

What do thomas
hardy's stories tell us
about the author and
his beliefs



Thomas Hardy was born in 1840 and died in 1928. During his lifetime he wrote fifteen novels and over a thousand poems. He was born in England, in a county town of Dorset, near Dorchester. Thomas Hardy had lived there for the greater part of his life, he named this area Wessex; he did this because of the fictional name based on the Anglo Saxons Kingdom of Wessex. Wessex is an unchanged rural area where people have lived there for centuries.

His stories were set in this area and his characters in most stories were the naive yokels from that area. 'The withered arm and other Wessex tales' is just one of his books. Throughout these stories Hardy shows the simplicity of the yokels, how they believed in fate and superstition and the effects on the class systems on them. Hardy shows how strongly he disagree with the class system through the characters and his tales.

Thomas hardy was influenced by the people he met in his childhood. Phyllis is a good example of this from the 'Melancholy Hussar of the German legion' as he quotes 'Phyllis told me the story with her own lips.' This makes the stories sound realistic.

Throughout his stories the jobs he choose for his characters makes them very realistic for the rural area they live in, for example Rhoda Brooks was a milk maid, Sophie Twycott was a parlour maid, Tony kytes was a Wagoner and Sam was a market gardener. Most of Hardy's characters in the stories, their dialect is wrote how they would speak, in a simple, yokel accent,

" He do bring home his bride to-morrow, I hear"

" Hav anybody seen her?"

" Years younger than he, they say."

This is a conversation between the milkers, this shows us Hardy tries to write in their local accent.

Around that time a lot of people would have believed in superstition, Thomas Hardy's influences from his childhood are shown through his stories this is no better illustrated than in the 'Withered arm' Gertrude was an educated woman but she still went along with the yokels superstition about laying her arm on a dead mans neck. When she actually went to cure her arm at the jail it didn't work and mysteriously died. The yokels would have called this superstitious.

The yokels would have also believed in fate and your life is mapped out from birth in the stars. Thomas Hardy would have also believed in fate, he shows this in many of the stories he wrote. One of the best examples of this is the 'Withered arm'.

'For some time she could not be found; but eventually she reappeared in her old parish, - absolutely refusing, however to have anything to do with the provision made for her.' This quote shows that Rhoda Brooks simply accepts her fate at the end of the story. Rhoda Brooks was a milk maid and had an legitimate child to the Farmer, Farmer Lodge, he then married a younger woman named Gertrude of his class, Farmer Lodge could not marry Rhoda because she was of a lower class. Gertrude's arm then becomes 'withered' and is told to place her arm on a dead mans neck that has been hung. She

then goes to the jail and coincidentally the dead man is Rhoda Brooks' son. She then dies. Thomas Hardy also shows his disagreement in the class system in his stories and in some of the other stories. The 'Sons Veto' illustrates this very well,

....'became- in her son's eyes- a mother whose mistakes and origin it was painful lot a gentlement to blush for.'

This shows how Sophie Twycotts son is ashamed of her because she was of a lower class than the Father. She married a vicar and she was just a maid. They had a child together named Randolph, who is all grown up to from a higher class. Sophie Twycott is in a wheelchair after falling down the stairs, Randolph hates Sophie. Mr Twycott dies from old age. Randolph wont let her marry again and later dies an unhappy old women.

" Then he flushes and bursts into passionate tears." This shows how 'stuck-up' the child is.

Most of Hardys stories were set in a rural, pastoral area because this is where he grew up and got his influences from. It is an unchanged area of Dorchester. Hardy shows how rural the area is through the characters and their jobs; milkmaids, farmers, and gardeners.

In my conclusion I have learnt that Thomas Hardys influences from his childhood have been shown throughout his stories. Most of his stories show how much he was against the class system. I have also learnt that the people of that time and are were strong believers in fate ans superstition. I

personally quite liked the Withered Arm has it had a twist at the end of the story.