This quotation is part of a lengthy description given of Eustacia that follows her interaction with Wildeve on Guy Fawkes Day. Here, the description characterizes Eustacia as someone determined to find love. Eustacia genuinely believes in the power of passionate love, though various situations will challenge this belief as the novel progresses. At this early point in the story, however, Eustacia thinks that love is an antidote to her loneliness—something that will solve all of her problems. However, as the novel continues, it eventually becomes apparent that Eustacia's love is conditional. She loves Clym, but only as long as Clym can take her to Paris. When Clym's eyesight begins to fail and he can no longer help Eustacia escape from Egdon, her love for him starts to fade. Arguably, the most Eustacia ever loved Clym was before she even met him: "the abstraction called passionate love" overwhelms Eustacia after she first hears


of Clym and sets her head spinning. However, the actual Clym ends up underwhelming and disappointing her.

Book 2, Chapter 1 Quotes

☛ "The place he's been living at is Paris," said Humphrey, "and they tell me 'tis where the king's head was cut off years ago. My poor mother used to tell me about that business. 'Hummy,' she used to say, 'I was a young maid then, and as I was at home ironing Mother's caps one afternoon the parson came in and said, 'They've cut the king's head off, Jane; and what 'twill be next God knows.'"

Related Characters: Humphrey (speaker), Eustacia Vye, Clym Yeobright, Captain Vye

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 108


Explanation and Analysis


Eustacia is listening to Humphrey and Captain Vye discuss Clym's return to Egdon Heath. Eustacia takes a clear interest in Clym because he is from Paris, and so she carefully listens to every word Humphrey says about Clym. However, Humphrey's insights are not particularly insightful, and they demonstrate how isolated Egdon is from France. The event Humphrey refers to is King Louis XVI's execution, which took place during the French Revolution in 1793. In other words, the only thing Humphrey knows about France is more than half a century out of date. Meanwhile, though Eustacia may know more than Humphrey about France, she is similarly isolated from it. All of Eustacia's knowledge about Paris comes from what she has read and heard; she has never stepped foot outside of England herself. She claims to love Paris, but, like Humphrey, her Paris is a dream world that likely bears little resemblance to the material reality of the city as it exists in the mid-19th century.

Book 2, Chapter 3 Quotes

☞☞ She was dancing to wondrous music, and her partner was the man in silver armour who had accompanied her through the previous fantastic changes, the visor of his helmet being closed. The mazes of the dance were ecstatic. Soft whispering came into her ear from under the radiant helmet, and she felt like a woman in Paradise. Suddenly these two wheeled out from the mass of dancers, dived into one of the pools of the heath, and came out somewhere into an iridescent hollow, arched with rainbows. "It must be here," said the voice by her side, and blushing looking up she saw him removing his casque to kiss her. At that moment there was a cracking noise, and his figure fell into fragments like a pack of cards.

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye, Clym Yeobright, Damon Wildeve

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 118

Explanation and Analysis

This quotation is part of a dream Eustacia has after she hears that Clym is returning to Egdon Heath from Paris. Even before she meets Clym, Eustacia spends her days and nights fantasizing about meeting him. As this quote suggests, Eustacia's fantasies are completely overblown—they construe Clym as a literal knight in shining armor who has come to rescue her. In particular, the end of Eustacia's dream is interesting, as the knight falls apart "into fragments." Although Eustacia does not read it as such, the end of her dream suggests that the reason she could not see her knight in shining armor's face is because no such man actually exists. Though she may imagine Clym to be her savior, he is not—nor is Wildeve. Throughout the novel, Eustacia continues to get caught up in similar fantasies, only to have reality send them shattering "into fragments like a pack of cards," much like the knight in her dream.

Book 2, Chapter 5 Quotes

☞☞ On Egdon there was no absolute hour of the day. The time at any moment was a number of varying doctrines professed by the different hamlets, some of them having originally grown up from a common root, and then become divided by secession, some having been alien from the beginning. West Egdon believed in Blooms-End time, East Egdon in the time of the Quiet Woman Inn. Grandfer Cantle's watch had numbered many followers in years gone by, but since he had grown older faiths were shaken. Thus, the mummers having gathered hither from scattered points each came with his own tenets on early and late; and they waited a little longer as a compromise.

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye, Grandfer Cantle

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 129

Explanation and Analysis


This quote describes how time functions (or does not function) in Egdon Heath near Christmas time. Here, the mummers of Egdon Heath are all meeting at Eustacia's place but they all arrive at different times because there is no universal time on the heath. This passage demonstrates how vastly different life on the heath is compared to the modern world in the 19th century. Even a principle as simple as the proper time is up for debate on the heath—there, time is considered a matter of faith rather than objective truth. However, though such a system, or lack thereof, might seem inconvenient, it is considered socially acceptable on the heath. Additionally, it is yet another factor that emphasizes the Egdon Heath's timelessness. Egdon Heath is timeless in this case because it is *literally* a place out of time—just as the residents' watches are out of sync with one another's, Egdon is out of sync with the modern world.

Book 2, Chapter 6 Quotes

☞☞ The face was well shaped, even excellently. But the mind within was beginning to use it as a mere waste tablet whereon to trace its idiosyncrasies as they developed themselves. The beauty here visible would in no long time be ruthlessly over-run by its parasite, thought, which might just as well have fed upon a plainer exterior where there was nothing it could harm. Had Heaven preserved Yeobright from a wearing habit of meditation, people would have said, "A handsome man." Had his brain unfolded under sharper contours they would have said, "A thoughtful man." But an inner strenuousness was preying upon an outer symmetry, and they rated his look as singular.

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye, Clym Yeobright

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 137


Explanation and Analysis

This description comes from the first time Eustacia sees Clym, although these thoughts are the narrator's, not Eustacia's. The description makes Clym sound like a troubled figure whose mind and body do not align with each another. Furthermore, this description foreshadows events which will occur later in the novel. The parasites that overrun Clym symbolize the events that take place early on in his marriage—or, if one wants to take a more cynical reading, they symbolize Eustacia herself. However, even without Eustacia, Clym is out of sync with the world around him. He does not belong in Paris, nor, as the rest of the novel demonstrates, does he belong in Egdon Heath. Throughout the story, Clym represents the clash of two cultures—that of natural, isolated Egdon and that of modern, industrialized Paris—which do not align with one another. This passage conveys this misalignment in its description of his physical and mental features, as well as the way it alludes to Clym's ultimate fate.

Book 2, Chapter 8 Quotes

☝☝ When Thomasin was tremblingly engaged in signing her name Wildeve had flung towards Eustacia a glance that said plainly, "I have punished you now." She had replied in a low tone—and he little thought how truly—"You mistake; it gives me sincerest pleasure to see her your wife today."

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye, Damon Wildeve (speaker), Clym Yeobright, Thomasin Yeobright

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 164

Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from Wildeve and Thomasin's wedding. Eustacia surprises both of them, especially Wildeve, by attending. Eustacia's attendance is especially spiteful, though ultimately representative of Eustacia and Wildeve's relationship. At the time, Eustacia seems to be telling the truth; she really did come to the church simply to let Wildeve know that she genuinely believes that she will be


just fine without him. She thinks this because she believes that Clym is her new savior—that he, not Wildeve, will be man to take her away from Egdon Heath. However, despite what she says, and perhaps even what she honestly thinks, Eustacia is not over Wildeve. Additionally, even on his wedding day, Wildeve does not appear to be done with Eustacia. Meanwhile, Thomasin is left in the dark, as her wedding day has turned into an empty affair for her and a battle between her duplicitous husband and his former lover. It is one of the crueler moments in the novel and characterizes Eustacia as manipulative and unlikeable.

Book 3, Chapter 1 Quotes

☝☝ "I found that I was trying to be like people who had hardly anything in common with myself. I was endeavouring to put off one sort of life for another sort of life, which was not better than the life I had known before. It was simply different."

Related Characters: Clym Yeobright (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 171

Explanation and Analysis

This quote from Clym explains his inability to fit in among the people of Paris. Though Clym had a good job as a jeweler in Paris, he was not happy; at this point in the novel, he plans to stay in Egdon and start a school. However, a careful look at his words suggests that Egdon may not bring him happiness, either. Although he does say that Paris is not better than Egdon, he does not say that Egdon is better than Paris. This suggests that the unhappiness he felt in Paris may follow him to Egdon; indeed, by the end of the novel, Clym only finds despair in his hometown. This should make the reader wonder if Egdon was worse for Clym than Paris. Indeed, the novel repeatedly shows how characters who suffer the most are those who attempt—or in Clym's case succeed—to escape the heath.

Book 3, Chapter 5 Quotes

☝☝ "There is no chance of getting rich. But with my system of education, which is as new as it is true, I shall do a great deal of good to my fellow-creatures."

"Dreams, dreams! If there had been any system left to be invented they would have found it out at the universities long before this time."

Related Characters: Clym Yeobright, Mrs. Yeobright (speaker), Eustacia Vye

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 200

Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from an argument between Clym Yeobright and Mrs. Yeobright, and it touches on a number of key themes in the novel. First and foremost, there is the question of whether the heath can be changed and, more specifically, whether it can be modernized. While Clym thinks that there is a way to teach his “fellow-creatures,” Mrs. Yeobright firmly believes that this is impossible. On this count, Clym’s ultimate failure to build a school on Egdon Heath symbolically suggests that Mrs. Yeobright is right.

This passage also addresses the question of class. As the son of Mrs. Yeobright, Clym lived a privileged life compared to the other members of the heath, especially in regard to education. He believes his education has helped him in life, and he believes that having an education can do the same for his “fellow-creatures,” too. However, Mrs. Yeobright sticks with her typical elitist attitude and insists that her lower-class neighbors are impossible to educate. She thinks Clym is living in a fantasy land, not unlike Eustacia.

Book 4, Chapter 1 Quotes

☝ “You ought to have better opinions of me—I feared you were against me from the first!” exclaimed Eustacia.

“No. I was simply for Clym,” replied Mrs. Yeobright, with too much emphasis in her earnestness. “It is the instinct of everyone to look after their own.”

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye, Mrs. Yeobright (speaker), Clym Yeobright, Thomasin Yeobright, Damon Wildeve

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 238-239

Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from an argument between Mrs. Yeobright and Eustacia after Mrs. Yeobright accuses Eustacia of cheating on Clym with Wildeve for money. In stark opposition to Thomasin’s wedding, where Eustacia is at her worst, this moment finds her at her most sympathetic. Her mother-in-law has made a false and serious accusation against her and now refuses to apologize

for it. Meanwhile, Mrs. Yeobright comes off as hypocritical. Although it is partially true that she wants to protect her son, she also wants to make sure her family name is not tarnished. Prior to both Clym’s and Thomasin’s weddings, Mrs. Yeobright expresses at least as much concern for the family name as she does the welfare of her son and her niece, if not more. Furthermore, her refusal to apologize in this moment is emblematic of her character. She will not take back anything she’s said, even if it means further eroding her relationship with her son.

Book 4, Chapter 2 Quotes

☝ It was bitterly plain to Eustacia that he did not care much about social failure; and the proud fair woman bowed her head and wept in sick despair at thought of the blasting effect upon her own life of that mood and condition in him. Then she came forward.

“I would starve rather than do it!” she exclaimed vehemently. “And you can sing! I will go and live with my grandfather again!”

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye (speaker), Clym Yeobright, Captain Vye

Related Themes:  


Page Number: 248


Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from an argument between Clym and Eustacia after Eustacia hears Clym singing happily while working in the furze. Eustacia, angry at how far her fortunes have fallen, cannot believe that Clym can find any happiness in their current situation. Evidently (and unsurprisingly), Eustacia considers cutting furze as “social failure,” even though Clym is only doing so to support himself and Eustacia while his eyes recover. In fact, Eustacia considers nearly all work beneath her, as earlier in the novel she rejects an offer from Venn to work as a companion to an old woman in Budmouth. Eustacia has never had to work a job in her life, and she does not plan to. Clym’s expression of happiness angers her not simply because he is happy and she is not, but rather because she thinks Clym, in working the land like a commoner, has resigned himself (and by proxy her) to a lower social order that she cannot accept.

“Yes, I fear we are cooling—I see it as well as you,” she sighed mournfully. “And how madly we loved two months ago! You were never tired of contemplating me, nor I of contemplating you. Who could have thought then that by this time my eyes would not seem so very bright to yours, nor your lips so very sweet to mine? Two months—is it possible? Yes, ’tis too true!”

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye (speaker), Clym Yeobright

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 249-250


Explanation and Analysis

Here, Eustacia is reflecting on her failing marriage with Clym. After only a few months together, Clym has fallen further than Eustacia could have ever imagined, and she finds herself out of love with him. When Eustacia thought of Clym as a sophisticated, intelligent, and handsome young man who could whisk her away to Paris, she loved him deeply. However, now that he is poor, blind, and complacent, Eustacia cannot understand how she ever loved him. Notably, Eustacia lists sensual features—lips and eyes—and speaks of contemplation rather than reality. In reality, Clym was never the man Eustacia thought he was; he had no interest in returning to Paris and being a part of the modern world. However, Eustacia always held out hope that Clym would change his mind. This is the moment in the story where Eustacia realizes that this change is never coming.

Book 4, Chapter 4 Quotes

“Sometimes more bitterness is sown in five minutes than can be got rid of in a whole life; and that may be the case here.”

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye (speaker), Clym Yeobright, Mrs. Yeobright, Damon Wildeve

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 268

Explanation and Analysis


Eustacia speaks these words to Clym after Mrs. Yeobright falsely accuses her of adultery. Eustacia’s statement applies to several parts of the novel. There are several moments in *The Return of the Native* where characters make life-altering

decisions or say something life-altering that they wish they could take back but cannot. Eustacia’s decision not to let Mrs. Yeobright into her home is one such moment, as is her decision to try and escape with Wildeve. There is a fatalism to this idea that develops over the course of the novel. In each case where a character does or says something that crosses a line, their overstep seals their fate or the fate of another person. Here, Eustacia’s failure to let Mrs. Yeobright into her home seals Mrs. Yeobright’s fate by indirectly causing Mrs. Yeobright’s death (Mrs. Yeobright dies after she’s bitten by a snake while walking home from Eustacia and Clym’s house after Eustacia fails to let her into her home. Though Eustacia will come to regret her decision, she cannot take it back.

Book 4, Chapter 6 Quotes

“There you mistake me. I married him because I loved him, but I won’t say that I didn’t love him partly because I thought I saw a promise of that life in him.”

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye (speaker), Clym Yeobright, Damon Wildeve

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 276


Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes from a conversation between Wildeve and Eustacia. Wildeve has come to visit Eustacia while Clym naps, and Eustacia catches him up on her failing marriage. In this moment, Eustacia outwardly admits that part of the reason she wanted to marry Clym is because she thought he could take her to Paris. However, she also says that Paris is not the only reason she loves Clym. This latter claim is up for interpretation much more so than the former. One of Eustacia’s unfortunate character traits is her ability to deceive herself. Often, Eustacia genuinely seems to believe her intentions are pure, only to later realize that were corrupted by her desires. There are moments earlier in the story where Eustacia genuinely believes she is in love with Wildeve, too. However, she gets over him immediately when Clym comes into the picture. Then, when Clym can no longer get her what she wants, she sets her sights on Wildeve again. In each instance, Eustacia justifies her actions and feels that she is doing what she must. However, it seems clear that what she feels she must do is always

largely self-serving.

☞ Her eyes were fixed on the ground; within her two sights were graven—that of Clym’s hook and brambles at the door, and that of a woman’s face at a window. Her lips trembled, becoming unnaturally thin as she murmured, “’Tis too much—Clym, how can he bear to do it! He is at home; and yet he lets her shut the door against me!”

Related Characters: Mrs. Yeobright (speaker), Eustacia Vye, Clym Yeobright

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 278-279

Explanation and Analysis

This passage shows Mrs. Yeobright’s reaction to Eustacia’s failure to open the door for her after she walked for miles on a hot summer day to see Clym at his and Eustacia’s house. At this point, Mrs. Yeobright feels that her relationship with Clym is in critical shape, so she makes her way to see him, only to have her son (seemingly) reject her. Mrs. Yeobright takes the rejection as the ultimate insult. Because she sees Clym’s hook and brambles on the door, she thinks that he is inside the house, ignoring her. In reality, though Clym is inside the house, he is taking a nap and unaware that she’s come to see him. Additionally, this moment leads Mrs. Yeobright to believe that Eustacia is just as loathsome as she always thought she was. It seems to Mrs. Yeobright that Eustacia has poisoned Clym against her and thus ruined her relationship with her son for good. The tragedy of this moment is that Mrs. Yeobright soon dies (a poisonous snake bites her during her walk home from Clym’s house) without ever learning the truth about how her son felt about her: that he loved her and didn’t actually reject her.

Book 5, Chapter 1 Quotes

☞ “But, Damon, please pray tell me what I must do? To sit by him hour after hour, and hear him reproach himself as being the cause of her death, and to know that I am the sinner, if any human being is at all, drives me into cold despair. I don’t know what to do. Should I tell him or should I not tell him? I always am asking myself that. O, I want to tell him; and yet I am afraid. If he finds it out he must surely kill me, for nothing else will be in proportion to his feelings now.”

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye (speaker), Clym Yeobright, Mrs. Yeobright, Damon Wildeve, Captain Vye

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 307


Explanation and Analysis

This quotation comes from a conversation between Eustacia and Wildeve as Eustacia tries to figure out if she can bear to tell Clym the truth about his mother’s death. Although Eustacia’s choice is not easy, her reasons for not telling Clym the truth are admittedly selfish and at least partially overstated. Despite what she says, it’s unlikely that she believes Clym will actually kill her. Additionally, just before Mrs. Yeobright’s death, Eustacia threatened to return to her grandfather’s house anyway. However, that is not to say that Eustacia does not feel genuine guilt over her actions. She is not a monster, and she knows what she has done is wrong. In this passage, she even refers to herself as “the sinner.” The use of the singular here, as well as the words that follow, suggest that Eustacia blames herself more than Mrs. Yeobright for what has happened. She does take ownership over what she has done, at least in the presence of Wildeve, which helps make her situation more sympathetic.

Book 5, Chapter 2 Quotes

☞ “Diggory, if we, who remain alive, were only allowed to hold conversation with the dead—just once, a bare minute, even through a screen of iron bars, as with persons in prison—what we might learn! How many who now ride smiling would hide their heads! And this mystery—I should then be at the bottom of it at once. But the grave has forever shut her in; and how shall it be found out now?”

Related Characters: Clym Yeobright (speaker), Eustacia Vye, Mrs. Yeobright, Damon Wildeve, Diggory Venn (The Reddleman)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 313

Explanation and Analysis


This quote comes from a conversation between Clym Yeobright and Diggory Venn. Clym is talking to Venn about the death of his mother; he has received contradictory information about what his mother thought about him at the time of her death and he is trying to put the pieces

together. Ironically, even if Clym could talk to his deceased mother, he would not get the full story, because Mrs. Yeobright never learned the truth before she died. Additionally, he does not yet know that learning the truth will only make his life worse rather than better, for it will reveal the role that his wife, Eustacia, played in Mrs. Yeobright's thoughts about Clym and in her death. Of course, ultimately, Clym does learn the truth and regrets doing so. Meanwhile, after the deaths of Wildeve and Eustacia, Clym fails to learn the full story because there is no one left around to tell it. Instead—rightly or wrongly—Clym is left with only himself to blame. He ends the mystery by pointing the finger at himself, something that many other characters in this novel refuse to do, and he lives out the remainder of his life in isolation.

Book 5, Chapter 7 Quotes

“How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me! . . . I do not deserve my lot! [. . .] O, the cruelty of putting me into this ill-conceived world! I was capable of much; but I have been injured and blighted and crushed by things beyond my control! O, how hard it is of Heaven to devise such tortures for me, who have done no harm to heaven at all!”

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye (speaker), Clym Yeobright, Mrs. Yeobright, Damon Wildeve

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 346


Explanation and Analysis

This quote is Eustacia's final words before her death. Though she's decided to run off with Wildeve, she clearly isn't happy with where her life has taken her. An important question in the novel is whether characters fail as a result of their own actions or as a result of fate. In this case, Eustacia blames “things beyond [her] control. Indeed, there are moments in the story leading up to this moment that are not Eustacia's fault. For instance, she cannot help that she did not she Clym's letter. She also had no way of knowing that Clym would not let his mother in on the day of her death. However, what Eustacia does not say here, and what is important to contemplate, is that there were many decisions she *did* have control over, as well. For instance, Eustacia chose to keep the circumstance surrounding Mrs. Yeobright's death a secret. She also decided against fully explaining herself to Clym. As such, the degree to which the novel is about fate is up to interpretation.

Book 6, Chapter 1 Quotes

“The story of the deaths of Eustacia and Wildeve was told throughout Egdon, and far beyond, for many weeks and months. All the known incidents of their love were enlarged, distorted, touched up, and modified, till the original reality bore slight resemblance to the counterfeit presentation by surrounding tongues.

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye, Clym Yeobright, Mrs. Yeobright, Damon Wildeve

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 371

Explanation and Analysis

This quotation kicks off Book 6, which serves as an epilogue to the rest of the story. The quote is an appropriate beginning of the end because it directly addresses one of the novel's main themes: failed communication. Throughout *The Return of the Native*, characters misunderstand, misinterpret, and blatantly deceive one another, often for self-serving reasons. Such failures of communication lead to the novel's tragic events. Mrs. Yeobright's death is due to a misunderstanding; meanwhile, Clym and Eustacia's marriage ends in part because Eustacia fails to be honest with Clym. It is fitting, then, that the novel manipulates Wildeve and Eustacia's story following their deaths. Throughout the novel, gossip and storytelling are central parts of life for those who live on the heath. Wildeve and Eustacia's story is a perfect blend of the two. and it is ripe for manipulation, as this passage suggests.

“He frequently walked the heath alone, when the past seized upon him with its shadowy hand, and held him there to listen to its tale. His imagination would then people the spot with its ancient inhabitants—forgotten Celtic tribes trod their tracks about him, and he could almost live among them, look in their faces, and see them standing beside the barrows which swelled around, untouched and perfect as at the time of their erection. Those of the dyed barbarians who had chosen the cultivable tracts were, in comparison with those who had left their marks here, as writers on paper beside writers on parchment. Their records had perished long ago by the plough, while the works of these remained. Yet they all had lived and died unconscious of the different fates awaiting their relics. It reminded him that unforeseen factors operate in the evolution of immortality.

Related Characters: Eustacia Vye, Clym Yeobright, Mrs.

Yeobright

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 373



Explanation and Analysis


This is a description of Clym Yeobright as he wanders the heath, still attempting to find solace after the deaths of his mother and Eustacia. As he walks, Clym is reminded of all of the people who have lived and died on the heath before him. It is not a pleasant description, though it is not an ominous one either. Notably, the remnants of the previous inhabitants of Egdon Heath are nowhere to be found, though Clym knows they once existed. For longer than Clym can imagine, people have lived on the heath and died on heath. However, only the heath itself remains, and, as Hardy regular reminds us, only the heath itself will endure. It is not clear whether Clym finds comfort or despair (or perhaps a bit of both) in this fact. However, he knows that he too will someday be gone—and that the heath will live on without him.

Book 6, Chapter 4 Quotes

●● He left alone creeds and systems of philosophy, finding enough and more than enough to occupy his tongue in the opinions and actions common to all good men. Some believed him, and some believed not; some said that his words were commonplace, others complained of his want of theological doctrine; while others again remarked that it was well enough for a man to take to preaching who could not see to do anything else. But everywhere he was kindly received, for the story of his life had become generally known.

Related Characters: Clym Yeobright, Diggory Venn (The Reddleman)

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 396

Explanation and Analysis

These are the final words of the novel, and they describe Clym as he takes on his new job as a traveling preacher. Clym's fate is fitting for his character. Throughout the story, he's not been able to fit in anywhere, and so it's fitting that he is left wandering at the novel's conclusion. Clym's decision to not stick to a single theological doctrine also mirrors his inability to find comfort anywhere. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that his faith is reminiscent of Venn's—unable to have the love of his life, he wanders. Also, although Clym does not end the story happy, in the battle of tradition versus the modern world, tradition wins out. Clym has chosen as his profession a job that is steeped in tradition, even if he does not practice it traditionally. Although it is difficult to call this a happy ending, it does end on a happy note; those who receive Clym treat him kindly, which is more than he could say for the citizens of Paris.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 1

Twilight closes in on Egdon Heath, a “vast tract of unenclosed wild.” Although the coming night has already darkened the land, the sky still retains light. Egdon Heath is a special stretch of land; it is “majestic without severity, impressive without showiness, emphatic in its admonitions, grand in its simplicity.” It is a mixture of beauty and wildness that appeals to “the moods of the more thinking among mankind” as well as a remote and primitive place, which rejects civilization and has looked the same since “prehistoric times.” To the north of Egdon Heath is an important highway, once traveled by the Romans, which is still visible even as darkness settles in.

Egdon Heath seems almost like a character itself. Throughout the novel, long passages are dedicated to descriptions of the heath and its beauty. The Return of the Native is a work of naturalism, a genre which is known for its portrayal of nature as sublime, yet indifferent to the struggles of mankind. This theme is at play in the opening of the novel and will continue to be present throughout. Also important is that the heath remains untouched by outside influences; the people who live there are largely isolated from the outside world. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that much of the novel takes place at night, including the opening.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 2

An old man (Captain Vye) walks along the highway north of Egdon Heath where he comes across a reddleman and his wagon. The two walk together for a while, mostly in silence, and the old man notices that the reddleman is concerned about something in his wagon. Then, the old man hears a cry come from the wagon. When he asks the reddleman about the cry, the reddleman tells him that it came from a young woman he is transporting who cried out in her sleep because she is not used to travel. The old man presses the reddleman for more information about the woman’s identity, which makes the reddleman uncomfortable. The reddleman cuts off the conversation, telling the old man that he plans to stop and rest for a while.

A reddleman is someone who sells red ochre to farmers—red ochre is used to dye sheep wool. Because they constantly handled red ochre, reddlemen’s skin would turn red, making the job undesirable to most people. The nosiness that the reddleman exhibits in this scene suggests that an interest in knowing others’ business is typical of people who lives on Egdon Heath.



As the old man continues on his way, the reddleman looks up at a large barrow sitting on Egdon Heath. There, he sees a motionless figure standing so still that it seems to be part of the structure. Suddenly, the figure moves, and the reddleman can tell that it is a woman. It’s not long before the woman vanishes. In her place appear a number of other figures carrying something, which they deposit on top of the barrow. It appears that whatever the woman was doing was unrelated to the project of the other figures, though it seems she made an effort to avoid them.

The woman appears to not want to be seen—otherwise, she wouldn’t be standing so still and making a special effort to avoid the other figures. She also seems uninterested in associating with members of her community. The reader’s first impression of her is that she flees from social interaction. At this point, for the other characters—and the reader, too—the woman remains a figure shrouded in mystery.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 3

The people the reddleman saw are locals of a town called Blackbarrow who are making a bonfire to celebrate Guy Fawkes Day. As they light their bonfire, other fires spring up in the distance. Around the fire, an old man named Grandfer Cattle dances and sings. Nearby are Timothy Fairway, Humphrey, Olly Dowden, and Susan Nunsuch. After Grandfer Cattle finishes his song and dance, the group gossips about a wedding. Earlier in the day, Damon Wildeve married Thomasin Yeobright despite the disapproval of Mrs. Yeobright, Thomasin's aunt. The town gossips always thought that Thomasin would marry Clym, Mrs. Yeobright's son, but he left to live in **Paris**.

The group's topic of conversation switches to people who cannot marry because they are undesirable. During this conversation, Christian Cattle, Grandfer's son, arrives and says that he is one such person. Timothy changes the conversation when he mentions possibly seeing a ghost, which looked "as if it had been dipped in blood." However, the conversation ends when Grandfer Cattle starts singing again. As his song ends, the bonfire begins to die down, which causes the group to notice a large bonfire burning on Captain Vye's property. Timothy guesses that Vye's granddaughter, who lives there alone, likely lit the fire.

After more dancing and singing, the group decides they will go to see the newlywed couple and congratulate them. However, before they can do so, the reddleman arrives, asking for the way to Mrs. Yeobright's place. They tell him the way to go. Though he seems familiar, no one can place where they know him from. Almost immediately afterward, Mrs. Yeobright comes across the revelers on her way to the Wildeve place to see the newlyweds. She reveals that her son, Clym, has recently arrived home for the holidays. Then, she asks Olly to accompany her to the Wildeve place because it's dark. Olly happily agrees to do so, and the two head off together.

Guy Fawkes Day is a tradition that begins in England in 1605 after the failure of the Gunpowder Plot, an attempt on the life of King James I; people around London lit bonfires to celebrate that the king lived. It is this tradition that the residents of Egdon Heath are taking part in, though its historical roots seem unimportant to them. Instead, the locals use the holiday to drink, catch up with one another, and gossip about news around the heath. It is through characters like Timothy Fairway and Grandfer Cattle that we are first introduced to the novel's main characters. Throughout the novel, the locals will continue to act as a valuable source of information, often by filling in important background details about the main characters. Here, for instance, they seem to implicitly reveal the identity of the woman that Venn was transporting in his wagon as Thomasin Yeobright.



The theme of undesirable marriages runs throughout The Return of the Native. In fact, the entire novel is structured around three marriages, two of which are considered undesirable by some of the story's key players. Throughout the novel, social status plays a key role in determining what makes a marriage desirable or undesirable. Additionally, this passage demonstrates the locals' fear of the supernatural. Though Timothy mentions a red ghost, it seems more likely that he's just run into the reddleman.



At this point in the story, the reddleman is an outsider. He is largely unknown to the locals who are confused and a little frightened by his presence. Nonetheless, he seems familiar with Mrs. Yeobright, whom the locals know well. Additionally, this passage introduces Clym and explains the name of the novel—Clym is the native who is returning home.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 4

As Olly and Mrs. Yeobright make their way toward Wildeve's, Olly remarks that Mrs. Yeobright will miss Thomasin now that she is married because they lived together. Mrs. Yeobright concurs. Olly continues, saying that she is surprised Mrs. Yeobright ultimately accepted the arrangement. Mrs. Yeobright agrees but thinks she did the right thing by letting Thomasin choose her husband. Nonetheless, Mrs. Yeobright disapproves of Wildeve because he is an innkeeper; Mrs. Yeobright herself is one of the wealthiest members of the heath, and she thinks that marrying Wildeve is beneath her niece.

The road diverges, and the two women split up; Olly heads home, and Mrs. Yeobright continues on to the Quiet Woman Inn, owned by Wildeve, where she expects to find her niece. When she arrives at the inn, Mrs. Yeobright finds the reddleman and his wagon. Mrs. Yeobright recognizes the reddleman as Venn, the son of a dairy-man she once knew. Mrs. Yeobright tells Venn that she is going to the inn to see her niece, but Venn tells her that she isn't there. He knows this because Thomasin is who he's been transporting in his wagon. Venn explains that Thomasin chased him down on the road and asked him for a ride. He accepted but does not know what is going on.

Together, Mrs. Yeobright and Venn move to the back of the wagon where Thomasin lies asleep. As Mrs. Yeobright looks in to check on her niece, Thomasin wakes up, clearly distressed. Mrs. Yeobright comforts her and tells her that she is almost home. Together, the two of them start moving in the direction of the inn, leaving Venn to continue on his way. As soon as they are out of earshot of Venn, Mrs. Yeobright's tone shifts and she asks Thomasin, "what's the meaning of this disgraceful performance?"

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 5

Mrs. Yeobright's sudden change of tone shocks Thomasin, and she apologizes for any embarrassment she's caused. She explains that she and Wildeve were unable to marry because of an issue with the marriage license, although she doesn't know the details. Mrs. Yeobright continues to chastise her niece; she is already angry about being the subject of gossip and expects that this incident will only make things worse. As Mrs. Yeobright and Thomasin make their way to the Quiet Woman Inn to ask Wildeve about the issue with the marriage license, Thomasin explains that she abandoned Wildeve and went with Venn because she was so upset that she couldn't get married.

For Mrs. Yeobright, marriage is all about social advancement. She wants her family to move up in the world and away from Egdon Heath. She knows that this can never happen if Thomasin marries Wildeve, a common innkeeper.



Venn reveals himself to be an upstanding man who is willing to help Thomasin, even without knowing the details of her situation. Additionally, it is notable that his father was a dairy-man because dairy farmers had a considerably higher social standing than reddleman. This begs the question: why did Venn become a reddleman?



While around Venn, Mrs. Yeobright acts performatively. She expresses concern for her niece, but she doesn't express anger. However, once Venn can no longer hear them, Mrs. Yeobright immediately shows her true feelings; though she is concerned for her niece, she is equally (if not more) concerned about her family's reputation.



*Although the issue with the marriage license may seem like no big deal today, during the time *The Return of the Native* was written, such an incident would have indeed been considered scandalous. Mrs. Yeobright knows this and is correct to assume that it will become the center of the town's gossip. Additionally, Thomasin's decision to leave Wildeve for Venn suggests that she feels safe or comfortable around him—and perhaps even has a romantic history with him.*



Thomasin and Mrs. Yeobright arrive at the inn where they find Wildeve. After briefly scolding Thomasin for abandoning him, Wildeve explains to Mrs. Yeobright that he got the marriage license from a different town than the one he was to be married in. He didn't read the license in advance and therefore didn't know that it would be an issue. Mrs. Yeobright is angry at Wildeve for his carelessness and reprimands him, though he shrugs off her aggression. He tells her that she is making something out of nothing and then asks for some time alone with Thomasin.

Thomasin and Wildeve move off to a side room where they can speak alone. Wildeve tells Thomasin that he still wants to marry her, but he is annoyed with Mrs. Yeobright because of the scene she's caused and because of how she treats him. Before their conversation can advance too far, the bonfire group arrives and begins singing. Wildeve tells Mrs. Yeobright to hide in the side room with Thomasin while he faces the bonfire crew. Unaware of what has happened, the bonfire crew enters and congratulates Wildeve on his marriage. They all have a drink together and engage in idle gossip. Wildeve tolerates them but treats them rather rudely.

After a while, the conversation turns to the subject of the Vye homestead. Fairway tells Wildeve about the bonfire, and Wildeve looks out the window to find it still burning. Soon after, the revelers leave. Wildeve looks in the side room and finds that Mrs. Yeobright and Thomasin are also gone. After a brief detour to Olly's house, where he drops off a bottle of wine, Wildeve heads in the direction of the Vye property, while saying to himself, "Yes—by Heaven, I must go to her, I suppose."

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 6

After the revelers depart to see the newlyweds, a woman walks up to what remains of their bonfire. It is the same woman whom Venn saw earlier. She is tall and "lady-like in her movements." Unlike most women, she is not afraid to walk alone around the heath at night. As the wind blows around her, making a sound which almost sounds like music, the woman sighs. She is looking at the light coming from Wildeve's, which is the cause of her frustration.

Wildeve's explanation seems innocent enough and, unlike Mrs. Yeobright, he is not concerned about the social implications of what has occurred. Furthermore, his unconcerned attitude suggests that maybe the mix-up with the license wasn't as unexpected (and disappointing) to Wildeve as it was to Thomasin—maybe his explanation isn't as innocent as it seems.



Though Mrs. Yeobright's intention in meddling with Thomasin's marriage is purportedly for Thomasin's benefit, it often has the opposite effect—here, it's caused a minor rift between Thomasin and Wildeve. Wildeve is annoyed by Mrs. Yeobright's condescension and with good reason. However, he proves that he can be quite condescending himself in his interactions with the bonfire crew.



Wildeve treats the bonfire as though it is some sort of signal for him. He also acts as though the bonfire is more important to him than dealing with Mrs. Yeobright and Thomasin. His fixation on the bonfire becomes clear when he says to himself that he "must go to her," which implies that another woman in his life (besides Thomasin) is using the bonfire to summon him.



This scene mirrors the end of the previous chapter when Wildeve looks at the bonfire. Though it's still unclear who this woman is, it's obvious that her bonfire is indeed meant to summon Wildeve. It also seems clear that this woman often walks alone on the heath at night—something that nobody else who lives on the heath seems to do. There are rules to living on the heath if one wants to survive, and this woman—either out of arrogance or out of ignorance about these rules does not follow them.



The woman turns away from the light to face the nearby bonfire. She uses the little light still left to find the **hourglass** she's placed nearby. The hourglass has run its course; no sand remains in the top. When the woman sees that no sand remains in the top, she makes her way to the bonfire at the Vye property. Although it is a lengthy trip, the woman eventually arrives at her destination to find the fire still burning. Near the fire is a child named Johnny who is upset that she has left him to tend the fire alone in the dark. He refers to the woman as "Miss Eustacia."

Shortly after Eustacia arrives at the bonfire, Captain Vye comes out and asks why she is still out and about. Eustacia tells him it is because Johnny is enjoying the fire and doesn't want it to stop. After Captain Vye leaves, Eustacia gets Johnny to agree to tend to the fire just a little longer. Then, Johnny mentions that he's heard the sound of a frog jumping into a pond. This animates Eustacia, who then gives Johnny money and tells him he can leave.

After Johnny's departure, Eustacia meets up with Wildeve nearby. Though Eustacia is glad to see Wildeve, she is also angry with him. Wildeve used to pursue Eustacia in secret; the two of them were apparently in love. However, Eustacia is upset about Wildeve's recent engagement to Thomasin and pretends that she is no longer interested in him. In response, Wildeve implies that he may give up Thomasin for Eustacia. Then Wildeve departs, leaving Eustacia alone with her thoughts. She still loves Wildeve, but she feels as though he is playing with her emotions.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 7

Eustacia is "the material of a divinity" with "the passions and instincts which make a model goddess" but "not quite a model woman." She dislikes Egdon Heath, though, "since coming there she had imbibed much of what was dark in its tone." Eustacia is originally from Budmouth, "a fashionable seaside resort" that is 20 or 30 miles away from Egdon. There, she received a good education, though she eventually had to leave for Egdon after the death of her parents. Ever since, she's lived with her grandfather, who is one of the wealthiest people on the heath, along with the Yeobrights.

In this scene, the hourglass (an important symbol that also functions as a memento mori, or a reminder of death) points to the Eustacia's relationship to time—she seems highly attuned to the passage of time. Also note: Eustacia has not lit her own fire, which implies that she considers herself to be above manual labor.



Eustacia's explanation to Captain Vye, her grandfather, is clearly a lie. Johnny is annoyed that he is up so late and wants to go home. Eustacia's reaction to Johnny's mention of a frog jumping into a pond suggests that the noise is actually another signal, one that Wildeve has sent.



Wildeve's continued courting of Eustacia is one reason to suspect that his claims about the marriage license in earlier chapters may not be true. Additionally, his claim that he may give up Thomasin for Eustacia may not be true either. Both Wildeve and Eustacia are prone to sudden and significant mood shifts, making their conversations with each other volatile and full of deception. Additionally, Wildeve's actions would've been considered highly scandalous and immoral to the novel's repressed, Victorian audience.



The novel often relates Egdon and its inhabitants to Greek and Roman mythology. Rather than describe Eustacia as angelic, which would befit the Christian tradition of his audience, the novel describes her as a "goddess." In Greek and Roman mythology, gods and goddesses were often deeply flawed, and this is what this passage means to impart about Eustacia. Also like the gods and goddesses of the Greco-Roman tradition, Eustacia sees herself as above everyone else.



Eustacia thinks highly of herself, as though she were goddess, and feels as though the heath is not fit for her. Eustacia's ego isolates her from the rest of Egdon and she spends much of her time alone. Often, she wanders the heath and hopes that something or someone will take her to a more luxurious place. Furthermore, though Eustacia is not a schemer, she can scheme effectively when she wants to.

Eustacia does not appreciate the heath's beauty, nor does she acknowledge its power. In her attempts to escape Egdon, she will make increasingly rash and desperate decisions. Although she can scheme effectively, her ego and her desire to escape ultimately prove to be overwhelming.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 8

Johnny starts walking home but is scared of doing so in the dark. Instead, he turns around to ask if Eustacia will accompany him. He arrives back at the fire and finds Eustacia talking to Wildeve. But Johnny doesn't alert them to his presence—though he doesn't fully understand their conversation, he understands that he likely shouldn't be privy to it. As such, he decides to walk home on his own after all.

Johnny is the first person to overhear one of Eustacia and Wildeve's conversations, but he will not be the last. Eustacia and Wildeve are not as secret and cunning as they think they are. Additionally, the novel once again stresses the danger of walking alone on the heath in the dark.



On his way home, Johnny comes across the Venn's wagon. The wagon scares Johnny because the children on the heath think of Venn as some sort of boogeyman. He tries to sneak by Venn's wagon but ends up tripping and rolling right to Venn's feet. Venn asks Johnny questions about Eustacia and the bonfire, and Johnny responds to them all. In return, Venn answers Johnny's questions about his occupation and assures him that he isn't any sort of boogeyman. Although Johnny is still nervous, this largely puts him at ease. Eventually, their conversation ends, and Johnny goes home, though not before Venn learns that Wildeve went to see Eustacia on the night he was supposed to marry Thomasin.

Venn's appearance is frightening to Johnny because of his red glow. However, Venn once again proves himself to be a kind man, albeit a nosy one. Though Johnny is a child and does not put much thought into why Wildeve and Eustacia would be meeting secretly, Venn instantly knows what is going on.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 9

Reddlemen are becoming rare around the heath, though they used to be a more common sight. Because their red glow makes them stand out, children are afraid of them. It is a job that pays well, but the bodily changes that come along with it, relegate its practitioners to a low spot on the social hierarchy. It is especially strange that Venn chose this occupation, because he was born to a class which typically considers itself above such work.

Throughout the 19th century, many jobs that used to be common began to disappear as England became more modern and industrialized. This makes Venn a less common sight than he would've been 100 years prior, which only makes his odd appearance stand out more. Though Venn makes a good living as a reddleman, it is odd that he would choose to lower his social standing, especially in a society that is so rigorously structured according to class.



Still sitting in his wagon, Venn pulls out a note Thomasin wrote to him two years ago. In it, Thomasin rejects Venn's marriage proposal, explaining that he is not high-class enough for her, even though he was a dairy farmer at the time. However, she does make it clear that she likes Venn, and her rejection is sent with love. After receiving Thomasin's letter, Venn decided to become a reddleman. This morning is the first time Venn has seen Thomasin since she rejected him.

Nonetheless, Venn is still protective of Thomasin, and he does what he can to help her. As such, Johnny's information bothers him, and he makes it his duty to figure out what is going on between Eustacia and Wildeve. Despite his love for Thomasin, his goal is to make sure she marries Wildeve, because he thinks it will bring her the most happiness. In order to make this happen, Venn waits silently near Eustacia's house over the next several nights, hoping to overhear one of her meetings with Wildeve.

Sure enough, four nights after their first meeting, Wildeve comes again. Eustacia and Wildeve have a conversation that is not unlike their first. Wildeve insists that he is still interested in Eustacia but admits that he is in a tricky situation. Meanwhile, Eustacia continues to play with Wildeve's emotions by sometimes suggesting that she still loves him and other times suggesting that she is done with him. Eventually, their conversation turns to their mutual hatred of Egdon Heath, at which point Wildeve suggests that they run away to America together. This surprises Eustacia, who asks for some time to think about his proposition. After their conversation, Wildeve departs. Venn returns to his wagon and thinks about the best way to break up Wildeve and Eustacia so that the Wildeve can marry Thomasin.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 10

On a quiet, Sunday afternoon Venn walks to Captain Vye's house to talk to Eustacia. He has time to do so because no one goes to church on Sunday in Egdon Heath unless someone is being "married or buried." Like Eustacia, Captain Vye is a bit of a wild card, so he rarely gets visitors. Nonetheless, when Venn arrives, Captain Vye greets him warmly. Captain Vye informs Venn that Eustacia is still asleep but says he will tell her that Venn wants to speak with her. Venn waits outside and is just about to leave when Eustacia comes strolling over to him.

Thomasin's rejection hurts Venn so much that he exiles himself from society. Reddlemen are essentially nomads who live apart from society and this is the only lifestyle Venn feels he can accept if he isn't able to marry Thomasin. Class status does not matter to him if, no matter what, he can never rise high enough to marry the woman he loves.



Throughout the novel, Venn will act as a largely silent observer of the story's other key players. He often operates by hiding in the shadows, only revealing himself when he thinks he may prove useful. Although Venn is perhaps a more morally upstanding figure than some of the other characters in the novel, he is not above spying and secrecy.



Eustacia and Wildeve's conversations quickly become repetitive. Both play with the other's emotions and neither is sure that they want to be with the other. However, their mutual hatred of Egdon binds them together, though it is not clear whether Wildeve can actually carry out the plan he suggests. Meanwhile, Venn proves to be quite the schemer himself.



Unlike much of England at the time, Egdon is not especially religious. The distance between homes makes traveling to church on a weekly basis impractical, so it is a tradition that the community has largely abandoned. Meanwhile, Venn's arrival at the Vye household suggests that he has come up with a plan to separate Eustacia and Wildeve.



Venn tells Eustacia that he is worried about the marriage that was supposed to occur between Thomasin and Wildeve because another woman is in the picture. At first, Venn does not openly implicate Eustacia. Instead, he merely asks Eustacia to do what she can to make sure that the other woman backs off. In response, Eustacia pretends not to know what Venn is talking about and claims that she has no influence over Wildeve's affairs. This causes Venn to drop the façade; he directly accuses Eustacia of stealing Wildeve away from Thomasin.

Eustacia bristles at Venn's accusations. Although she doesn't deny meeting with Wildeve, she thinks that she is the one who has been wronged. After all, Wildeve courted her first; Thomasin came into the picture later. In response, Venn attempts to make her a deal. He knows an elderly woman in Budmouth that needs a companion. He offers to put Eustacia in contact with her so that she can leave the heath. However, Eustacia considers herself above having to work for a living and rejects the offers. Angered, Eustacia stops the conversation before it can go any further and leaves. Venn departs, upset that his plan didn't work. Meanwhile, Eustacia feels stronger than ever about running away with Wildeve.

BOOK 1, CHAPTER 11

Having failed to persuade Eustacia, Venn decides to talk to Mrs. Yeobright. He finds Mrs. Yeobright on her way to see Wildeve; she looks upset. Venn strikes up a conversation with her and admits he was once one of Thomasin's suitors. He asks whether there is a possibility that he could marry Thomasin, but Mrs. Yeobright says no. Although she does not like Wildeve, she feels that it is best for Thomasin's reputation if she marries him. Venn disagrees with this assessment, but there is nothing he can do.

However, even though Venn is dejected, Mrs. Yeobright is excited. She now has a bargaining chip to use against Wildeve. Mrs. Yeobright arrives at Wildeve's inn and the two of them begin discussing the marriage between Wildeve and Thomasin. Mrs. Yeobright tells Wildeve that he needs to act soon because Thomasin now has a different suitor. She does not reveal the suitor's identity, but it does not matter; the news clearly bothers Wildeve. Mrs. Yeobright informs Wildeve that if he doesn't marry Thomasin soon, she will accept the offer of the other man instead. She also tells him that he is not allowed to see Thomasin in the meantime.

Initially, Venn speaks subtly so as not to offend Eustacia and make her mad. However, Eustacia's refusal to back down forces Venn's hand.



Here, Eustacia is a rather sympathetic character because, as she says, she has been wronged at least as much as Thomasin. However, this does not sway Venn, who utilizes his only bit of leverage. He knows that Eustacia wants to get away from Egdon (even more than she wants to marry Wildeve), so he makes her a seemingly appealing offer. However, Eustacia's ego will not allow her to take a job, even if the job is simply acting as an old woman's companion.



Here, it is apparent that Mrs. Yeobright cares more about appearances than Thomasin's happiness. Though she suspects that Thomasin could live a happier life with Venn, she worries about how Thomasin marrying Venn would negatively affect her family's reputation.



Like many other characters in the novel, Mrs. Yeobright is happy to resort to deception if it means getting what she wants. Unlike Venn, who approaches Eustacia with an honest offer, Mrs. Yeobright uses manipulation. In this case, her manipulative tactics are effective; like Eustacia, Wildeve is motivated by jealousy. Additionally, Mrs. Yeobright tells Wildeve that he cannot speak to Thomasin because she doesn't want him learning the truth about the other suitor.



Knowing his time is running out, Wildeve heads to Eustacia's to see if she's made a decision about coming to America with him. However, in doing so, he reveals to Eustacia the news that Thomasin has another suitor. This turns Eustacia off from Wildeve, and she once again informs him that she is not sure if she wants to be with him. However, she does promise to give him a firm answer in a week. Immediately after this conversation, Eustacia returns home where her grandfather tells her that Clym Yeobright, Mrs. Yeobright's son and Thomasin's cousin, is returning home from **Paris** for the holidays.

Once again, Eustacia and Wildeve demonstrate that neither truly loves the other. Furthermore, Eustacia has just learned of a man who comes from Paris, a place she fantasizes about. This knowledge is sure to push her even further away from Wildeve.



BOOK 1, CHAPTER 1

Winter arrives in the heath, leading to many cold and dark days. Eustacia sits inside and listens to her grandfather, Sam and Humphrey discuss Clym's return to Egdon. She learns that Clym works as a jeweler in **Paris** and that he is extremely intelligent. She also hears that both of his parents were born well off, though his father is now dead. Shortly afterward, their conversation switches to the topic of Thomasin's marriage, or lack thereof. Apparently, Thomasin is sick, and nobody has seen her since the day of her aborted wedding.

Eustacia, who normally never interacts with anyone except Wildeve, demonstrates her interest in Clym by sitting and listening to others talk about him. Additionally, despite Wildeve's promises to Mrs. Yeobright, it seems that he still hasn't married Thomasin. This suggests that he is still holding out hope for Eustacia, though she appears to have moved on from him in favor of Clym.



Eustacia is bored by the talk of Thomasin and instead begins to fantasize about Clym and the life they could lead together in **Paris**. While doing so, she takes a walk out on the heath. She heads toward Blooms-End, the home of the Yeobrights. Eventually, she comes to a "removed spot to which was about to return a man whose latter life had been passed in the French capital—the centre and vortex of the fashionable world."

Eustacia cares little about those who live around her and finds her thoughts drifting to self-serving fantasies. Before she even meets Clym, she's already imagined what he can do for her. In her mind, he is a completely romantic figure, which is reflected in Hardy's romanticized description of Paris as "the centre and vortex of the fashionable world."



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 2

Although she is still feeling down about her disastrous love life, Thomasin agrees to help Mrs. Yeobright prepare for Clym's arrival. Together, they clean and pick apples while discussing the ongoing situation. Thomasin is upset because she feels as though people are judging her unfairly. However, Mrs. Yeobright doesn't feel bad for Thomasin because she warned her not to get herself into such a situation. Still, both of them think it is best that Thomasin goes forward with the marriage. Thomasin insists that she still loves Wildeve, though Mrs. Yeobright thinks she is lying. Additionally, Thomasin asks that Mrs. Yeobright not tell Clym about her current situation; she wants to be able to tell him herself. Mrs. Yeobright agrees not to tell Clym, and then the two of them head to spot where they expect him to arrive.

Mrs. Yeobright acts rather cruelly to her niece, maintaining an "I told you so" attitude. Meanwhile, Thomasin is miserable and embarrassed, and Clym's arrival only makes things worse. At one point, the community thought that Thomasin and Clym would marry, and so Thomasin is nervous for Clym to find out that not only does she plan to marry someone else, but she has also tarnished the family's name as a result. Additionally, the marriage still has not occurred and it is not clear if it ever will.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 3

Still excited by Clym's impending arrival, Eustacia spends time near the Yeobright property, hoping to catch a glimpse of the man from **Paris**. However, it looks as though no one is home, so she decides to head back. Just then, she hears the Yeobrights and, shortly afterward, passes them on the road. As she does so, the Yeobrights greet her, and the sound of Clym's voice excites her. However, she keeps her head down during this brief exchange and therefore does not get a chance to see Clym. Nonetheless, this interaction is still enough to get Eustacia to fantasize about Clym for the rest of the day.

Eustacia heads home and asks Captain Vye why they aren't friendly with the Yeobrights. Captain Vye doesn't give a clear answer, though he does tell her that she would not like them because they are simple country people. This confuses Eustacia, who thinks of Mrs. Yeobright as "a lady-like woman." Captain Vye then tells Eustacia that Mrs. Yeobright was born rich but married a dairy farmer who was well below her social standing.

After her conversation with her grandfather, Eustacia goes to bed and dreams about a "man in silver armour" who takes her magnificent places and dances with her. However, the man never removes his helmet, and Eustacia never sees his face. She wakes up frustrated that her dream concealed the face of her knight in shining armor. As such, Eustacia spends her days walking around the heath, hoping to catch a glimpse of Clym. However, after several days of doing so, she has no luck and eventually gives up on this plan.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 4

It is two days before Christmas. Eustacia is sitting home alone, upset that she is unlikely to see Clym before he returns to **Paris**. Because Egdon Heath is so remote, the community does not get together for Christmas, so even the holidays cannot bring Eustacia and Clym together. While sitting and moping, Eustacia hears a knock on the door. She answers it to find a group of mummers who want to use Captain Vye's fuel-house to rehearse their play. Eustacia gives them permission to use it.

Eustacia spends her day looking for Clym only to ignore him when she finally crosses paths with him. It is not clear why she does so. Perhaps it is because she is not friendly with the Yeobrights, or perhaps she is too nervous and excited to think clearly. Regardless, her first interaction with Clym is over before it even begins.



More than anything else, this passage is an important and easy to miss bit of character development for Mrs. Yeobright. Despite insisting that Thomasin marry someone who is at the very least her social equal, it seems that Mrs. Yeobright herself married below her social standing. This opens up a number of questions about her character. Does Mrs. Yeobright regret her choice? Is she acting hypocritically?



Eustacia literally dreams of Clym as a knight in shining armor. This is a highly romanticized depiction of a man who Eustacia still has not even met. Thinking of him in such a high regard can only lead to disappointment, though this is a lesson that Eustacia has yet to learn.



Although she partially brings the isolation upon herself, it is not difficult to see why Eustacia finds the heath so lonely. It is difficult for her to come into contact with Clym, even as she actively tries to do so. However, the arrival of the mummers gives Eustacia the opportunity she has been looking for. A mummer is an English term for an actor who delivered pantomime performances around the holidays, especially Christmas; they were prominent in the 18th and 19th centuries.



The mummers go to the fuel-house to rehearse, and Eustacia follows them. She learns that the play will be performed at the Yeobright's place, which piques her interest. After the rehearsal, Eustacia invites a boy named Charley inside and asks him to tell her his lines. She repeats them back to him and then asks if she can have his role in the play. In return, she promises to pay him. Charley declines her offer but provides a counteroffer: he will give her his part if he can hold her hand for a half hour. Eustacia tells him she will do it for 15 minutes instead, and Charley agrees to her terms.

Here, Eustacia proves resourceful in managing to find a way to the Yeobright's party. This shows how determined she is to get to Clym, her knight in shining armor.



The next night, Charley returns and gives Eustacia his costume. The two of them hold hands for several minutes, though Charley ends the session early, insisting that he wants to save some of his time for later. Eustacia tells him that that's fine, as long as he's used up the whole 15 minutes by the end of the week. Then, Eustacia leaves to put on the costume. When she returns, Charley decides that he wants to use up more of his hand-holding time. Before long, he forgets about his time limit and unwittingly uses up all he has left. This pleases Eustacia and the two of them go their separate ways.

Charley's feelings for Eustacia are sweet and innocent—and this makes Eustacia's manipulation of him for personal gain all the more cruel.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 5

The following evening, Eustacia meets her fellow mummers near the fuel-house. She introduces herself as Miss Vye's cousin who has come to replace Charley because he is ill. The others are skeptical at first, but Eustacia recites a few lines to win them over. The mummers head to Blooms-End, and Eustacia wonders whether all of this effort is worth it. However, she convinces herself that her efforts will not be in vain, because she will soon meet the man who has "the power to deliver her soul from a most deadly oppression."

Eustacia's decision to join the mummers is a big moment of character development, and it also reinforces her genuine desire to escape Egdon. Previously, Eustacia has actively avoided the rest of her community, and now she is going to perform in front of all of them. Once again, she remains steadfast in the notion that Clym is her savior, despite having never met the man.



The mummers arrive at Blooms-End but have to wait outside in the cold—there is still dancing going on inside, and they have to wait their turn. After a while, the mummers consider heading inside before they are called, though Eustacia insists that doing so would be rude. After talking amongst themselves for some time, the mummers ask Eustacia if she is Eustacia Vye. Eustacia does not give a clear answer to their question, though it is obvious that the mummers have figured out the truth. They promise not to reveal her true identity.

Eustacia is not used to others treating her like a member of the lower classes, and she bristles at the idea of waiting outside in the cold. This sense of entitlement immediately gives her away to her fellow mummers, all of whom are presumably used to much worse.



Eventually, it is time for the play to begin. Eustacia, who plays the Turkish Knight, has a lead role for the first half of the play, and she does a decent job. She recites her speeches perfectly, though she does struggle when she has to partake in sword fights. Overall, the performance is mediocre, so nothing Eustacia does makes her stand out one way or another. Halfway through the performance, Eustacia's character dies. During her death scene, Eustacia makes sure she falls against a wall so that she can spend the rest of her time scanning the party for Clym.

BOOK 2, CHAPTER 6

As the play continues, Eustacia keeps a look out for her knight in shining armor. As she looks around, she notices that Thomasin is not present. Then, her gaze settles on Clym, who is an impressive-looking young man. Though he is handsome, one looking critically at Clym would recognize that something is eating him up inside. However, Eustacia doesn't notice this. Instead, she immediately falls in love with him; he is everything she dreamed about and more.

The play ends, and Timothy and Christian arrive. Mrs. Yeobright chides them for their tardiness, but they insist that they wanted to wait until the opportune time to arrive. Clym welcomes the newcomers, and everyone catches up with one another. Meanwhile, Eustacia continues to stare at Clym, still smitten by his good looks and charm. After a while, Clym offers the mummerys a drink and, though Eustacia declines, Clym's attention thrills her.

As the party continues to drag on, Eustacia begins to worry that her identity will be revealed. Nonetheless, she continues to follow Clym around, which results in her eavesdropping on a conversation between Clym and Thomasin. Clym wants Thomasin to join in the fun, but Thomasin says that she is too sick to do so. Eustacia sees through Thomasin's excuse, though Clym is confused. Later on, Clym confronts Eustacia and asks her if she is actually a woman. Eustacia says that she is but refuses to reveal her true identity. After the party, Eustacia is upset because she knows that, although she has finally met Clym, she is no closer to getting him to marry her. Clym doesn't even know her true identity, and she worries that Thomasin could end up with him instead.

Eustacia proves that she can more or less keep up with her fellow mummerys, despite joining the troupe at the last minute. It is unclear at this point whether anyone suspects the truth of her identity.



Thomasin, it appears, is still not showing her face in public after her failed marriage ceremony. Additionally, although Eustacia fails to see it, Clym is not as perfect as she has imagined him to be. However, Eustacia fails to see anything in Clym other than what he can provide for her.



Though Eustacia has managed to get physically close to Clym, she is now faced with a problem; that is, how can she interact with him without revealing her identity? Even when Clym comes to her, she cannot bring herself to strike up a conversation with him.



Thomasin's excuse to Clym is confusing for him because he still hasn't learned about her engagement to Wildeve. Meanwhile, Eustacia continues to struggle with courting Clym. Because she has isolated herself from the community, Eustacia has no way to contact Clym after the night of the Christmas party. Additionally, she doesn't want to make a scene by revealing her true identity.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 7

The day after the party, Captain Vye asks Eustacia where she's been—he thinks that her behavior has been strange lately and wants to get to the bottom of it. At first, Eustacia replies vaguely, but she eventually admits that she was acting in a play. Eustacia's answer amuses Captain Vye, and he drops the subject. After their conversation, Eustacia leaves and starts walking. Before long, she spots Venn and approaches him. She asks Venn why he is still in Egdon during the wintertime when his services are no longer needed. Venn admits that his continued presence is related to Thomasin. Eustacia writes him off as a last resort for Thomasin who Mrs. Yeobright is simply using to her advantage.

In the middle of her discussion with Venn, Eustacia spots Wildeve coming up the road. Hoping to avoid him, Eustacia asks Venn if she can sit in his wagon, where she won't be seen. However, she does not tell Venn the truth of why she wants to do so. Venn allows her to sit in the wagon and, after a short time, Wildeve passes by. Venn realizes why Eustacia hid and tells her so. Eustacia tells Venn that, despite what he may think, she wants Wildeve to marry Thomasin. Venn is surprised; he knows that Eustacia and Wildeve are meant to meet that very evening.

Eustacia wants to get rid of Wildeve but doesn't know how. Venn tells her to write Wildeve a letter and says he'll deliver it to him on Eustacia's behalf. Eustacia does so, though she does not understand why Venn is so interested in helping another man pursue the woman he loves. Regardless, Venn takes the letter from Eustacia and delivers it to Wildeve.

Eustacia's letter is short and to the point. Eustacia blames Wildeve for their failed relationship and returns all of the gifts, via Venn, that he ever gave her. This angers Wildeve, though Venn is quite pleased. Venn thinks that Thomasin will reject Wildeve, which is what he feels Wildeve deserves. Meanwhile, Venn will be the next in line for Thomasin's hand. Excited, Venn makes his way to Bloom's End. However, when he arrives, he finds Wildeve who explains to Venn that he and Thomasin will soon be married. Mrs. Yeobright confirms Wildeve's assertion and Venn departs, once again sad that he cannot marry Thomasin himself.

Although Captain Vye is Eustacia's guardian, he treats her more as a friend than a granddaughter. He does not give her orders and allows her to go where she pleases. Unlike Mrs. Yeobright, Captain Vye is not concerned with social improprieties or his family name. Additionally, Eustacia immediately sees through Mrs. Yeobright's scheme regarding Venn. There are moments such as this that make Eustacia seem quite perceptive. However, she still has difficulty examining her own situation with the same critical eye.



Eustacia's decision to avoid Wildeve rather confront him head-on speaks to her immaturity and inability to self-reflect.



Here, Venn's motives are questionable. Certainly, he derives some satisfaction out of getting to deliver Wildeve the news. He feels Wildeve has wronged Thomasin and that this incident will put him in his place.



Venn, who largely lives apart from society, cannot believe that Thomasin would still want to be with Wildeve after what he has done. However, Thomasin and Mrs. Yeobright's feelings about propriety and honor will not allow them to make any other decision.



BOOK 2, CHAPTER 8

Clym is away visiting a friend while the drama occurs between Thomasin's suitors. However, he hears rumors about what has been going on and writes angrily to his mother about the situation. Although Thomasin is upset by her situation, she still insists on marrying Wildeve. She has just spoken to Wildeve, who promises that they will marry soon. While discussing the situation with Mrs. Yeobright, there is a knock on the door—it's Venn. Mrs. Yeobright answers and sends Venn away by informing him that Thomasin will marry Wildeve. Thomasin feels bad for Venn but thinks that there is nothing that can be done to fix his broken heart.

Several days later, Thomasin and Wildeve get married. Thomasin does her best to put on a happy face, though the circumstances of her marriage clearly upset her. She insists that no one she knows be allowed to attend the ceremony and purposely schedules it the morning of Clym's return so that he will not have time to come. When Clym returns, Mrs. Yeobright catches him up on the situation. Clym tells her that he wants to go to the wedding anyway, although he is too late.

Venn shows up at the Yeobright residence and tells the Yeobrights that the wedding is over. He knows because he sat nearby and watched the whole thing. The wedding went smoothly this time, though oddly, Eustacia was in attendance. Venn doesn't witness Eustacia's interaction with Wildeve; however, the narrator makes it clear that Eustacia attended to demonstrate to Wildeve that she no longer cares for him. In a low voice, she tells Wildeve, "it gives me sincerest pleasure to see her your wife to-day."

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 1

As time stretches on, it becomes clear to the locals that Clym doesn't plan to leave Egdon Heath anytime soon. They gossip about why this might be. When Clym comes for his haircut, Sam and Fairway ask him why he is still around. Clym reveals to them that he did not like Paris because he didn't like his job and couldn't find people who think like him. Instead, he wants to stay in Egdon and start a school. However, Fairway thinks that he will change his mind before too long.

The beginning of this chapter replays the end of the previous chapter, this time from Thomasin and Mrs. Yeobright's perspective. Evidently, Thomasin never told Clym about her suitors and let him learn the drama for himself. In this way, she is like Eustacia; she avoids responsibility and allows others to deliver bad news.



Unlike Thomasin and Mrs. Yeobright, Clym is not overly concerned with the optics of Thomasin's wedding. However, he is hurt that he was kept in the dark and not invited to the wedding itself.



This part of the novel contains a nasty bit of Eustacia's characteristic posturing. Though she clearly wants to tell Wildeve that she is done with him, she does so by ruining his wedding day. Additionally, the latter half of the novel demonstrates that Eustacia is not as over Wildeve as she pretends to be.



Eustacia wants Clym to take her to Paris, but Clym has no desire to return to Paris. This conflict is central to the entirety of Books 3 and 4. Additionally, Clym's desire to build a school near Egdon suggests that he wants to modernize the heath, an environment notoriously immune to modernization.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 2

Though Clym's love for Egdon is genuine, his plan for a school is half-baked. When he reveals his plans to Mrs. Yeobright, she is shocked and angered. Mrs. Yeobright worked hard to make sure that Clym was educated and could make a better life for himself than what can be found on the heath. She feels as though Clym wants to throw all of her hard work away. Clym insists that wealth and status aren't everything, though Mrs. Yeobright clearly disagrees.

In the middle of their argument, Christian arrives with a story. Apparently, Eustacia attended church for the first time in a long time. During the service, Susan Nunsuch jabbed Eustacia with a needle. Though Mrs. Yeobright doesn't like Eustacia, she feels bad for her, and Clym is even more sympathetic. Clym also wonders whether such simple and superstitious people would truly benefit from the school he hopes to build. However, he is interested in Eustacia and begins looking for an excuse to meet her. He thinks she might be the same woman he met at the Christmas party. Before long, an excuse arrives, as Sam informs Clym that the Vyes are having an issue with their well. Clym insists on coming along to help.

BOOK 3, CHAPTER 3

Mrs. Yeobright is worried that Clym will become romantically involved with Eustacia and tells him so. However, Clym ignores her and heads to the Vye residence. When he arrives, he finds a group of local men attempting to remove a water bucket that is stuck in the well. Clym offers to help, though nothing comes of it. Eventually, the men leave, deciding that there is nothing more that can be done for the time being. Eustacia is upset so Clym offers to get her some clean water. Eustacia politely declines his offer and then the two of them try once again to get the bucket out of the well. However, they fail, and Eustacia cuts her hand in the process. Clym examines her wound and offers an apology on behalf of Egdon for what occurred at church.

Over the next few days, Clym and Eustacia begin meeting up with each another, and a romance starts to blossom. Mrs. Yeobright is upset by this development and tells Clym to stay away from Eustacia. However, Clym doesn't listen. Mrs. Yeobright is especially angry after she hears that Clym gave Eustacia a gift that was meant to be hers. Tensions continue to rise between Clym and his mother. One day, they get into a big fight; Mrs. Yeobright calls Eustacia a "hussy," and Clym storms out, not wanting to say anything that will make matters worse.

Clym's plans are the last thing Mrs. Yeobright wants to hear about after Thomasin's disastrous marriage. She worries that Clym will continue to lower the status of their family by remaining at Egdon. Although Mrs. Yeobright and Eustacia will soon clash heads, they are not all that different from each other. Both believe that life is better away from the heath.



Eustacia likely attended church hoping to see Clym, although that obviously did not happen. However, her plan works indirectly because Clym learns her name and immediately takes an interest in her. Also, it is worth noting that the reason Susan jabs Eustacia is to test whether she is a witch.



Once again, Mrs. Yeobright's efforts to interfere in a family member's love life go ignored. Unsurprisingly, Clym immediately takes an interest in the beautiful Eustacia, whom he also feels quite bad for. He thinks of superstition as a primitive way of thinking that his school could help modernize.



Mrs. Yeobright suspects that Eustacia was the reason why Wildeve refused to marry Thomasin, which makes the elder woman dislike her. Additionally, Eustacia is a bit of an outcast in the Egdon community, and Mrs. Yeobright worries about how such a marriage would affect the Yeobright family's reputation.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 4

Clym spends his days studying and his nights with Eustacia. One night, Clym meets Eustacia, and the two of them discuss Mrs. Yeobright's feelings toward her. Though Eustacia worries that Mrs. Yeobright hates her, Clym is convinced that his mother will come around. Eustacia turns the topic of conversation to **Paris**, a subject Clym finds boring. Eustacia tells Clym that she will marry him if he'll take her to Paris, though he tells her that this is unlikely to happen. This displeases Eustacia, though she ultimately tells Clym that she will marry him anyway. Afterward, Eustacia leaves, and Clym is left to wonder whether marriage is a good idea. He thinks Eustacia is still set on going to Paris, regardless of what she says. He also worries about what their marriage will do to his relationship with his mother.

Clym and Eustacia have fallen in love with each other, which makes it hard for either one of them to look at their situation objectively. Clearly, Clym has no interest in returning to Paris. Eustacia thinks she can convince him to go anyway, and Clym thinks that he can convince her to stay. Additionally, though it is possible that Mrs. Yeobright may come around, it is certainly not a guarantee; Mrs. Yeobright has proven herself to be quite stubborn up to this point in the novel.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 5

Mrs. Yeobright hears from Captain Vye that Clym is going to marry Eustacia, and she is not happy. She yells at Clym and calls Eustacia “an unworthy person.” This doesn't go over well with Clym, who, once again, angrily storms out of the house. He meets up with Eustacia, and the two of them discuss Mrs. Yeobright's disapproval. Then, they move onto a happier subject; Clym promises Eustacia that after the first six months of their marriage, he will move them to Budmouth. In the meantime, they will live in a small cottage while Clym studies. Eustacia is hesitant, but she ultimately agrees to Clym's conditions. Eustacia leaves, and Clym contemplates his situation. He loves Eustacia but is worried about what she expects out of their marriage.

Although the conditions surrounding their impending marriage are not ideal, Clym and Eustacia have managed to make a compromise in the form of Budmouth. Still, though, Eustacia holds out hope for Paris, suggesting that Clym is right to be concerned about rushing into this marriage too quickly.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 6

Clym leaves Blooms End, wishing Mrs. Yeobright farewell. He tells her that he hopes that she comes to see him soon, but she says she probably won't—Clym is planning to marry Eustacia soon, and Mrs. Yeobright still disapproves. After Clym leaves, Thomasin arrives and asks her aunt some questions about money. Apparently, she wants some money, but doesn't know how to get it from Wildeve. It is unclear whether she's asked him for any directly. Mrs. Yeobright tells her that she should insist that Wildeve give her money, though the suggestion makes Thomasin uncomfortable. Mrs. Yeobright worries that Wildeve is not treating Thomasin very well.

A number of issues arise in this novel because characters refuse to interact with one another directly. Instead, they act passive aggressively or turn to an outside source for help. This is the case with Thomasin in this passage, and it results in a chain reaction of anger and misunderstandings.



Although it doesn't solve the larger issue of Wildev's treatment of Thomasin, Mrs. Yeobright offers Thomasin her inheritance. Thomasin accepts, and Mrs. Yeobright promises to send it over soon. The conversation then turns to Clym's marriage. Thomasin tells Mrs. Yeobright that she is being too harsh on her son. Thomasin also reassures her that Clym still loves her; she just needs to talk to him. However, Mrs. Yeobright is stubborn and says she will not do so. Meanwhile, Wildev learns that Eustacia is engaged, and he discovers that he still has feelings for her after all.

Although Thomasin does not do a good job of advocating for herself, it does seem to be the case that Wildev is not a good husband. Eustacia's engagement to Clym has reignited his jealousy, and more problems are sure to follow.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 7

Mrs. Yeobright does not attend Clym's wedding. Instead, she spends the day at home, sad and alone. Before long, Wildev stops by because he heard there is something for Thomasin that needs to be picked up. Immediately, Mrs. Yeobright is skeptical of Wildev. She thinks Wildev may know about Thomasin's money and means to claim it for himself. As such, she tells Wildev that she will give it to Thomasin later. Wildev finds this strange but does not put too much stock into it.

Again, Mrs. Yeobright fails to place any faith in Wildev. Although this is not overly concerning to Wildev in the moment, it will have repercussions later in the novel.



After Wildev's departure, Mrs. Yeobright contemplates the best way to send Thomasin the money without Wildev's knowledge. She decides that it would make the most sense to have Christian deliver it. Additionally, she decides to give Clym his part of the inheritance as a wedding gift. She gives the money to Christian and tells him her plan. Christian agrees to deliver the money and sets off to do so. On his way to Thomasin, he comes across some of the locals, including Fairway, who convince him to come to Wildev's inn with them.

Mrs. Yeobright's decision to trust Christian over Wildev immediately backfires as it seems that Christian and Wildev are bound to run into each other. Evidently, Mrs. Yeobright's decision to distrust Wildev is not merely class-based—after all, Christian is not well off—it is character-based, as well.



Christian arrives at the Quiet Woman Inn with the others, and they convince him to gamble. He manages to win some money and insists on keeping the dice that led him to victory. After, Christian briefly speaks to Wildev and implies that he has money to give to Thomasin. Wildev realizes that the money is what Mrs. Yeobright refused to give him. He is annoyed that she doesn't trust him enough to give him Thomasin's inheritance and starts to plot his revenge.

Christian's involvement in gambling cannot go anywhere good, seeing as he possesses a large sum of money that is not his. Meanwhile, although Wildev is far from the most sympathetic character in the novel, his anger at Mrs. Yeobright is not unwarranted. As far as he's concerned, he's done nothing to make Mrs. Yeobright think that he would withhold money from Thomasin.



Wildeve follows Christian from the inn and talks him into gambling some more. He tells Christian that the money he is gambling with belongs to Wildeve anyway, so it won't be a big deal if he loses. Christian accepts the offer and slowly loses all of Thomasin's money. He becomes addicted to the game and starts using Clym's money, as well. Wildeve is unaware that some of the money belongs to Clym and continues with the game. Eventually, Christian loses all of the money that Mrs. Yeobright gave to him and then flees in shame. However, just as Christian departs, Venn shows up.

Wildeve's scheme is clear; he wants to take the money in Christian's possession to teach Mrs. Yeobright a lesson. Indeed, he succeeds in getting the money, but Venn's sudden appearance suggests that he may not keep it for long.



BOOK 3, CHAPTER 8

Venn challenges Wildeve to a game of dice. Slowly, Venn wins back all of the money Wildeve made off of Christian. As the game progresses, Wildeve becomes increasingly angry, although he eventually concedes defeat and hands over all of the money to Venn. Shortly after the game ends, the newlyweds (Eustacia and Clym) go by in their carriage. Wildeve hides, not wanting to interact with Eustacia, though Venn congratulates them. He also informs them that he needs to find Thomasin to give her the money, and they point him in the right direction. Unfortunately, Venn does not know that half of the money belongs to Clym, so he does not give him any.

Venn once again proves himself to be Thomasin's savior, even if Thomasin does not know it. Although his actions are largely selfless, it is apparent that Venn enjoys getting the better of Wildeve, whom he feels is undeserving of Thomasin. Additionally, Wildeve's decision to hide from Eustacia suggests that he still has unresolved feelings for her.



BOOK 4, CHAPTER 1

July arrives. Eustacia and Clym are enjoying their marriage. However, as more time passes, Eustacia worries whether she will ever be able to escape to Budmouth, let alone **Paris**. Meanwhile, Clym worries that starting his school will be more difficult than he anticipated. At the same time, Mrs. Yeobright is upset that her son never thanked her for the money she sent his way. She has already received a note from Thomasin thanking her for the money and expects the same from Clym. Mrs. Yeobright remains unaware that Christian gambled away her money.

Tension begins to build between Eustacia and Clym because Clym has not followed through on his promises. Eustacia not only expected to go to Budmouth, but she also hoped to go to Paris. Meanwhile, because of a misunderstanding, Clym and his mother have yet to reconcile.



Mrs. Yeobright wonders whether Eustacia has something to do with the missing money. She decides to go see her, but before she can do so, Christian confesses to what he's done. Mrs. Yeobright is angry with Christian and fires him, but then, wondering what she will do without him, instantly rehires him. Mrs. Yeobright thinks that Wildeve and Eustacia might be romantically involved with each other and that Wildeve gave Eustacia the other half of the money, so she departs to confront Eustacia. Eventually, Mrs. Yeobright finds Eustacia and confronts her. Eustacia is appalled at the accusation and vehemently denies it. Mrs. Yeobright believes her but does not apologize. Instead, the two women get into a screaming match, and then Eustacia storms home, angry and upset.

Misunderstandings build upon one another until conflict between Eustacia and Mrs. Yeobright is worse than ever before. Notably, Mrs. Yeobright refuses to apologize to Eustacia, even when she realizes that she is wrong. Though Eustacia is not perfect, she is understandably offended by her mother-in-law's actions, and it is hard to blame her for acting as she does. However, Eustacia's actions place even more stress on Clym's relationship with his mother.



BOOK 4, CHAPTER 2

Eustacia returns home upset and tells Clym that she never wishes to speak to his mother again. She refuses to go into more detail, leaving Clym in the dark about what all transpired. Later in the day, Thomasin arrives with Clym's half of the inheritance money. Apparently, Thomasin heard about the fight between Eustacia and Mrs. Yeobright, though she doesn't say how. Thomasin tells Clym to be grateful that the money was not lost. Clym responds that he would rather not have the money if he could've avoided such an incident.

Knowing that Eustacia is unhappy, Clym studies extra hard so that they can move soon. However, he is quickly beset by misfortune. His constant studying has had a negative impact on **his eyesight**, and he starts to go blind. A doctor tells him that it will be months before he can read again without putting an undue strain on his eyes. This means that Clym and Eustacia will have to continue living in their small cabin, which horrifies Eustacia. Even when Clym is better, it doesn't seem as though he will be able to build a school anytime soon.

Because he cannot read, Clym decides to become a furze-cutter. Clym enjoys the job and spends much of his time singing. Eustacia overhears one of Clym's songs, at which point she decides to confront him. Eustacia cannot believe that Clym can find pleasure in such work, which she feels is beneath him. However, Clym thinks that she is overreacting and tells her so. They need money, so why shouldn't he do something he enjoys? This does not satisfy Eustacia, who leaves in tears.

BOOK 4, CHAPTER 3

Clym and Eustacia's relationship takes a turn for the worse. Though Clym tries to comfort his wife, Eustacia cannot bear what has become of their future. Clym questions Eustacia about whether she ever loved him. He thinks it likely that she was more interested in what he could do for her than anything else. Eustacia refuses to answer Clym's questions directly, and Clym departs. Eustacia, now alone, says aloud, "Two wasted lives—his and mine. And I am come to this! Will it drive me out of my mind?"

One of Eustacia's major character flaws is that she refuses to speak plainly to Clym. There are a number of key moments in the novel where Eustacia chooses silence over an explanation when an explanation could make things better. Perhaps her silence is in part due to the fact that she has unresolved feelings for Wildeve, even if she has not acted upon or consciously acknowledged them.



Clym and Eustacia's plans have quickly fallen apart. Now that Clym can no longer offer Eustacia an escape from Egdon, it becomes difficult to know if she still loves him. Certainly, a large part of Eustacia's love for Clym is predicated on his ability to get her away from Egdon, something he no longer appears able to do. Also note that Clym's diminished eyesight corresponds with Eustacia's waning interest in Clym; this helps establish Clym's eyesight as a symbol for his (figurative) shortsightedness—he's inability to see that Eustacia's love for him is (and perhaps always has been) conditional.



A furze-cutter is someone who harvests furze, a plant used to feed livestock. Eustacia considers Clym's new job to be low class and cannot stand to think that her husband could ever find himself in such a position. Certainly, Mrs. Yeobright would agree.



Eustacia doesn't feel as though she can live in Egdon any longer. At this point, Clym's condition has shattered her fantasies of escape, and she wonders if she will be driven to insanity. She has wasted her life by failing to leave Egdon, and she has wasted Clym's life by marrying him.



Wanting to feel better, Eustacia decides to go to a party that the wife of a cattle-dealer invited her to. When Eustacia arrives at the party, she finds that the cattle-dealer's wife is not present and that she doesn't know anyone else. Eustacia walks around on her own for a while and eventually spots Wildeve. Wildeve asks Eustacia to dance, and she accepts. Although nothing inappropriate happens, it is clear that both parties still have feelings for each another.

After the party, Wildeve and Eustacia walk home together. Eustacia learns that Thomasin is going to have a baby, while Wildeve learns of Clym's blindness. On their way home, Wildeve and Eustacia spot Venn coming down the path. Not wanting to attract undue attention, Wildeve decides to go off in a different direction. Although Venn cannot recognize Wildeve, he does notice a figure depart from Eustacia's side. When he meets Eustacia on the road, he assumes that the figure must have been Wildeve. Venn is worried about Thomasin and goes to Wildeve's house. Wildeve isn't home, but Thomasin is, so Venn asks her questions about her husband. However, he doesn't learn much and ultimately departs. Wildeve returns home later on and becomes worried after Thomasin tells him that Venn stopped by and asked about him.

BOOK 4, CHAPTER 4

Venn resorts to drastic measures to keep Eustacia and Wildeve apart. He spends much of the evening hours following Wildeve around and scaring him. Among other things, he fires a gun at Wildeve when he sees him heading in the direction of Eustacia's house. Wildeve knows that Venn is responsible, though he does not spot him. Feeling as though he's scared Wildeve off for the night, Venn pays Mrs. Yeobright a visit. Venn tells Mrs. Yeobright about Clym's condition, though she still won't go see him. Venn warns her that Eustacia and Wildeve seem to have started a secret relationship, but Mrs. Yeobright refuses to do anything about it. Meanwhile, Eustacia and Clym are at their home discussing Clym's relationship with Mrs. Yeobright. Clym gets mad at Eustacia because she does not seem to care about his relationship with his mother.

Clearly, Eustacia is desperate: previously, she avoided all social interaction, and yet now she is attending a party. Her renewed relationship with Wildeve suggests a number of issues for the plot moving forward. Eustacia has already been accused of being unfaithful to Clym and now it seems as though that accusation may become a reality.



Both Eustacia and Wildeve act selfishly. While they attend a party, their spouses are at home—one blind, one pregnant. Furthermore, they know that they are acting inappropriately, which is why Wildeve actively avoids Venn. However, as always, Venn is quick to catch on to the truth, and he is also privy to Eustacia and Wildeve's former relationship.



Venn is willing to do anything to keep Thomasin happy, even if it means spending his evenings threatening Wildeve. However, while Wildeve and Eustacia are not entirely innocent, they also are not as guilty as Venn thinks they are. As such, the information he gives Mrs. Yeobright is unfair to Eustacia and Wildeve, and it only makes matters worse between Mrs. Yeobright and Clym. Meanwhile, Clym is clearly devastated by his ruined relationship with his mother. Both Mrs. Yeobright and Clym feel betrayed. While there is some validity to them feeling betrayed, their division comes from miscommunications and assumptions more than anything else.



BOOK 4, CHAPTER 5

On a sweltering day in August, Mrs. Yeobright decides that she will pay Clym a visit. The walk to Clym and Eustacia's place is long and hot, which is difficult for an older woman like Mrs. Yeobright. On her way to Clym's house, she spots Clym out in the field, although she does not recognize him at first. She is shocked to learn that he has become a furze-cutter. This new revelation, along with the heat, makes Mrs. Yeobright stop and sit down. She looks at her son's new house and thinks about how she will approach Clym and Eustacia after not seeing them for so long.

Egdon Heath can be a dangerous place (particularly for an older woman), even in the daytime. In this case, the sweltering heat exhausts Mrs. Yeobright, and it is a testament to how much she wants to see her son that she pushes through her exhaustion. Like Eustacia, Mrs. Yeobright cannot stomach the thought of her son being a furze-cutter, but she does not want to ruin their relationship completely by telling him so.



BOOK 4, CHAPTER 6

On the same day that Mrs. Yeobright goes to see Clym and Eustacia, Wildeve decides to do the same. Wildeve arrives before Mrs. Yeobright and Eustacia lets him in. Wildeve and Eustacia talk as Clym takes a nap, exhausted from working in the hot sun. Wildeve only now realizes how low Eustacia's fortunes have sunk, and he reminds her that she should have married him instead. Eustacia doesn't take kindly to this remark and tells Wildeve that it is his fault that were not married. Wildeve agrees and admits that he wishes they were still together.

Wildeve's arrival at Clym and Eustacia's home is a disaster waiting to happen. Mrs. Yeobright already suspects that something inappropriate is going on between Eustacia and her former suitor, and arriving at Clym's to find Eustacia and Wildeve together would vindicate her feelings.



In the middle of their conversation, Eustacia and Wildeve hear a knock at the door. Eustacia looks and sees that Mrs. Yeobright is standing outside. She debates whether to open the door with Wildeve present. She knows the Mrs. Yeobright will assume the worst of her if she does. Eustacia notices Clym waking up and knows that he will answer the door whether she likes it or not. Ultimately, Eustacia tells Wildeve to sneak out the back, which he does. Eustacia goes outside with him, assuming that Clym will answer the door. However, when she returns inside, she finds Clym still asleep, and Mrs. Yeobright is nowhere to be found.

Eustacia finds herself in a difficult position; though she hasn't been unfaithful to Clym, she assumes Mrs. Yeobright will think the worst of her if she sees her with Wildeve. Eustacia's decision to turn Mrs. Yeobright away proves to be one of the most important moments in the entire novel, as the fallout of this moment sets up the story's climax.



Devasted, Mrs. Yeobright heads home. She saw Eustacia look at her through the window and thinks that she and Clym are refusing to let her in. On her way home, Mrs. Yeobright walks alongside Johnny and tells him about everything that has transpired. Johnny brings Mrs. Yeobright some water, but she barely drinks any of it because it is warm. Afterward, Mrs. Yeobright dismisses him and sits alone in the grass. It is still excruciatingly hot outside, and she is having a difficult time breathing.

Mrs. Yeobright is understandably devastated; she compromises her core values to repair her relationship with her son, only for her son to turn her away—or so she thinks. Of course, Mrs. Yeobright does not know the full story and so the information that she gives Johnny is incorrect. This misinformation is crucial for the plot moving forward.



BOOK 4, CHAPTER 7

Clym wakes up from a dream about his mother. He bemoans the fact that she still hasn't come to see him. Not wanting to admit what she has done, Eustacia keeps quiet about the events that transpired earlier in the day. Deciding that he cannot take it anymore, Clym decides to visit his mother. Eustacia begs him not to go and even offers to go herself, but Clym won't listen. On his way to his mother's house, Clym finds her lying in the grass. Concerned, he carries her to the nearest houses he can find, which happens to be where Sam, Fairway, and Humphrey live. Sam quickly deduces that Mrs. Yeobright was bitten by a snake. He tells Clym that until they get a doctor, the best they can do is to rub the fat from other snakes on the wound. They do so, but Mrs. Yeobright's condition doesn't improve.

Eustacia doesn't want Clym to see his mother because she knows that Mrs. Yeobright will tell her son that Eustacia refused to let her in. However, though Clym ignores Eustacia, he may be too late; Mrs. Yeobright was already exhausted and dehydrated, and now she's been bitten by a deadly snake. Additionally, because this is Egdon Heath and doctors are not readily available, all Clym can do is wait and hope someone will come soon.



BOOK 4, CHAPTER 8

Eustacia worries about what will come out in the conversation between Clym and Mrs. Yeobright. While Eustacia is at home alone, Captain Vye shows up and tells her that Wildeve recently came into a large fortune. He also takes notice of her current living situation and tells her that she should've married Wildeve instead. Additionally, Captain Vye offers Eustacia money, though she refuses to take anything from him. Eustacia knows that Wildeve is still in love with her and wonders what will become of that love now that he has his fortune. She goes outside to walk and think over her present circumstances.

Wildeve's new fortune is important because it is yet another way that Eustacia can get out of Egdon Heath. She thinks that her relationship with Clym is coming to an end, and she knows she needs a backup plan. However, she also does not want to become the heartless adulterer that Mrs. Yeobright thinks she is.



On her walk, Eustacia encounters Wildeve, although their meeting doesn't seem like much of a coincidence on Wildeve's part. Wildeve tells Eustacia about his fortune, which he didn't reveal earlier because he didn't want to seem as though he was bragging. Wildeve tells Eustacia that he plans to travel all around the world, including **Paris**, whether Thomasin accompanies him or not. While walking together, Wildeve and Eustacia spot a light coming from nearby. They go to investigate and find that a number of people, including a doctor, are standing, and crying over the body of Mrs. Yeobright who has just died. However, they remain out of sight to avoid arousing suspicion. Eustacia overhears Johnny tell Clym that his mother described herself as "a broken-hearted woman" who was "cast off by her son."

Clearly, Wildeve does not care for Thomasin as much as he cares for Eustacia. Though he does not ask Eustacia to join him on his travels, he implies that it is a possibility, and he knowingly mentions Paris to entice her. However, before Eustacia can even begin thinking about such a possibility, she is met with the consequences of her earlier actions: Mrs. Yeobright's death.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 1

In the wake of Mrs. Yeobright's death, Clym feels incredibly guilty. Eustacia still hasn't told him that Mrs. Yeobright came to see him, and Clym holds himself responsible for his mother's death. A few weeks after Mrs. Yeobright's death, Thomasin pays her brother a visit and tells him that her baby will be born in two months. Clym acknowledges the news but is too distracted by his own guilt and shame to care. He cannot understand why his mother said what she did before her death. While Clym and Thomasin are talking, Eustacia goes outside to find Wildeve, who has come to get his wife. Wildeve advises Eustacia to tell Clym the truth, but to omit that Wildeve was present. Before their conversation can continue, Thomasin shows up and departs with her husband.

In the wake of his Mrs. Yeobright's death, Clym's obsession with his mother only grows stronger. He feels extreme guilt about what happened and Eustacia selfishly denies him the truth. However, like all important pieces of information in this novel, the truth has a way of surfacing—whether Eustacia wants it to or not. Meanwhile, Wildeve also continues his selfish streak by making sure that his name does not come up.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 2

One evening, while Clym is still depressed, Christian arrives and provides him with a new piece of information. Mrs. Yeobright had forgiven her son and was on her way to see him on the morning of her death. Clym is confused; he now has two pieces of contradictory evidence. Not long after, Venn stops by, and Clym tell him that his mother is dead. The news shocks Venn, though he seconds Christian's opinion that Mrs. Yeobright forgave Clym.

Christian's information sets Clym on a path to find out the truth. Although Clym does not know it yet, it seems that learning the truth about Mrs. Yeobright's death will cost Clym his relationship with Eustacia.



Realizing that something doesn't add up, Clym decides to speak to Johnny again. Johnny is Susan Nunsuch's son, and she assures Clym that Johnny is telling the truth. Nonetheless, Clym demands to speak with Johnny again. This time, Clym finds out that by the time Johnny saw his mother, she was already on her way back from Clym's home. Johnny tells Clym that he saw a man enter Clym's house and then watched as Eustacia turned Mrs. Yeobright away. This infuriates Clym, who leaves to find Eustacia.

Because Eustacia does not speak up about what actually happened on the day of Mrs. Yeobright's death, Clym is now left to assume the worst.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 3

Clym arrives home and begins yelling at Eustacia; he blames her for Mrs. Yeobright's death and accuses her of having an affair. Eustacia denies his accusations but refuses to explain further. Eustacia eventually admits that she is partially guilty—but not in the manner Clym thinks. Clym asks her to explain herself, and she refuses. Eventually, Eustacia admits that she did not unlock the door immediately. However, she promises that that she would have done so had she realized that Clym hadn't answered it either. Still, she does not make any mention of Wildeve. Upset by the whole situation, Eustacia leaves to go back to her grandfather. Later in the day, Clym learns that Thomasin's given birth to a baby girl, whom she names Baby Eustacia.

Once again, Eustacia refuses to adequately defend herself. Though Clym's accusations are largely false, they are not unreasonable, and Eustacia does little to help case. Although Clym quickly realizes that some of his accusations go a step too far, he still wants answers—which Eustacia repeatedly denies him. Additionally, in a twist of cruel irony, Thomasin names her child after Eustacia, just as Eustacia and Clym's marriage starts to crumble.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 4

Eustacia heads to her grandfather's place, completely lost. When she arrives, she finds Charley, who is visibly concerned for her safety. However, she refuses to tell Charley what happened. Eustacia heads inside and sees her grandfather's guns. She looks at them and contemplates suicide. Noticing this, Charley takes them down from the wall and puts them somewhere that Eustacia cannot find them. When Eustacia asks him to fetch her the guns, he tells her, "I care too much for you to give 'em up." Eustacia is angry at Charley for not allowing her to end her own life, but she eventually calms down and tells him that she is no longer suicidal.

All of Eustacia's hopes and dreams have failed, and so she considers ending her own life. However, despite her poor treatment of him, Charley is determined to make sure that nothing happens to Eustacia. Even though Eustacia hates the heath, many of its residents are kind to her, with Charley being the primary example.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 5

Guy Fawkes day arrives again, so Charley builds the Vyes a bonfire, hoping to cheer up Eustacia. Captain Vye thinks that this is a good idea, although it doesn't work as intended. Eustacia does not feel up to doing anything and worries that Wildeve will think she is signaling him. Indeed, Wildeve shows up and converses with Eustacia. Wildeve appears sympathetic to Eustacia's situation, and he offers to help her in any way he can. Although Eustacia doesn't want to ask too much of Wildeve, she does ask him if he can help her get to Budmouth. From there, she hopes to sail to **Paris**. Wildeve promises that he will help Eustacia get to Budmouth.

At this point, an entire year has passed since the start of the novel. This time, the bonfire, which previously gave Eustacia hope, is now a symbol of fear. Eustacia doesn't want Wildeve to come to her, for fear that his presence will make matters worse. However, Wildeve ultimately proves himself useful, and Eustacia once again has some hope that she can escape Egdon.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 6

As Eustacia schemes to escape Egdon Heath once and for all, Clym attempts to sort out the truth. He doesn't think that Eustacia is guilty of all he accused her of, and he starts to feel ashamed of how he acted. He wants to make things right but isn't sure how, so he decides to visit Thomasin and ask her for advice. Thomasin is surprised to learn what's happened between Eustacia and Clym. She tells Clym that he must fix things right away and suggests writing Thomasin a letter. Clym and Thomasin switch the topic of conversation to Thomasin's life. Thomasin complains that Wildeve is not present in her life.

Throughout The Return of the Native, characters tend to spend too much time deliberating and talking to anyone and everyone except the person they should be talking to. Though Thomasin gives Clym helpful advice, he should really be speaking to Eustacia—and his time to do so is quickly running out.



Clym goes home and writes to Eustacia. His letter is partially an apology, though it is clear that he still places a significant amount of blame on her for his mother's death. Nonetheless, Clym promises to forgive her and tells her, "Our love must still continue." Meanwhile, Wildeve arrives home, where Thomasin promptly questions him regarding his whereabouts. Wildeve refuses to answer her questions, though, so Thomasin decides to question him directly about Eustacia. Wildeve bristles at the mention of Eustacia's name and tells Thomasin that he doesn't want to talk about her.

It is hard to imagine that Clym's ambivalent letter will do much to cheer up Eustacia, though it is at least an attempt to save their failing marriage. Meanwhile, it is clear that Wildeve has just returned from meeting with Eustacia, and he does a poor job of hiding it from Thomasin.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 7

Eustacia decides once and for all that she is leaving Egdon Heath. Before signaling to Wildeve that she is ready to depart, Eustacia takes a walk around the heath. While on her walk, Susan spots her. Susan is angry at Eustacia because her son Johnny is ill and thinks that it is all Eustacia's fault. Susan creates an effigy of Eustacia and then shoves needles through it before burning it in the fire.

After Eustacia returns from her walk, she starts a bonfire to let Wildeve know that she is on her way. Before she departs, Clym's letter arrives. She doesn't see it, though, because Captain Vye accepted it and assumed his granddaughter was asleep. Eustacia starts to make her way to Wildeve's but begins to have second thoughts. She doesn't know if she can count on Wildeve, and the weather is starting to get bad. In misery, she cries out, "How I have tried and tried to be a splendid woman, and how destiny has been against me! . . . I do not deserve my lot!" Nonetheless, she continues to make her way to Wildeve's.

Superstition is common among the residents of Egdon Heath, and Susan is the most superstitious of all. The effigy Susan creates and burns suggests that she still believes Eustacia is a witch.



Clym's missed letter is yet another instance of failed communication in the novel. Additionally, the rapidly changing weather is an ominous sign. As Eustacia suggests here, it seems that her dreams of Paris simply are not meant to be, though she continues to chase them anyway.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 8

Clym waits and wonders if Eustacia will return. Before long, Thomasin arrives with her child and tells Clym that she thinks Eustacia has gone to meet Wildeve. Earlier, she heard Wildeve take money out a chest in their bedroom, so she assumes that he means to run off with Eustacia. Shortly afterward, Captain Vye shows up and confirms that Eustacia is missing. Clym leaves to go look for Eustacia.

Thomasin stays put at first, but then, against her better judgement, decides to go looking for Eustacia and Wildeve. Thomasin quickly gets lost, though she luckily comes across Venn and lets him know what is going on. Venn is confused; he thought he heard a woman crying shortly before Thomasin arrived. However, Thomasin assures him that the crying did not come from her or her child. Together, Venn and Thomasin head off into the storm in the direction of Thomasin's house.

Thomasin immediately recognizes what her husband has done, suggesting Wildeve is not as sly as he thinks. Additionally, yet another major character has left the safety of his home to face the powerful weather of the heath.



Even more characters end up in the bad weather, making disaster appear immanent. However, Venn has repeatedly proven himself to be the most resourceful character in the novel, so it is lucky for Thomasin that she finds him.



BOOK 5, CHAPTER 9

Wildeve spots Eustacia's fire and prepares to take her to Budmouth. He thinks that the good deed he is doing for Eustacia will allow him to make her his mistress while still keeping Thomasin as his wife. He sees no issue with this arrangement and thinks himself worthy of both women. On his way to meet Eustacia, Wildeve comes across Clym. Nearby is a pond, from which Wildeve and Clym hear Eustacia scream. Both Clym and Wildeve jump into the water to try and save her. Venn arrives shortly after and helps them.

Unsurprisingly, Wildeve is planning to do almost exactly what Thomasin feared he'd do. His willingness to help Eustacia is not a purely selfless act; it is an attempt to fulfill a fantasy of his own. However, Eustacia's scream signals that Wildeve's plan will never come to fruition.



Several members of the community are drawn to the scene because of the commotion it has created. Everyone works together, along with Venn to save Clym, Wildeve and Eustacia. Eventually, everyone is recovered from the pond, although Eustacia and Wildeve are dead. Although Clym is breathing, he is unconscious and does not look good. Back at the inn, everyone tries to make sense of what happened, but no one has the full story now that Eustacia and Wildeve are dead. Eventually, Charley arrives, looking for Eustacia. Clym tells Charley that Eustacia is dead and takes him to look at her body. In death, her beauty is described as, “eclips[ing] all her living phases.” Clym blames himself for the entire situation and wonders whether he will ever recover.

In this climactic moment, all of the central characters converge into one place, though two of them don't make it out alive. Similar to Mrs. Yeobright's death, Eustacia and Wildeve's deaths leave a lot of questions, although it is unlikely that those left behind will find any answers.



BOOK 6, CHAPTER 1

The story of Wildeve and Eustacia becomes well-known, even by those who did not know them. After Wildeve's death, Thomasin learns that her husband had many debts, which she uses his fortune to pay off. Additionally, she is forced to move back to her aunt's old home with Clym. Although she is devastated by what happened, Thomasin is glad that she still has Baby Eustacia to keep her company. Clym, however, is a shell of himself and spends most of his time wandering between the graves of his loved ones. Meanwhile, Venn gives up his reddleman career and returns to dairy farming. This catches Thomasin's attention, and she and Venn strike up a romance.

Although the last year of Thomasin's life has not been easy, it seems as though she will eventually recover. However, Clym remains obsessed with the past and unable to pull himself away from what happened. Meanwhile, it seems that Venn may finally be an appropriate match for Thomasin.



BOOK 6, CHAPTER 2

Thomasin discovers that her nurse borrowed one of her gloves and took it to a party. Thomasin saw Venn at this party, and he told he was looking for the glove of a beautiful woman. As it turns out, Venn knew the glove belonged to Thomasin, and Thomasin realizes the whole situation is one big romantic gesture. Thomasin goes and speaks to Venn about the glove incident, and the two of them start to fall in love.

Most deceptive actions carry a negative connotation in this novel. However, Venn's glove ploy works perfectly because it is done with genuine love and innocence rather than a selfish desire to manipulate Thomasin.



BOOK 6, CHAPTER 3

Still lost in the world, Clym decides he will become a preacher. Additionally, he considers asking Thomasin to marry him. However, when he goes to discuss marriage with Thomasin, Thomasin reveals that she is already considering marrying Venn. However, before she does so, she wants to ask Clym's permission. More specifically, she wants to know if Mrs. Yeobright would've approved of her marrying Venn under such circumstances. At first, Clym is not sure if the marriage is a good idea, but he eventually changes says that it is appropriate under the circumstances. Thrilled, Thomasin agrees to marry Venn.

Clym considers marrying Thomasin out of obligation rather than love. However, he quickly perceives the error of his ways and, for the first time, the novel presents a happy union between two people who seem like they'll stay together.



BOOK 6, CHAPTER 4

Thomasin and Venn's wedding is a happy event for everyone except Clym, who is too sad to attend. Instead, Clym spends his day walking near the Vye property, where he spots Charley. Charley is also still saddened by Eustacia's death, and he asks Clym if he can have something of hers to keep. In response, Clym gives him a lock of Eustacia's hair. At the end of the day, Thomasin comes to see Clym and tells him that she is off to start her new life with Venn. Eventually, Clym realizes his dream of becoming a preacher, though he never manages to get over the deaths of Eustacia and Mrs. Yeobright.

Clym's ending is ultimately tragic. Though he manages to become a preacher, he cannot let go of the past or relinquish his own guilt. Though his mother and Eustacia had flaws of their own, Clym cannot help but feel that their tragic fates were avoidable. However, the novel is not without hope; Thomasin and Venn appear genuinely happy and baby Eustacia represents the new life that will populate the heath in the years to come.





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