

Symbolism in tess of the d'urbervilles essay



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In *Tess of the D'urbervilles*, Hardy uses symbolism effectively to foresee what is going to happen in the future, to show a specific mood he wants to portray, and to put across his opinion. He also uses the roles of rustic characters in the book, and makes them as a whole special, and emphasises the fact that they work hard. He shows them in a pleasant light, that makes them appear better than urban dwellers, they are shown as being friendly and sympathetic. *Tess of the D'urbervilles*, which I may refer to as *Tess*, was published in 1891, in Victorian Britain. It was published weekly in an English Newspaper, and at the time, came into a lot of conflict, as these type of stories were not written about. It was thought inappropriate that Hardy wrote about rape, even though it was subtle, and it was unheard of to have a child without being married, so many people looked down on Hardy's writing.

Also the names that Hardy gave the phases in his book, such as "maiden no more" were considered inappropriate and received much criticism. However this did not effect Hardy's style and choice of writing, and the next book that he published, "*Jude the Obscure*" which was also his last book caused even more disapproval, which was a novel on conflict between carnal and spiritual life, this made Hardy realise that he was not being very successful at writing novels, and chose to write poetry instead. Hardy's style of writing was influenced by his upbringing, and things that he heard in his surroundings as he was growing up. Hardy was born in Dorset, in 1880, he lived and grew up in the country side, which gave him his own personal perspective of country life, that he puts across in his books.

The county he calls "Wessex", in his books is based around the area that he lived in, with slightly adapted names. Hardy loved his home, nature and the

people that lived in the countryside with him, and this can clearly be depicted in the novel, by the way that he describes the surroundings, and the rustic characters. Hardy uses experiences and events that he has heard of in his stories. He uses incidents that he has seen or been told of to make the plot of the story more interesting. An example that could be used is Tess' hanging, at the end of the novel. Allegedly Hardy witnessed the hanging of a woman who had tried to or succeeded in killing her husband, because he was having an affair, and as we find out this is what happens to Tess at the end of the novel- she is sentenced to being hung for murdering Alec.

Also, Hardy's mother and aunt used to tell him of incidents where people in the village had baptised their children themselves, as they knew their children were dying and believed they should not be allowed to enter heaven without a baptism. As Tess does to baby "Sorrow" in the book, in her despair that her child would be punished for something he has not done. Tess was scared for her child, and loved him dearly, although she did not always show it, we can tell this by her reaction when she realised her baby could end up in hell. Hardy says that Tess thought "if she should have to burn for what she had done, burn she must, and there was an end of it.

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but her darling was about to die, and no salvation" This shows how strong a moral issue it was if your child was not baptised, it was believed they were sent to hell instantly, and although Tess had baptised sorrow, it was not enough, and he still had to be buried "in that shabby corner of God's allotment where he lets the nettles grow." We can also see some of Hardy's

own experiences in Tess if we look deeply enough, Hardy just as Tess was, was educated to a high level, which was unusual and considered a privilege, he was also sent away to work, like Tess, maybe Hardy's feelings and personal experiences have been put in the novel. Hardy loves the traditional country lifestyle, and people, this could be because he grew up with it, or because he likes hard working people. Hardy likes tradition and traditional ways of doing things, for example Hardy describes the countryside's way of life as being hard working and gives the impression that it has a lovely environment. He loves the actual countryside and scenery, and is often referring to its beauty, and how perfect and unspoilt it is.

One of the very first examples of this at the beginning of the book, when he first describes Marlott, he says " the village of Marlott lay amid the north eastern undulations of the beautiful Vale of Blakemore or Blackmoor aforesaid, an engirdled and secluded region, for the most part untrodden." He immediately portrays a positive and warm image of this place. In referring to the land being " untrodden" he means that tourists had not yet discovered its beauty and taken over. Hardy also talks about club walking, and may dancing, and describes the scene where we first meet Tess, dressed all in white, along with other girls who are carrying out a long tradition and attending a mayday dance.

Hardy describes this as being " a gay survival from Old Style days, when cheerfulness and may time were synonymous." Meaning that it is a good survival, and he is pleased by the fact that this tradition is still carried out. This proves that Hardy likes the traditional countryside way of life. We also grow to realise very quickly that Hardy does not like modern technology, and <https://assignbuster.com/symbolism-in-tess-of-the-durbervilles-essay/>

disapproves very much of the industrial revolution. When Tess first visits Mr. D'Urberville's house, in hope of claiming kin, Hardy comments on the colour of the house calling it a "crimson brick lodge," after he goes on to comparing it to the evergreens, saying "formed such a rich red green colour with the evergreens."

"Hardy talks disapprovingly of the house. The fact that he compares the its red colour to the green of nature, is as though he is comparing the good of nature against the house, and showing what a contrast there is. He described the house, stables and the surroundings as looking like "money, like the last coin issued from the mint." Implying that the D'Urberville's have actually only recently come into money, and everything to do with their property and them is new. Something that Hardy does not like, this is almost a fore warning that something bad will come out of the family. Hardy also describes tractors in a very bad way "Rabbits, hares, snakes, rats, mice, retreated inwards as into a fastness, unaware of the ephemeral nature of their refuge, and of the doom that awaited them later in the day, when, their convert shrinking to a more and more horrible narrowness, they were huddled together, friends and foes, till the last few yards of up right wheat fell also under the teeth of the unerring reaper, and they were every one put to death by the sticks and stones of the harvesters."

"This tells of why Hardy doesn't like harvesters and tractors, because animals will burrow deep in the fields to try and be safe, and the tractors will kill them. Which is how we can tell that Hardy is against the industrial revolution, because of what it is doing to nature. Throughout the novel, Hardy makes rustic characters appear friendly, they like to socialise, laugh

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together, but at the same time are very understanding, and can be considerate. They are hard working people normally, and Hardy puts across the opinion that he thinks they are better than urban dwellers. One example of rustic characters being caring and understanding in the book is when Tess is working in the fields, and Liza-Lu brings her baby to her when they are resting and eating.

“ The men who sat nearest considerately turned their faces towards the other end of the field,” This shows that the workers out of courtesy and thoughtfulness were looking away. The workers also stood up for Tess, when they could have thought badly of her, for getting pregnant before she was married, when speaking of the incident when Tess was raped, they blamed Alec for what happened, and did not hold it against Tess as they could have done, or as Angel did later on in the novel. Saying, “ a little more than persuading had to do’ the coming o’t I reckon” referring to the rape, “ there were they that heard a sobbing one night last year in the chase.” The workers were very sympathetic, and did not make Tess feel bad in anyway. Another occasion where Hardy makes rustic people seem friendly is when Izzie tells Angel how much Tess loves him, even though she loves him as well herself. The rustic characters in Marlott, were also understanding and respected Tess’ wishes.

When Tess was walking back from the May Dance, with her friends and companions, and met her father, who it appeared was making a fool of himself by saying he had a family vault. Tess stood up for her father, which not very many people would have done, because she was probably exceedingly embarrassed by his behaviour, thinking that he was drunk, as

no doubt her friends would be thinking. When the girls started laughing at Tess' father, Tess stood up for him saying " I won't walk another inch with you if you say any jokes about him." Hardy then says " perceiving that they had really pained her they said no more." This proves that although rustic characters were sometimes a little harsh, as people can be, they were respectful, and overall good people.

The rustic characters in the novel can also be used to contrast others, and show their bad qualities when we compare them to each other, Hardy does this effectively, and if we compare them to for example the Clare brothers, we can see that the rustic characters are more relaxed, and are up for having a good time. They are friendly type people. When Angel asked his brothers to join him in dancing with the may dancers they declined. Saying " no-no; nonsense!" " Dancing in public with a troop of country hoydens- suppose we should be seen!" Implying that there was no dignity in dancing with these people, making it appear that they thought themselves too good for normal people.

It makes them appear to be slightly stuck up, the fact that Angel Clare chose to dance despite what his brothers said, shows that he is more like a rustic character in the book. Although it is said that rustic characters are in general very nice hard working people, there are exceptions to this, which make Tess stand out and make her special. When Tess goes to work at Trantridge, For the d'Urberville's, she works on a fowl farm looking after chickens, whilst she is there she has an encounter with " Car" another worker on the fowl farm. On Saturdays all the workers travel to Chaseborough , and socialise and drink and dance. On one occasion they were travelling home to Trantridge,

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and Car placed a wicker basket on her head, treacle leaked all down her back, and she ended up rolling around in a field to try and get it off. All of the other workers were laughing at Car, but as soon as Tess started to join in laughing she cried " how darest th' laugh at me, hussy" Tess apologised, but Car continued " ah th'st think th'beest everybody, dostn't because th'beest first favourite with he now!" then she started stripping off, saying she was better than two of Tess.

This incident made her seem rude and uncouth, and also shows that she was jealous as Alec D'Urberville liked Tess, and not was showing more attention to her. This proves that Hardy sometimes uses rustic characters to make Tess stand out and seem different. It makes us think that Tess is special. It is very clear in the book that Tess is Hardy's favourite character, he makes her stand out and portrays her as being different from other people.

He does this in many ways, Tess unlike many people her age has had a good education, she can speak proper English as well as normal country English. Hardy makes Tess seem different, by making her care in times when people her age maybe necessarily wouldn't, she stands up for her family, for example when her dad embarrasses her in front of her friends, she still stands up for him. Also Tess is very responsible, and is expected to do a lot, she looks after her younger brothers and sisters, and feels she must help bring in money. Tess feels very guilty when Prince is killed in the accident, which is why she felt she had to go and work at Trantridge, to please and support her parents. Hardy uses symbolism and metaphors in the novel, which if looked at can have a greater meaning, these are two extended metaphors that Hardy used to tell the reader something." Beautiful feminine

tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a course pattern as it was doomed to receive.

" This is the extended metaphor that Hardy used to describe Tess' rape, it describes how Tess was once pure and innocent, like the gossamer. But now Alec has taken away that purity and innocence by what he did to her, and she will never be the same again. It acts subtly, but is very effect, describing the change from the feminine tissue into the coarse pattern." All these young souls were passengers in the Durbeyfield ship-entirely dependent on the judgement of the two Durbeyfield adults for their pleasures there necessities, their health, even their existence. If the heads of the Durbeyfield household chose to sail into difficulty, disaster, starvation, disease, degradation, death, thither were these half dozen little captives under hatches compelled to sail with them-six helpless creatures, who had never been asked if they wished for life on any terms, much less if they wished for it on such hard conditions as were involved in being of the shiftless house of Durbeyfield.

" This metaphor is used to describe how the Durbeyfield children do not have a choice in the path they are to take. Their parents are choosing or maybe already have chosen their route in life, and the children have no choice but to follow it. They are captives in a boat that could take them through hard times, but they have no escape, their lives are in the hands of their parents. Hardy uses the passing of seasons in this novel very effectively, they are very important in the book, and to some extent can predict what is going to happen. Throughout the book we can see that in seasons that Hardy likes

good things happen to Tess and the other rustic characters in the book, this is in spring and summer, when there is lots of life.

However when we get to winter and autumn and plants start dying and the leaves fall off the tree, unpleasant things will happen in Tess and the rustic characters lives. When the novel first begins in May, during spring, Tess' life, is good, and she is happy, she goes May dancing, and is enjoying her life.

When Tess moves to work in Trantridge, it is now autumn, and the leaves are starting to fall. When she gets lost with Alec in the chase it is Autumn, and he leaves her to lie on the fallen leaves. " Tess became invisible as she fell into reverie upon the leaves where he had left her.

" This is a bad stage in her life, therefore it happens in winter. Tess leaves and goes to Talbot Hays in May, here she meets Angel and falls in love, once again we are in spring like in the beginning of the play, and things are good in Tess' life, but we know that they will not continue to stay like this. Angel leaves Tess, and moves to Brazil, once again she is on her own and upset, and we are now approaching winter. As she could no longer work at Talbot Hays she leaves, and works on a turnip farm in Flintcomb Ash, it is cold, hard work and there is not very much pay, and we are now in winter, in one of the lowest times of Tess' life, as if by warning that it was now winter, Tess meets Alec again. Finally the book ends in winter, when Tess has killed Alec, and is now going to be hung.

This is a sad ending, in what is also a sad season. As well as seasons having a significant effect on what is to happen, we can also tell what is going to happen in the future by colours that Hardy uses. Hardy uses colours as a

representation, to show something for what it really is. Most colours have symbolic reference and can show something when looked into more deeply. The colour white is symbolic, because it represents purity and cleanliness. Tess is often seen wearing white clothes, and is described as being "this white shape" which is almost like describing her to an angel.

Green is used as a representation of good things, such as grass, and hills and the countryside, and everything that Hardy likes that is natural. If the land and outlook ahead was green then it would be a good life. Hardy described Tess' old life, before she moved to Trantridge as being good and green. "behind the green valley of her birth" Grey symbolises no hope and looking into a bad future. As Hardy referred to Tess' life ahead as being grey. "Before a grey country of which she knew nothing.

"Which is how Hardy makes it easy to tell by colour and the seasons what will happen in the future. Another colour that is also very important and is used a lot is red, red is a danger sign, warning of what is to come. It is referred to when Alec feeds Tess strawberries, by the red of the strawberries, and placing flowers on her. This should have started alarm bells sounding in Tess' mind about the danger that Alec was, but they didn't, as Tess was oblivious as to what was going on. The colour red was also used to describe Alec D'urberville's house, as a "crimson brick lodge" which was forewarning Tess that something bad would happen here. This is how colour can be used effectively to show what is to come.