

Penguin  Readers

Tess of the
d'Urbervilles



THOMAS HARDY

Contents

Note about the story	4
Before-reading questions	5
Chapter One – An ancient family	7
Chapter Two – A visit to the d’Urbervilles	13
Chapter Three – The Chase	19
Chapter Four – Sorrow	24
Chapter Five – The milkmaid	30
Chapter Six – The young farmer	35
Chapter Seven – Summer love	39
Chapter Eight – Angel visits home	44
Chapter Nine – When no means yes	49
Chapter Ten – The letter	56
Chapter Eleven – A secret is told	63
Chapter Twelve – An old face	70
Chapter Thirteen – Temptation	77
Chapter Fourteen – At Sandbourne	83
Chapter Fifteen – Five days	88
Chapter Sixteen – “Justice”	94
During-reading questions	98
After-reading questions	101
Exercises	101
Project work	106
Essay questions	107
Glossary	108

CHAPTER ONE

An ancient family

On an evening in late May, a middle-aged man was walking home from Shaston to the village of Marlott when he passed an old **parson** on a grey horse.

“Good night, **Sir** John,” called the parson.

The man, after another step or two, turned round.

“Parson Tringham, that’s the second time you have called me ‘Sir’ John this month. What’s your meaning when I am only ordinary John Durbeyfield?”

The parson rode a bit closer. “It’s because of something I discovered a few months ago when I was reading about the history of old families in the **county**,” he replied. “Did you know, Durbeyfield, that your **ancestors** are the grand and **ancient** family of the d’Urbervilles who are **buried** in Kingsbere Church?”

“Never heard it before, **sir**!”

“Well, it’s true,” said Parson Tringham. “And I can see the d’Urberville nose and mouth in your own. The d’Urbervilles had **mansions** all over this part of England, although the family disappeared about eighty years ago. But there has been a long line of Sir Johns before you, and, if the family were still here, you would be Sir John now!”

The village of Marlott lies in the **Vale** of Blackmoor – a

beautiful valley full of wide green fields and narrow white **lanes** with low **hedges** – only four hours from London. It was in one of these fields, that same evening, that the village was holding its yearly May-Day dance. A group of Marlott's young women had come together in white dresses with flowers in their hands. They were dancing in circles with the evening sun warming their heads, laughing and happy, when one of them cried, "**Good Lord!** Tess Durbeyfield – is that your father riding home in a carriage?"

A young girl, who looked older than her real age of 16, lifted her head. She had a beautiful soft red mouth and large **innocent** eyes. As she looked around, she saw her father John Durbeyfield, in a carriage. The **landlady** of The Pure Drop **public house** was driving him. Durbeyfield was lying back in his seat, waving his hand above his head and singing, "I've got a family **vault** in Kingsbere Church. I'm Sir John!"

The girls all **laughed**, except Tess, whose face had turned red.

"He's tired, that's all," she said, quickly, "and he has been driven home because our horse has had to rest today."

Realizing Tess was **ashamed**, the other girls said nothing more, and her father's carriage moved on. Tess smiled and began to dance again. At first, it was just the girls dancing with each other, but soon some younger men came to watch, and then one or two brave ones began asking the girls to dance.

Among the watchers were three brothers of a higher

class who did not belong to the area. They told those who asked that they were spending their holidays on a walking tour through the Vale of Blackmoor. **Leaning** over the gate by the lane, with bags over their shoulders, they discussed with each other the meaning of the dance and the **maids** in white dresses. After a few minutes, the two older brothers wanted to move on, but the youngest one had put down his bag and was climbing the gate.



“What are you going to do, Angel?” asked one of the brothers.

“I’m going to have a dance,” replied the younger one. “You walk on if you want to. I’ll follow in five minutes, I promise.”

The two men walked on, carrying their brother's bag with them. Angel entered the field and, looking quickly at the girls, took the hands of the nearest one to him, and then another after her. But, a few minutes later, he heard the church bells sound the hour and knew that he must leave. As he was moving towards the gate, he noticed Tess standing by the hedge. His eyes met her large, beautiful ones and he saw a shadow of sadness in them that he had not chosen her. He wished now that he had asked her. She looked so pretty and innocent in her white dress that he felt he had acted stupidly. But it was too late now. He jumped the gate and started running down the lane after his brothers, putting her out of his mind.

The young man stayed in Tess's thoughts for much longer. She did not feel like dancing again after he left but stayed with her friends until it grew dark. Then, she went home. She entered the house and heard her mother, Joan, singing to her baby sister, while her younger brothers and sisters stood around her.

"Well, I'm glad you've come, Tess," her mother said, when she had finished her song. "I have to go and get your father. But first I have to tell you about the wonderful thing that has happened."

"Is this 'wonderful thing' why Father was drunk in the carriage this afternoon?" asked Tess, tiredly. "I've never felt so ashamed!"

“We’ve found out that we’re from a grand family, Tess. Our real name is d’Urberville.”

“But will it do us any good, Mother?”

“Yes. And that’s why your father rode home in the carriage, not because he was drinking, as people supposed.”

“But where *is* Father?” Tess asked.

Her mother put on her coat. “Now don’t be angry, but he has gone for a drink at Rolliver’s. He wanted to tell everyone the news before he drives the **beehives** to Casterbridge. You can watch the children while I go and get him.”

Tess did not argue. She knew why her mother wanted to go. These journeys to get her husband from Rolliver’s public house were one of the few things that Joan Durbeyfield could still enjoy. To sit there with him for an hour or more and forget all about housework and caring for the children made her happy.

Joan found her husband in an upstairs room with a group of people who said hello to her when she entered. John Durbeyfield bought her a drink and then continued to talk loudly to the others in the room about his new ancestors.

“I’ve had an idea,” his wife said, sitting down next to him. “There’s a rich lady near Trantridge on the edge of The Chase. Her name is d’Urberville. She must be a relative. I think we should send Tess to let her know about us.”

“There *is* a lady of that name, now that you mention it,” said John Durbeyfield. “Parson Tringham didn’t think of that.”

“She is sure to notice the maid,” said Joan Durbeyfield,

“and perhaps it will lead to some rich gentleman marrying her.”

“And what does Tess think about this?”

“I’ve not asked her yet, but I’ll be able to make her go, I’m sure.”

The two of them stayed so late drinking and talking excitedly about their plan that Tess sent her little brother Abraham to get them. Her father sang all the way home, “I’ve got a family vault at Kingsbere!”

It was eleven o’clock before the family were all in bed. Two o’clock the next morning was the latest that John Durbeyfield could leave with the beehives to get them to the Saturday market at Casterbridge, which was between twenty and thirty miles away. At half past one, Joan Durbeyfield came into the large bedroom where Tess and all her little brothers and sisters were sleeping.

“The poor man can’t go,” she said, waking Tess, who was still half in a dream. “Is there a young man in the village that can take the beehives?”

“Oh no,” replied Tess, proudly. “We cannot let people know why Father can’t take them. I think I could go if Abraham came with me.”

Her mother happily agreed to this arrangement. Tess quickly got dressed while her mother woke Abraham. Then, Tess and Abraham went out into the night.