

# ["the withered arm” by thomas hardy and "tickets please” by d h lawrence](https://assignbuster.com/the-withered-arm-by-thomas-hardy-and-tickets-please-by-d-h-lawrence/)

I am going to compare the story by Thomas Hardy, that was first published and set in the second half of the nineteenth century, with a story written by D. H.

Lawrence which is set in the early twentieth century in the period of the first world war, to assess the different treatment of women at those times. The main characters in Thomas Hardys book “ The Withered Arm” are Farmer Lodge, Gertrude his wife and Rhoda Brook, the mother of a child to the farmer called Lodge. Rhoda was once a beautiful young woman but has now, at the age of thirty, become a faded woman. Her ex-lover Farmer Lodge owns a big farm, which employs Rhoda and other women as milkmaids. Rhoda becomes jealous of farmer Lodges new wife, Gertrude, and in a dream imagines a horrible vision happening to Gertrude, which later comes true.

Because of Gertrude’s illness Farmer Lodge becomes a gloomy and silent man saddened by his wife’s loss of beauty. To get back her beauty and her husbands love, Gertrude ignores her husband’s wishes and hides her actions from him. Gertrude’s secretive actions to cure her illness result in causing her death. In the story “ Tickets please” by D. H. Lawrence, which is set in the early twentieth century during the First World War, the main characters are Annie and John Thomas.

Annie works with other women on the trams as a replacement for the men who have gone to war and the work makes her feel important and free. John Thomas is an inspector on the trams who flirts with the women workers and begins to “ walk out” with Annie. When John Thomas leaves Annie she becomes jealous and plans to get revenge. When she does get revenge she feels as if she has lost. At the time that Hardy was writing, the life for poor women was harsh. They were thought of as second-class citizens and had poorly paid jobs such as milkmaids and were dependent on their men.

For example, women married men such as Farmer Lodge for security and money. Today women’s lives are different, they can get the same jobs and pay as men and be independent. Things began to change for women when the First World War began. Women were for the first time doing men’s jobs, demonstrating their equality and power.

The women who work on the trams in D. H. Lawerence’s story are “ fearless young hussies” and “ they push the men off at the end of their distance” and are comfortable with their power. In the nineteenth century Hardy uses words such as “ a fading women of thirty” and “ that had once been handsome, seem handsome anew” to describe Rhoda as a women who is becoming old.

To compare Rhoda with Gertrude he describes Gertrude’s skin as “ Soft and evanescent, like the light under a heap of rose petals” and “ her face as comely as a live dolls”. Rhoda’s personality seems to be one of bitterness because of her fading looks and her jealousy of the beautiful and youthful Gertrude. Gertrude seems to be innocent and soft and not used to the hard ways of the world. Rhoda Brook used to be a pretty young woman that had a child with Farmer Lodge but is now “ a fading women of thirty” and is left by Farmer Lodge to bring up her son by herself because she is getting old and her looks are going. At first she reacts with jealously but when she gets to know Gertrude better she begins to realise that Gertrude is an innocent women.

Farmer Lodges marriage seems at first to be happy and he is pleased to show her off, and she ties to look her best by dressing in “ a white bonnet and a silver coloured gown” which “ whewed and whistled so loud when it rubbed against the pews” and impressed the men. Because he is older and because of the way women were looked upon at the time, he is strict and tells her what she can and cannot do, for example travelling to Casterbridge by herself was considered inappropriate for a women. In modern days married women are treated as equals and have a say in what they do as a married couple, for example women can travel freely and unaccompanied without attracting unnecessary attention. The women in “ the withered arm” are dependent on men to provide for them to live a decent life. Rhoda and Gertrude are both used to men telling them what to do, neither are independent and outgoing whereas Annie and the women in “ tickets please” are more carefree and have a say in what they want to do.

D. H. Lawrence describes the women as “ fearless young hussies” that “ fear nobody-and everybody fears them” In many ways the tram girls can be said to lead very different lives to Rhoda and Gertrude because society has changed and now needs women to work in industry and support the country whilst most of the able bodied men are fighting for their country’s cause abroad. Society now has an important use for the women and the women recognise this, their characters are more outgoing. The tram women at that time begin to feel more independent and powerful than the period that Rhoda and Gertrude lived in.

However the girls can be said to be similar to Hardys characters in that they still want or need a man to marry and to provide for them. John Thomas flirts with all the tram girls, preferring newcomers and his actions cause “ considerable scandal … in half a dozen villages” as he always was intending to be just “ a nocturnal presence” and not get involved in a relationship leading to marriage.

Annie regards John as a “ fine cock-of-the-walk” and is happy when she is near him because she feels he has the qualities she is looking for in a man and wants to take “ an intelligent interest in him”. But I feel she thinks that he would make a good husband for her. When the girls turn on John Thomas they become violent. Annie takes the lead and “ fetched him a box on the side of the head”. The girls “ threw themselves upon him with unnatural strength and power” and are acting the way they do towards him because each one of them felt cheated and used and each thought that they could possibly have had a chance to marry him.

Lawrence wanted to show that society was changing. Women’s roles were also changing, and he wanted to show it was perhaps happening quicker than people realised and that there would be implications for men who did not accept women’s new found power. He wants us to sympathize with the girls but at the same time be horrified at the fury of their revenge and gives the message that women were becoming aware of being able to have an equal power with men. Annie’s attitude towards men is very different to the women in the other story, because she has more freedom of choice than they had had, due to the war. Most of the men had gone away to fight for their country and this leads to a rise in women’s confidence and self esteem. In her work, Annie’s passengers have to respect and obey her, but John Thomas has power of choice over whom he wishes to marry.

But he becomes wary of Annie and the other women’s power and confidence when they gang up on him because of his flirting. In the story by Thomas Hardy I have noticed that the women’s appearance has a significant impact on the prospect of a marriage to a higher-class man and the security it brings. The women in Thomas Hardys stories have to accept what comes to them because marriage gives an acceptable life style and the alternative is a low paid hard labour job, such as milkmaids. Gertrude’s attitude to men is different to Annie’s.

She has to obey her husband to keep her security and has to show respect to his cold attitude towards her. Rhoda is independent and her attitude towards men was probably the same as Annie’s, before Rhoda grew old and faded. Annie’s life is of a better quality than Rhoads but if she had a child out of marriage she would find in some cases life difficult, as did Rhoda when she had to accept farmer Lodges decision to leave her to cope on her own with her son.