

# The use of natural imagery in tess of the d'urbervilles



In Thomas Hardy's novel, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the reader is introduced to a character named Tess who comes to be known as a "Child of Nature" (Amazon. co. uk). The British author's novel flourishes with the use of natural imagery. Hardy uses natural imagery to mimic Tess's current situation and evoke an emotional response in the reader. Hardy's utilization of natural imagery is apparent in the similarities between Tess Durbeyfield and Marlott, the affects Tantridge has on her persona, the contrast between Talbothays Dairy and Flintcomb-Ash, the use of seasons to affect the mood, and the conflict between the city and the country." The village of Marlott lay amid the north-eastern undulations of the beautiful Vale of Blakemore...an engirdled and secluded region...this fertile and sheltered tract of country, in which the fields are never brown and the springs never dry...(12)." This description of Marlott notes that Marlott is a "sheltered" region, which does not have to face the peril of the world. Much like Marlott, Tess has been living a "sheltered" existence. Tess is a "simple...fresh...picturesque country girl...(15-16)" who has no clue what awaits her. Because of her simple and sheltered life, Tess has become gullible and easily manipulated "just as the earth can often be victim to the people who inhabit it (Patel, Tanvi)." Manipulated by her parents to claim kinship, Tess travels to Tantridge where her personality begins to change with the environment around her. Upon her arrival in Tantridge, Tess is faced with Alec D'Urbervilles' relentless pursuit. Alec D'Urberville is an arrogant teenager who on more than one occasion tries to take advantage of Tess. Because of Alec's demeanor, Tess is forced to become less gullible and more acute to her environment, just as the law of nature requires any inhabitant to be equally decisive in their habitat. It is at night, when Tess is walking home

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through the forest, that Alec persuades her to let him carry her home. After a long period of time, Alec leads Tess into a thick patch of fog and Tess learns that Alec has not been taking her towards the house and quickly dismounts declaring she'll find her own way. Tess finds herself drowsy and makes a bed for herself on the ground. This is the location where Alec rapes Tess, leaving her pregnant and changing her life forever. Thomas Hardy also uses the locations where Tess finds work to vividly express his use of natural imagery. Tess, seeking employment and trying to start a new life, makes her way to Talbothays. At Talbothays Tess senses a rejuvenated spirit of hope for her life ahead. "It was unexpanded youth, surging up anew after its temporary check, and bringing with it hope, and the invincible instinct towards self-delight (100)." Talbothays is a peaceful place where Tess quickly makes friends and performs light work. The environment of Talbothays is serene, calm, and refreshing, much like Tess is currently feeling. Tess's job at the dairy is milking cows, stirring the milk to keep it fresh, and various other light labor jobs; this illustrates that things are starting to look better for her. This life-style and these jobs are the direct opposite of the ones she encounters while working at Flintcomb-Ash. Flintcomb-Ash was a "starve-acre place," as Tess's inner being is just as hard and hurt there (284). "The sky wore, in another colour, the same likeness; a white vacuity of countenance with the lineaments gone (285)." At Flintcomb-Ash Tess is forced to work "hour after hour, unconscious of the forlorn aspect they bore in the landscape (285)." Tess is forced to labor in the heat of the day and on man driven machines, jobs that take their toll on her tired body. This fierce work and environment parallels with the rough relationship between Tess and her estranged husband. Flintcomb-Ash is a place for lost souls to go as a last resort and at <https://assignbuster.com/the-use-of-natural-imagery-in-tess-of-the-durbervilles/>

this point it is Tess's last resort. She chooses to bear the rough climate and rugged terrain as she chooses to continue her own rough and rugged marriage." Hardy's belief in the constant movement of human feeling between pain and pleasure is also reflected in the seasonal nature of life (Barron's)." In this novel the readers notice how the characters' emotions and fortunes are reflected by the seasons in which they take place. Tess of the D'Urbervilles begins in May, " a hopeful time when life renews (Brooklyn)." Marlott is in celebration of springtime as everything is blossoming and hopes are high for the summer months to come. At the May Day celebration readers are introduced to a pure and happy-go-lucky Tess, who appears to have no care in the world. Tess falls in love with Angel Clare, the son of a minister who is studying at Talbothays Dairy. Their love begins to blossom in the late spring and throughout summer just as the plants are fertile and ripening. Tess is raped and loses her baby in September when " nature is slowly dying and decaying (Patel, Tanvi)." In the middle of winter Tess marries Angel, thereby foreshadowing the eventual death of their marriage. Just as all the leaves have fallen from the trees and seemingly all that has life has died, so does Tess's marriage in four short days. Also during the winter months, Tess works at Flintcomb-Ash, where not only is her faithfulness to her husband tried but also her physical body is tested in the harsh environment. Tess's life is more than coincidentally related to nature. Just as the novel has seven phases representing Tess's life, the moon has seven phases in its cycle (McKay, Lucy). Another argument throughout Tess of the D'Urbervilles is the conflict between the city and the country. Once Tess has been established as a " Child of Nature" she is altered by urbanity and " industrial forces have their effect on Tess's life (Patel, Tanvi)." The first <https://assignbuster.com/the-use-of-natural-imagery-in-tess-of-the-durbervilles/>

key attribute of the urbanization of Tess's character is her own parents. Tess's parents took pride in their agrarian lifestyles and made a living by farming. Once the industrial movement hits, Tess's parents are affected financially and mentally. After John Durbeyfield's death the family was evicted from the property to make room for the industrial movement (Patel, Tanvi). The second key attribute of the urbanization of Tess's character is her introduction to Alec D'Urberville. "The manner in which he goes about manipulating Tess is as unsuspecting and savage as the transformation between rural to urban (Patel, Tanvi)." In the darkness and dense fog of the Chase, Alec rapes Tess and steals her purity and innocence. The third key attribute of the urbanization of Tess's character is her relationship with Angel Clare. Angel is considered a hypocrite by most readers and is highly criticized for being so double-dealing. Angel punishes Tess for being impure when he himself has willingly become impure. "Although he tries to become part of the rural world, his upbringing forces him to side with the notions of industry (Patel, Tanvi)." Tess of the D'Urbervilles is a novel loaded with natural imagery. From Tess's younger days in Marlott to her days at Flintcomb-Ash, the reader can see how her personality correlates with nature and her surrounding environments. Tess proved to the reader that she would never be anything more than a "Child of Nature" who could not seem to escape her destiny. Like the moon that has to wait for the seven phases to end to begin anew, Tess is forced to follow the seven phases of her life before she too can begin anew. Tess never said that she wanted the life she was given, but she found the strength to go on hoping that nature would show her favor tomorrow. Just as the more powerful and more popular industrial movement overran the agricultural lifestyle, so did the forces of <https://assignbuster.com/the-use-of-natural-imagery-in-tess-of-the-durbervilles/>

nature around Tess's relationships, emotions, and body overrun her. The reader is left wondering, what if Tess had never accidentally killed the family's horse? What if she had never met Alec D'Urberville? Would everything have turned out like a fairytale romance? Could she have escaped her destiny? These are the questions readers are left to contemplate and never find the answers to. "'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals had ended his sport with Tess. And the D'Urberville knights slept on in their tombs unknowing (395-396)." Works Cited" Flintcomb-Ash: Nature and Flintcomb-Ash." Brooklyn College. 19 Aug. 2003. [http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/novel\\_19c/hardy/flint.html](http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/english/melani/novel_19c/hardy/flint.html)

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