

## ***Jude The Obscure* by Thomas Hardy: The Book As A Whole:**

1. The use of doubling is evident throughout the book. Consider how Sue and Arabella are reversed doubles of each other, and perhaps of two sides of Jude. Additionally, Sue can be seen as a double of Jude, Hardy having included several direct comments on the idea. Phillotson and Jude are doubles for each other-as husbands to Sue, as seekers of learning, as men whose beliefs change radically in the course of their lives. Finally, Little Father Time is an obvious double of Jude himself, perhaps a “successful” Jude.
2. Sue may well be the real center of the book, since it is she who seems to be a major moving force, acting as a catalyst upon both Jude and Phillotson, disillusioning Little Father Time, and certainly changing the course of Arabella’s life.
3. Settings are very important in this book. For Jude the ridge-rack near the Brown House outside Marygreen is a place full of significance for his life and for his ancestors. Consider also the importance of Christminster, elsewhere, etc.
4. The allusions used in association with Jude are especially significant. Consider the following -- Jude, Judas, Job, Christ, Samson, Robinson Crusoe, Laocoon, Joseph, St. Stephen, Don Quixote.
5. Hardy considered (and temporarily used several different titles for his book. These were *The Simpletons*, *Hearts Insurgent*, *A Dreamer*, and *The Recalcitrants*. How would the book have been affected by this change of title? Explore *all* the ramifications of the title chosen -- *Jude the Obscure*. What significance is there to the subtitle, “The Letter Killeth.” Hardy also considered various names for the character of Jude-Jack, Head, Hopeson, Stan, and Stancombe. Would a different name have changed the novel’s meaning? Explore naming in general in the book, being sure to look up the original meanings of the various names of characters.
6. Examine Hardy’s letters, poems, and prefaces to determine what *he* thought he was doing in this book. Then discuss his intentions and his achievements.
7. The epigraphs for this book, as for any book, are significant since they often reinforce the author’s point of view. Examine these epigraphs and their relationship to the part which they precede as well as to the book as a whole.
8. This book, like all of Hardy’s books, makes frequent reference to other writers’ works. Examine some of these, particularly Browning’s “By the Fireside,” “The Statue and the Bust,” and “Too Late.” You might also want to consider the works mentioned by Wordsworth, Swinburne, and Shelley.
9. The biblical allusions in this book and the quotes used throughout reveal much about the characters and their situations. Consider these references, especially those from Corinthians.
10. Trace the animal imagery in the book, paying particular attention to any references to gins and springs.

11. Three times objects are burned -- Jude's portrait, his ecclesiastical books, and Sue's embroidered nightgown. There are additional references to "burning" love or kisses, to the Martyrs' burning place, and to the burning of the body. Considering that fire both consumes and purifies, discuss the significance of these.

12. Light and darkness are significant images in this novel, especially when one considers the title. Trace the references to light and darkness as they appear in the book.

13. Photographs figure prominently in this novel and make decisions, or even to substitute for reality. various photographs referred to in the novel.

14. Hardy denies that he intended a particular attack on marriage, but any will reader will immediately see the significance of marriage vs. sex vs. love in reading the novel. Discuss the attitudes various characters have towards marriage, as demonstrated by their words *and* actions.

15. This book's comparability to *The Scarlet Letter* is particularly obvious. Re-examine *The Scarlet Letter* and compare and contrast it with *Jude the Obscure*. If you have not studied this book, you may submit another title for approval.