

The Ruined Maid



POEM TEXT

1 "O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!
 2 Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town?
 3 And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?" —
 4 "O didn't you know I'd been ruined?" said she.

5 — "You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks,
 6 Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding up docks;
 7 And now you've gay bracelets and bright feathers
 three!" —
 8 "Yes: that's how we dress when we're ruined," said she.

9 — "At home in the barton you said thee' and thou,'
 10 And thik oon,' and theäs oon,' and t'other'; but now
 11 Your talking quite fits 'ee for high compa-ny!" —
 12 "Some polish is gained with one's ruin," said she.

13 — "Your hands were like paws then, your face blue and
 bleak
 14 But now I'm bewitched by your delicate cheek,
 15 And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!" —
 16 "We never do work when we're ruined," said she.

17 — "You used to call home-life a hag-ridden dream,
 18 And you'd sigh, and you'd sock; but at present you seem
 19 To know not of megri-ms or melancho-ly!" —
 20 "True. One's pretty lively when ruined," said she.

21 — "I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
 22 And a delicate face, and could strut about Town!" —
 23 "My dear — a raw country girl, such as you be,
 24 Cannot quite expect that. You ain't ruined," said she.

"At home on the farm you talked like a country person, saying 'thee' and 'thou' and 'thik oon,' and 'theäs oon,' and 't'other': but now your accent makes you ready to hobnob with the upper class!" "One gets more sophisticated when one has been ruined," she replied.

"Your hands used to be rough like paws, and your face was pale and haggard, but now I'm amazed by your beautiful complexion, and your little gloves fit like a rich woman's!" "We don't have to work when we're ruined," she replied.

"You used to say that life at home was a nightmare, and you'd sigh and grumble. But now you seem so far from misery and depression." "True. One's pretty cheerful when one's been ruined," she replied.

"I wish I had elegant clothes and a lovely face, and could walk around town with pride!" "My dear: an unrefined country girl like you can't really expect that kind of life. You haven't been ruined," she replied.



THEMES



VICTORIAN SEXUAL HYPOCRISY

Presented as a conversation between a well-to-do young woman and her impoverished hometown friend, "The Ruined Maid" takes an [ironic](#) perspective on Victorian sexism. Amelia, despite being supposedly "ruined" by her unmarried love affair with a rich man, is living a much more comfortable life than the friend she speaks to. The poem critiques the conventional Victorian attitude that would condemn this "ruined maid" (but not her boyfriend): if ruination is so terrible, the poem asks, why does being an unruined maid seem like the worse option?

The poem observes that, if a woman chose to trade her sexuality for financial security, she could lift herself out of poverty, but she'd be socially punished for making this pragmatic choice. That the sexual option seems like the brighter side in this poem is not an embrace of women's sexual liberation, but rather a critique of economic and moral strictures that left working-class women in a double bind: sell your sexuality and be "ruined," or stay "pure" and poor.

When Amelia's friend questions her about her new wealth and elegance, Amelia replies to every inquiry with a flippant reference to her ruination. Amelia's sophisticated shamelessness reflects the irony of her situation: all her new pleasures and privileges tie directly back into her disreputable life as a mistress.

As Amelia's friend wonders at Amelia's new lease on life, she



SUMMARY

"Oh Amelia, my dear, this beats everything! Who would have thought that I'd run into you in the city? And where did you get such beautiful clothes, such wealth?" "Oh, didn't you know I'm a ruined woman?" she replied.

"When you left home, you were dressed in rags, and barefoot, and tired of digging up potatoes and weeding. Now you've got beautiful bracelets and three colorful feathers in your hat!" "Yes: that's how we dress when we're ruined," she replied.

covers everything from clothing to mood. Amelia's situation is improved on every level. Amelia's friend, meanwhile, describes Amelia's former life as one of grotesque poverty—with the implication that her own life is still just as bleak. Not being "ruined" sounds desperately awful: the friend speaks of grubbing around in dirt, freezing, and wearing rags. Her talk of "melancholy" suggests that her poverty isn't just physically hard, but soul-corroding. By the end of the poem, her open envy of Amelia speaks to how much she's suffering.

The contrast between Amelia's voice and her friend's suggests that Amelia has made her way into a higher echelon of Victorian society. The friend points out that Amelia's changed accent "fits 'ee for high compa-ny." Amelia replies that to be ruined gives one "polish"—but drops briefly back into her old accent at the end of the poem to tell her friend that a woman "such as you be" can't rise to this polished state if she "ain't ruined."

This condescending, confidential aside suggests that Amelia is well aware of the choice she's made, and the pretense she has to keep up. Maintaining her status means concealing her origins, pretending to be respectable, though the world will always judge her. Amelia can't fully join the respectable world she now lives in proximity to, precisely *because* she's "ruined."

Amelia's comfort and status thus come at a cost: though she's flippant about being "ruined," it's a grim fact that her new position will forever exclude her from respectable society, and her privileges are dependent on the whim of a man whom society will not judge nearly as harshly. To that end, there's a missing character in this exchange: the man who "ruined" Amelia. His role in the situation is only implied; ruination falls only on the female partner in this arrangement. Yet Amelia's choice to become this man's mistress is presented with great sympathy: who wouldn't choose to be "ruined" if it meant escaping a life of deadening poverty?

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-24



LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS

LINES 1-4

*"O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!
Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town?
And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?" —
"O didn't you know I'd been ruined?" said she.*

"The Ruined Maid" makes the reader into an eavesdropper. The poem launches right into a [dialogue](#) between two young women meeting in the street, and that dialogue is pretty telling. From the very start of the poem, the reader has a sense of what

kind of person the first of these two speakers is. Her cheery, [colloquial](#) greeting—"O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!"—lets the reader know a great deal about her. She's friendly, she's enthusiastic, she's jolly—and she's lower-class. A Victorian reader might even be able to guess that she's from the countryside from this very first line; a modern-day reader will catch up as soon as she cries, "Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town?" That important-sounding capital T on "Town" suggests that this cheery lady might be the type to look up in awe at all the tall buildings.

The Amelia she's just met, meanwhile, seems like a different character altogether. Even from these first few lines, the reader can gather that Amelia has changed a lot since the last time her friend saw her. Not only has she come to "Town," she's well-dressed and wealthy now—with the implication that she absolutely wasn't before.

She's got an easy explanation for this, though, and her reply characterizes her as clearly as her friend's cheerful chatter. She answers her friend's astonished questions almost with a yawn: "O didn't you know I'd been ruined?" said she."

It's here that the poem's profound [irony](#) kicks into gear. Amelia describes being "ruined"—that is, becoming an unmarried mistress, a serious sin in the eyes of Victorian society—as casually as she might describe getting a new pair of shoes. Not only does she take this ruination lightly, it seems to be the source of a whole new life for her—and one that seems to be treating her pretty well.

Her voice is also very different from her friend's: none of that thick accent, and none of that enthusiastic exclaiming. She's adopted an upper-class voice as well as an upper-class presentation.

The poem's use of overheard dialogue here thus makes a lot of thematic sense: it's as if the reader has become a passerby in the street, turning an ear to all the hot gossip. The steady [rhyme scheme](#)—AABB, a set of rhyming [couplets](#)—adds to the light, bouncy atmosphere, cluing readers into the fact that the poem is satirical. The same can be said for the poem's meter, [anapestic](#) tetrameter with an [iamb](#) thrown in at the start of lines (an anapest goes da-da-DUM while an iamb da-DUM):

*"O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!
Who could have supposed I should meet you in
Town?*

LINES 5-8

*— "You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks,
Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding up docks;
And now you've gay bracelets and bright feathers three!" —
"Yes: that's how we dress when we're ruined," said she.*

Marveling, the friend remembers how terrible Amelia looked when she last saw her—in turn emphasizing how much things

have changed now. Amelia seems to have come from a community living in serious rural poverty, people who make a living grubbing around in the dirt for potatoes. The friend's use of the word "us" to describe this community, as well as her thick dialect, suggests that she herself is still enduring exactly these conditions.

The friend's tone here stays cheerful and ingenuous, full of words that mark her out as a country girl: "spudding up docks" is a way of describing pulling up weeds that a local could perhaps use to pinpoint the very *village* she lives in.

She's also childishly admiring, noticing not just that Amelia has a nice hat, but actually counting the "bright feathers three" that decorate it, as if adding up how much so many decorations might cost. And she seems to have an enthusiastic lack of volume control: she closes one of her lines with an emphatic exclamation point, and will go on doing so all through the poem.

[Alliteration](#) and [consonance](#) add to the feeling of enthusiasm and wonder. Note the loud /d/, /p/, and /t/ sounds, as well as the [assonance](#) of long /ay/ and short /uh/ sounds:

— "You left us in **tatters**, without shoes or socks,
Tired of digging potatoes, and **spudding up docks**;
And now you've **gay bracelets** and **bright feathers**
three!" —

Amelia's curt reply is the same as before, a return to what will become a [refrain](#):

"Yes: that's how we dress when we're **ruined**,' said she."

All of her new pleasures come down to having been ruined, it turns out. And while she's completely matter-of-fact about this, even boastful, there's also a hint that she'd rather her friend not yell quite so loudly about how she used to roll around in the dirt with the potatoes. Look at that line again:

"Yes: that's how we dress when we're **ruined**,' said she."

The understated touch of whispery [sibilance](#) here suggests that she might be lowering her own voice just a little, trying to calm her friend down. But if she's trying to conceal anything, it's certainly not her ruination, but her impoverished origins.

LINES 9-12

— "At home in the barton you said thee' and thou,'
And thik oon,' and theäs oon,' and t'other'; but now
Your talking quite fits 'ee for high compa-ny!" —
"Some polish is gained with one's ruin," said she.

The friend isn't going to let Amelia's understated responses dampen her enthusiasm. Here, she doubles down on memories

of her and Amelia's shared rural past, working her way through a heap of the [colloquial](#) dialect that once marked Amelia's speech.

[Polysyndeton](#) helps her list to feel goofily drawn-out: "And thik oon,' and theäs oon,' and t'other.'" In an [ironically](#) thick accent, she concludes, "but now / Your talking quite fits 'ee for high compa-ny!"

This is a moment worth special note. Amelia's ruination hasn't just made her wealthier: it's made her *classier*. Accent has always signified social class, but this was especially true for the British in the 19th century. (Just read Shaw's [Pygmalion](#)—or watch *My Fair Lady*, the musical based on it—for a taste of exactly how much of a difference your voice could make to your prospects in England, even years after Hardy wrote "The Ruined Maid"!.) In becoming a mistress, Amelia has gained access to a whole new social class.

...Or has she? In this stanza, she replies, "'Some polish is gained with one's ruin.'" "Some polish" is all very well, but it doesn't address a genuine problem. While Amelia in many ways *resembles* an upper-class lady now that she's a rich man's mistress, the fact that she's "ruined" means she won't ever *truly* be able to join respectable society. Perhaps she'll have some "high compa-ny," but they will forever look down on her. She has certainly risen above her former station (and her friend's), but no matter how flippantly she reports on it, her ruination means that she's stuck in a kind of social limbo. The poem is certainly being funny about Amelia's situation, but it's also providing a sharp critique of the lousy options available to poor Victorian women.

LINES 13-16

— "Your hands were like paws then, your face blue and bleak
But now I'm bewitched by your delicate cheek,
And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!" —
"We never do work when we're ruined," said she.

By this stanza, the friend's delight in Amelia's new fanciness edges toward a darker feeling: envy. Everything the friend has said so far suggests that she's enduring exactly the miserable conditions she describes in Amelia's past. Here, as she turns her attention not just to Amelia's clothes, but to her body, she sidles right up to the border of Insult Country. But those insults are double-edged, as they also suggest that her *own* body is battered by her poverty.

She first turns her attention to Amelia's hands, remembering that they were once "like paws." This [simile](#) suggests that rural poverty is *dehumanizing*, changing people into animals. Then she remarks on Amelia's past complexion, "blue and bleak," pale and wasted. Soft hands and a rosy complexion were two big Victorian markers of beauty, but also of class: soft hands meant the hardest work you did was needlepoint or sketching, and a nice complexion meant you were keeping out of the sun, living a

life of leisure. It's for these reasons that Amelia responds to these remarks with a reference, not to manicures or lotion, but to *work*, which ruined maids never have to do.

But what *does* Amelia have to do to earn her fabulous new look? There's a meaningful absence here: the absence of the rich man whose mistress she has become. He doesn't seem to be part of the equation in this conversation, for two upsetting reasons. One is that *he* isn't ruined by his transactional relationship with Amelia; Victorian men had sexual freedom that Victorian women couldn't even come close to. Another is that, of all the things that Amelia has gained from her new life, love doesn't seem to be among them. An unmarried love affair might condemn a woman to the life of a social outcast, but reward her with affection. But a purely sexual affair lacks even those rewards.

The lines are again filled with [alliteration](#), [consonance](#), and [assonance](#). The /b/ of "blue and bleak" draws readers attention to the phrase, for example. More broadly, the repeated /b/ sounds of the friend's speech add a loudness and brashness to her speech that then contrasts with the softer /w/ sounds that characterize Amelia's more polished reply:

[...] blue and bleak
But now I'm bewitched by your delicate cheek,
[...]
"We never do work when we're ruined," said she.

LINES 17-20

— "You used to call home-life a hag-ridden dream,
And you'd sigh, and you'd sock; but at present you seem
To know not of megrims or melancho-ly!" —
"True. One's pretty lively when ruined," said she.

The plight of the rural woman isn't just to do with physical misery, the friend suggests in this stanza. It's also emotional. She remembers Amelia calling "home-life a hag-ridden dream"—that is, a nightmare. In this [metaphor](#), Amelia's rural life feels horrific and unreal to her, and she suffers "megrims" (deep sadness) and "melancholy" (more deep sadness) over it.

There's also a hint of further sexist trouble in the use of the words "hag-ridden dream" to describe a nightmare. Bad dreams were once called "hag-ridden" because they were blamed on witches or succubi: that is, dangerous magical women on either side of the female double-bind. A "hag," an ugly old witch, was useless in the sexual marketplace—and perhaps angry enough about it to cause trouble. A succubus, on the other hand, was *perilously* sexy, a female demon who was supposed to bring sleepers erotic dreams. The Victorian world (and plenty of worlds before and after it) expressed anxieties over female sexuality by condemning and fearing both not-enough and too-much. Like all the women around them, Amelia and her friend are damned if they do, and damned if they don't.

That Amelia seems to have awakened from the "hag-ridden dream" of her past life doesn't mean she's woken up into the real world. Her life now will evaporate the moment her lover becomes bored with her. In the meantime, she's "pretty lively"—not overjoyed or love struck or blissful, just "pretty lively." That [understatement](#) is both a class marker (it's not posh to get overexcited) and a truth: she's better off emotionally now, but in no way truly secure.

Once again, the friend's words are filled with sonic devices that make her speech feel louder, brasher, and more urgent. [Alliteration](#) is particularly prominent here, connecting "home-life" to that "hag-ridden dream," "sigh" to "sock," and "megrims" to "melancholy."

LINES 21-24

— "I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
And a delicate face, and could strut about Town!" —
"My dear — a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain't ruined," said she.

Regardless of the tenuousness and implied secret unhappiness of Amelia's new life, the friend's envy is full-blown by the last stanza. Who wouldn't want all the riches and beauty that being a mistress affords? The friend again uses [alliteration](#) in her words that adds an intensity to her wishes; take the /f/ of "feathers," "fine," and "face."

But something changes in these last lines. Where before, the friend's excitable babbling has taken up three lines of each [quatrain](#), with Amelia's reply providing a curt punchline, here Amelia breaks in earlier. The last [couplet](#) of the poem is all hers.

There's a lot going on in this [ironic](#) one-two punch. Amelia's response to her friend's envy is condescending, but also revealing. She briefly dips back into her old dialect, mimicking her friend's voice with a "such as you be" and an "ain't." But this *is* her native accent, and the only thing that separates her from her friend is the favor of a rich man and her performance of a higher class.

Notice the way that the meter suggests the difference between Amelia's mocking country accent and her affected upper-class accent: "Cannot **quite** expect **that**" is a very upper-class inflection.

That rhythm also provides a flavor that keeps the poem from being a pure cry of outrage. Looking back over the poem, the reader will find that [anapestic](#) da-da-DUM galloping them through the verse—the meter of Dr. Seuss. This is a poem with a serious point to make, but it's also witty and funny, and its sounds reflect that. Along with the use of the [refrain](#), the poem's meter makes it sound more like a bawdy music-hall song than a lament for broken, impoverished women.

That humor is all part of the poem's work. The irony here isn't just bitter: it's funny. Through the poem's wit, its precision, and its careful observation of these women's social behavior, Hardy

asks his readers: "Can't you see that this system is ridiculous?"



SYMBOLS



CLOTHING

Clothing, in this poem, is a complex [symbol](#) of status, reflecting both the pressures and the instability of women's roles in Victorian society.

The first thing Amelia's friend notices about her is her "fair garments," which signal Amelia's new wealth. The friend returns and returns to Amelia's clothing, noting "gay bracelets," "bright feathers," "little gloves," and a "fine sweeping gown." These are all displays of luxury, reflecting Amelia's rise in society—but they're also a means of concealment. That Amelia's gown is "sweeping" hints at how she's sweeping more than a few things under the rug here (for example, the supposedly immoral circumstances that led to her new life).

Her new clothing makes her *look* like a wealthy upper-class lady, but it can't stop society from considering her "ruined." Clothing, then, reflects not only status but also the hollowness and fragility of that status. Whether in the "tatters" of a poor farmer or the "gay bracelets" of a mistress, a woman's essential dilemma is the same: she's at the mercy of oppressive male ideas about her sexuality.

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Line 3:** "such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?"
- **Line 5:** "tatters, without shoes or socks,"
- **Line 7:** "gay bracelets and bright feathers three!"
- **Line 8:** "that's how we dress when we're ruined,"
- **Line 15:** "And your little gloves fit as on any la-dy!" —
- **Line 21:** "feathers, a fine sweeping gown,"



COUNTRY AND TOWN

The country and the town here [symbolize](#) multiple divisions in the poem: there's the literal rural/urban divide, but there's also the split between the poor and the wealthy—and, by implication, the division between women who are "pure" and women who are "ruined."

Whenever Amelia's friend refers to the city, she does it with a capital letter: it's never "town," but "Town." This suggests that Town has a special grandeur and importance. Being of the Town means being worldly and wealthy, but also (in the eyes of the world) corrupted.

The countryside of "the barton," meanwhile, produces women who are "raw," unrefined and poor. That place of impoverished exile, the poem suggests, is the place that working-class women who play by the rules and don't make use of their sexuality are likely to get stuck in.

This division would have been especially meaningful to a Victorian audience, who watched (often with dismay) as England's economy—once primarily rural—moved into wealthy cities, leaving country people to struggle.

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Line 2:** "Who could have supposed I should meet you in Town"
- **Line 9:** "At home in the barton"
- **Line 22:** "and could strut about Town!"
- **Line 23:** "a raw country girl"



POETIC DEVICES

ALLITERATION

[Alliteration](#) helps to give the reader the flavor of Amelia's friend's chatter. Working alongside the poem's bouncy [meter](#), alliteration evokes the inescapable energy of the friend's conversation as she wonders at her old neighbor's transformation.

Take a look at how this works in the second stanza:

— "You left us in **tatters**, without shoes or socks,
Tired of **digging** potatoes, and spudding up **docks**;
And now you've gay **bracelets** and **bright** feathers
three!" —
"Yes: that's how we dress when we're ruined," said she.

Alliteration works here to create that special feeling of being stopped in the street by a chatty old friend when perhaps you'd rather not be recognized: the repetition of sharp /t/ and blunt /d/ and /b/ sounds batters away at Amelia's facade of elegance. By contrast, Amelia's own speech is usually much softer—any alliteration that appears is typically on the gentle /w/ sound ("we [...] when we're").

Elsewhere, alliteration also helps to evoke the distance between Amelia's dismal past (and the friend's dismal present) and her fancy new life:

— "Your hands were like paws then, your face **blue**
and **bleak**
But now I'm **bewitched** by your delicate cheek,
And your **little** gloves fit as on any **la-dy!**" —

Here, alliteration on /b/ shows the transition between Amelia's miserable "**blue and bleak**" past face and her "**bewitching**" present face, and the repetition of light /l/ sounds emphasizes her new ladylike delicacy. Again, Amelia's own speech sounds soft by comparison—characterized by those /w/ sounds:

"We never do work when we're ruined," said she.

The only time Amelia's speech gets a little feistier is at the very end of the poem, when she dips back into her country accent and her final two lines are marked by sharp alliteration of the hard /k/ sound:

"My dear — a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. [...]"

Where Alliteration appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "Melia," "my," "dear," "does"
- **Line 2:** "meet"
- **Line 5:** "tatters"
- **Line 6:** "Tired," "digging," "docks"
- **Line 7:** "bracelets," "bright"
- **Line 8:** "we," "when we're"
- **Line 9:** "thee," "thou"
- **Line 10:** "thik," "theäs," "t'other"
- **Line 11:** "talking"
- **Line 12:** "with one's"
- **Line 13:** "blue," "bleak"
- **Line 14:** "But," "bewitched," "by"
- **Line 15:** "little," "la-dy!"
- **Line 16:** "We," "work when we're"
- **Line 17:** "home-life," "hag-ridden"
- **Line 18:** "sigh," "sock," "seem"
- **Line 19:** "know not," "megrims," "melancho-ly"
- **Line 21:** "feathers," "fine"
- **Line 22:** "face"
- **Line 23:** "country"
- **Line 24:** "Cannot quite"

ASSONANCE

[Assonance](#) is one of the most common poetic devices, and it often appears just because it sounds good. It certainly plays that role in this poem. The assonance here is rarely prominent enough to really draw the reader's attention to itself, but its tunefulness keeps the poem feeling lively.

That tunefulness—the plain sound of the short /ih/ in "your little gloves fit," the /uh/ in "spudding up," the long /ay/ in "gay bracelets," the /eh/ in "'Yes: that's how we dress'"—points to a bigger point about the poem. This poem is certainly bitterly [ironic](#), but it's also *funny*. That humor is reflected in the poem's sounds: this isn't a solemn chant or a grim ballad of a fallen woman. The pleasant sounds of assonance contribute to this sense that, while this poem is certainly a condemnation of sexual hypocrisy, it does its condemning by pointing out that sexual hypocrisy is ridiculous.

In this way, assonance works together with its cousin [alliteration](#), and with the bouncy, rollicking [anapestic](#)

tetrameter (that is, the poem's da-da-DUM rhythm)—all of which one might find in a kids' book. The devices that make this poem sound musical and superficially lighthearted are also the devices that cloak its social critique in humor.

Where Assonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "Melia," "dear"
- **Line 2:** "could," "should," "meet"
- **Line 3:** "fair," "prosperi"
- **Line 4:** "O," "know"
- **Line 6:** "spudding up"
- **Line 7:** "gay bracelets"
- **Line 8:** "Yes," "dress"
- **Line 15:** "little," "fit," "la-dy"
- **Line 17:** "You," " , " "used"
- **Line 18:** "seem"
- **Line 19:** "megrims," "melancho-ly"
- **Line 20:** "pretty," "lively"
- **Line 21:** "I," "I," "fine"
- **Line 23:** "country," "such"

POLYSYNDETON

Pile-ups of [polysyndeton](#) add to the cumulative effect of the friend's marvel. Her recounting of the ways in which Amelia has changed uses strings of the word "and," evoking her energetic, uninhibited voice. Polysyndeton often creates a feeling of accumulation, and here it does exactly that.

In this poem, polysyndeton tends to appear in the same spots as passages of thick dialect. Take a look at lines 9 and 10:

— "At home in the barton you said thee' and thou,
And thik oon,' and theäs oon,' and t'other'; but now
Your talking quite fits 'ee for high compa-ny!" —

Here, those "and"s just keep coming as the friend runs through all the everyday, down-to-earth language she can think of. This polysyndeton makes the friend seem sweet and perhaps a little dense: she keeps on thinking of a new turn of phrase to add, but they're all variations on a theme. She's essentially saying "this, that, and the other," but adding on each new word as if it comes as a surprise.

Polysyndeton appears again in line 18, where the friend remembers Amelia's whining: "And you'd sigh, and you'd sock". There's a feeling here that the friend is recalling a drawn-out habit of moaning and groaning (not an unreasonable habit, given the circumstances!).

Where Polysyndeton appears in the poem:

- **Line 10:** "And thik oon,' and theäs oon,' and t'other'"
- **Line 18:** "And you'd sigh, and you'd sock;"

CAESURA

The many [caesuras](#) in this poem help to create a naturalistic rhythm, making the [dialogue](#) between these two women sound like everyday speech while remaining almost goofily musical. (See this guide's entry on [assonance](#) for more on this musicality.) But caesuras also help to draw attention to some of the poem's most blisteringly [ironic](#) moments.

The more naturalistic caesuras often turn up in the friend's dialogue, including in her (and the poem's) very first line: "'O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!'" The caesuras at the commas here are just how people talk: this is an everyday rhythm of speech.

But there's a repeated, meaningful caesura in each stanza's final line: the caesura that comes just after Amelia finishes speaking. While the friend's dialogue is never tagged, Amelia's speeches always end with the words "said she." This serves a few purposes.

For one thing, that "she" confirms that this is the very "ruined maid" the poem's title has led the reader to expect. For another, it makes Amelia's speeches feel clipped and terse in comparison to the friend's long, flowing, naturalistic sentences. That this caesura always falls after the word "ruined" only directs the reader's attention more pointedly to the poem's irony. The two caesuras in the final line make their point even more emphatically:

"My dear — a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain't ruined," said she.

Here, in the poem's final punchline, a caesura to either side gives that ironic ruination plenty of emphatic space.

Where Caesura appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "'Melia, my dear, this"
- **Line 3:** "garments, such"
- **Line 4:** "ruined?" said"
- **Line 5:** "tatters, without"
- **Line 6:** "potatoes, and"
- **Line 8:** "ruined," said"
- **Line 10:** "oon,' and," "oon,' and," "t'other'; but"
- **Line 12:** "ruin," said"
- **Line 13:** "then, your"
- **Line 16:** "ruined," said"
- **Line 18:** "sigh, and," "sock; but"
- **Line 20:** "ruined," said"
- **Line 21:** "feathers, a"
- **Line 22:** "face, and"
- **Line 23:** "dear — a," "girl, such"
- **Line 24:** "that. You"

COLLOQUIALISM

[Colloquialisms](#) play a couple of critical roles in "The Ruined Maid": they work thematically, raising questions of class and status, and they also help to characterize both the friend and (by extension) the earlier version of Amelia.

The poem launches right in with highly-flavored dialect in the first line: "O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!" From the start, any reader familiar with English dialects knows that this speaker is enthusiastic, bold, and—importantly—both rural and lower-class. That impression only deepens: in this speaker's world, people don't pull weeds, but rather "spud up docks"; people don't live on a homestead, but a "barton"; people don't moan and groan, they "sigh and sock."

Amelia, by contrast, rejects this kind of colloquial language. Pretty much everything she says in the poem is rather formal: the drawling understatement of "One's pretty lively when ruined," for instance, has a haughtiness that actively resists her friend's countrified voice. But that changes at the end of the poem:

"My dear — a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain't ruined," said she.

Here, Amelia returns briefly to the dialect she once shared with her friend. There's something mocking in this moment, but also something telling. Amelia hasn't gotten rid of her roots, she's only concealed them. Colloquialisms point to some of the poem's deepest concerns about women's status and options.

Where Colloquialism appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "'O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!"
- **Line 6:** "spudding up docks"
- **Lines 9-11:** "— 'At home in the barton you said thee' and thou,' / And thik oon,' and theäs oon,' and t'other'; but now / Your talking quite fits 'ee for high compa-ny!' —"
- **Line 18:** "And you'd sigh, and you'd sock"
- **Line 19:** "To know not of megrims or melancho-ly!" —"
- **Line 22:** "could strut about Town!" —"
- **Line 23:** "such as you be,"
- **Line 24:** "You ain't ruined,"

END-STOPPED LINE

The many [end-stopped lines](#) in "The Ruined Maid" help to give the poem its energetic punch and underline its humor.

For instance, take a look at the friend's end-stopped exclamations. There's one in every stanza, from "'O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!" to "I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown, / And a delicate face, and could strut about Town!" This is a strong effect, and gives a sense that the friend is speaking both enthusiastically and rather loudly.

Meanwhile, Amelia's lines always end with a full stop, and

therefore, so does every stanza. There's a big contrast in tone here. The friend is all yokelish energy, but Amelia's responses are cool and collected; her new life comes as no surprise to her.

Those full stops feel like they belong to the poet as much as to Amelia. Just as the [refrain](#) means everything in the poem always comes back to ruination, those periods suggest the poet's thin smile at this bitter joke.

There are subtler end-stops in the poem, too, like the semicolon that ends line 6 or the comma at line 14. Separating the friend's memories from her description of Amelia's present elegance, these end-stops often help to set up the [juxtaposition](#) between these ruined and unruined maids.

Where End-Stopped Line appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "crown!"
- **Line 2:** "Town?"
- **Line 3:** "prosperi-ty?" —
- **Line 4:** "she."
- **Line 5:** "socks,"
- **Line 6:** "docks;"
- **Line 7:** "three!" —
- **Line 8:** "she."
- **Line 9:** "thou,"
- **Line 11:** "compa-ny!" —
- **Line 12:** "said she."
- **Line 14:** "cheek,"
- **Line 15:** "la-dy!" —
- **Line 16:** "she."
- **Line 17:** "dream,"
- **Line 19:** "melancho-ly!" —
- **Line 20:** "she."
- **Line 21:** "gown,"
- **Line 22:** "Town!" —
- **Line 23:** "be,"
- **Line 24:** "she."

ENJAMBMENT

There are only a couple of moments of [enjambment](#) in the poem, and they contribute to the overall effect of the friend's excitable babble.

Both of these moments of enjambment occur when the friend is turning from how Amelia *used* to be—poor, cold, ragged, miserable—to how she is now—wealthy, elegant, ladylike. Take a look at the first of these:

— "At home in the barton you said thee' and thou,
And thik oon,' and theäs oon,' and t'other'; but now
Your talking quite fits 'ee for high compa-ny!" —

Here, enjambment works along with [polysyndeton](#) to suggest that the friend is getting so overwhelmed by how dramatically

Amelia has changed that she's babbling. That her own dialect is so strong in these lines ("Your talking quite fits 'ee for high compa-ny!") only drives the point home: the friend is just like the old Amelia herself.

The second moment of enjambment comes at a subtly poignant moment among all the poem's wit and irony:

And you'd sigh, and you'd sock; but at present you
seem
To know not of megrims or melancho-ly!" —

Here, as the friend recalls how Amelia's suffering wasn't just physical but emotional, her words again spill over from line to line; her urgency hints at the real desperation of her life.

Where Enjambment appears in the poem:

- **Lines 10-11:** "now / Your"
- **Lines 18-19:** "seem / To"

REFRAIN

The [refrain](#) of "The Ruined Maid" is one of the poem's most important devices. Whatever happens in the stanza before that refrain—whatever misery the friend describes, whatever elegance she admires in Amelia now—the reader knows that it's all going to come back, literally, to Amelia's ruination. This pattern of returning and returning to Amelia's ruin hammers home the poem's joke (and its social criticism).

The specific qualities that Amelia's friend notices, and that Amelia attributes to ruination, are also telling. Through the refrain, Amelia explains that the benefits she's gained through being a mistress are, in order: wealth, fancy clothes, elegant speech, leisure, and cheerfulness. While this is a lot, there do seem to be a few desirable aspects of a relationship missing: love, for instance.

The refrain isn't just thematically important. It also helps to keep the poem's tone light and witty. Refrains are *musical*—think of the chorus of a song—and they make a poem feel, well, poetic: one wouldn't use a refrain in day-to-day speech.

The refrain here thus works with a lot of other musical qualities (especially [assonance](#), [alliteration](#), and bouncy [meter](#)) to make the poem feel lighter and funnier. It almost sounds like a music-hall song (a kind of popular, lowbrow, often racy vaudeville performance popular in England through the 19th century and beyond). The refrain thus contributes to both sides of the poem's [irony](#): the bitter and the comical.

Where Refrain appears in the poem:

- **Line 4:** "ruined?" said she."
- **Line 8:** "ruined," said she."

- **Line 12:** "ruin," said she."
- **Line 16:** "ruined," said she."
- **Line 20:** "ruined," said she."
- **Line 24:** "ruined," said she."

IRONY

[Irony](#) is the water this poem swims in. The whole conceit of the poem is ironic: being "ruined," which sounds pretty terrible and was *meant* to be pretty terrible according to Victorian social mores, in fact seems to be a fountain of blessings for Amelia.

The last stanza, where all the poem's ironies culminate, might be the richest example of irony:

— "I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
And a delicate face, and could strut about Town!" —
"My dear — a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain't ruined," said she.

Here, the friend has moved from enumerating all the ways that Amelia is better off now that she's a rich man's mistress into wishing for those same pleasures herself. Amelia replies that a "raw country girl" can hardly expect to earn such privileges without being ruined.

There's a whole onion of ironic layers here. There's the usual irony that being ruined is, to these women, a lot like being blessed. But there's also a touch of subtler irony in Amelia's diagnosis of her friend's situation. When she tells her friend she can't have wealth and class because "you ain't ruined," she seems to suggest that being ruined is an essential character trait: you got it or you don't! But what does it take to be ruined? A lover, of course—the lover who is, ironically, completely absent from this poem. Hardy's ironic critique of sexual hypocrisy is shaped as much by who *isn't* in the poem as who is.

Where Irony appears in the poem:

- **Line 4:** ""O didn't you know I'd been ruined?" said she."
- **Line 8:** ""Yes: that's how we dress when we're ruined," said she."
- **Line 12:** ""Some polish is gained with one's ruin," said she."
- **Line 16:** ""We never do work when we're ruined," said she."
- **Line 20:** ""True. One's pretty lively when ruined," said she."
- **Line 24:** "Cannot quite expect that. You ain't ruined," said she."

JUXTAPOSITION

This whole poem is one big [juxtaposition](#). Through voices, through subject, through structure, and through themes, "The

Ruined Maid" juxtaposes unlike characters to make its point.

The very shape of the poem is one juxtaposition after another. Each stanza pits the friend's admiring wonder and her heavy dialect against Amelia's brief, flippant replies. There's a stylistic juxtaposition between the friend's talkative and energetic tone with Amelia's curtness: "'O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!'" is the greeting of a very different person than the one who introduces herself by drawling, "'O didn't you know I'd been ruined?'" This difference also points to a juxtaposition of impoverished-but-honest country life with wealthy-but-corrupt town life (read more about this in the [Symbols](#) section of this guide).

That points to the bigger thematic juxtaposition here. Though these two women seem very different, the poem reminds readers over and over that they're alike in all ways but one. While Amelia has used her sexuality to escape her impoverished origins, she and her friend are both from the same place, and they're both struggling under the same strictures. In this world, a woman can be a good girl or a bad girl, but either way, society will judge her for what she does with her sexuality.

Where Juxtaposition appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-4
- Lines 5-8
- Lines 9-24

SIBILANCE

The [sibilance](#) of "The Ruined Maid" is pretty subtle. In the friend's lines, it sometimes works in tandem with [alliteration](#), helping to create a wall of sound that evokes the friend's unsophisticated chatter, as in "You left us in tatters, without shoes or socks, / Tired of digging potatoes, and spudding up docks" (lines 5-6), or "you'd sigh and you'd sock" (line 18). (See the [Devices](#) entry on alliteration for more on this.)

But sibilance also turns up regularly in the poem's [refrain](#), where Amelia's dialogue is always tagged "said she." This isn't especially strong sibilance; it feels more incidental than intentional. But it does add a very slight hiss to Amelia's lines, which sometimes links up with further internal sibilance in what she actually says.

For instance, in line 8, Amelia replies to her friend's marveling inventory of her new clothes with the word: "'Yes: that's how we dress when we're ruined,' said she." In this reply, a very light, understated /s/ (and /sh/) pattern weaves through Amelia's words. The effect is a subtle chill in her tone, and maybe a hint of a whisper. Amelia is perhaps not a hundred percent delighted to be having this loud conversation about her former life with a country acquaintance in the middle of town.

Where Sibilance appears in the poem:

- **Line 4:** "said she"
- **Line 5:** "us," "shoes," "socks"
- **Line 6:** "spudding," "docks"
- **Line 8:** "Yes:," "dress," "said she"
- **Line 12:** "polish," "one's," "said she"
- **Line 16:** "said she"
- **Line 18:** "sigh," "sock," "present," "seem"
- **Line 20:** "said she"
- **Line 24:** "said she"

METAPHOR

[Metaphor](#) (in which one thing is said to be another thing) and [simile](#) (a type of metaphor in which two unlike things are explicitly compared using the words "like" or "as") appear in only a couple of places in "The Ruined Maid," but they're both doozies. In one instance, a simile lowers Amelia's former self to the level of the animal; in the other, a metaphor makes Amelia's past seem like a horrible dream.

In among her lengthy catalog of ways in which Amelia used to be ugly, miserable, poor, cold, starving, etc., the friend observes that, in her earlier life, Amelia's "hands were like paws" (line 13). This vivid image suggests that not only was Amelia's former life full of hard labor that made her hands rough and clumsy, but that this labor made her animal-like. This is a lowering image: there's a hint here that the friend's envy is getting to her, and she's becoming a tiny bit insulting. Of course, these insults are also at her own expense: she's still stuck in this miserable bestial life.

The second image is Amelia's own: in her past, the friend reports, she called "home-life a hag-ridden dream" (line 17)—that is, a nightmare. This metaphor suggests a feeling of horrible unreality. And indeed, Amelia has awakened from the nasty dream of her past life, but she's only arrived in another dream, which might just as easily vanish if her lover gets tired of her.

Where Metaphor appears in the poem:

- **Line 13:** ""Your hands were like paws then,"
- **Line 17:** ""You used to call home-life a hag-ridden dream,"

Prosperity (Line 3) - Wealth and success.

Ruined (Line 4) - In the context of this poem, being "ruined" means having had sex before marriage. Amelia, as a rich man's mistress, is thoroughly "ruined."

Tatters (Line 5) - Ragged clothing.

Spudding up docks (Line 6) - Digging up weeds.

Gay (Line 7) - Cheerful, colorful.

Barton (Line 9) - Farm, homestead.

"thee' and thou,' / And thik oon,' and theäs oon,' and t'other'" (Lines 9-10) - A long passage of rural dialect. "Thee" and "thou" are informal forms of "you." "Thik oon," "theäs oon," and "t'other" mean "this one," "these ones," and "the other"—so, something like "this, that, and the other."

Polish (Line 12) - Sophistication and refinement.

Blue and bleak (Line 13) - Pale and haggard.

Hag-ridden dream (Line 17) - A nightmare (from the old folk belief that witches or succubi pouncing on someone in the night caused bad dreams).

Sock (Line 18) - Moan and groan.

Megrims (Line 19) - Sadness, depression, the blues.

Melancho-ly (Line 19) - Deep sadness, depression, angst.

Raw (Line 23) - Coarse and unrefined.

**FORM, METER, & RHYME****FORM**

"The Ruined Maid" uses six [quatrains](#), each made up of two rhyming [couplets](#). It's the patterns within these regular quatrains that give the poem its flavor.

The poem is a dialogue between two former friends: one chatty and countrified, one haughty and sophisticated. Take a look at the first stanza:

"O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown!
Who could have supposed I should meet you in
Town?
And whence such fair garments, such prosperi-ty?" —
"O didn't you know I'd been ruined?" said she.

The shape of this exchange, in which the friend cheerfully babbles for the first three lines and Amelia responds with a curt, flippant reference to her ruination, repeats through almost the whole poem. This pattern gives the reader a sense of these two women's different characters—and of the new contrast between two people who used to be very similar.

It's only in the last stanza that something changes:

**VOCABULARY**

"this does everything crown!" (Line 1) - An exclamation of surprise, something like "doesn't that beat everything!"

Whence (Line 3) - From where.

Fair garments (Line 3) - Beautiful clothes.

— "I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
And a delicate face, and could strut about Town!" —
"My dear — a raw country girl, such as you be,
Cannot quite expect that. You ain't ruined," said she.

At the poem's punchline, Amelia takes two lines rather than her usual one to dampen her friend's envious longing for her wealth and sophistication, driving home the point the poem has been insisting on all along.

METER

The [anapestic](#) tetrameter of "The Ruined Maid" is a rollicking, speedy [meter](#) that suits the poem's ironic humor. (This meter might be familiar to readers from the works of Dr. Seuss.) An anapest is a poetic foot with a da-da-DUM rhythm, and tetrameter just means there are four metrical feet per line.

But this isn't *pure* anapestic tetrameter: most lines actually start with an [iamb](#) (da-DUM). In those lines, the rhythm looks like this:

Who **could** | have supposed | I should **meet** | you in
Town?

Notice how, in this example, the stress pattern helps the reader to hear the friend's voice: "Who **could** have supposed?" evokes a different accent than "Who could have supposed?" Similarly, the meter means that the friend often leans on an unusual syllable, saying "prosperi-ty," "compa-ny," "la-dy," and "melancho-ly"—a rusticated speech pattern that Hardy emphasizes even further with those hyphens.

There's a related (but opposite) effect in lines 24-25:

"My **dear** | — a raw coun- | try girl, **such** | as you **be**,
Cannot **quite** | expect **that**. | You ain't ru- | ined," said
she.

The anapests (da-da-DUM) that kick off that final line gives the reader a strong sense of the elegant accent Amelia is putting on: "Cannot **quite** expect **that**" stresses "quite" and "that" with a touch of haughty disdain. This effect is especially potent in contrast with Amelia's mocking dip into her former dialect when she says "such as you be" and "ain't."

The meter also strengthens the contrast between Amelia and her friend in a subtler way. While Amelia's friend's dialogue takes up full lines, Amelia's speeches are curter: the tag "said she" at the end of each of her lines means she has even less than a line to say herself, making her replies seem clipped and dismissive.

RHYME SCHEME

"The Ruined Maid" uses a jaunty pattern of rhymed [couplets](#), running:

AABB

Importantly, that BB rhyme remains steady all through the poem: the last two lines *always* rhyme on a long /ee/ sound, so that each [stanza](#) can conclude with the words "said she."

This rhyme scheme is lively and bouncy, evoking the friend's countrified babbling. But it also underlines the poem's [irony](#). It's not just the words "said she" that repeat, but the words, "'ruined,' said she." That ever-repeated B rhyme insists that all the new luxuries of Amelia's life are the result of her ruination. Everything comes back to being ruined—literally.



SPEAKER

Accent is a huge part of how people read social class, and it was an especially meaningful signifier in 19th-century England—where (as anyone who's seen *My Fair Lady* or *Pygmalion* will know), one's patterns of speech could unlock, or lock, whole worlds. So the two very different voices of the speakers in this poem tell the reader a lot about their personalities and circumstances.

The first voice the poem introduces is that of Amelia's unnamed friend, a sweet, rusticated girl with a thick rural accent. Friendly and ingenuous, this girl also comes across as a bit of a yokel as she marvels openly at Amelia's new wealth. Her harrowing descriptions of Amelia's past suggest that she herself is still living a life of exhausting poverty. Perhaps there's also a hint, as the poem goes on, that some of her friendliness is masked spite: she doesn't seem willing to let Amelia forget exactly how terrible things used to be for her.

In reply to her friend's persistence and enthusiasm, Amelia only drawls. Her "ruination" has given her a new upper-class voice and a new upper-class attitude; she's sophisticated, flippant, and condescending. But as her switch back into her former dialect (note that [colloquial](#) "ain't") at the end of the poem indicates, this is as much a defensive posture as a true change. Ruination means that, while Amelia is living a life of luxury, she's also living in the margins, and she has to double down on her performance of upper-classness in order to endure the sexist judgments of Victorian society.



SETTING

The poem is set in "town"—that is, the city, as opposed to the countryside that Amelia came from. There's more to be learned about "town" from the friend's description of Amelia's muddy, potato-filled origins than from any direct description of town itself: town, the reader gathers is everything that the countryside is not. Through the friend's marvel at Amelia's elegant clothes and delicate complexion, the reader learns that "town" is a place of wealth, refinement, and leisure, as opposed to the grimy and impoverished rural village where Amelia and

her friend once toiled together.



CONTEXT

LITERARY CONTEXT

Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) was an English poet and a novelist, known for his passionate opposition to the cruelty and hypocrisy of the buttoned-up Victorian world he was born into. Though best known now for novels like [Jude the Obscure](#) and [Tess of the d'Urbervilles](#), during Hardy's lifetime these frank and shocking books weren't especially well-received, and he made his reputation as a poet. His life spanned both high Victorian propriety and the horrific disillusionment of World War I; his work is both righteously angry and pessimistic.

Hardy was deeply influenced by his rural upbringing in Dorset, where he saw first-hand the kind of suffering he describes in "The Ruined Maid." Many of his books and poems are set in a fictionalized version of his home county, which he renamed "Wessex" and elaborated as thoroughly as Tolkien elaborated his Middle-earth. Hardy's friend William Barnes, who was similarly interested in rural identity and dialect, was a big influence on him. In his passionate denouncement of sexual hypocrisy and misogyny, Hardy also followed in the footsteps of thinkers like [John Stuart Mill](#) and [Mary Wollstonecraft](#).

Hardy was well-known during his own lifetime, and was a public figure as well as a literary man. His political outrage and naturalistic ear for voice in turn influenced any number of later writers, from [Yeats](#) to [Woolf](#) to [Sassoon](#).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 1866, when "The Ruined Maid" was written, England was at the height of its power and prosperity. It was also a world of deep divisions between the rich and the poor, the upper classes and the lower classes, and men and women. "The Ruined Maid" casts a jaded eye on a plain fact of the Victorian woman's life: female sexuality was demonized and exploited by men at exactly the same time.

The reign of Queen Victoria was a paradoxical time for women. On the one hand, Victoria was the first queen to wield any real power since Elizabeth I, and she was a beloved and successful ruler, presiding over the vast British Empire. But just as Elizabeth had to present herself as an eternal Diana-like virgin goddess to maintain power in a man's world, Victoria had to be a model of strict female propriety, and the world around her reflected those strictures.

The Victorian era was a difficult time to be a woman. Sexuality was off-limits outside the confines of marriage—but only for women; men could essentially do what they liked and get away with it. This double standard left a lot of women in desperate circumstances. If a woman was known to have had sex outside wedlock (or to have had a child), she was likely to be cast out of

respectable society altogether, and perhaps forced into prostitution.

This problem was exacerbated by sharp class divisions and a serious wealth divide. The Industrial Revolution was changing the world, and as Hardy's rural maid notes, life in the countryside was not getting any easier as wealth moved into the cities. "Ruin" by a rich man might indeed look like a pretty cushy option to a starving farmworker—at least, until the rich man got tired of her.



MORE RESOURCES

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- [More on Hardy's Life and Work](#) — A short biography of Hardy and links to more of his poetry. (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/thomas-hardy>)
- [Hardy's Anti-Sexist Writing](#) — A piece in The Atlantic about Hardy's literary pushback against Victorian sexism. (<https://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2013/05/you-aint-ruined-how-thomas-hardy-took-on-victorian-era-purity-culture/276289/>)
- [The Hardy Society](#) — The official website of the Hardy Society, dedicating to promoting "understanding and appreciation of the life and works of the novelist and poet Thomas Hardy." (<https://www.hardysociety.org/>)
- [A Dramatization of the Poem](#) — Watch a video of the poem being performed as a little play. (<https://youtu.be/67g3RRrJZHk>)
- [Portrayals of Sexism in Hardy's Writing](#) — A piece about the different faces of Victorian sexism in Hardy's *Tess of the D'urbervilles*—a famous novel with themes similar to those of "The Ruined Maid." (<https://lithub.com/my-fictional-nemesis-why-thomas-hardys-angel-clare-is-the-worst/>)

LITCHARTS ON OTHER THOMAS HARDY POEMS

- [A Wife In London](#)
- [Channel Firing](#)
- [Neutral Tones](#)
- [The Convergence of the Twain](#)
- [The Darkling Thrush](#)
- [The Man He Killed](#)



HOW TO CITE

MLA

Nelson, Kristin. "The Ruined Maid." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 7 Jan 2020. Web. 10 Nov 2020.

CHICAGO MANUAL

Nelson, Kristin. "The Ruined Maid." LitCharts LLC, January 7, 2020. Retrieved November 10, 2020. <https://www.litcharts.com/poetry/thomas-hardy/the-ruined-maid>.