

# Tess of the d'urbervilles – thomas hardy



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Discuss the concerns that are highlighted in phases one, two and three. In Tess of the D'Urbervilles, Thomas Hardy emphasises many concerns to do with what is happening to the world and to Tess. The role of fate in Tess's journey and the foreshadowing of future events have a heavy impact on her life. Resulting in her having to experience the injustice of life where she is punished for breaking what is thought to be a social law. The injustice of life for Tess is conveyed through her unfortunate experiences which result in her having to face the consequences of an unfair life. At the beginning of the novel, when Tess takes her brother Abraham to deliver the beehives for her father, she tells Abraham that we live on a 'blighted' star.

This implies that we are living on a fallen world - where also Tess's family has fallen, they have lost their name, wealth, lineage and lands. Unfairness toward Tess is shown from the beginning of the novel when the family horse, Prince, dies. Tess is blamed for this even though it was not her intention to kill Prince. She is also blamed by her family, especially her mother, Joan Durbeyfield, when she is raped by Alec D'Urberville and returns home without a husband. 'And yet th'st not got him to marry 'ee!' reiterated her mother. 'Any woman would have done it but you!'" After Tess tells of her misfortunes at the D'Urbervilles farm, her mother's immediate reaction is disappointment and anger. She compares Tess to other women and shows no compassion toward her daughter's experience.

Hardy, therefore emphasising Tess's innocence and the fact that she does not understand the extremity of what has happened to her, and her mother's lack to inform her because of the greed and foolish thoughts that Alec would marry Tess. The predominance of fate and God's role in Tess's life are shown

through the foreshadowing of the unfortunate happenings of the future. The realization that they live on a 'blighted' star foreshadows the events that are about to corrupt Tess's life. "Why she is doomed to be coveted by the wrong man and not by a certain other man the exact and true;" This foreshadows the fact that she is to be 'doomed' by Alec instead of the man who is innocent and true, Angel. It also gives the reader the suggestion that Tess's fate has already been determined. Hardy is very contradictory to the Victorian era where social respectability went along with conforming to a religion, however in the novel it is shown that people could buy their way into the middle class - the Stoke D'Urbervilles being an example of this.

But Tess's family, although conforming to religion have lost their own respectability due to the fact that they live on a 'blighted star' which leads to question whether God is in fact on Tess's side. Thomas Hardy's heavy analysis of the conflict between natural law and social law gives the reader an understanding and reason to empathise with Tess and her situation. Hardy attacks these and opposes them with natural law by saying that Tess is not breaking natural law. He criticizes the fact that the social classes show that men should be experienced and women should not be.

Alec regards Tess as exploitable, and he is very conscious of his place in the middle class. It is not conceivable that a man in his class would think of marrying a 'farm girl' like Tess. Hardy exclaims that the baby has broken a social law, but it is the gift of nature and therefore has not broken a natural law. This shows another condemnation, made by Hardy, to social laws and recognition of natural laws. Tess however, because of the punishment she experiences feels that she has in fact broken a natural law, but her

innocence in the situation and what happened to her was natural - therefore it is impossible that she could have broken a natural law.

The concerns Hardy expresses in the beginning phases of the novel are very important in Tess's life throughout it. The significance of foreshadowing and identifying future events introduce the role of fate and God in the life of Tess. The unfair treatment that Tess and her family receive shows emphasis of the injustice of life at this point in time. Hardy makes these issues a large part of the novel by also making contradictory comments about society - including natural laws and social laws. Where he condemns social laws of this era and recognises those that are natural.