



Indira Gandhi
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School of Humanities

BEGC 133
BRITISH LITERATURE

BLOCK

2

THOMAS HARDY: *FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD*

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BLOCK 2 THOMAS HARDY: *FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD*

Introduction

Some of the greatest British novelists lived and wrote in the nineteenth century. It was a period of great transitions in Britain, which was being transformed from a primarily agricultural nation into an industrialised one. Novelists like Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, and George Eliot, wrote with sensitivity and sympathy about the great changes happening in British society, the problems caused by industrialisation and urbanisation, and about the miserable conditions of the poorer sections of society.

In this block, we will be studying the novel *Far from the Madding Crowd* by Thomas Hardy. Hardy's novels which are set against the fictional landscape of 'Wessex', explore the major issues of the century, such as the crisis in religious belief caused by Darwin's theory of evolution and the condition of the rural communities. *Far from the Madding Crowd* is one of his most popular novels.

Unit 1 of the block traces the history of the British novel from the eighteenth century till the present and introduces various sub-genres within the novel form.

Unit 2 introduces you to the writing of Hardy and the salient aspects of his novels.

Unit 3 discusses the summary of the novel *Far from the Madding Crowd* and some of its major themes.

Unit 4 focuses on the major characters of the novel and discusses Hardy's philosophy.

We hope you enjoy reading the novel and that this block will help you to critically analyse it.

UNIT 1: THE NOVEL IN BRITAIN: AN INTRODUCTION

Structure:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Aims and Objectives
- 1.2 What is a Novel?
- 1.3 A Brief History of the English Novel
 - 1.3.1 Reasons for the rise of the English Novel in the 18th Century
 - 1.3.2 The Novel in the 18th Century.
 - 1.3.3 The Novel in the 19th Century
 - 1.3.4 The Modern Novel
 - 1.3.5 The Postmodern Novel
- 1.4 Summing Up
- 1.5 Questions and Answers
- 1.6 References
- 1.7 Reading List
- 1.8 Glossary

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Far from the Madding Crowd is the fourth novel written by Thomas Hardy, a 19th century British novelist belonging to the Victorian Age. This was published in 1874. It appeared originally as a monthly serial and as it gained wide readership, it was later published as a full-length novel. The novel has been made into a film quite a few times, with the first attempt in 1967. The film based on Hardy's novel was a bold attempt to centre stage a single young woman who takes up the daunting task of managing her late uncle's farm at a time when the patriarchal community was strong and dominant. It was also an indictment of the moral code of conduct that privileged the male over the female who was subjected to harsh treatment for any perceivable violation of the Victorian moral code.

After you finish reading the novel, watch the 1967 film production, starring Julie Christie and Alan Bates. You can also view subsequent film productions of the novel. This will give you an idea of how the literary medium and the film medium parallel each other to create the atmosphere of the novel that has truly captured and rendered the rural life of the Victorian age in the latter half of the 19th Century.

1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

After going through the Unit, you will be able to discuss the following:

- *What is a Novel?

*A Brief History of the English Novel from the 18th century to the present time and the causes for the rise of the Novel in the 18th century.

1.2 WHAT IS A NOVEL?

Before we take up Hardy's novel for a detailed study in Units 3 and 4, we must get to know what a novel is and follow it up with a brief history of the English novel. This will help you to place Hardy's work among the novels written during the second half of the 19th century.

The novel has many forms and any attempt to seek a single definition that is applicable to all the forms is like trying to catch a leviathan (a monster) in a fly net. No definition is likely to be adequate to cover all of them. Novels are generally classified into two broad categories- the literary novel and popular fiction. In this Unit, though our focus is on the first one, namely the literary novel, we need to distinguish it from popular fiction. Fiction has to be first and foremost entertaining i.e., hold the interest of the reader. The primary difference between the literary novel and popular fiction is in its range of appeal, as the interest of readers vary. Popular fiction is sometimes pejoratively referred to as the airport novel, novels that you pick up at the airport or in a bus or railway station for reading while waiting or travelling to your destination and cast them aside once you finish reading. Unlike the literary novels that we love to go back for a re-read and for another re-read, popular fiction does not leave us with any residual interest. Literary fiction aims to hold up a mirror to the human condition while popular fiction aims to entertain and provide excitement. Popular fiction is associated with straightforward narration to keep the interest of the reader. This genre of story writing is popular among a majority of readers. As popular fiction provides light entertainment, it gets sold in large numbers. Literary novels are complex both in characterization and content.

Some critics consider popular fiction as the opposite of literature. For example, they concede *Mills and Boon* and Harry Potter novels are popular, but they are different from classics written by novelists like Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, D.H. Lawrence, Leo Tolstoy, and George Eliot. The two categories cater to two different tastes and it is not correct to privilege one over the other. The aim of a literary novel is the self expression of the author while the focus of popular fiction is the reader. "Popular culture is the television we watch, the movies we see, the fast food, or slow food, we eat, the clothes we wear, the music we sing and hear, the things we spend our money on, our attitude toward life. It is the whole society we live in, that which may or may not be distributed by the mass media. It is virtually our whole world"¹. In the literary novel, the character takes centre stage while popular fiction is driven by the plot.

Activity 1:

What types of fiction do you read? Do you automatically think literary means quality? Do you think popular fiction leaves a lasting impact?

Activity 2:

Analyze any one popular novel you have read in the light of your views on its lasting impact.

However let us attempt a simple definition of a novel that can be applicable to a majority of fiction written either as literary fiction or popular fiction. The novel is a **genre of fiction writing** distinct from the other forms of storytelling like a short story or novella or drama. The novel has much in common with these other forms of fiction writing, but has certain formal traits especially with reference to its length.

One defining trait of the novel is the use of prose, which uses natural speech unlike poetry which is generally marked by a rhythmic structure and often rhyming words. Prose is the best medium to tell a story as the story is narrated through dialogues between characters, though we now have graphic novels—novels using either a comic, or an artistic format where graphics substitute for words.

In simple terms, the novel can be defined as an extended narrative in prose, longer than a short story and longer than a novella and consisting of a plot (or multiple plots), characters caught in the turmoil of problems arising out of the plot, development of the characters shaped by life experience and the resolution at the end.

Traditional novels-in particular of the 18th and the 19th centuries, offer a strong plot that pose a problem or set of problems to the characters in the narrative, some of which are resolved in the action of the novel. On the contrary, modern novels of the 20th Century break with tradition and in place of conventional plot structure, have multiple plots and multiple stories and have a greater focus on characters. Considering this type of flexibility in the genre, we can see that there is a great deal of variety allowed by the novel form. There are innumerable forms of novel - adventure novel, picaresque novel, fantasy novel, epistolary novel, the Gothic novel, the graphic novel, historical novel, dystopian novel, sentimental novel, science fiction novel, and Utopian novel- just to name a few.

Activity 3:

Refer to the Glossary (1.6) to learn about the different forms of novel and attempt to find examples of each one of them other than those given in the section.

From the above analysis, we can conclude that

- *The Novel is a prose narrative normally of 40000 -50,000 words or even more.
- *It deals with characters like you and me -characters we can easily identify with and
- *It presents events involving the characters that again are realistic and easy for us to connect to.

This is a broad definition. "People in significant action is one way of describing it"². The narrative line shows the development of characters in their growth and discovery of themselves and fellow characters through their life experience.

1.3 A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL

This section will give you a brief history of the English novel from the 18th century to the post modern period which spans the second half of the 20th century till date. So this brief history

covers more than two hundred years starting from the 18th century to the present times. You may wonder why we have chosen the history of English novel from the 18th century and not before that. The novel as a literary genre became popular only in the 18th century, though there were a few novels earlier in the 17th century.

For all purposes, the novel as a literary genre came into existence in 18th century England. If you read the History of English Literature, you will find the reference to the 18th century, as the *Age of Prose and Reason*. Before the 18th century, the dominant forms of writing were poetry and drama. Not that there were no prose writings prior to the 18th century. But prose literature was not as prolific as poetry and drama during the period from the 14th century to the 17th century. Examples of quality prose written in that period include Francis Bacon's *Essays*, Sir Philip Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry*, John Milton's *Aeropagatica*, and Tyndale's translation of The King James Bible, from Greek and Latin languages. But the novel as a literary genre did not get prominence, though notable mentions can be made of Francis Bacon's Utopian novel, *New Atlantis*, Francis Godwin's *Imaginary Voyage to the Moon*, the earliest science fiction in English literature and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim Progress*, an allegorical narrative. Aphra Behn, the female writer who wrote *Oroonoko* in 1688, is considered the first professional novelist and the first female novelist in English. It was only in the 18th century, that the novel became popular and had a wider readership than in the past. Before we take up the development of the novel in the next two centuries leading to our present times, let us list out the reasons behind the rise of the novel in the 18th century.

1.3.1 The Reasons for the Rise of the Novel in the 18th century

There are many reasons for the rise of the novel in the 18th century. This period in English Literature is known by multiple names- the Augustan Age, Age of Prose and Reason, the Neo-classical Age, and the Age of the Periodical Essay. The main reason for the development of the novel is the development of prose in this period. Prose, as we have shown, is the medium of the novel.

The development of prose can be traced back to the interest the writers had in the classical writings of the ancient times. That is why this period is known as the Augustan Age. The Augustan Age has been one of the most illustrious periods in Latin literary history, from approximately 43 BC to 18 AD. It is known as the Golden Age of Latin literature. Emperor Augustus was the ruler when great Roman writers like Horace, Ovid and Virgil were at their creative best and that period has been known as the Classical Age. When we use the term 'classical literature', it refers to writings that affirm order, harmony, restraint, balance, rationality and the importance of unity in literature. When we read 18th-century literature in England, we recognize how it was characterized by realism, reason, correctness, intellect and satirical spirit similar to the writings of the Augustan period. Many of the writers looked back to the ancient Roman geniuses and hence this period was rightfully called the Augustan Age.

It was also known as the neoclassical age i.e., a return to classical age. The birth of a new literary movement, Neoclassicism was facilitated by the rational and scientific thinkers of that period like the English philosopher and thinker, John Locke and the great astronomer and physicist Isaac Newton. They were influential thinkers of the 18th century. Science became the new

authority and Reason was given a higher status than imagination and feeling to enable man to act and behave in a civilized manner. So the writings that come under the rubric of Neoclassicism endorsed the use of correct language, high degree of objectivity and rationality that we associate with scientific spirit and temperament. Literature of this period sought to express universal truths that had stood the test of time. This means, the writers discarded subjectivity as they expounded truths that were timeless and universal.

There was yet another reason why prose flourished in the 18th century. The Royal Society of London, the oldest scientific institution in the world, was formed in 1660 to improve natural knowledge and promote Science. It stands to reason that scientific concepts needed prose as they cannot be expounded and explained in the medium of poetry. Scientific theories had necessarily to use prose to express with clarity and un-ambiguity.

After the Glorious Revolution of 1688 that ensured England would have a Constitutional monarchy in which Parliament would enjoy the majority of power, the political system in England changed. With the balance of power moving away from monarchy in favour of Parliament, two principal parties emerged- the Tories and the Whigs. The Parliamentary system demanded political debate and political manifestoes from the two contending parties and this in turn demanded once again clear, unambiguous and straightforward prose.

Then there was the rise of the middle class which was getting educated. They needed something to read which they could understand and enjoy. They did not want heavy reading but something light, interesting, educative and entertaining. This gave rise to the emergence of periodical essays. Periodical essays typically appeared in affordable publications that came out regularly, usually two or three times a week, and were only one or two pages in length-short, witty, elegant and entertaining. “Unlike other publications of the time that consisted of a medley of information and news, essay periodicals were comprised of a single essay on a specific topic or theme, usually having to do with the conduct or manners. They were often narrated by a persona or a group personas, commonly referred to as a ‘club’.”³

Notable periodical essayists of the 18th century include Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Samuel Johnson, and Oliver Goldsmith. Again the periodical essay demanded simple prose of easy comprehension. Hence Addison and Steele who started a daily publication called *The Spectator* wrote that their objective was “to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality”. The journal was meant for the vast middleclass majority which was to be “something that every middle-class household with aspirations to looking like its members took literature seriously, would want to have.”⁴ The two pioneers of the Periodical essay said their aim was to bring “philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools, and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and coffee-houses”⁵.

“The Periodical essay dealt with society and fictitious characters who exemplified the values of an old country gentleman, portrayed as lovable but somewhat ridiculous (‘rather beloved than esteemed’) making his Tory politics seem harmless but silly”⁶. This was a major step towards the development of characters that became a feature of the novel in the 18th century. Thus, the rise of the middle class was one more reason for the rise and popularity of the novel in the 18th century.

1.3.2 The Novel in the 18th century

Daniel Defoe who wrote three novels - *Robinson Crusoe*, *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana* is often considered the father of the English novel. These were the early novels and were published in 1730. They were in the form of connected episodes centred on a single character. His novels were in the nature of fictional autobiographies, which the 19th century novelist Charlotte Bronte followed in her novel *Jane Eyre*. The other early novelists included Samuel Richardson who pioneered the epistolary novel.

The epistolary novel is a distinct form where the story line is developed through letters exchanged between different characters. The entire novel is written as a series of documents either in the form of letters, or diary entries, newspaper clippings and other documents. Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* is written in the form of letters and this is considered to be the first real English novel. His characters are from the middle class and the novel stresses on a moral code of conduct. Since the 18th century, there have been many examples of epistolary novels. Popular among them are: *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley; *Moonstone* (1868) by Wilkie Collins; *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker; *Diary of a Young Girl* (1952) by Anne Frank, and *The Color Purple* (1982) by Alice Walker.

Henry Fielding introduced the picaresque novel in *Joseph Andrews*, *Tom Jones* and *Jonathan Wild*. You must have read in your school days the abridged version of *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift. This is a satirical novel which satirizes not only British society and imperialism, but also satirizes the human race in general for its destructive and selfish characteristics. Yet another great writer of the 18th century was Lawrence Sterne who wrote a masterpiece *Tristram Shandy*, *Gentleman*. This is in the autobiographical form with Tristram as the narrator. It is made up of multiple stories, stories within stories and is a highly experimental novel.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders* (1722) are considered to be among the early English novels although his characters were not fully realized enough to be considered full-fledged novels. Much later in the 19th century, Jane Austen, the author of the well known classic novels-chief among them being *Pride and Prejudice* (1812), and *Emma* (1816)-was considered the greatest of early English novelists who wrote a distinct kind of novel, the 'Novel of Manners'. Jane Austen's novels are perhaps the most recognizable works in this genre. Because of Austen's works, the Novel of Manners is mostly associated with the early 19th century. The special features of the Novel of Manners are given below.

It is a sub-genre of the realist novel i.e., novel that presents events that could have actually occurred to you or me or anyone in a believable setting. Thus the stories depict real life situations and fictional characters within these stories react similarly to real people. It is about a particular class of people in society at a particular time of history. For example, Jane Austen writes about the 18th century middleclass trying to follow the genteel or the upper class. It examines the customs and manners, behaviour and language of a specific cultural group, here the middle class. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "The *Novel of manners* is a work of fiction that re-creates a social world, conveying with finely detailed observation the customs, values, and mores of a highly developed and complex society."⁷ The famous novelists of this genre from the 19th to

the end of the 20th Century were Jane Austen, Henry James, Evelyn Waugh, Edith Wharton, and John Marquand.

1.3.3 The Novel in the 19th Century

English literature has seen alternate periods of Classicism and Romanticism, propelled by political and social ideas and developments. Classicism laid emphasis on reason, logic and objectivity while romanticism gave free rein to expression of emotions, feelings, imagination and subjectivity. While objectivity is based on observable phenomena, uninfluenced by emotions and personal prejudices, subjectivity is based on individual personal impressions, feelings and opinions rather than external facts. So 18th century writers following classical norms wrote objectively about society, manners, the follies and foibles of mankind, while the first half of the 19th century, influenced by the call of the French Revolution (Liberty, Equality and Fraternity) allowed personal feelings and imagination to replace objective reasoning and logic.

The first half of the 19th century came under the influence of Romanticism and the focus was on Nature and imagination that extended to supernaturalism. This gave rise to the Gothic novel with its emphasis on mystery and the supernatural. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte, *Wuthering Heights* by her sister Emily Bronte, *The Scarlet Letter* and *The House of Seven Gables* by Nathaniel Hawthorne and *Moby Dick* by Herman Melville are fine examples of this kind.

The second half of the 19th century is known as the Victorian Age. It denotes the reign of Queen Victoria from 1837-1901. The novel was the dominant literary form during her reign. This was also the time of Industrial revolution in England and there was a perceptible shift from the rural agrarian England to the industrial towns and cities. Thus Victorian era had two parallel and contrary characteristics- it was the era of expansion, great technology, communication and colonial empire on the one hand and in contrast the era of urban poverty, injustices, and starvation experienced by a vast majority of the middle class and the working class. Victorian novelists portrayed the middleclass with its strict morals and values. These morals included sexual restraint, low tolerance of crime and strict adherence to the social code of conduct. The Victorian values prioritized respect for the Christian Church, morals, hard work and personal success. Notable Victorian authors include Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, the Bronte sisters, George Eliot, Thackeray, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Antony Trollope.

These novelists, in particular, Charles Dickens portrayed characters caught in the swirl of industrialization. They were neither wholly good nor bad, and his writings eschewed all the idealism and romanticism of the early 19th century. Realism and Naturalism were the main characteristics of the novels of this period. The great realism of the first half of the 19th century was followed by a period of relative mediocrity after 1848 and Victorian imperialism gave rise to new realism which was a humanist revolt against imperialism. Anatole France, Romain Rolland, Bernard Shaw, and Thomas Mann reflect this humanist revolt leading to a new form of bourgeois realism.

1.3.4 The Modern Novel (The first half of the 20th century)

Modernism can be seen as two phases of literature-modernist literature(1900-1945) and contemporary literature (1945 to the present), also referred to as postmodern literature

.Modernism marks a radical shift from the previous centuries in form and content, in the aesthetic and cultural sensibilities in art (painting), architecture, music, sculpture and literature. The new world order that came into existence, questioned the Victorian world view of a stable, meaningful and fairly comprehensible world, based on reason and logic inherent in the scientific and Industrial revolutions of that period. The catch phrase of the modern period was 'to make it new'. Modernism thus marks a distinct break with Victorian bourgeois morality (what Bernard Shaw caustically refers to as 'middle class morality'), its optimism, its cultural robustness and in its place brought in a pessimistic picture of a culture in disarray. When cultural roots do not provide the strength needed to live a life of hope and cheer it results in cultural despair giving rise to moral relativism and moral apathy. Relativism is the new view of the 20th century, that says there is no absolute truth or value and everything is relative. The characters in modern and contemporary novels questioned the existence of God, the supremacy of the human reason, and the nature of reality.

George Lukacs, the Hungarian writer and philosopher detects three strands of modern literature: (1) Experimental, where works are unorthodox and experimental. (2) Social realism presented mainly in the writings of the Communist Eastern Europe, that promised a utopia, a perfect world without conflicts, hunger and unhappiness. But in trying to depict an imaginary society of perfect order, the writers did not factor in the everyday problems, conflicts and contradictions. (3) Critical realism, best represented by Thomas Mann, Bernard Shaw and Conrad which is a return to realism away from the above mentioned experimental and social realistic strands.

The 20th century novel was very different from the novels of the earlier two centuries. It had the following characteristics:

- *No linear flow of narrative, i.e., a beginning leading to them iddle and the end as though on a straight line.
- *No unity of plot or character, and therefore no cause and effect in the development of the novel.
- *No single moral or philosophical meaning as a result of the use of irony and ambiguous juxtapositions of multiple views. Thus the concept of relativism is brought in with no absolute truths of good and evil presented in black and white.
- *Talks not about progress but the decline of civilization. The earlier optimism is replaced by despondency and pessimism.
- *No more of dialogue and relationship with others, but more about loneliness as a result of the machine age. The idea conveyed is 'people herd together, but the crowd is no company.'
- *Novels often written in first person and use of *stream of consciousness* technique that gives the feeling that the plot is going nowhere, also called "internal monologue," as the style incorporates the natural chaos of thoughts and feelings that occur in any of our minds at any given time.
- *Exposure of bourgeois rationality and hypocrisy through the adoption of a tone of self-mockery;
- *Replacement of objective and rational discourse by subjective and inward consciousness and
- *Rejection of the 19th century bourgeoisie social world⁸

1.3.5 The Postmodern Novel (from the second half of the 20th century till date)

Realism and naturalism paved the way for postmodern novels. The postmodern novel includes magic realism, metafiction, and the graphic novel. Some of the postmodern novels include: *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker; *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capot; *Roots* by Alex Haley; *Fear of Flying* by Erica Jong and *A Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez; *Midnight's Children* and *Satanic Verse* sby Salman Rushdie.

1.4 SUMMING UP

In this Unit we focused on the novel as a literary genre and discussed the differences between the literary novel and popular fiction. We also discussed briefly the history of the novel in English from the eighteenth century till the present. The different forms of the novel were also introduced. After this introductory unit on the novel as a genre, in the next three units of this block, we will proceed to study the novel *Far From the Madding Crowd*, by Thomas Hardy.

1.5 UNIT END QUESTIONS:

1. What are the typical characteristics of the novel?
2. What are the different forms of the novel?
3. List out the reasons for the rise of the English novel in the 18th century.
4. What are the characteristics of the 18th century English novel?
5. What are the characteristics of the 19th century English novel?
6. How does Modernism differ from the artistic and literary sensibilities of the previous ages?
7. What are the characteristics of the 20th century novel?

1.6 REFERENCES

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1.7 READING LIST

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1.8 GLOSSARY

Novella: a short narrative tale, especially a popular story having a moral or satirical point. A novella is considerably longer than a short story, but shorter than a novel. Example: Boccaccio's *Decameron*, John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*.

Adventure novel: The adventure genre of fiction is fast-paced and usually centers on a protagonist in a dangerous or risky situation. Science fiction novels always contain elements of adventure. Examples: Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Henry Melville's *Moby Dick*.

Picaresque novel: a genre of fiction that depicts the adventures of a roguish, but "appealing hero", of low social class, who lives by his wits in a corrupt society. Examples: Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones*, Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*, Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Fantasy novel: a type of fiction that ideologically and aesthetically subordinates reality to imagination by depicting a world of marvels that is contrasted to everyday reality and to accepted views of what is credible. Examples: *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *The Lord of the Rings*, *His Dark Materials* (which begins with *The Golden Compass*)

Epistolary novel: a novel written as a series of documents. The usual form is letters, although diary entries, newspaper clippings and other documents are sometimes used.

Gothic novel: is characterized by elements of fear, horror, death, and gloom, as well as romantic elements, such as nature, individuality, and very strong emotions which include fear and suspense.

Graphic novel: uses the interplay of text and illustrations in a comic-strip format to tell a story.

Historical novel: a literary genre in which the plot takes place in a setting located in the past, in historical times. Sometimes it borrows true characteristics of the time period in which it is set. Historical fiction is a fictional story that is written around, and includes historical events, usually from the past. Sir Walter Scott is the father of the English historical novel. His *Ivanhoe* is a classic example of historical fiction.

Dystopian novel: Dystopian is the opposite of Utopian. Dystopian novels describe an imaginary society that is as dehumanizing and as unpleasant as possible. Famous dystopian authors include Aldous Huxley, H. G. Wells, George Orwell, and Ray Bradbury who wrote *Brave New World*, *The Time Machine*, *Animal Farm* and *Fahrenheit 451*.

Utopian Novel: works of fiction depicting ideal societies, where the citizens are bearers of a perfect moral code, or at the least, every violator of the moral code is harshly punished. A

utopian society is one where all social evils have been cured. Examples: *News from Nowhere* by William Morris, *A Modern Utopia* by H. G. Wells

Sentimental novel: exalts feeling above reason and raises the analysis of emotion to a fine art. Examples: Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* and Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey*.

Science Fiction novel: a genre of fiction in which the stories often tell about science and technology of the future. It is important to note that science fiction has a relationship with the principles of science—these stories involve partially true, partially fictitious laws or theories of science. Examples: *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, *Ubik* by Philip Dick.

Allegorical Narrative: A complete narrative that involves characters and events that stand for an abstract idea or event. It presents straightforward embodiments of aspects of human nature and abstract concepts, through such characters as Knowledge, Beauty, Strength, and Death. Examples; John Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress* and the Morality play *Everyman*.

Romanticism: a movement in the arts and literature that originated in the late 18th century, emphasizing inspiration, subjectivity, and the primacy of the individual.

Classicism: the following of ancient Greek or Roman principles and style in art and literature, generally associated with harmony, restraint, and adherence to recognized standards of form and craftsmanship, especially from the Renaissance to the 18th century.

Bourgeois Realism: an artistic style characterized by simple scenes of peasant life with a moral message.

Relativism: the doctrine that knowledge, truth, and morality exist in relation to culture, society, or historical context, and are not absolute.

Stream of Consciousness: a literary style in which a character's thoughts, feelings, and reactions are depicted in a continuous flow uninterrupted by objective description or conventional dialogue. James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Marcel Proust are among its notable early exponents.

Magic realism: an approach to literature that weaves fantasy and myth into everyday life.

Metafiction: fiction in which the author self-consciously alludes to the artificiality or literariness of a work by parodying or departing from novelistic conventions and traditional narrative techniques.

UNIT 2 THOMAS HARDY'S LIFE AND WRITINGS

Structure:

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Aims and Objectives
- 2.2 Three phases of Thomas Hardy's writings
- 2.3 Hardy's classification of his own novels
- 2.4 Hardy's Wessex
- 2.5 Thomas Hardy and the novel of realism
- 2.6 Salient aspects of Hardy's novels
- 2.7 Hardy's religious beliefs
- 2.8 Summing Up
- 2.9 References
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- 2.12 References

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Thomas Hardy is a writer with protean talent. He is a versatile writer whose literary output includes short stories, novels, poetry and drama, each one of them reflecting his insight into the deeply disturbing social and religious issues of his time. His works also reveal his empathy and compassion towards the underprivileged people who bore the brunt of social injustice as a result of the Victorian moral codes that were particularly discriminatory against women. Hardy's novels are a scathing indictment of Victorian beliefs about women, its adherence to archaic Church doctrines, its iniquities, the lack of equal access to educational and judicial systems, and the destructive disruptions caused in the life of the agrarian population by the industrial revolution.

2.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES.

This Unit gives you a brief introduction to Thomas Hardy and his writings. At the end of your study of this Unit, you will be able to discuss:

- * the multifaceted talent of Thomas Hardy as a writer of short stories, a novelist and a poet
- * the three phases of his writing
- * the classification of his novels
- * Wessex as the location and setting of his novels
- * Hardy and the novel of realism
- * Major features of his novels
- * Hardy's religious beliefs

2.2 THREE PHASES OF THOMAS HARDY'S WRITINGS

Hardy's work can be divided into three phases - the early phase, the middle phase and the later years. These three phases roughly correspond to the two genres of his writing: poetry, fiction and a return to poetry. One should not think of such a division as water tight and rigid, since in the

last phase, as also in the first, Hardy wrote both novels and poetry. Between 1867 and 1872, when he was in his late twenties and early thirties, he wrote three novels- one of which, *The Poor Man and the Lady*, a class conscious novel was never published. The second one, *Desperate Remedies*, a less opinionated story with a dense plot had a lukewarm reception while the third one *Under the Greenwood Tree*, a humorous idyllic novel revealed his distinctive style of writing. It also reflected Hardy's early attempts at presenting the social change that was taking place in Victorian England. In 1872, he started sending monthly installments of his next novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes* which, thanks to its popular appeal, was published a year later. Hardy's rise to fame as a novelist began from this period and his next venture was *Far from the Madding Crowd*, with a female protagonist wooed by three suitors. *Far From the Madding Crowd* was the first of the 'Wessex Novels' which had Wessex as the setting. Wessex is a fictitious landscape, located in the South and South west of England, principally in Dorset which was the setting of many of his novels. "This term, Wessex, has become so common and been so closely associated with Thomas Hardy's works, that we can easily forget that Hardy invented the term--or at least resurrected the term from centuries of obscurity."¹

His novels written in the middle period had a mixed response. *The Return of the Native* was a highly successful novel while the others like *The Trumpet Major* set in the Napoleonic period and two more, *A Laodicean* (1881) and *Two on a Tower* (1882) did not make the grade. The later novels, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the D'urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* are his outstanding novels and they deal with the socio-economic issues of the day and offer deeply sympathetic representations of the working class people. While *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* criticizes society's sexual mores, *Jude the Obscure* is a critique of the educational system of the latter half of the 19th century. Both novels had a hostile reception as they affronted the Victorian sexual morality and it is then that Hardy moved away from fiction and turned to poetry.

Any writing on Hardy will remain incomplete without a reference to Hardy, the poet. When his poetry written in his early years did not receive favourable response, he switched to fiction. Later, he returned to poetry, and at the turn of the century, i.e., the 20th century, (in Hardy's later phase) he wrote only poetry. Hardy published his first volume of poetry, *Wessex Poems* in 1898, a three-volume epic drama *The Dynasts* (1904–08) as well as several war poems in the context of the Boer Wars and World War I.

2.3 HARDY'S CLASSIFICATION OF HIS OWN NOVELS

"Hardy himself has classified his novels into three groups:

Novels of character and Environment (Rural Studies): *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, and *Jude the Obscure*.

Romances and Fantasies: *A Pair of Blue Eyes*, *A Group of Noble Dames* and *The Well Beloved*.

Novels of Ingenuity: *The Hand of Ethelberta*, *A Laodicean* and *A Changed Man*.

It was only in the novels of the first category with which Thomas Hardy became associated as one of the finest English novelists.²

Check Your progress: 1

1. What are the three phases of Hardy's writing? What were the issues he dealt with in those three phases?
2. Write briefly on Hardy's classification of his novels. What do these three categories relate to?

2.4 HARDY'S WESSEX

Hardy's novels are grouped under the rubric *The Wessex Tales*. Thomas Hardy's Wessex is a literary landscape that inspired the novels. So much so, Wessex became a part of his characters with its moods and destiny.

Thomas Hardy was born in Upper Brockhampton, Dorset, where he spent much of his adult life. He was well acquainted with the local customs and location in this part of England and which are in evidence in his novels and also his poetry. They form an integral part of his writings. Wessex was the fictional name Hardy gave to this part of Southern England. "Hardy's intense study and accurate portrayal of nineteenth-century rural society in Dorset ...presents a microcosm of human life through which Hardy intended to comment on the universal condition of human existence"³. Wessex is the setting for his four major novels, *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *Return of the Native*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

"...in Hardy's fiction, the natural world is often described in great detail, rendering it more significant than a mere setting against which the narrative unfolds. Hardy establishes a reciprocal relationship between environment and character; an interaction which serves to demonstrate the changing position of humans in the post-Darwinian Victorian period. Hardy's narrative voice depicts the natural world in the same way the appearance of different individuals are described, and vice versa. This technique removes the sense of authority from human hands, placing humans within the natural world rather than ruling above it."⁴

Hardy had come under the influence of Charles Darwin who in his *Origin of Species* had postulated the theory that the human species as it is today, is the result of natural selection which is a random selection, without any intent. It is circumstance that has enabled different species to evolve into the human species. Natural selection is the central concept of evolution which is the process where organisms evolve by adapting to their environment. Such a postulation went against the prevalent Christian belief in God as the Creator.

Hardy's emphasis on environment demonstrates the influence of Darwinian theory. The role of fate and circumstance are important features of the plot, echoing the stress evolutionary ideas place upon chance, extinction, and survival. Darwin's emphasis upon the power of circumstance to alter the outcome of natural selection is evident in Hardy's fiction. Human forces are

ultimately rendered inconsequential against the unseen powers that appear to govern their immediate environment.⁵

2.5 THOMAS HARDY AND THE NOVEL OF REALISM

Hardy was a well read man and the literary and classical allusions in his writings serve as testimony to the vast reservoir of knowledge he had stored in his memory. He could cull out of his memory stories that he had listened to from his personal interactions with the people of rural England and from his reading of newspaper articles and he made them a part of his novels. He was a good prose writer and equally a good poet, and his writings reflect both his talent for expression and his enormous empathy with the rural and underprivileged people.

Hardy had a tormented adult life as he recognized the problems, sadness and lack of educational opportunities for peasants and rural people. He was also highly critical of the society's sexual mores that weighed in favour of men and victimized innocent women. He hardly communicated his grief except through his writings. Hardy once told his friend, Edward Clodd, in respect of his novels, that "every superstition, custom, etc., described therein may be depended on as true records of the same — and not inventions of mine".

Hardy's novels are realistic novels. What is realism in literature? A simple definition of realism in content, is that it is a faithful representation of reality with special focus on the representation of middle-class life. Realistic novels in the Victorian age were about the common man, in particular about the struggles of the lower classes especially when the lower class tried to gain upward mobility. Thus these novels came much closer to real life. Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* illustrate the Victorian preoccupation with this genre known as social realism. Sometimes realism is defined as a 'slice of life writing' that presents a close observation of contemporary life. Realism in form relates to a literary technique to describe story elements, such as setting, characters, themes, etc., without using imagery or decorative language. Writers depicting realism use simple, transparent language. The characteristics of realism in novels include:

- *An emphasis on the here and now
- Attention to specific action and verifiable consequences
- Realists evoke common actions, present surface details, and emphasize the minor catastrophes of the middle class
- They employ simple direct language and write about issues of conduct
- Characterization is very important. There is often an abundance of characters and social types.⁵

Check Your progress 2

1. What do you understand by 'realism' in a novel?
2. Write a note on Hardy's Wessex.

2.6 SALIENT ASPECTS OF HARDY'S NOVELS

Hardy examines the social conventions that hinder the lives of the poor rural folk in Victorian England, and criticizes such conventions, especially those relating to marriage, education and religion, that constrained the aspirations of those people and caused them unhappiness. Such unhappiness, and the suffering it brings, is seen by poet Philip Larkin as central in Hardy's works:

"What is the intensely maturing experience of which Hardy's modern man is most sensible? In my view it is suffering, or sadness, and extended consideration of the centrality of suffering in Hardy's work should be the first duty of the true critic for which the work is still waiting" ⁶

In his novels, Hardy boldly takes a stand against the harsh and strict Victorian morals that do not accommodate passion and love that cuts across class differences. Tess is punished in the eponymous novel (*Tess of the D'Urbervilles*) for her sexual involvement with a person from the aristocratic class. Hardy wants his readers to be conscious of the societal conventions that are forced on men and women as moral codes, without factoring in the passion and emotion underlying the relationships between men and women.

Fate or chance is another important theme. In Hardy's novels chance plays a predominant role almost reducing the characters to puppets who are pulled up and down by chance or Fate which often is malicious in its dispensations. Fate is not the same as Destiny though both terms are often used as synonyms. Fate is that which we cannot change. Destiny is something that holds the possibility of doing something by taking chances. For example, when we say someone is destined for great things, it means that the person can achieve it through making active and conscious decisions. Destiny is when we take chances even if we cannot control fate. Fate implies a force beyond human control that directs our actions. Indeed, Hardy's main characters often seem to be held in Fate's overwhelming grip. The role of Fate in the case of Tess is her tragedy. *Far From the Madding Crowd* is an example of a novel in which chance has a major role: "Had Bathsheba not sent the valentine, had Fanny not missed her wedding, for example, the story would have taken an entirely different path."

2.7 HARDY'S RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Lastly it is essential to understand Hardy's religious views that get reflected in his writings. We had touched upon it in section 2.4, focusing on Darwin's influence on Hardy. Hardy's family was Anglican, but not very religious. He was disturbed by the struggles and often tragic events of life and Man's struggles while confronting them.

This made him question the traditional belief in Christianity that viewed God as all powerful and as the dispenser of rewards and punishments for good and evil committed by humans. He found it difficult to reconcile the existence of evil with the idea of God as omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent and a repository of goodness. He substituted the Christian God by the force called the Immanent Will that controls the universe – not in an orderly divine fashion, but through indifference, arbitrariness and caprice. Hardy believed that the Universe was devoid of meaning

and in place of the divine force controlling the universe, he put the blind and unconscious will. Though he remained with the church he found that institutionalized Christianity with its belief in a divine and omnipotent God was incompatible with the human sufferings he witnessed all around him. Hardy developed “a consistent world-view through the notions of Chance and Time, Circumstances, Fate, Nature, Providence, Nemesis and Will tinged with metaphysical idealism”⁹.

While we study Hardy, we may have to keep in mind all these views – his views on Fate, the Immanent Will, the moral and societal codes of the Victorian period and his deep sympathy with the common people.

Check Your progress 3

How do you relate Hardy’s religious views to Darwin’s theory of evolution?

2.8 SUMMING UP.

In this Unit we have discussed: a brief summary of Hardy’s novels; the salient features of his writings and Hardy’s skepticism regarding religious beliefs. In the next two units, we will be discussing the novel *Far from the Madding Crowd*, in detail.

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4. *ibid.*
5. British Literature, Wiki
6. Philip Larkin,, "Wanted: Good Hardy Critic" in *Required Writing*, London: Faber and Faber.
7. *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Thomas Hardy – Introduction (Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism. Ed. Linda Pavlovski. Vol. 153. Gale Group, Inc.,)
8. Brennecke, Ernest Jr. *Thomas Hardy's Universe: A Study of a Poet's Mind*, Boston: Small Maynard and Company

2.10 GLOSSARY

Multifaceted: Having many aspects
Protean: Many sided, versatile
Iniquity: Lack of justice or righteousness, injustice.
Archaic: Old, ancient, outdated, antiquated.
Agrarian: Agricultural, farming, rural
Watertight: Foolproof, firm, impregnable, airtight.
Lukewarm: Uninterested, unresponsive, indifferent
Idyllic: Pastoral, picturesque, peaceful

Mores: Customs, conventions and practices.
Critique: Analysis, appraisal, assessment.
Rubric: Class, category, heading
Microcosm: A little world, world in miniature.

Post Darwinian: period after Charles Darwin, the British naturalist whose 'Theory of evolution based on Natural selection' in 1859 revolutionized the study of Biology. Evolution, he said was due to the process of changes and adaptation since the origin of the species.

Eponymous: A book or a Novel named after something else or deriving from an existing name or word.; the title of the novel has the same name of a character in it or the eponymous character in a story has the same name as the title of the story.

Boer Wars: Between 1899-1902, the Boer War was fought between the British and the Boers in South Africa (now called Afrikaners) as Britain wanted control of South Africa.

2.11 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Why do we regard Thomas Hardy as a protean writer?
2. Discuss the salient aspects of Hardy's novels.

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UNIT 3 FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD: SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Aims and Objectives
- 3.2 A short summary of the novel
- 3.3 Analysis of the novel
 - 3.3.1 Nature: its role in the novel.
 - 3.3.2 Themes of the novel
 - 3.3.3 Conclusion: a tragedy with a happy ending
- 3.4 Summing Up
- 3.5 Unit end Questions
- 3.6 Glossary
- 3.7 Reading List
- 3.8 References

3.0 INTRODUCTION

Far From the Madding Crowd is Hardy's fourth novel and this is considered to be his warmest and sunniest novel. Most of his major novels especially those written in his later years like *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* have tragic endings. But this novel is in line with happy, meaningful and conventional endings, with the marriage of the female protagonist Bathsheba to the unpretentious hero, Gabriel Oak who has been in love with her right through the narrative. This is a conventional love story where constancy in love, however unflashy and restrained, gets its just reward.

This unit attempts to give a summary of the novel, but not as a shortcut to learning the story without reading the full novel. The story in brief is meant to perk your interest to read the book in the original and enjoy Hardy's storytelling technique and his power of describing the scenes where the story takes place.

3.1 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you will be able to

- *discuss the summary of the novel
- *analyse the plot in relation to the role of Nature
- *discuss the themes that are interwoven in the novel.
- *explain how this novel is both a tragedy and a comedy.

3.2 A SHORT SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

The novel is remarkable for its presentation of the charm of rustic life and the simple, guileless character of the rural people. It is the inter weaving of the story with the scenic description that

gives the novel an easy momentum, making it one of the great pastoral novels of English literature.

The story runs smooth without any complexity from the beginning to the end as though on a straight line, involving the three suitors of Bathsheba - the loyal, simple Gabriel Oak; the Don Juan, Sergeant Troy; and the frustrated middle-aged wealthy farmer, William Boldwood. It ends with the happy marriage of Bathsheba and Gabriel Oak. This novel was written towards the end of the 19th century and a few years later, it was adapted as a play for the stage and much later for film. Though both film and theatre productions were financially a success, they could not do justice to Hardy's imaginative description of Nature and the rustic Wessex that one reads about in the novel. The merit of Hardy's novel rests on his picturesque realism, enhanced by his sensitive understanding of his characters. Hardy displays a highly romanticized version of rustic life that is in evidence in the almost idyllic descriptions of Wessex. His protagonist, the rustic shepherd Gabriel Oak with his love of the flute and love for his sheep is a contrast to the attractive playboy image of Sergeant Troy and the stiff, wealthy farmer Boldwood.

The plot is simple. Gabriel Oak is the owner of a small farm of 200 sheep, and as the novel opens, he is seen tending to his sheep. He leaves his farm and goes in search of a job where he meets Bathsheba, a beautiful young woman who happens to be in a wagon near a toll gate close to his field. He notices her smiling at her own image in a mirror even as she haggles over the toll charges. Farmer Oak steps in and pays the amount and the woman drives away without a word. Despite his attraction for her, Oak is sharp in the observation he makes to the gate keeper that she has one fault: "Vanity".

Bathsheba Everdene is an attractive young woman, highly independent and educated, who in a male dominated rural world of the 19th century has the boldness to work in a farm on equal terms with men. She is without fortune at the beginning, but soon after, she inherits her uncle's prosperous farm and in a world where managing farms and estates is in the domain of men, she proves she is no less than anyone of them.

One of the fortuitous incidents that brings Oak closer to her is when she saves him from fire that engulfed his hut when he was asleep. He had fallen asleep in his shepherd's hut with the hearth lit and windows closed. When the hut catches fire, he almost dies of suffocation but Bathsheba breaks in and saves him. He thanks her and asks her name. Not only does she refuse to give her name, she also challenges him to find it out for himself. There are a few more occasions when he spots her without her knowledge and he slowly realizes that he is in love with her. He makes bold to seek her hand in marriage, but she refuses saying she is not in love with him. When he asks her a second time and she again refuses, he agrees to drop the matter, though he declares he will always love her.

Activity 1

What in your opinion does this tell us about Oak? Is he shy and willing to accept Bathsheba's rejection of his love or is he a practical man willing to wait to win over Bathsheba?

Bathsheba leaves for Weatherbury after inheriting her uncle's farm. Meanwhile, disaster strikes Gabriel Oak as one of his young sheep dogs unwittingly chases his flock of sheep into a huge chalk pit where they drown. Gabriel loses all his life's savings that he had invested in his sheep. He loses not only the sheep, but, since many of them were pregnant ewes, all their unborn lambs. He leaves his farm in Newcombe Hill and goes to find a job in Weatherbury in response to an advertisement asking for a bailiff to work in a farm. But he could not get the job as the hiring employers learn that Oak himself had been an owner of a sheep farm and therefore will not be the suitable person to be employed as a farm hand. Oak is not disheartened and tries to earn money by playing his flute.

Activity 2.

What trait of Gabriel Oak do you see in the above episode?

Yet another fortuitous event takes place. Oak falls asleep in a wagon that was going to Weatherbury, where Bathsheba has settled. When he wakes up and slips out of the wagon, he sees something on fire at a distance. He finds a straw-rick (a large stack of straw, wheat, or other grain) on fire. As a shepherd, Gabriel has the knowledge to extinguish a farm fire and with his quick action and response, he succeeds in putting out the fire. The mistress of the farm in a veil comes to him and thanks him and asks him how she should repay his services. He tells her that she could hire him on her farm to give her a helping hand. The woman lifts her veil and Oak is delightfully surprised to recognize her as Bathsheba. She engages him on her farm.

Oak is accepted by the farm labourers as he easily mingles with them. He learns from others that Bathsheba was left penniless by her father, but her uncle has made her his heiress. He also learns that she is a strong woman who has decided to manage the farm by herself and displays her strength when she dismisses her bailiff for stealing barley from the farm. He also hears that one of her young servants, Fanny Robin has mysteriously disappeared and is suspected to have committed suicide. Bathsheba asks her workers to find Fanny, or get information about her as to who her lover is with whom she might have fled. She comes to know vaguely that Fanny had a soldier sweetheart.

A third fortuitous event takes place when Oak has an unexpected meeting with a poorly dressed young woman as he walks back to the inn where he stays. The sparsely clad woman is Fanny Robin who pleads with him not to tell anyone that he has seen her. On seeing this pathetic, poorly clad woman, Gabriel offers her a shilling. Bathsheba receives a visitor in her farm: he is Boldwood, a middle-aged farmer. Though she does not meet him immediately, she comes to know that he is a wealthy man, kind, and fond of children. He resists all female attempts to impress him and shows no interest in women.

Bathsheba wins the approval of all the male farmers by her firm standing and she proves a match to her competitors in the market where she sells her grains. She lets the men talk, but in arguing on prices she holds her own firmly like any experienced dealer even though she is a woman in a man's world. But there is an elasticity in her firmness which makes her far removed from obstinacy and at the same time there is a *naïveté* in the way she reduces the price. Boldwood is the only man who does not focus his attention on her. In a whimsical gesture,

Bathsheba sends him a Valentine card with a seal that says "Marry Me". But she does not affix her signature.

Boldwood is puzzled as to who could have sent the Valentine card. At that time, the mailman hands him an envelope which he opens to find that the mail is for Gabriel Oak. Seeing Gabriel Oak walking across the field, he hands him the letter with apologies for having mistakenly opened it. Gabriel reveals to him the contents of the letter which is from Fanny Robin. The letter says that she is going to marry Sergeant Troy. Even though Fanny had requested him to maintain secrecy about her, Gabriel informs Boldwood as the latter is genuinely concerned about Fanny. Boldwood feels skeptical as he knows Troy to be untrustworthy. Boldwood then shows Gabriel, the unsigned Valentine card and asks him if he can identify the sender. Gabriel recognizes the writing, and Boldwood is puzzled and bewildered when Gabriel tells him that it is from Bathsheba.

In a twist of fate, Fanny fails to turn up at All Saints' Church, where she is supposed to get married to Sergeant Troy, a dashing, handsome soldier, as she mistakenly waits for him in a different church, All Souls Church. Troy, who is waiting for Fanny feels embarrassed as the congregation at All Saints' Church - mainly comprising inquisitive women begin to move out. Troy is infuriated by his humiliation before the old women who wait to witness his wedding and takes out his rage on poor, confused Fanny. He is noncommittal to Fanny's plea to get married the next day. She is terrified to see his fury, the first hint at his real nature.

For the first time Boldwood meets Bathsheba in the market and finds her beautiful. Hardy describes this meeting thus: "Adam had awakened from his deep sleep, and behold! there was Eve. and for the first time he really looked at her." Bathsheba becomes aware of having made an impression, but regrets her capricious, impulsive action of sending him a Valentine card. Hardy briefly shows the new awareness of Bathsheba and Boldwood for each other. Boldwood is naïve and he fails to notice Bathsheba's wilful caprice and intentional frivolity in sending him the Valentine message with the two words 'Marry Me'. So also Bathsheba does not realize how her careless and impulsive act will have tragic consequences.

Activity 3

Explain the reference to Adam and Eve in this section. Whom does the reference relate to?

Boldwood meets Bathsheba when she is in the fields with Gabriel Oak. Though Boldwood does not speak to her, Oak intuitively senses that Boldwood is deeply in love with Bathsheba. He also suspects her to have done something impish that may lead to future complications. A few days later, Boldwood overcoming his shyness, suddenly proposes to Bathsheba. Her response was quick: "Mr. Boldwood, though I respect you much, I do not feel - what would justify me to accepting your offer." Boldwood tells her that despite his age, he will make a better husband who cares for her than any young man. Bathsheba asks for six weeks time to give him her final answer.

Hardy, who is famous for weaving his tale through a series of twists, brings in Sergeant Troy, the third suitor to seek Bathsheba's hand. He is untrustworthy, a charmer, a flatterer, and a liar.

After rejecting the offers of Oak and Boldwood, Bathsheba is captivated by the charm and ardent wooing of Sergeant Troy. Troy initially has no intention of marrying Bathsheba and true to his nature, merely pursues her lightheartedly. She is flattered by his pretentious solicitousness and is completely taken in by him, revealing herself to be rather gullible and guileless. It is her own vanity that makes her think he is sincere. Boldwood is upset as he knows Troy as a seducer of women. Boldwood is angry and launches into a long, distraught harangue with Bathsheba: "Bathsheba, sweet, lost coquette, pardon me! I've been blaming you, threatening you, behaving like a churl to you, when he's (Troy) the greatest sinner. He stole your dear heart away with his unfathomable lies! . . . I pray God he may not come into my sight, for I may be tempted beyond myself . . . yes, keep him away from me." This sounds ominous as Boldwood shoots Troy towards the latter part of the novel.

But at this point in the story he tries to bribe Troy and offers him 500 pounds to marry Fanny and leave Bathsheba. Boldwood is shocked when Troy pockets the money but does not marry Fanny, driving her to a penniless state and death. Boldwood approaches Troy once again and in order to protect Bathsheba's honour, makes yet another offer of 500 pounds if he leaves her. Troy teases him by showing a newspaper announcing Bathsheba's recent marriage to Troy. Derisively Troy tells Boldwood: "Yours is the ridiculous fate which always attends interference between a man and his wife." Bathsheba's vanity, Boldwood's naive and artless nature, and Troy's libertinism and profligacy come together to spell disaster for Bathsheba. She settles for the glib, suave soldier in place of the anxious and clear thinking Boldwood and the truthful and steadfast Gabriel Oak.

Gabriel Oak is honest, fair in his judgement and has the courage to confront Bathsheba and warn her about Troy. Though he is almost certain that she will not listen to him, he deems it his duty to speak. He begs her to be discreet: "Bathsheba, dear mistress, this I beg you to consider - that, both to keep yourself well honoured among the workfolk, and in common generosity to an honourable man who loves you as well as I, you should be more discreet in your bearing towards this soldier." She dismisses his advice with a foolish comment that Gabriel Oak's remarks were born out of his frustration over her refusal to marry him. Oak's honest response that he has stopped thinking about the possibility of marrying her hurts her. Bathsheba is upset not only by his frankness, but more so by his indifference to her.

In a fit of anger, Bathsheba dismisses Gabriel Oak from her service for meddling with her personal life. But he agrees to go only if she hires a good bailiff in his place. When she does not do so, Gabriel refuses to leave the farm. As luck would have it her lambs are taken ill and the only one who can cure them is Gabriel Oak. Bathsheba immediately recalls him to join back. While Oak experiences anxiety over Bathsheba's relationship with Troy, Boldwood, very unlike the dignified, Boldwood at the beginning of the story displays great anger. Hardy gives us a hint of the potential violence in him.

Troy, a charming liar ensnares Bathsheba. He indulges in flattery to woo and win her. He exhibits his skill with his sword, and Bathsheba is overwhelmed, and falls in his trap. What Troy asks her in jest to accept him, she takes it seriously and agrees. Troy feels trapped by his own foolish jest. Her falling for Troy, a handsome, charming, chivalrous, skilful swordsman blind her to the deceit of the artful dodger. The strong self reliant woman who has never had such an

encounter with someone who is clever and who manages to win over the opposite sex by fake charm, suddenly loses her strength and shows herself to be a weak and helpless woman. Hardy writes:

"Bathsheba loved Troy in the way that only self-reliant women love when they abandon their self-reliance. When a strong woman recklessly throws away her strength, she is worse than a weak woman who has never had any strength to throw away. One source of her inadequacy is the novelty of the occasion. She had never had practice in making the best of such a condition. Weakness is doubly weak by being new."

Except for the perceptive Gabriel, no one notices her infatuation for Troy. In the absence of Boldwood who has gone out of town, Gabriel feels responsible to protect her from Troy and advises her to be more discreet in her bearing towards the soldier. Bathsheba does not wish to think ill of Troy, does not want to believe the stories about him, and fights against the possibility of their truth.

Bathsheba marries Troy, and Gabriel is uneasy as he feels that in the near future she will regret her hasty decision. Boldwood is angry that Bathsheba has preferred the untrustworthy Troy to his own constancy and loyalty in love. Troy returns to the farm after giving up soldiering. He celebrates his marriage by drinking with all the farm hands except Gabriel who refuses to get drunk. It happens to be a stormy night. While Troy and all the farm workers are in a heavy drunken stupor, Gabriel goes to Bathsheba's farm and saves the hay ricks from the storm. Bathsheba also goes out in the night and meets Gabriel at work. Gabriel asks her to leave but she stays and gratefully says "you are kinder than I deserve. I will stay and help you." Bathsheba abruptly confesses the reason for her trip to Bath; she had intended to break off with Troy, but jealousy of a possible rival and her own distraction had led her to marry him instead. Bathsheba's impetuous and hasty actions lead her to disaster. Three men - Troy, carefree and reaping the advantages of being master of a farm; Boldwood, angry, hurt and experiencing severe emotional tension and Gabriel, remaining loyal to her despite her refusal to accept his proposal - change her life.

Their marriage starts crumbling. Troy's claims to Bathsheba's money to cover his gambling losses hint at the disquietude that has set in. He accidentally comes across Fanny, feels guilty for abandoning her after having an affair with that timid young woman, and leaving her pregnant. Troy's concern for her is real. Fanny is another victim of his inability, or his refusal, to live by anything but impulse. Impulse dictated his marriage to Bathsheba, which now is obviously crumbling.

Fanny dies and both Boldwood and Bathsheba who had been her employers in the past, feel duty bound to give her a decent burial. The farm labourers know that Fanny had run away to follow a soldier. Only Boldwood and Gabriel are aware that the soldier was none other than Sergeant Troy. Gabriel sees the coffin with a scrawl on the lid saying 'Fanny and child'. Gabriel erases the last word to save her honour.

Bathsheba becomes aware that Fanny had died in childbirth. She had earlier seen Fanny's golden hair in Troy's watch case. Intuitively, Bathsheba arrives at the truth about who Fanny's lover

was. She shows her pity for the mother and child by placing flowers around their bodies. Troy's emotion and remorse at Fanny's death, reinforce her realization that her marriage is over.

Troy who always desires fun and excitement gets bored with the life in the farm. He feels some remorse for his flirtation with Fanny and leaving her to take a forlorn path that ends with her death and also that of his child she was carrying . He feels a savage aversion to Bathsheba and leaves her, seeking solitude. He goes for a swim, is carried away by the deeper currents of water but is rescued by a passing ship.

Though news of Troy drowning reaches Bathsheba, she refuses to accept it, as deep within she believes he is alive. She has no emotions left for him and goes about her daily duties. Bathsheba is remorseful but somewhat relieved when Troy disappears. His clothes are found on the shore of a bay where he had gone for a swim. The circumstantial evidence points to his death, but Bathsheba knows intuitively that he is alive. After much persuasion she agrees to wear mourning clothes as Troy's widow. Boldwood continues to seek her hand but she says she cannot accept him before the seven year period of mourning is over. Boldwood who was earlier known for his farming and managerial skills is reluctant to work and take charge of his farm. Gabriel accepts his request to attend to his farm after consultation with Bathsheba, whose farm he is already managing.

Six years pass by, and Boldwood approaches Bathsheba to marry him as per her promise (that she would marry him after the seven year mourning period, when the law will declare her legally widowed). Troy returns and interrupts the Christmas party that Boldwood is giving prior to his marriage. Shocked at his return, the infuriated Boldwood loses cool and shoots him. Troy is buried beside Fanny, his wronged love. Because of his insanity, Boldwood's sentence is eventually commuted to internment at the pleasure of Her Majesty, the Queen. Gabriel, who has served Bathsheba patiently and loyally all this time, marries her at the story's conclusion. The augury is that, having lived through tragedy together, the pair will now find happiness.

3.3. ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL

The novel has 57 chapters. Harper and Brothers' first edition of the novel in 1912 had 464 pages. Here we have abridged the book with a focus on the story. In this abridged version of the story, we have only given a short summary of the novel and not dealt with Hardy's description of the rural countryside and the role played by Nature in the progress of the novel. In this section we will take up the role of Nature in the novel. You will gain an insight into Hardy's picturesque description of the Wessex countryside and understand how Hardy uses Nature to echo human feelings and thoughts. Before analyzing the role of Nature, let us first learn about the location of the story.

The novel is the first to be set in Thomas Hardy's fictitious countryside, Wessex, which he locates in rural southwest England. Hardy set all of his major novels in the south and southwest of England. He named the area "Wessex", which he described as 'a realistic dream country'. But in reality, there exists no such place. What Hardy does is to recreate real places from the southwest region of England and fill them with fictional characters from the rural countryside. His portrayal of the folks from small towns in the farming areas is authentic and real.

In this novel, we find life in the rural region presented idealistically and ends on a happy fulfillment of human emotions unlike in his later works notably *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* which end in tragedies. *Far from the Madding Crowd* is an early novel of Hardy where love and constancy win in the end.

The main story of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, as we discussed above, is that a young woman, Bathsheba Everdene, has inherited a farm and is courted by three men: Gabriel Oak, a shepherd who is devoted to her but is ruled out as a suitor due to his low station; Boldwood, a neighbouring wealthy farmer, upright and reserved; and Sergeant Troy, a dashing soldier. *Far From the Madding Crowd* is a great, emotional story about three interesting characters in love with one strong, beautiful and self-confident woman, and whose one wrong choice changes the fortunes of all the three suitors. Her impetuous decision causes fatal disaster to one of the suitors (Sergeant Troy), leads another to crime and punishment (farmer Boldwood) and ends happily with her marriage to the third suitor (Gabriel Oak). Apart from some minor characters, we have Nature presented as one more important character playing a very significant role.

3.3.1 Nature: Its role in the Novel.

Though Wessex with its rich pastoral setting does not exist, the simple rustic, jolly characters bring it alive as they seem to be carriers of old traditions. Hardy says that he went back to early English history to understand the rural myths and beliefs, their traditions of farming and transposed them on to 19th century England under the reign of Queen Victoria. Hardy's attempt, he said, was to seek a continuity of the past and the present. The rural countryside continues the age-old serenity and peace which Hardy captures through his Wessex, where society and Nature are in harmony. In this novel, the Wessex countryside has not felt the impact of the industrial revolution. Nature and Man still live in close proximity to each other.

Nature does not remain a static entity, but an animated presence and its pristine purity, its abundant generosity and its energy are embodied in Gabriel Oak. It is the same with Bathsheba but she deviates through her impulsive acts. She is equally a woman rooted in the rural soil, self-confident, vivacious and beautiful but unlike the calmness of Nature, she reveals an impulsive and whimsical self, as a result of which she is restless, agitated and needs a calming influence that Gabriel Oak, is ever willing to offer.

Boldwood in the early part of the novel, represents the best of Nature in his disciplined and confident way of living, far from the madding emotions of love and passion, jealousy and vengeful rage, but Bathsheba's playful and thoughtless note expressing her interest in him - and which is not true, but only an impish act - changes him, and in the latter part of the novel he gives himself to passionate jealousy and kills Troy for coming in the way of his marriage to Bathsheba. He goes against his natural traits and gets out of tune with Nature which is the personification of selfless generosity, of giving in abundance without any expectation of receiving in good measure. While Gabriel Oak seeks nothing after Bathsheba rejects his proposal and works for her selflessly, looks after her personal interest and also her farm, Boldwood is jolted out of his calm and gentle nature when he begins to love Bathsheba, mistaking her impetuous request to marry her as genuine and turns violent, in violation of his basic nature. He

shoots Troy because his return will hinder his proposed marriage to Bathsheba. Troy is the anti-thesis of Nature displaying the city-country conflict as he represents the city's superficiality and shallowness in contrast to the country's naturalness and wholesomeness. His agitation, his restlessness and flirtatious behaviour is pitted against the quietness, tranquility and serenity in Nature.

The title "Far from the Madding Crowd" is a line adapted from the 18th century "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard," by Thomas Gray ("Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife"). The word 'madding' means frenzied. This serene countryside is far removed from the hurly burly of the city. Hardy shows the rural peace of the countryside that is not disturbed by the inhabitants. But it is breached by the man from the town who intrudes into the lives of Bathsheba, Boldwood and Fanny and wrecks all of them. But Nature's tranquility represented by Gabriel Oak restores peace at the end. Nature is constant in her serenity even when there are stormy nights.

Gabriel does not change even when there are ups and downs in his life. He encounters disasters like the loss of his entire flock of sheep, rejection of his marriage proposal by Bathsheba, and his instinctive anxiety about her relationship with Troy, and despite all these troubles, he continues with his professional work and remains loyal to Bathsheba and feels responsible for her wellbeing. "The constancy of the rural life and of dependable characters such as Oak are still there when all the trials and tribulations are over, to provide sheet anchor for such as Bathsheba, 'Far from the Madding Crowd's ignoble strife'."¹

The calm pastoral landscape, free of strife is set against the turmoil and conflict among men. Nature with all her calmness poses a challenge to human beings who are compelled to face natural disaster. The story shows how the one who is able to navigate through vicissitudes of natural disaster triumphs at the end. The sudden disaster that overtakes Gabriel Oak when he loses all his sheep changes his life and he is forced out of his home to go in search of a job. He gets a job when he puts out a fire in Bathsheba's farm and later he saves a group of lambs from being poisoned by clover. He is a man of the soil and is skilled to navigate around natural disasters. In contrast, Troy cannot face Nature's storm that washes away the flowers he had planted over Fanny's grave. He is listless and dissatisfied after his marriage to Bathsheba. He only wanted to flirt with her, pompously strut around as he is conscious of his handsome appearance, his soldier's uniform and his skill as a swordsman. He is surprised at Bathsheba's willingness to marry him. He marries her not out of genuine feelings of love, but to show off to the poor, innocent villagers his prize catch and that too won by outsmarting Boldwood. After the wedding, he celebrates by getting drunk along with the wonderstruck workers in Bathsheba's farm. Troy's pretension of love is in conflict with Nature's spontaneity and generosity. His behaviour is yet another conflict generating aspect that ends in tragic disaster.

When the storm breaks out at night when Troy and the farm labourers are in a drunken stupor, Bathsheba joins Gabriel to race against time and storm to safeguard all their farm produce. Humans then, can work to mitigate conflicts within nature, can rebel – unsuccessfully - against it, or can become hostile forces of their own. Whichever the case, the novel makes clear that country life is not exempt from such conflicts"². And while humans manage natural forces as best they can, there is little they can do to halt them. In the novel, Hardy uses nature as a premonition, as a clue to understand the future of some relationships between different

characters. For example, Fanny, most of the time, appears alone, at night, hidden in the darkness. In chapter seven, she meets Gabriel for the first time; she is alone at night, she is fleeing Bathsheba's house, to ask Troy to marry her. She is what can be best described as 'darkness visible.' She is no doubt betrayed by Troy, but she is a victim of her fate as she misses out the church where she is supposed to marry Troy.

Check Your Progress 1

1. What does Wessex stand for in the novel?
2. How does Hardy relate nature to the different characters?

3.3.2 Themes of the Novel

- (1) Unrequited love: Gabriel's love, Boldwood's passion for Bathsheba, Bathsheba's misplaced love for Troy and finally poor Fanny's innocent love for Troy illustrate this theme.
- (2) Concept of class structure- Bathsheba's earlier rejection of Gabriel Oak, Farmer Boldwood's consciousness of his superiority, Troy's supercilious attitude towards the rural folk and Bathsheba's treatment of her farm workers and her maids are examples of this class structure.
- (3) Catastrophe: Gabriel's loss of his entire flock of sheep at the beginning of the novel changes his life, leading him to seek work in Bathsheba's farm. Nature's fury and the stormy nights bring Gabriel and Bathsheba together when she begins to appreciate his commitment and loyalty despite her rejection of his proposal to marry him.
- (4) Fate: Fate, chance, and circumstance rule Hardy's rural world. Fanny turns up at the wrong church to marry Sergeant Troy – if this marriage had taken place, one of Bathsheba's options would have been removed and Fanny's tragedy averted. So is the return of Troy at the nick of time when Bathsheba agrees to keep her promise to marry Boldwood after the official mourning period of widowhood is over. The result is the shooting of Troy by Boldwood and his imprisonment as a consequence. Destiny brings a happy ending to the story with Bathsheba's acceptance of Gabriel and marriage to him.

Check Your Progress 2:

Write a note on the themes of *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

3.3.3 Conclusion:

This novel is one of the very few novels of Hardy that ends on a happy note though the elements of tragedy cannot be ignored. It has elements both of tragedy and comedy and approximates to the dramatic genre called 'tragicomedy'. The German writer and philosopher Gotthold Ephraim Lessing speaks of tragicomedy as a mix of seriousness and pain: "Tragicomedy allows works of literature to explore depths and paradoxes of human experience unavailable to strict comedies and tragedies."³ In this respect *Far From the Madding crowd* explores different human experiences - of love, constancy, rejection, depression, and anger. *Far from the Madding Crowd* starts on a tragic note with the memorable image of all Gabriel Oak's flock of sheep running

over a cliff in the dark. Although this is disastrous for him personally, it proves to be lucky, as he goes in search of a job and meets Bathsheba, whom he ultimately marries. Troy's desertion of Fanny and the death of Fanny and their unborn child is tragic. In fact, later Troy mourns at Fanny's grave and although he had been false to her in life, he decorates her grave with expensive flowers. Ironically the heavy rains that night made water leak from the church roof, and through the mouth of one gargoyle floods the grave. Boldwood's shooting of Troy is sensational and overtly melodramatic. It is a calamitous ending for both the suitors who with a single bullet have put an end to both their claims over Bathsheba. It enables the novel to end on a happy note as there is nothing to come in the way of the union of the lead pair. The happy ending after a series of tragic events makes almost everything turn out for the best for the protagonists. We may recall here, Thomas Hardy's wise observation on writing: "The whole secret of fiction and the drama - in the constructional part - lies in the adjustment of things unusual to the things eternal and universal."⁴

3.4 SUMMING UP

You should definitely read the story in the original to appreciate Hardy's gifts as a story teller. In this Unit, we have discussed the summary of the novel in brief; analysed the role of Nature in the novel, focusing on the one-to-one correspondence between nature and the four major characters, and considered *Far from the Madding Crowd* as a combination of elements of tragedy and comedy.

3.5 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Justify the novel's title *Far from the Madding Crowd*.
3. Is the novel a tragicomedy?

3.6 GLOSSARY

Rustic: Rural, of the countryside

Guileless: Simple, undesigning, not scheming

Interweaving: interlacing, blending

Momentum: impetus, thrust, drive

Pastoral: Rural, rustic, countryside

Don Juan: A habitual seducer of women

Idyllic: idealized, picturesque

Protagonist: Leading character

Playboy: Womanizer, Pleasure seeker

Ewes: female sheep

Haggling: quarreling, arguing

Fortuitous: Happening by chance, lucky, fortunate

Hearth: A fireplace

Bailiff: An overseer of an estate; a steward.

Shilling: in Britain until 1971, a coin worth one-twentieth of a Pound

Hoary: ancient, venerable

Naivete: Unaffected simplicity, lack of worldliness

Mailman: One who delivers mail, postman
Skeptical: Having doubt
Congregation: A gathering
Inquisitive: curious, inquiring
Adam and Eve: The first Man and the first Woman, ancestors of all humans
Capricious: Unpredictable, impulsive
Impish: Mischievous, prankish
Solicitousness: excessive concern
Gullible: Easily trusting, unsuspecting
Distraught: Deeply agitated
Harangue: A long, pompous speech
Coquette: A flirt
Churl: A rude boorish person
Libertinism: a tendency to unrestrained, often licentious or dissolute conduct
Profligacy: immorality, dissipation, depravity
Suave: smooth tongued, charming
Artful Dodger: A sly rogue, a miscreant
Stupor: a state of numbness, drunken state of reduced consciousness
Impetuous: hasty
Augury: forerunner
Proximity: Closeness
Static: Fixed, stationary
Entity: Something that exists as a particular unit
Animated: lively, dynamic
Pristine : remaining in a pure state.
Anti-thesis: opposite
Navigate: drive, maneuver, steer
Vicissitude: change
Unrequited: Unreciprocated, not returned

3.7 READING LIST: CRITICAL WORKS ON THOMAS HARDY

Page, Norman, *Oxford Reader's Companion to Hardy*.

Nathalie, Bantz, "*Far from the Madding Crowd* and the Anxiety of Place."

"Notes on *Far From the Madding Crowd*." Methuen & Co.

C. G. Harper. *The Hardy Country*.

3.8 REFERENCES:

1. Notes on *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Methuen & Co.

2. www.litcharts.com › lit › themes › conflict-and-the-laws-of-nature.

3. *A Hardy Companion: A Guide to the works of Thomas Hardy* by F.B. Pinion, Springer publications, 2016.

UNIT 4 FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD: CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Aims and objectives
- 4.2 A brief sketch of the major characters
- 4.3 Quotes from the text in illustration of the characters
- 4.4 Hardy's philosophy
- 4.5 Summing up
- 4.6 Unit end questions
- 4.7 References
- 4.8 Glossary
- 4.9 Reading list

4.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we discuss the major characters and themes of *Far From the Madding Crowd*. We will be looking at the ways in which authors create and develop characters and how these characters reflect the realities of the period when the novel was written (in this novel, the later period of the 19th century). Characterization includes description of the physical features, the social status and the ideas, attitudes and behaviour of the characters, their interactions with each other and their interaction with the outer world.

4.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit in conjunction with Unit 3 you will be able to:

- Develop a critical understanding of characterization in novels with reference to *Far From the Madding Crowd*
- Understand how character traits contribute to the progression of the plot and
- Discuss the themes of *Far From the Madding Crowd* in the context of Thomas Hardy's philosophy.

4.2 A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE MAJOR CHARACTERS IN FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

All novels have two major elements - story and characters apart from the narrative style, i.e., how the story is narrated. The plot or events drive the novel from the start to the finish, while characters move the story forward with their words and actions.

Characters are of many types; each has its unique characteristics and functions. Normally the characters do not change midway in the course of the novel. Some characters develop and grow

and these are the ones who contribute to the progress of the story. These characters start out one way and end up different, and the change in the story is brought out by what happens to them.

Who are the main characters in this novel? The major characters pivotal to the story, whose actions develop it from beginning to end are discussed below.

4.2.1 Bathsheba Everdene

Bathsheba, the orphaned daughter of a wealthy farm owner, is raised by her aunt in the countryside. She is the protagonist as the novel centers around her. The story progresses through her relationship with three suitors and her final choice reflects her personal growth from the impulsive and headstrong woman that she was at the beginning to a mature woman who can manage her emotions. She is pivotal to the story and her final choice of Gabriel Oak as her husband shows she is far from her mad obsessed lover, Farmer Boldwood and a pretentious, self absorbed husband, Sergeant Troy who deserts her soon after marriage. Bathsheba is by far the best-drawn and strongest female character seen in Hardy's work, despite her vacillations. Hardy shows her to be a strong and self-reliant woman and although she makes some poor choices, they do make sense. She is a realistic character whose statement made late in the novel helps to explain Tess, Eustacia and Sue the central female leads in Hardy's later novels: 'it is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in language which is chiefly made by men to express theirs.'

4.2.2 Gabriel Oak

Gabriel, like Bathsheba, is different from all other characters in the novel. He is far from the madding crowd of Weatherbury, for he is originally from Norcombe Hill and he comes to Weatherbury in search of a job. He is an outsider to Weatherbury and learns about the people of that place and their way of living after he gets a job under Bathsheba to manage her farm and settles down there. While the Weatherbury folks are given to gossip and are skeptical about a woman deciding to manage her own farm, Gabriel Oak, a shepherd who was reasonably well off in his native place till tragedy struck him with the loss of his two hundred sheep, suffers from no false pride and accepts a job under a woman. He does not gossip about anyone. He is humble and gentle and accepts Bathsheba's instant rejection of his marriage proposal in his stride. His humility, unboastful character and selflessness are in marked contrast to the vain, boastful, self-centric Sergeant Troy who marries Bathsheba and leaves her. He is also a simple rustic shepherd from an obscure village and thus is a contrast to the country-bred, complex and wealthy gentleman Farmer Boldwood, who falls a victim to his own passion that was initially kindled by Bathsheba's prankish message to him to marry her. Thus Gabriel Oak is far removed from both the suitors of Bathsheba - Sergeant Troy and Boldwood. Gabriel Oak stands out in the midst of the Weatherbury crowd, and proves to be a likeable loner, far from the madding crowd.

4.2.3 Sergeant Francis Troy

Sergeant Troy is a handsome, dashing young soldier, charming to women and a pleasure seeker. He is not one of the Weatherbury types; he feels superior to the countryfolks in Weatherbury and his conquest of Bathsheba provokes awe and admiration in the innocent rural farmhands. He is in their eyes a hero who could tame Bathsheba, the spirited young woman of the place. He is not

like Gabriel Oak who is self-effacing and withdrawing by nature. He is unlike Farmer Boldwood who is a strict no-nonsense type and who adheres to Christian morals. Boldwood has a congenital hatred for Sergeant Troy who with his pretentious charm, woos and wins Bathsheba. If Gabriel Oak, who ultimately proves successful, is the hero, Sergeant Troy is the antagonist of the novel. He should not be seen as totally evil for he has shades of good qualities. He keeps to his promise he made to Fanny Robin that he will marry her by waiting in the church for her to turn up. Unfortunately it is destiny that mars their marriage as Fanny reaches another church and thus fails to arrive at the right place. He feels a deep sense of remorse, when Fanny dies along with his unborn baby.

4.2.4 Farmer Boldwood

Boldwood is the second of the three suitors for Bathsheba's hand. Boldwood is not a young man like Gabriel Oak or Sergeant Troy. He is middle aged, dignified and respectable. He owns a farm close to Bathsheba's and is a highly respected farmer, especially for his knowledge and management of his farm. He had never regarded marriage as a necessity and despite the gossip of the villagers about his unmarried status, the truth is, he had never really been in love. He is kind and sympathetic towards the poor and the submissive like Fanny Robin. He is a man with a kind heart and he feels responsible for Fanny, initially for her schooling, then for her employment in Bathsheba's uncle's farm and finally for her safety when she suddenly disappears from the village with no one having any information about her whereabouts.

In spite of his no-nonsense approach to women and marriage, he misunderstands Bathsheba's mischievous Valentine card sent to him with the tag line 'Will you marry me?' He is flattered to be paid such attentions by a beautiful, almost imperious woman and slowly becomes obsessed with her - an obsession that eventually turns into madness. He is insistent on Bathsheba agreeing to marry him after it is rumored that her husband Sergeant Troy had died of drowning. The Valentine card makes him for the first time look at women and think of marriage that he had till then shunned. For the first time, he experiences love which turns into obsessive passion. He becomes possessive of Bathsheba and gets upset with Sergeant Troy whom he knows to be a pretender with no genuine love for Bathsheba. The change in Boldwood is palpable. He is far removed from his earlier serious and solemn nature. He forces Bathsheba to promise that she will marry him after the official mourning period for her departed husband is over. His character undergoes change twice in the course of the novel - from a stiff, sedate, sober, almost a boring character to a passionate and obsessed lover and then, when he is denied the fruition of his obsession, to a vengeful murderer.

4.2.5 Fanny Robin

She is not a full-fledged character and her appearance is limited to her meeting with Gabriel Oak on a gloomy winter evening. Yet she is pivotal to the development of the story. Both Boldwood and Bathsheba wonder where the girl had disappeared, as they are not aware of her pathetic condition of pregnancy and destitution. She is young and innocent and is taken in by the charming Sergeant Troy. She believes in him as a true lover with his proposal to marry her. But it was just her fate that she waits for him outside a wrong church while Troy waits inside another church. Troy gets angry and refuses to listen to her pleas for forgiveness and abandons

her even as she carries his baby in her womb. Fanny dies in childbirth and but for Gabriel Oak's presence of mind to erase the word 'child' on the coffin and retain only 'Fanny', her name would have been sullied as an unwed mother. She is guileless, innocent and honest as she returns the shilling that Oak had lent her earlier on seeing her distressed condition.

The rest of the characters who appear are the people of Weatherbury, mainly farm hands and employees of the farm owners. They are illiterate labourers, and work manually in farms to earn their livelihood. The only pleasure they get is from their drink and gossip.

Check Your Progress 1

Write short notes on the major characters of the novel, and show how Hardy develops these characters in the course of the novel.

4.3 QUOTES FROM THE TEXT IN ILLUSTRATION OF THE CHARACTERS

These quotes are taken from the Penguin Classic edition (2003) of *Far from the Madding Crowd*.

4.3.1 Bathsheba

Let us start with Bathsheba. She is a pretty young woman and Hardy without giving details, creatively suggests her beauty. In the opening chapter, her good looks are suggestively introduced:

“She did not adjust her hat, or pat her hair, or press a dimple into shape, or do any one thing to signify that any such intention had been her motive in taking up the glass. She simply observed herself as a fair product of Nature in a feminine direction—her expression seeming to glide into far-off though likely dramas in which men would play a part—vistas of probable triumphs...”

Early in the novel, in chapter 4, she says: “nobody has got me yet as a sweetheart, instead of my having a dozen as my aunt said; I hate to be thought men's property in that way—though possibly I shall be had some day.” Two things strike us - the 19th century woman is presented as a modern heroine, refusing to be a man's property. But realizing the patriarchal mindset of the age, she retreats and says she possibly will have to be the property of some man at some point of time. She shows herself to be strong willed and fiercely independent, though aware of the social compulsions that will force her to accept a man. She does not want to be the centre of gossip and pity over her unmarried status among her labour force that constitutes the village majority. More than that she is keen to prove she is equal to the other sex in terms of owning, managing, and administering the farm and the farm labourers.

In chapter 13, after she sends the Valentine card, the novelist Hardy comments: “So very idly and unreflectingly was this deed done. Of love, as a spectacle Bathsheba had a fair knowledge; but of love subjectively she knew nothing.” This sums up the naivety of Bathsheba who has had no experience of love, a corroboration of what she had earlier said that she did not want to be any man's property. She is presented as a happy-go-lucky young woman, self confident,

independent but impetuous and acting whimsically. She has no love for Boldwood, which is but natural since he is middle aged and appears mature and stiff in contrast to her youthful appearance, vivacity and high spirits. She had noted his aloofness from women and wanted to tease him. Hence her Valentine card with the inscription 'will you marry me' was a spontaneous prank just to see what the women-shy Boldwood's response would be! The same impetuosity can be seen in her impulsive acceptance of Sergeant Troy. Despite the mature Gabriel Oak's warning, she sticks to her impulsive decision and faces tragic consequences.

She grows up as she experiences the ups and downs of life and we see her a mature young woman when she accepts Gabriel Oak after her earlier impulsive rejection of his marriage proposal. Hardy's comment on Boldwood's shock and awe on receiving the Valentine card reveals Boldwood's lack of understanding of women. "Boldwood's blindness to the difference between approving of what circumstance suggests, and originating what it does not, was well matched by Bathsheba's insensibility to the possible great issues of little beginnings."

If Bathsheba's action reveals her insensibility and lack of feeling as well as her inability to foresee the problems it would create, Boldwood's acceptance of her Valentine card and the message it carried as a genuine manifestation of a woman's love, reveals his ignorance of women and matters of the heart. On close analysis, we can see how in their respective ways both are shown to be immature and given to impulsive responses. Boldwood feels flattered that a young woman loves him while Bathsheba is shown to be a woman given to rash and devil-may-care attitude. It is said, opposite pairs attract and like pairs repel each other. Boldwood and Bathsheba seem to have similar characteristics while Bathsheba and Gabriel Oak are dissimilar. The first pair failed while the second pair shows that the strongest affinity happens when two people are dissimilar.

Bathsheba is aware of her whimsical nature and her vulnerability while remaining single. She is aware that she should marry and marry someone like Boldwood who is an earnest and respectable man. Though she rejects him, she is aware of her recklessness and is seen throughout the novel, seeking deliverance from her whims and rash actions.

Bathsheba proves to be a match for the men in her village. She has earned the respect and admiration of all by her ability to run her own farm. But all her knowledge and talent are confined to her rural society. Hardy observes: "Of the fabricated tastes of good fashionable society she knew but little, and of the formulated self-indulgence of bad, nothing at all." She is taken in by the urbane charm of Sergeant Troy, wonder struck at his sword skills and falls for him. Despite the warning of Gabriel Oak, she marries him only to discover that he is a misfit in a rural setting. Just before her marriage, she overhears maids gossiping about her and Troy. She is furious with herself as she is torn between her attraction for Troy and the rumours she hears about his nature and character. Once again her furious impetuosity drives her to take the rash decision to marry him. When Gabriel Oak warned her, she says vehemently: "You are taking too much upon yourself! Everyone is upon me - everybody. It is unmanly to attack a woman so! I have nobody in the world to fight my battles for me, but no mercy is shown. Yet if a thousand of you sneer and say things against me, I will not be put down!"

Troy's demands for money, the picture of Fanny in his purse, his dandyish behaviour and his lack of concern for her life in the farm, turn Bathsheba away from him. She realizes that Troy's

nature was less pure than her own. “Until she had met Troy, Bathsheba had been proud of her position as a woman; it had been a glory to her to know that her lips had been touched by no man’s on earth, that her waist had never been encircled by a lover’s arm. She hated herself now.” The shooting of Troy by Boldwood when he suddenly surfaces, Boldwood’s imprisonment and Gabriel Oak’s renewal of his marriage proposal conclude the story. The final part gives a clue to the character of Bathsheba and also that of Gabriel Oak. That evening the couple sits down to tea in Bathsheba’s parlor, where they’ve decided to live. Just then they hear a cannon and trumpets: they go to the porch and hear a great clang of instruments: the farm labourers gather to wish long life to the couple, and Gabriel thanks them. The others tease him for the naturalness with which he says, “my wife,” though they say it needs to be a little chillier—that will come with joy. Bathsheba doesn’t laugh much anymore, but she smiles, and they cheerfully greet the workers.

Bathsheba continues to want to pay the price for her actions, refusing grand ceremonies and celebrations: the story’s happy ending is mitigated to a certain extent by the deaths that will continue to hang over her head, not to mention Boldwood’s lifelong imprisonment. But the villagers’ joviality allows the book to end on an upward, more comic bent, reflecting the dual tragic and comic bent of the novel.

Activity

Select relevant lines, quotes and paragraphs from the different chapters of the novel to delineate the character of Bathsheba Everdene.

4.3.2 Gabriel Oak

The opening lines of the novel give us a perfect introduction to Gabriel Oak. We get an insight into his personality:

“When Farmer Oak smiled, the corners of his mouth spread till they were within an unimportant distance of his ears, his eyes were reduced to chinks, and diverging wrinkles appeared round them, extending upon his countenance like the rays in a rudimentary sketch of the rising sun. His Christian name was Gabriel, and on working days he was a young man of sound judgment, easy motions, proper dress, and general good character.”

This description shows him to be a young man with a broad smile when his lips spread as far as his ears. He is young and appears wise beyond his years. Till the end, he remains sober, calm, unruffled, and stoic, seemingly unaffected by pleasure or pain, accepting life with its highs and lows. The simple shepherd that he was, he owned two hundred sheep, all of which he loses unfortunately.

“The sheep were not insured. All the savings of a frugal life had been dispersed at a blow: his hopes of being an independent farmer were laid low—possibly for ever. Gabriel’s energies, patience and industry had been so severely taxed, during the years of his life between eighteen and eight and twenty, to reach his present stage of progress that no more seemed to be left in him.”

So we meet this young man, twenty eight years old, who at an early age has experienced a sad and tragic loss in the drowning of his entire flock of sheep and with it all his hopes of moving socially upward from a shepherd to an independent farmer are shattered. The lines quoted above show two assets that he continues to possess - patience and industry. These two qualities will

prove triumphant at the end. His surname is Oak, and true to it, he is seen to be stable and sturdy. He goes in search of a job after the loss of his sheep. By chance he sees a serious fire, and hastens to give a helping hand to extinguish it. Bathsheba is impressed with his skill in putting off the fire and employs him as a shepherd in reward for his prompt action.

He finds Bathsheba beautiful though he discerns her vanity when he sees her looking at her image in a mirror. This shows the two shades of his character - romantic and at the same time, objective and practical in judgement. He decides to ask her to be his wife and proposes to her, but she does not feel any love for him.

“Finally Bathsheba admitted that she did not love Gabriel, and although the farmer said he would be happy if she just liked him, Bathsheba replied, "You'd get to despise me." Gabriel vehemently asserted, "Never. . . . I shall . . . keep wanting you till I die." He asked if he could come calling. She laughingly replied that that would be ridiculous, considering his feelings. "Very well," said Oak firmly. . . . "Then I'll ask you no more.”

Oak stays true to his word. He has patience and is ready to wait. He has his pride and strong determination. Again, true to his word, he does not ask for her hand even when he later warns her against accepting Sergeant Troy. Had he expressed his own feelings for her, maybe Bathsheba would not have plunged into the hasty marriage with Troy. Bathsheba is hurt. She is self centric and expects the rejected lover to come back and express his love for her. When Gabriel Oak does not woo her, she impulsively accepts Sergeant Troy's proposal.

Gabriel Oak remains her loyal employee. Just as he had earlier put off the fire in her farm, when he notices the arrival of storm and rain, he saves the sheaves working through the night. Bathsheba joins him and when he asks her to leave as she looks fatigued, Bathsheba recognizes how Gabriel Oak is a man of great compassion for her and shows his concern for her by insisting on working alone to save the barn. “You are kinder than I deserve...”, says Bathsheba. Hardy's comments reveal the character of Gabriel Oak. Even when his love was unrequited, he continues to love her. “Oak, suddenly remembered that eight months before this time he had been fighting against fire in the same spot as desperately as he was fighting against water now—and for a futile love of the same woman.”

Even though he does not know Fanny, Oak feels pity for the scantily clad young woman shivering in the cold. He offers her a shilling that she asks for. But his humaneness and compassion for the girl who was deserted by Troy and died during childbirth is in evidence when he protects her honour after her death.

“Suddenly, as in a last attempt to save Bathsheba from, at any rate, immediate pain, he looked again as he had looked before at the chalk writing upon the coffin-lid. The scrawl was this simple one: “Fanny Robbin and child.” Gabriel took his handkerchief and carefully rubbed out the two latter words. He then left the room, and went out quietly by the front door.”

He saves her from the callous and feeling-less gossip of the villagers if they had known that Fanny died an unwed mother.

The end of the novel is rather swift, almost abrupt. There is no coy romance between Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba. When he announces his intention to leave England and settle in California,

she comes to his house and asks him if she had offended him. Gabriel explains that, on the contrary, he was leaving because there was gossip that he was waiting to buy Boldwood's farm just so that he would be rich enough to court Bathsheba.

Bathsheba did not look quite so alarmed as if a cannon had been discharged by her ear, which was what Oak had expected. 'Marrying me! I didn't know it was that you meant. . . . Such a thing as that is too absurd — too soon — to think of, by far!' Gabriel heard only the "absurd," not the "too soon," and their talk continued at cross-purposes until Gabriel said that he wished he knew if she would let him court her. Bathsheba tearfully assured him that he would never know whether she would have him unless he asked. The two found release in laughter, finally throwing off the inhibitions and constraints of employer and employee. To Bathsheba's embarrassed remark that she had come courting him, Gabriel replied that it was his due for having long danced to her tune. "They spoke very little of their mutual feeling; pretty phrases and warm expressions being probably unnecessary between such tried friends. . . . when the two who are thrown together begin first by knowing the rougher sides of each other's character, and not the best till further on."

Activity

What does this last meeting before their wedding reveal about the personalities of Gabriel and Bathsheba?

Following this pattern in respect of the characters of Bathsheba and Gabriel Oak, read the novel, find suitable quotes to illustrate the characters of Farmer Boldwood, Sergeant Troy and Fanny Robin.

4.4 HARDY'S PHILOSOPHY

Hardy is primarily a novelist, but his novels go beyond the story to articulate his philosophy and his views on life. It will not be inaccurate to say that his novels reflect the 19th century conflict between religion and science, faith in God and belief in human rationality. *Far from the Madding Crowd*, raises many questions about society, religion, morals and ends on a positive note that virtue garners rewards as evidenced in Gabriel Oak's happy union with Bathsheba as a reward for leading a life of goodness, humility, loyalty and selfless love.

The 19th century was an age of transition. The transition is evident in the change:

- (a) from an agrarian rural life to industrial urban life,
- (b) from fundamental beliefs in God as the Creator of the world and as regulator of human affairs through his omnipotence and omniscience to acceptance of scientific laws based on Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* about the creation of the universe as an evolutionary process in defiance of earlier theological belief about God as the originator of the Universe,
- (c) from a predominantly rural society with its strong belief in tradition and customs that gave some degree of security and stability and dignity to the rural folks to a urban society, with its new outlook on life and morals, along with a focus on material well being and a new social order that brought a sharp cleavage between the educated elite and the uneducated or semi-educated poor.

- (d) from an acceptance of life's ups and downs as the working of a beneficent, omnipotent, and omniscient deity to questioning the function of that deity in the face of omnipresent evil and unreasonable happenings leading to unhappiness. It had become increasingly difficult to reconcile the prevalence of unhappiness in life with the operation of a benevolent deity. As Brennecke observed, "He (Hardy) cannot reconcile the idea of an omnipotent and merciful Deity with human sufferings."¹

Hardy was not a philosopher given to abstract metaphysical speculations. He was primarily a novelist and therefore it is appropriate to describe him as a philosophical novelist. His novels are not about an esoteric or an abstruse world but about the real world of the 19th century Victorian society to which he belonged. The novel form gave him the opportunity to reflect on Victorian society, its morals, ethics and worldview as it was caught between the old world that was slowly disappearing and the new world ushered in by the Industrial revolution, yet to be born.

Though a Christian by birth and upbringing, Hardy, under the influence of the 19th century scientific thinkers and writers like Charles Darwin, lost his faith in a Christian God. Darwin's work scientifically traced the origin of man as a natural evolution from a primordial form to his present state and thus questioned the prevailing concept of the creation of man by God. As a result, all the older Christian values appeared to the Victorians including Hardy as redundant. Darwin's work undermined the prevailing concept of the divine creation of man. He learnt from Darwin that the natural order is indifferent to man's desires and aspirations. As a consequence, he broke with Victorian optimism and self-complacency and developed pessimism and discontent.

Hardy was an extensive reader who had read the ancient Greek tragedies, Shakespeare's works, contemporary thinkers such as the English philosopher, Thomas Huxley, and the French radical reformers and philosophers, such as Charles Fourier, Hippolyte Taine, and Auguste Comte. His conception of human life was shaped in part by his extensive critical reading of the Bible. His novels are full of Biblical allusions and *Far From the Madding Crowd* is rich in its Biblical allusions. All his readings were further supported by his rural background.

Ernest Brennecke, who wrote one of the earliest appraisals of Hardy's philosophy of life, argued that Hardy developed "a consistent world-view through the notions of Chance and Time, Circumstances, Fate, Nature, Providence, Nemesis and Will tinged with metaphysical idealism".² His novels seem to suggest that the old Christian values did not help man to face misery and unhappiness. Thus we see the dilemma in his writings where on the one hand he castigates religion as it had very little to offer to the modern man and on the other he is acutely aware of the place of religion in tradition and customs that had given some degree of solidity to the culture of the people.

As Lennart A. Björk noted, "Hardy's castigation of traditional religion is an integral part of his social criticism,"³ as religion cannot offer comfort and consolation during moments of crisis. Thus we see his writings that deal with the loss of an earlier simpler Christian faith and its total abandonment to the will of God, and a longing for a new order to replace that loss of the older faith in God by making the church an important social institution. He told Edmund Blunden, "If there is no church in a country village, there is nothing."

Hardy's critical vision of life was deeply rooted in his Hellenic and pagan sympathies of the rural countryside which held more charm for Hardy than did Christianity. In his Wessex novels and

stories, Hardy's vision of an old, rustic England was essentially pagan. He shared fellow Victorian, Matthew Arnold's ideal of Hellenic paganism, with its emphasis of the development of a complete man with the harmonious body and soul. He preferred Auguste Comte's religion of humanity as a substitute for Christianity.

One more aspect of his philosophy is that of Determinism. Determinism also referred to as necessitarianism is the philosophical doctrine that all events, including human choices and decisions, are necessarily determined by external forces acting on the will. Man's life is controlled by what we call Fate or Destiny. His major fiction shows that human existence is intrinsically tragic because people are trapped by the laws of Nature and the laws of civilization. Novels like *Tess*, *Jude the Obscure* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* end in tragedy where Fate or Chance plays a causal role in human affairs. Chance or Fate, can change man's destiny. Chance is for Hardy everything over which man has no control. It is not that fate is always sinister, but the fact is Man cannot overcome his fate. More often than not his men and women become tragic victims of Fate. Contrary to the Christian belief in God's justice and compassion for humanity, Hardy presents the universe as a rigid mechanism which is indifferent and apathetic to human suffering.

But *Far from the Madding Crowd* is an exception as it ends on a positive note of bringing Gabriel Oak and Bathsheba together. The return of Sergeant Troy at the very moment Boldwood is getting ready to marry Bathsheba is an instance of the operation of forces outside man's plans and actions. Gabriel Oak shows how despite all odds against human life, man can overcome it by taking responsibility for fellow men. Hardy saw at least one hope for mankind, which is expressed in his view of evolutionary meliorism - that is, that the world can be improved by human effort. Hardy said:

I believe that a good deal of the robustious, swaggering optimism of recent literature is at bottom cowardly and insincere. My pessimism, if pessimism it be, does not involve the assumption that the world is going to the dogs. On the contrary, my practical philosophy is distinctly meliorist. Whatever may be the inherent good or evil of life, it is certain that men make it much worse than it need be. When we have got rid of a thousand remediable ills, it will be time enough to determine whether the ill that is irremediable outweighs the good⁴

Hardy, like many writers before and after him, is concerned with existential questions, such as the human condition, personal freedom and determinism, the attitude to God and religion, the role of destiny, failed human relationships and the alienation of human beings in the modern world. He presents life's happenings as events that are unalterable and believed that man cannot take any preventive measures to change or stop them. Worse is the certainty of suffering. Hardy's world is dictated by Chance and therefore his people live in an uncaring, unfeeling and unfriendly universe, made worse by their painful awareness of their existence.

Between man's desire and its fruition comes destiny. Hence his philosophical outlook was certainly deterministic, pessimistic and tragic, yet it offered a possibility of positive morality. Hardy insisted that there is a limited personal freedom in the midst of his state of being un-free. It is in his strength to transcend his natural bondage, he may achieve personal freedom, which means that he is free to make his own choices – but he will have to pay dearly for them. It is easy to resign oneself to fatalism which acknowledges that all action is controlled by Fate which is a

great, impersonal, primitive force. But it takes a lot of man's spiritual energy to take action even when action will prove a failure.

Thus, in his novels, man is pitted against chance or Fate. Fanny's life ends on a tragic note because of the fateful mistake of waiting outside a wrong church. Similarly Fate interferes at the moment Boldwood and Bathsheba get ready for their marriage. The man who for seven years had not turned up and was therefore assumed to be drowned, turns up at that very moment thereby nullifying Bathsheba's widowhood. But those who are contented, calm and balanced and not protesting against life's hard dispensations overcome chance and succeed at the end as is the case with Gabriel Oak.

While in his novels barring the early ones like *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Hardy shows power of Chance or Fate triumphing over the power of Man, he makes a plea that social laws and conventions that are man-made must be changed so that man is not helplessly and hopelessly doomed.

Activity

Which are the social conventions and views in *Far from the Madding Crowd* that should be changed in your opinion? (Hints :Women cannot and are not capable of managing a farm; The sneering comments on unmarried women; Harsh criticism of young innocent women who become victims of the predatory nature of men; Patriarchal society).

4.5 SUMMING UP

In this unit, we have discussed: the role of characters in a novel; the major characters in *Far From the Madding Crowd* who shape the novel; Hardy's philosophy in line with the scientific and intellectual thinkers of the late 19th century.

4.6 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Explain the terms 'Determinism', 'Meliorism', and 'Hellenic Paganism'.
2. Give a brief overview of Hardy's philosophy.
3. Discuss *Far From the Madding Crowd* in the context of Hardy's philosophy. In what way is his philosophy as expressed in this novel, different from that in novels like *Tess* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* ?

4.7 REFERENCES

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4.8 GLOSSARY

Protagonist: central character

Self-effacing: not drawing attention to oneself, modest

Congenital: innate. inherent

Antagonist: opponent, rival, adversary
Morose: melancholy, gloomy
Palpable: obvious, evident
Full-fledged: fully developed
Destitution: pennilessness, beggary
Sullied: dishonoured, disgraced
Patriarchal: relating to male hierarchy
Naivety: in a state of simplicity, innocence, inexperience
Corroboration: confirmation, authentication
Impetuous: rash, unthinking
Whimsically: behave eccentrically
Devil may care: reckless
Vulnerability: susceptibility, exposure
Dandyish: affecting extreme elegance in dress and behaviour
Unruffled: calm, composed
Stoic: seemingly indifferent to emotions, to pleasure or pain
Oak: hard durable tree
Discern: see, perceive
Unrequited: not reciprocated, not rewarded
Omnipotence: power, supremacy
Omniscience: total knowledge
Cleavage: the state of being split
Omnipresent: present everywhere
Esoteric: intended for or to be understood by a small group
Abstruse: obscure, complex
Primordial: existing from the beginning
Redundant: surplus, excessive, extra
Nemesis: retribution, something that causes misery or death
Hellenic: pertaining to ancient Greek culture and thought
Paganism: strong belief in supernatural power
Causal: indicative of a cause

4.9 READING LIST

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