

*THE LIFE AND
POETRY OF THOMAS
HARDY*



EARLY YEARS



Thomas Hardy was born on June 2, 1840 in Higher Bockhampton in this cottage. Throughout his life, he would fondly remember this house and frequently visit it.

Hardy spent his early life singing in the church choir with his father.

His father was a successful mason and offered his son a good education. His mother fostered in him a love of literature, at school he learned to read Latin, while at home he taught himself Greek. When he was sixteen he finished his formal education.



EARLY YEARS



At the age of 22, Hardy moved to London to become an architect. Hardy was determined to become a great poet and he began writing in earnest in his spare time. He sent his verses to literary magazines throughout the capital but none were accepted. In 1867, bored by his work and disappointed by his lack of success as a poet, he moved back to Dorset.



Hardy first met his future wife, Emma Gifford, at St. Juliot's rectory in 1872. They married in 1874. This chance meeting would shape the next 40 years of Hardy's life.



Emma Gifford was a woman of high social status. She had a very interesting personality and was always remembered by visitors to the Hardy household. She died in 1912.



Thomas and Emma Hardy resided at Max Gate from 1884 onward.

HIS LIFE

Hardy met Florence Dugdale in 1907. After Emma's death in 1912, Florence and Hardy married and continued to live at Max Gate.



Hardy died on January 11, 1928.

THE POET

He is the first of the modern poets, who are suspicious of writing well. Younger poets like W.H. Auden studying at Oxford, read Hardy, when they were looking for inspiration for their own craft. Auden wrote later, "My first Master was Thomas Hardy, and I think I was lucky in my choice. He was a good poet, perhaps a great one, but not too good. Much as I loved him, even I could see that his diction was often clumsy and forced and that a lot of his poems were plain bad. This gave me hope, where a flawless poet would have given me despair. He was modern without being too modern...

Hardy's first volume of poetry, Wessex Poems, was published in 1898.



HARDY DIVIDED HIS NOVELS AND COLLECTED SHORT STORIES INTO THREE CLASSES:

Novels of Character and Environment

- The Poor Man and the Lady (1867, unpublished and lost)
- Under the Greenwood Tree (1872)
- Far from the Madding Crowd (1874)
- The Return of the Native (1878)
- The Mayor of Casterbridge (1886)
- The Woodlanders (1887)
- Wessex Tales (1888, a collection of short stories)
- Tess of the d'Urbervilles (1891)
- Life's Little Ironies (1894, a collection of short stories)
- Jude the Obscure (1895)

Romances and Fantasies

- A Pair of Blue Eyes (1873)
- The Trumpet-Major (1880)
- Two on a Tower (1882)
- A Group of Noble Dames (1891, a collection of short stories)
- The Well-Beloved (1897) (first published as a serial from 1892).

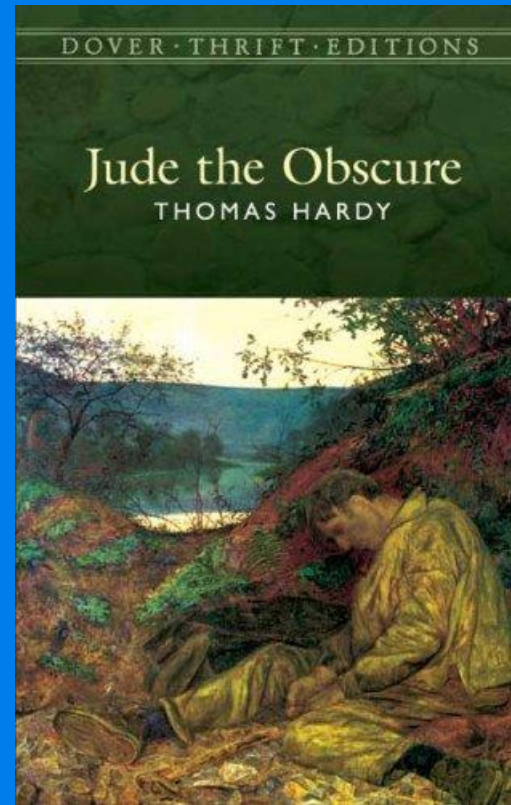
Novels of Ingenuity

- Desperate Remedies (1871)
- The Hand of Ethelberta (1876)
- A Laodicean (1881)

THE NOVELIST

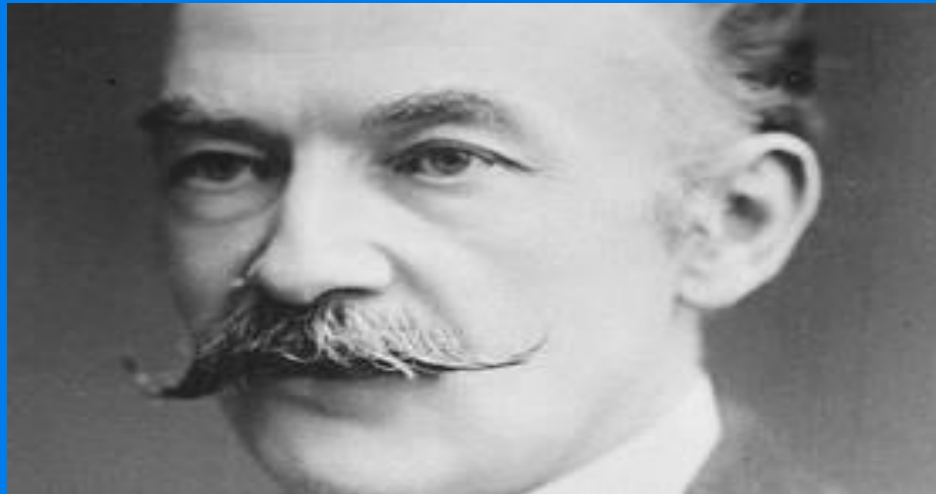
Hardy attempted his first novel in the summer of 1867, *The Poor Man and the Lady*. . Although this first novel was not accepted for publication, his second one, *Desperate Remedies*, was published in 1871. Thirteen more novels were to follow.

Although writing novels gave him financial success, as a form it remained for him a compromise to poetry. In 1895 when his latest novel, *Jude the Obscure*, was lampooned, *Jude the Obscene*, he turned back to poetry. Ignoring the critics poor reception of his verse, he continued writing and published eight volumes between 1898 and 1928.



Hardy's art

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Hardy's Poetic Themes

Disillusioned Love

“Neutral Tones”

He wrote of war, nature, friendship, bereavement and love and marriage.



In Hardy's earlier works, this was a favored theme. Love was never reciprocated or happy, but tedious and marked with infidelity. The poems of 1912-1913 written after Emma's death are also considered love poems.

Made by:
Yulia Khudyk
10th form

Stryj, 2012