

Jude The Obscure

Thomas Hardy



GCSE English Study Guide

JUDE THE OBSCURE

BY
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WITH AN ETCHING BY
H. MACBETH-RAEBURN
AND A MAP OF WESSLEY

"The letter killeth."



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The title page from the first Penguin edition of Jude the Obscure, printed in 1895

Jude the Obscure was first published as a serial in *Harper's New Monthly* between 1894 and 1895. The Penguin edition of Hardy's narrative was published in London in 1895. Owing to the controversy surrounding the novel's outright condemnation of Victorian society, it would be Hardy's last novel – he would spend the rest of his working life writing poetry and drama.

Jude the Obscure: Character

Hardy's characters in the novel have been the subject of much critical debate. In contrast to the Realist authors of the period, who subscribed to the idea that literature should present people as *they are* and society as it is rather than as objects of literary embellishment, Hardy's characters appear to be deliberately constructed to represent ideas and are the objects of his creative design. There are a number of key ways of looking at, and thinking about, the characters that Hardy has created in *Jude the Obscure*, which, in turn, allow the reader a greater understanding of the complex relationship between individuals and the destiny they are afforded by Victorian society, the central discussion of the novel.

Contrast

Hardy wrote in a letter to a contemporary, Edmund Gosse, that *Jude the Obscure* 'is all contrasts', that is, the novel succeeds by consistently presenting the audience with a character, theme or setting and its diametric opposite. In turn, as readers, we are able to elicit the tensions at the heart of Jude's world by identifying the oppositions that drive Hardy's narrative toward its brutal climax. One of the key ways that Hardy uses contrast is in the novel's characterisation: the stark contrast between the utilitarianism of the Marygreen residents and Jude's desire to understand the abstracts of mathematics and ancient languages, for example, exemplifies the way that Hardy uses contrast to establish the moral and ideological tensions that drive the narrative. Equally, the contrasts between Arabella and Sue are telling: one a coarse, pragmatic country girl whose sensual physicality counterpoints Jude's sexual inexperience, but Sue is identified as Jude's kindred spirit who shares his appreciation of knowledge and in whom he invests an ultimately fatal idealism.

- For each of the following characters complete the chart below to show how they contrast with one other character, giving details of how they contrast in terms of Hardy's description, their ideological perspectives and your reaction to them.
- Jude Fawley
- Aunt Drusilla
- Mr Phillotson
- Arabella Donn
- Sue Bridehead
- Little Father Time

Characters	Hardy's Descriptions	Their Ideological Perspectives	Your Reaction to the Characters

- Explain why you think Hardy has used contrast in the characterisation of the novel – think about its effect on the reader and how it helps Hardy to convey his ideological and moral ideas throughout the novel.
- Think more broadly about the idea of 'contrast' – by deliberately choosing to use contrast to create the characters that embody the world of the novel, what point might Hardy be trying to make about Victorian Society and its toleration, or otherwise, of individuals and their differences?

Jude the Obscure: Character

Characters as Representations of Ideas or Types

When we consider the contrasts that define Hardy's characterisation in the novel, it becomes obvious that Hardy's characters appear to be designed to represent specific types of people and particular thematic ideas that the author is exploring. This is a common technique that writers employ – especially when writing texts that question the morality of society – yet it differs from the conventional literary tradition of the time. The Realist writers were endeavouring to create accurate representations of society – part of which is dependent on creating characters who are credible physical and moral replications of typical human behaviours – in the belief that literature had a responsibility, and was in turn, a greater force for social progress, by exposing its readers to the realities of contemporary society. However, in *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy appears to reject this, instead, using his characters as objects that allow him to go beyond creating a representation of society, but instead create a society in which his characters *are* the ideas which are create the situations which lead to the horror of the novel's climax.

- Complete the chart below to identify, with textual evidence, which character(s) represent specific concepts or types in the novel:

Characters as Representations of Concepts or Types		
Character's Name	Idea/Concept that they Represent	Textual Evidence

Character's Point of View

As well as Hardy's omniscient narration, the reader is constantly the subject of each character's changing perspectives. Hardy deliberately makes the perpetually changing perspectives of his characters central to the narrative because it alludes to one of the central themes of his narrative – the restlessness created by the growing social modernity of the Victorian period – in the sense that each character, in keeping with the Realist tradition, is constantly re-evaluating their perspectives on the society of the novel – at times in a paradoxical and incoherent way. This is important because Hardy is endeavouring to engage the audience with the complex reactions of his characters to the traumatic events that confront them throughout the novel. The characters perspectives offer us a key insight into their reactions to Victorian society and the events that transpire as a consequence of Victorian morality and social ideals. In turn, it is the characters of the novel who become the greatest exponents of, and critics, of the values that determine their fates.

- For each of the following characters locate and annotate the moments of the narrative where they offer perspectives on the headings in the bullet point list.

Characters:

- ✚ Jude Fawley
- ✚ Sue Bridehead
- ✚ Arabella
- ✚ Mr Phillotson
- ✚ Little Father Time

Topics they Comment on:

- Education
- Religion
- Marriage
- Morality
- Fate/destiny

Jude the Obscure: Character

- For Jude and Sue complete the chart below to show how their perspectives on any two of the topics listed above can be traced across the novel – give textual examples to sustain your ideas.

Jude's Perspectives on Education					
At Marygreen	At Christminster	At Melchester	At Shaston	At Aldbrickham & Elsewhere	At Christminster Again
Textual Evidence:	Textual Evidence:	Textual Evidence:	Textual Evidence:	Textual Evidence:	Textual Evidence:
How has his perspective changed?	How has his perspective changed?	How has his perspective changed?	How has his perspective changed?	How has his perspective changed?	How has his perspective changed?

The Obscurers and The Obscured

At the core of the novel is the idea that individuals can be obscured as a result of either their own actions or the reactions of others towards them. In broader terms, the idea that individuals can be obscured in society is one of the great tragedies of the novel and, in turn, leads to the horrific conclusion of the narrative. However, Hardy uses the device subtly as a symbol of the way in which people choose either to conform to, or reject, social values and core moral ideals. This is his central condemnation of Victorian society: that those who choose to reject those principles it holds to be most valuable, are forced into lives devoid of happiness and fulfilment.

- For each of the following characters, complete a chart like the one below to show at what stages in the narrative, and by whom, they are obscured and then consider how the characters might obscure others. Think also about how characters might obscure themselves.

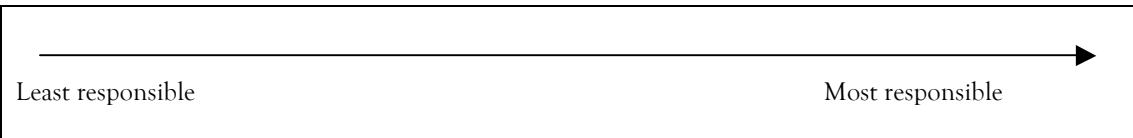
- Jude Fawley
- Sue Bridehead
- Mr Phillotson
- Little Father Time

Name of Character:			
Obscured: (give textual evidence)	Reason:	Obscurer (give textual evidence)	Reason:

Jude the Obscure: Character

The tragic climax of Hardy's novel is the murder of Jude's children by Little Father Time who himself commits suicide. Hardy's novel, when first published, was considered to be an inflammatory condemnation of Victorian Society. If we accept that Hardy uses his characters in order to represent the ideas of Victorian society, it is possible that certain individual bear responsibility for the novel's tragic climax.

- Complete the chart below, marking the name of each character who you think bears some responsibility for the moment of the hanging according to their level of individual responsibility.



Jude the Obscure: Setting



Map of Hardy's Wessex

The Novels Thomas Hardy & Wessex

Prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, Wessex was a historical term defining the south-western region of Britain ruled by the West Saxons. However, since Hardy resurrected its use in his novels, it has become synonymous with characters and events sprung from his imagination. Interestingly, the complex social and environmental organisation of Wessex as interpreted by Hardy's readers is of their own construction; that is, Hardy himself did not conceive of the place in the way that his body of work suggests. Hardy's motivation to set his works of poetry and prose in Wessex was determined by a desire to create a unity between his writing and establish an identifiable sense of place in which the events of his narratives occurred. Hardy referred to Wessex as a 'partly-real, partly-dream like' location which is characterised by its expansive landscapes and archetypal pre-industrial urban locations. In this sense, Wessex is supposed to represent a plain of imagination to the reader, upon which the characters of Hardy's novel live symbolic existences that forces the reader to identify with the allegorical trajectories that his protagonists take. Wessex, therefore, is a fictional location, where Hardy's characters endure the traumas of Victorian society in a place removed from the reality of his audience's lives. In turn, however, the lives of his protagonists become symbols for the lives of his audience because Wessex, as Hardy defined it, is 'partly-real, partly dream like' location; while captured in his fictional world, the audience are drawn to the realisation that Wessex is not so far removed from contemporary Victorian England as it may first seem.

Jude The Obscure and Wessex

Jude the Obscure is set in six defined locations in Hardy's Wessex, consequently the narrative itself might be compared to a 'Quest', that is, the central protagonist is compelled to travel in order to obtain something lacking in their lives. In Jude's case he is seeking education and must travel from the parochial insularity of Marygreen to Christminster. More broadly, however, each of the locations that Hardy uses in the novel perform a specific purpose in the narrative; each driving the narrative toward its conclusion.

Jude the Obscure: Setting

- For each setting complete the chart below to show which events take place in each of the locations.

Setting in <i>Jude the Obscure</i>					
Marygreen	Christminster	Melchester	Shaston	Aldbrickham	Christminster
Key events	Key events	Key events	Key events	Key events	Key events

- For each setting complete a chart like the one below adding key textual quotations about the place and commenting on what the location is supposed to represent to the reader.

Hardy's Description of the Settings		
Location	Hardy's Description	What is the effect of Hardy's description?

- For each of the locations listed below, complete the chart to explain its significance in the play.

- Marygreen
- Christminster (In Book 2&6)
- Melchester
- Shaston
- Aldbrickham

Significance of Settings in <i>Jude the Obscure</i>			
Location	What events take place here?	What does the setting signify and symbolise?	Textual Evidence

Jude the Obscure: Setting

- One critic of Hardy has identified a shift in terms of what Wessex means in *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy's last novel. He identifies that Jude is constantly in search of acceptance by the communities of each of the Wessex locations, yet he is always rejected and instead

Jude...uprooted spends his whole life unsuccessfully searching for a community to which he can commit himself...Hardy wrote the novel...to re-enforce one of the conclusions of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, that the Wessex world given life in his earlier fictions was no longer viable, and where it survived, was living on borrowed time.

- How does Hardy use the settings of the novel to convey the idea of change that was taking place during the Victorian period and how does it impact on the lives of the characters?
- Bearing in mind that Jude is ultimately rejected by each of the settings, what do you think Hardy is trying to point out about Victorian society as whole during this period, in terms of ideology and morality?

Jude the Obscure: Themes

The thematic content of *Jude the Obscure* is underpinned by a conflict between diametrically opposed ideas of the self and society. Within this dichotomy, the individual is uniquely placed in conflict with the rules, pillars and moral absolutism of Victorian society. The great tensions in the novel – as explored in the ‘contrasts’ of Hardy’s characterisation – constantly place the characters at odds with themselves and how they are expected to conform to the rigidity of social propriety. While it is important to understand the name and nature of the themes individually, it is equally crucial to see each individual theme as part of a wider ideological exploration of Victorian society; that is, when Hardy explores the theme of religion, for example, he is also bringing into question how individuals are constrained by their interpretations of biblical dogma. Once we understand the development of each key theme, we then need to begin to consider the connection between the themes in terms of the narrative, and how this impacts the characters.

The central themes of *Jude the Obscure* are:

- Education
- Religion
- Aspiration
- Individual & Society

1. Education

The very first lines of Hardy’s novel foreshadow the central importance of education in *Jude the Obscure*. As the school master leaves the village in chapter one, Hardy is constructing the first part of a complex trajectory that will force Jude Fawley to travel to Christminster in the pursuit of a classical education – an ideal that is both problematic and central to the undoing of Jude: Christminster becomes the focus of the murder-suicide of Jude’s children by Little Father Time and the consequent self-purging of sin by both Sue and Jude. Education is a device used by Hardy to explore not just Jude’s idealistic aspiration and desire for social mobility, but it also becomes one of the many institutions that obscure Jude.

➤ Look at the headings below – these are all elements in the narrative that present the theme of education:

- ✚ Jude’s relationship with the utilitarian residents of Marygreen
- ✚ His early pursuit of knowledge & learning Greek and Latin
- ✚ Jude’s marriage to Arabella & specifically her damaging his books
- ✚ The response of the Christminster officials to Jude’s application to study there.
- ✚ Jude’s interaction with the undergraduates at Christminster.

➤ Use the headings above and create a list of quotations that explore the theme of education in the play.

For each sub-section you should create a table like the one below to help structure your ideas:

<i>Jude’s relationship with the utilitarian residents of Marygreen & the theme of Education</i>		
Quotation	Page Number	How this quotation presents the theme of religion (refer to the language of your quotation)

Jude the Obscure: Themes

2. Religion

Hardy's presentation of religion caused outrage when the novel was first published, *Jude the Obscure* was considered by many to be a direct attack on the established church. However, the church and biblical dogma play a central role in Hardy's narrative, this is particularly evident in the final passages of the novel following the murder-suicide of Jude's children as both he and Sue commit to a self-purgation of their sin: Sue returns to Christianity as a self-inflicted punishment for living in sin with Jude. Equally, despite their apparent rejections of religion, the characters see the events of their lives very much in biblical terms. So, Hardy constructs a complex relationship between the individual characters and the collective social dominance of religion in Victorian society.

➤ Look at the headings below - these are all elements of the narrative that present the theme of religion:

- ✚ Jude's determination to use his understanding of Greek and Latin to Christian ends.
- ✚ Jude's Christian piety as counterpointed by the pagan inclinations of Sue & Arabella
- ✚ Jude's allusion to Christ's example as he pursues a career as a curate.
- ✚ Sue's desire to reconstruct Jude's New Testament
- ✚ Sue's return to Christian worship at St Silas Church.

➤ Use the headings above to create a list of quotations that explore the theme of religion in the novel.

For each sub-section you should create a chart like the one below to help structure your ideas:

Jude's determination to use his understanding of Greek and Latin to Christian ends & the theme of Religion		
Quotation	Page Number	How this quotation presents the theme of religion (refer to the language of your quotation)

3. Aspiration

Aspiration is one of Hardy's central narrative devices: that is, Jude's determination, at first, to become an educated man at Christminster, and his consequent rejection, leads him on to a more concrete aspiration to find Sue, his cousin. From this path, the tragedy of Hardy's novel evolves. Aspiration is important because it is one of the key indications of the problems faced by men like Jude in Victorian society: that is, unlike today where education is available to all, in the 19th Century, prior to government reform, education was the preserve of the wealthy. Jude's longing for education is, therefore, emblematic of his desire to improve his position in society. The value stored in such a need to improve his lot, is reflected in the tragedy that ensues when Jude realises that it is his destiny to be a working man for the rest of his life.

➤ Look at the headings below - these are all elements of the narrative that present the theme of aspiration:

- ✚ Jude's relationship with Mr Phillotson
- ✚ Jude's distant yearning for Christminster

Jude the Obscure: Themes

- ✚ Jude's written application to Christminster
- ✚ Jude's pursuit of Sue & his ideals of matrimonial harmony
- ✚ Jude's rejection by the authorities in Christminster

4. The Individual & Society

Victorian society was contradictory in many ways, and Hardy exploits the paradoxes at the heart of the period in *Jude the Obscure*. On the one hand, the Victorians placed great value on the idea of social conformity while at the same time witnessing a period of great social change and modernisation. Logically, it is inevitable that in times of such social change that individuals begin to question their own values and motivations, yet it appears, Hardy suggests that in doing so, and by abandoning the social order of the time, people were subject to rejection, isolation and, in the world of *Jude the Obscure*, great physical and emotional suffering. The central dichotomy at the heart of the novel is the balance between the individual and their consequent role in society. Jude wrestles with his place in society from his youth in Marygreen to the brutal adult experiences he endures in Christminster.

- Look at the headings below – these are all elements of the narrative that present the theme of the individual and society in the novel:

- ✚ Jude's relationship with the residents of Marygreen
- ✚ Jude's exclusion from the academic world of Christminster
- ✚ Perceptions of Jude's relationship with Sue
- ✚ Little Father Time's justification for the murder-suicide of his siblings
- ✚ The self-purgation of Jude and Sue following the murder-suicide.

Additional Themes

The key themes outlined above form the ideological heart of Hardy's novel, however, you should consider the themes listed below which make greater demands of your interpretation of the novel. In doing so, you will develop a broader, more nuanced, understanding of the novel. For each one you should locate and annotate moments in the text which trace their development throughout.

- ✚ Social Exclusion
- ✚ Forbidden desire & temptation
- ✚ Repression
- ✚ Self-denial & abnegation
- ✚ Modern restlessness
- ✚ Ideal forms & Material Reality
- ✚ Individual Lives & Historical Periods
- ✚ Moral & Social Relativism

Jude the Obscure: Motifs

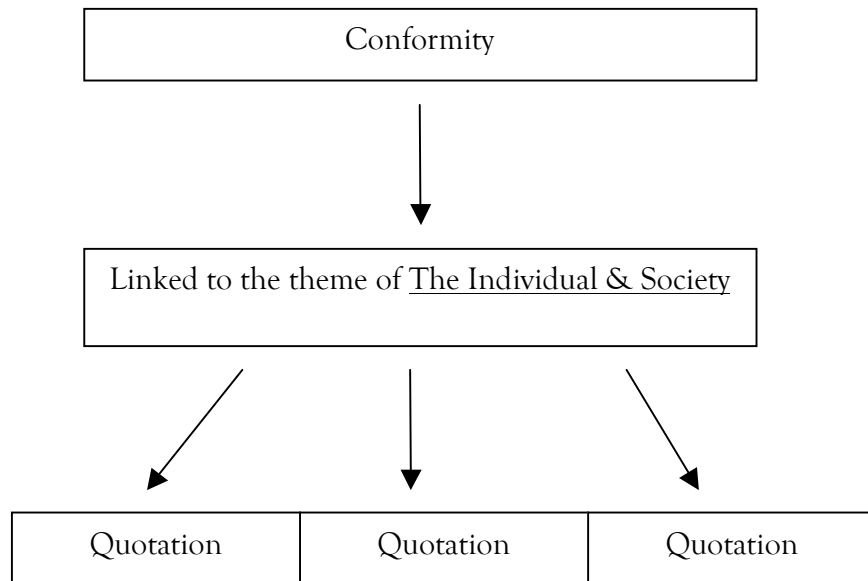
A text's motifs are slightly different from its themes – motifs are used by a writer in order to develop the broader themes that they are writing about.

- Look at the list below – these are some of the motifs that Hardy has used in *Jude the Obscure* to develop the broader themes that he is writing about and that you have explored in the last section.

- ✚ Conformity
- ✚ Churches and Prayer
- ✚ Marriage & Divorce
- ✚ Knowledge
- ✚ Ancestry
- ✚ Self-purgation of sin
- ✚ Repentance

- For each motif complete a diagram like the one below – using each motif as a heading, show which theme it is linked to and find a range of textual quotations that explore each one.

For example:



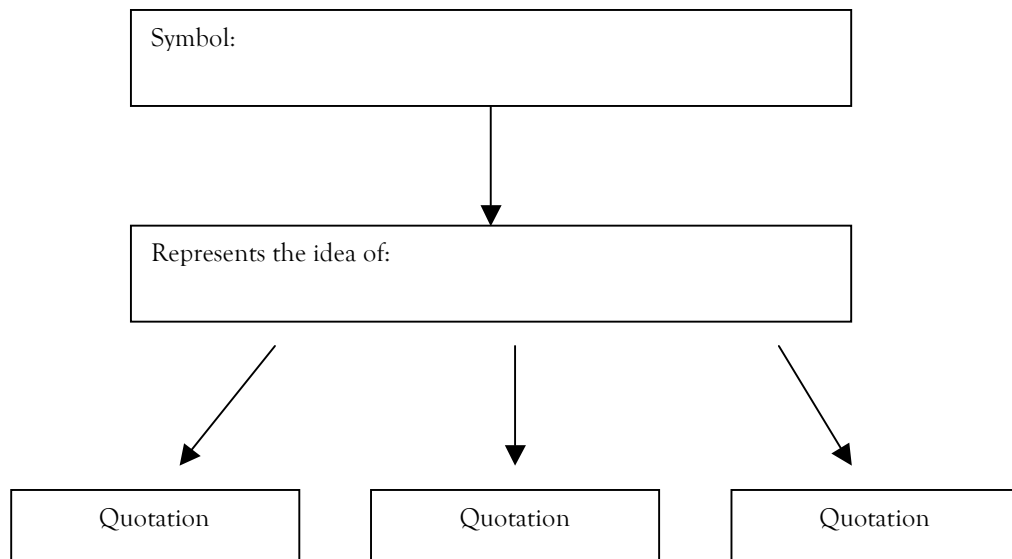
Jude the Obscure: Symbols

Symbols are objects, characters, figures or colours used to represent abstract ideas or concepts

Hardy employs a range of symbols throughout *Jude the Obscure* that are designed to present the abstract ideas that he is discussing.

➤ Using the list of symbols below, complete diagrams for each one as shown below:

- ✚ Phillotson's piano
- ✚ The new buildings of Gothic design in Marygreen
- ✚ Jude's books
- ✚ The pagan deities that Sue obtains in Christminster.
- ✚ Letters - refer to the novel's subtitle '*the letter killeth*'.
- ✚ Christminster
- ✚ Adults and Children
- ✚ The Railways & Modernity
- ✚ Biblical teachings & invocations of Biblical stories
- ✚ The pastoral verses the urban
- ✚ The Ancient World



Jude the Obscure: Language

In keeping with Hardy's assertion that *Jude the Obscure* is a novel of 'contrasts', the linguistic register that he adopts can be viewed in the same way. At the centre of Hardy's text are a range of linguistic contradictions and contrasts: most notably his use of dialect juxtaposed with an elevated register used by the educated figures of the novel. Equally, in a novel in which religion plays such a divisive role, it is logical that Hardy should draw on biblical register throughout. Essentially, Hardy is trying to convey the richness of the imaginary Wessex that he has created: on the one hand presenting the characters that people the rural Marygreen in opposition to the cosmopolitan world of Christminster. A direct consequence of Hardy's blend of language, the divisions, contrasts and tensions at the heart of the novel are given an obvious physicality; that is, they are articulated in the words of the characters and the narrator.

1. Dialectal Varieties

The Victorian Novel holds a key place in the literary canon, not just for its discussion of ideas central to a major period of social, industrial and moral change in British history, but also because it is a time of great experimentation by its writers. Novelists like Hardy, provide us with some of the first developed representations of dialectal varieties; that is, they attempt to reflect the social and educational diversity of the population through the use of dialogue, which attempts to replicate the language *actually used* by people of their class in reality. Hardy employs the same attempt at representation of dialect in *Jude the Obscure*.

- Complete the table below to show which characters use Standard English and regional dialect in their dialogue – give textual examples to support your ideas.

Regional Variety		Standard English	
Character	Textual Evidence	Character	Textual Evidence

- What do you notice about the groups that you have created in the table above? How might we group these characters in terms of their role in Wessex society?
- What is Hardy trying to imply by the way that he blends the use of dialects in the novel – think about your perception of the characters and their function in society/
- Is Hardy trying to make an implied statement about Victorian society through his use of language varieties? Think about certain stereotypes that you might attach to certain characters and their dialect and whether these are followed through in the novel.
- How does the use of the dialectal varieties help to stratify Wessex society and how does it enhance the idea of social exclusion in the novel?
- Think specifically about Mr Phillotson and Gillingham, both of these characters are educated and employ the register of educated men, yet at times they slip into the local dialect – what does this imply about Victorian society in terms of social change?

Jude the Obscure: Language

2. Literary Allusion

One of the most evident features of Hardy's style is the consistent literary allusion that he makes throughout. This is inevitable given Jude's determination to become a man versed in the culture and texts synonymous with a classical education. However, there is a striking tension that becomes obvious: Jude is someone who can access the ideas, narratives and characters of great literary works because of his own determination to learn; however, he is consistently rejected by those who share a similar understanding. Such a tension precludes one of the vices of Victorian society that Hardy is attacking in the novel: the preservation of education by the established classes, and the exclusion of the aspirant minority, like Jude. Hardy himself is guilty of exactly this in his use of literary allusion in the novel's epigraphs: the references to Ovid, Swinburne, and Browning, for example, because they form a central device of foreshadowing in the novel. That is, as the omniscient narrator, Hardy employs the epigraphs to alert the reader to the inevitability of Jude's betrayal, failure and, ultimately, his death, while at the same time, his protagonist continues, unaware, towards the fate that Hardy has determined.

- Choose five of the literary allusions that you consider to be the most important in the novel (perhaps choosing them because of their location at key moments of the narrative).
- Complete the table below, entering the exact quotation from the text, and – by researching the allusion – explain its significance in the narrative.

Literary Allusion in <i>Jude the Obscure</i>		
Allusion	What story/text is Hardy referring to?	What is the significance of the allusion in the novel?

- Using the list that you have compiled, think about how the allusions might be grouped thinking about the following:
 - Is it a device used to foreshadow later events?
 - Is it supposed to be used to make a social comment on Victorian society?
 - Is it a reference to a narrative or characters who share similar fates to the characters in the novel?
- Complete the table below to group your allusions.

Allusion	Its function in the novel

Jude the Obscure: Language

- One critic of Hardy has noted that

his style is characterised by superfluous allusion to literary standards designed primarily to focus the reader on his self-conscious prose style, and a vain desire to parade his social liberalism.

- What does this statement imply about Hardy's use of literary allusion throughout *Jude the Obscure*?
- How far is this a fair and appropriate interpretation of Hardy's use of literary allusion throughout *Jude the Obscure*?

3. Biblical References

Hardy presents an Old Testament perception of God throughout the novel; that is, a God who is driven by the power of vengeance as opposed to the New Testament reading of God as a redeemer of sin. It is interesting to note that following the murder-suicide by Little Father Time and Sue's subsequent miscarriage, the narrator remarks that Sue is struck by 'a sense of Jude and herself fleeing from a persecutor' and Sue goes on to determine that 'it is no use fighting God'. In this moment, Jude and Sue exhibit the characteristics of people at the centre of a society in which the maintenance of biblical order is paramount, and in which the perversion of religious dogma is punishable by great suffering. What this demonstrates to the reader is that, in spite of their determination to re-think and re-evaluate the role of religion in their lives, Jude and Sue are compelled to return to faith in an attempt to appease the God they perceive has determined their fate. In essence, biblical teaching forms the very core of the lives of the characters in the novel: it is the rule of law by which they measure morality and is embedded in their perception of the tragedies that befall them.

- Look closely at the passages that follow the murder-suicide of Jude's children by Little Father Time - identify a range of biblical references or allusions.
- Complete the table below to show what the references are, what they refer to in biblical terms and why you think Hardy has included them at this point.

Biblical References & Allusions in <i>Jude the Obscure</i>		
Reference/Allusion	What part of the Bible/reference to religion is Hardy making?	What is the significance of the reference/allusion in the novel?

- Bearing in mind the other elements of Victorian society that Hardy attacks in the novel - why do you think he has made biblical references such an integral element of the novel?
- What is the irony of Hardy's references to the Bible and religion?
- How do you react to Sue's submission to religion given her previously forthright rejection of it?

Jude the Obscure: Narrative Style

Narrative Voice

The narrative voice in *Jude the Obscure* is absolutely crucial in presenting a world from which we are distant, but in which we must engage in order to accept the tragedy of the novel. There are two central elements that create the intricate voice that Hardy employs.

1. Point of View

The ever-changing perspectives that the characters hold are central to our acceptance of them as representations of real, idiosyncratic people, yet at the same time, they also come to confuse our understanding of the characters who at times, seem to act almost without reason. If we consider Jude's continually changing relationship with Mr Phillotson, for example, we are presented with a character who, at first, identifies someone as the central motivation behind his desire for social progress, but then who becomes a rival for the affections of Sue, and in turn, the obstacle to his aspirations. Equally, if we think about the range of perspectives that Jude, Phillotson and Aunt Drusilla offer about Sue, we identify that none of them configure with the perception that Sue has of herself. In turn, Hardy's use of point of view in his broader narration shows the way that the characters are constantly confronted with an ever-evolving world, in which their perceptions of themselves, like the world around them, are subject to constant change. The pace with which this occurs invokes one of Hardy's themes: that is, he is alluding to the pace of change, socially, spiritually and industrially in Victorian society. In turn, the characters themselves find that they too are under constant pressure to re-evaluate themselves and their world.

2. Distant Narration

Unlike conventional omniscient narrators who offer interpretations and indicate the motivations behind the events of the narrative, Hardy's narration in *Jude the Obscure* maintains a distance from the action and the characters. Consequently, the narrative adopts a sense of esoteric forces of fate and nature at work against the characters. This is seen through the characters' sense of destiny: the first time that Jude can see Christminster from Marygreen, Hardy describes how 'Suddenly there came this wind something towards him - a message from this place - from some soul residing there, it seemed.' Hardy's distance is obvious here: instead of qualifying the idea as a perception of Jude, perhaps created by his longing for Christminster, he allows the reader to believe in the possibility of a distant force at work, convincing Jude that it is his destiny to venture to Christminster. This is deliberate: if Hardy is to succeed in convincing the reader, both in his own time and ours, that social control was achieved by the manipulation of religious authority, for example, and that a fear of divine retribution - itself dependent on the understanding of forces beyond the physical - he too, as narrator, must adopt a voice that is distant. In the world of the novel, the narrator takes on the presence of a God-like persona, who controls, judges and punishes characters for their sin in the constructed world of the fiction. In turn, Hardy exhibits precisely these qualities in *Jude the Obscure* but for a specific purpose: the creation of a world in which events appear incongruous but at the same time part of a pre-determined destiny.

3. An Inconsistent Narrator

Hardy does not maintain a distance throughout, however, at times appearing to align himself with characters in their darkest moments. In observing the bodies of the dead children, the narrator remarks that the face of Little Father Time was

their nodal point, their focus, their expression in a single term.
For the rashness of those parents he had groaned, for their ill-assortment he had quaked, and for the misfortunes of those he had died.

Obvious here is a sense that this is both a retrospective interpretation and construction of Little Father Time's justification for the murder-suicide. Yet, his own reasoning is articulated in the simplistic register of a child in the suicide note that he leaves, 'Done because we are too menny', and therefore we must assume that this is Sue's own perspective on the suicide. As she observes the body of her dead children – for reasons that might be interpreted as the ultimate failure in her role as mother – Hardy implies an alignment with Sue, by offering an insight into her perception of the tragedy that has unfolded. But equally, he fulfils the role of the God-like presence in the fictitious construct of the narrative: that is, he justifies the brutality of the event almost as divine retribution for the 'rashness' of Sue's and Jude's decision to become a couple in a society where it was been forbidden. The idea of a divine retribution, combined with a sense that the narrator is articulating Sue's own guilt, is created when we consider the references to the physical terror and pain of the death that Little Father Time has endured. The invocation of Little Father Time's groans and quaking imply both a visceral immediacy, in other words closeness to the death that might only be envisioned by a mother, and therefore demonstrating that the narrator is aligning himself with Sue. Equally, it also conveys a distance, the presence of an omniscient, God-like figure observing the death and recounting its justification almost with a coldness that serves to suggest that the deaths were retribution for the past sins of Jude, Arabella and Sue.

Ultimately, what we see is Hardy allowing the narration to appear at once distant and subservient to the presence of higher forces at work in the destiny of the characters, but then becoming involved at moments of retribution and judgement in the narrative. In so doing, Hardy establishes a world which is underpinned by two fundamental forces – both determined by the emphasis on religious subservience – sin and retribution: that is, we witness the sins of the characters from a distance – almost powerless to intervene in acts that we know will bear horrific consequences – but suffer their retribution up close. In turn, this helps Hardy to make one of his most damning criticisms of Victorian society: the over-zealous piety of Victorian orthodoxy.

Jude the Obscure: Narrative Structure

Geometrical Structuring

Jude the Obscure exhibits many of the features of a geometric structure: that is, the events appear to follow a logical and cogent path at odds with the aspirations of the characters. For example, Jude sets out from Marygreen to Christminster, whereas Sue begins in Christminster and ends the narrative in Marygreen. Equally, aside from the physical trajectories of the narrative, the characters experience an equally geometric spiritual progression: Sue shifts from scepticism to conviction; Jude from faith to lack of hope. This is a key feature of the narrative because once more we see the sense of a pre-determined destiny over which the characters themselves have no control. Hardy's intention is to create a narrative in which the characters appear to have clearly defined notions of the lives they lead while in the final analysis it is undermined by forces beyond them. It must be acknowledged that their aspirations for life are based on abstractions, that is ideas about the people they are and the people they hope to become. This is realised in the complex web of events that occur in the narrative where the geometric structure of the novel appears to be lost only to be recovered by the end. Hardy's point would appear to be to question the value of ideas in a world where events run counter to our expectations. The novel appears to place ideas against reality; creating a sense that ideals create understanding in the lives of the characters while the material reality of the world frustrates it. This is one of the central themes of the novel as best illustrated by Jude's desire for education: while he reasons with himself to find a solution to the exclusivity of the academic world and thereby find a means by which to enter it, the reality is embodied by the academics themselves who reject him. In turn, Jude's aspirations provide an understanding of what his function might be; while the world around him confuses his understanding by rejecting him from his desired path.

Satire

Satire is a form concerned with the exposure and mocking of human folly and vice. At times *Jude the Obscure* appears to fall into this category. The central characteristic of satire is the way that events can be perceived in a number of ways: the first seeming tragic; the other farcical. The single best example of this in *Jude the Obscure* is Little Father Time's murder-suicide which initially appears to be a tragic consequence of circumstance; yet, alternatively it can be read as ridiculous. If we accept that Little Father Time's actions are tragic then it is because we imbue him with the capacity to reason as an adult: to make selfless sacrifices in the manner of a parent. Equally, we have to accept that he has overcome the inherent egocentricity of a child and the instinctive desire to view themselves at the centre of their existence. Even a cursory consideration of Victorian society makes this implausible: to have developed the ability to reason in this way would take the rationing skills of a highly educated adult. Indeed, Hardy offers no suggestion that Little Father Time has the benefit of Sue's experience as a teacher and the note that he leaves appears to undermine the adulthood required to make the sacrifice he does. Instead, the note appears to convey a childishness, an innocence akin to Little Father Time's age – the tone of 'Done because we are too menny' appears to replicate an emotion intimated by Sue in earlier passages. Instead, Little Father Time's action read like the dutiful act of a child seeking the approval of his mother. However, there still remains a significant leap to be made if we assert that Father Time's need for approval extends to committing murder and suicide.

Instead, an alternative interpretation might be that Little Father Time is a stylised figure of the grotesque; a caricatured representation rather than a credible character. In this case, it is evidence of the satirical properties of the novel. We are then, as readers, left to identify the object of the satire, which appears to be the marriage laws and those who rejected Sue and Jude for being together. The hardship endured by Jude and Sue, which in turn leads to Little Father Time's act of murder, is brought upon them as Jude struggles to find work because of his relationship with Sue. Hardy, is therefore, making one of his most potent attacks at this point, against the rigidity and absolutism of Victorian society.

Jude the Obscure: Victorian Society

An Age of Change

Victorian Society was a period of great change and progress. Many of the established institutions found themselves at the heart of the change that occurred during this period. In the same way that technology has revolutionised life in the twenty-first century, industrialisation – and the subsequent changes that leads to – transformed life in the Victorian period. In areas like religion, industry, education and public reform, the nineteenth century remains one of the most turbulent periods in recent history. As society changes and advances are made, people themselves too re-evaluate their own lives and the principles that guide them. Hardy makes this point in *Jude the Obscure*; throughout the text there is a constant sense of restlessness whether it be physical – the emphasis placed on travel and movement – or spiritual, the characters are objects of the changes and advancements in scientific and technological ideology. Indeed, in the case of Jude and his family, they are also victims. This is an interesting aspect of Hardy's text: much of the change that takes place, Hardy deems to be detrimental to the individual – for instance, the rise of urban areas and the mechanisation of industry, leading to greater pressure on jobs and employment, something that Jude himself falls victim to. In turn, Hardy's writing is almost incongruous with the Realist literary movement of the time and hints at the Modernists who begin to appear at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Declining Emphasis on Agriculture

Prior to the Industrial Revolution, agriculture was for centuries the focus of English economic strength. However, by the middle of the nineteenth century, agriculture had become secondary to the industrial sector as the single largest employer in Britain. In turn, this led to the activities of people like Arabella, for example, becoming less viable in the new economic climate. Not only did this bring poverty but also an exodus of rural workers to places like Australia (as Arabella demonstrates) where their skills could generate a greater income. The greater emphasis being placed on mechanised industry meant that urban areas became the centre of economic activity, indeed Jude himself re-trains as a stonemason so that he might find employment in Christminster. Hardy alludes to this growing emphasis on the urban by implying that Jude finds the allure of Christminster infinitely more desirable than the insularity of Marygreen.

The Railways and Transportation

A particularly important outcome of the Industrial Revolution was the advent of the railway. Hardy uses the railways consistently to facilitate the movement of his characters throughout the novel and gives it a sense of mobility that was becoming common to families during the period.

Wagonways for moving coal in the mining areas had started in the 17th century and were often associated with canal or river systems for the further movement of coal. These were all horse drawn or relied on gravity, with a stationary steam engine to haul the wagons back to the top of the incline. The first applications of the steam locomotive were on wagon or plate ways (as they were then often called from the cast iron plates used). Horse-drawn public railways did not begin until the early years of the 19th century. Steam-hauled public railways began with the Liverpool and Manchester and Stockton and Darlington Railways of the late 1820s. The construction of major railways connecting the larger cities and towns began in the 1830s but only gained momentum at the very end of the first Industrial Revolution.

As a consequence of this new-found mobility, many of the original railway workers never returned to their rural origins, but instead, remained in the urban areas providing increased manual labour for the mechanised industries.

Jude the Obscure: Victorian Society

Education

The Nineteenth Century saw, amongst other major political reforms, the most progressive education legislation passed in history. In 1870 *Forster's Education Act* was passed which stated that education should be available to all children aged between the ages of five and twelve, although the act made the provision for pupils to pay fees, it stated that those who could not afford to pay would have their fees subsidised. Although the act did not make education compulsory – this did not happen until 1880 – it set in motion a period where, hypothetically, children of all classes might expect to be educated. Equally, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge became initiated the university extension movement which was designed to create a more open climate at some of Britain's most exclusive educational establishments. Bearing these reforms in mind, it becomes clearer where Jude's motivation to learn comes from: he lives in a time when education, for the first time, is becoming, in theory, accessible to all. However, he does not contend with the notion that while he might find change desirable, the bastions of such institutions as Oxford and Cambridge might be more resistant. Therefore, Jude's desire for social mobility and progression is stifled by the determination of the establishment to maintain the old order.

Loss of Religious Faith & The Rise of Scientific Alternatives

The nineteenth century saw the collision of scientific reason – this period is sometimes referred to as The Age of Reason – and orthodox Christian teachings. The publication of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of the Species* offered a reasoned and scientific explanation for the evolution of man in contrast to the Christian theory of Creationism which implies the creation of the Earth was carried out by God. In turn, many Christians began to question the logic of biblical explanations and turn, instead, to accept the possibility that there might be an alternative explanation. This was a major turning point in the relationship of society and the church. Gradually, over a period of years, the church began to lose its stranglehold on society and in turn, many Christians began to question the whole philosophy promoted by Christianity in terms of its compatibility with a rapidly modernising world.

Hardy himself underwent a conversion to atheism in his early twenties having first trained as an ecclesiastical architect. However, in *Jude the Obscure*, the challenge to Christianity comes not from scientific reason, but instead, from radical philosophy and theological revisionism. In turn, the novel exhibits a spiritual and religious vacuum; that is, the characters appear to lack the security of faith in any form. On the one hand they react against the orthodoxy of the church yet are unable to replace it with something of any real comparable substance, to the extent that Jude proclaims 'his present rule of life' consists of 'following inclinations which do me and nobody else any harm'. Therefore, a spiritual chaos erupts: the characters are guided by a moral relativism that is incongruous with their time, and Jude's otherwise idealistic proclamation comes to be a symptom of the nihilism that leads to the novel's tragedy.

The Malthusian Catastrophe

In 1798, Thomas Malthus published *An Essay on the Principle of Population* in which he outlined the central danger facing British society known as The Malthusian Catastrophe: society could be reduced to subsistence levels of existence because of an outstripping of the economy's ability to produce food, by the number of people who need feeding. In essence, Malthus promoted the notion that the population grows geometrically whereas the food supply grows arithmetically. Malthus argued that there needed to be 'checks' to ensure that society was able to sustain itself against this mathematical problem. In real terms, Malthus was suggesting that human mortality was a necessary part of sustaining society; however, he generated considerable controversy by supporting the relaxation of legislation designed to ease the suffering of poor people, the idea being that in turn this would lead to greater numbers of deaths in people who were unable to contribute to the food production needed to maintain society. The material effect of Malthusian thinking was to create a feeling amongst the lower classes that they were redundant and expendable. Although Malthus published the essay nearly one hundred years prior to the publication of *Jude the Obscure*, it becomes relevant when we consider Little Father Time's motivations for the murder-suicide of his siblings: he is the horrific, yet logical outcome of Malthusian thinking.

Section B:

**Broadening Understanding of the
Novel**

Jude the Obscure: Sue Bridehead – ‘New Woman’ vs. ‘Fallen Woman’

Victorian Expectations of Women & ‘The Cult of Domesticity’

‘The Cult of Domesticity’ or –as it was known by its detractors – ‘The Cult of True Womanhood’ was the prevailing view the Victorian period of how women were expected to behave. It referred specifically to their role in marriage and comprised three central **functions**:

1. Women should maintain the home as a refuge for their husbands.
2. Women should take the central role in training children
3. Women should set the moral example for their children to follow.

In line with these three ‘functions’ were four **characteristics** that women were supposed to embody so that they might perform their functions effectively:

1. piety
2. purity
3. submissiveness
4. domesticity

Inherent in this Victorian view is the idea of the woman as subservient to the male; that is, in order to fulfil her social role she must be submissive demonstrates the tariff placed on female subjugation in Victorian society. The woman’s place was, effectively, in the home rearing children and exemplifying good moral conduct in line with the orthodoxy of the time. By definition, any woman, who could not perform these functions, and did not exhibit these characteristics was condemned as immoral.

✚ Locate textual examples that show Sue’s attitude to ideas like those suggested by ‘The Cult of Domesticity’

✚ How far does Sue Bridehead fulfil the Victorian ideal of women?

The ‘New Woman’

The ‘New Woman’ ideal was a reaction to ‘The Cult of Domesticity’, it sought to liberate women from male subjugation and, in turn, to give them control over their lives. The inherent desire of the movement was to encourage women to free themselves from the conditions that might restrict their pursuit of happiness and self-realisation. The New Woman movement found itself at odds with the established conservatism of the period because of its relatively radical notions of how women might play a defining role in a society concerned with preserving its patriarchal heritage.

There were key characteristics that were central to the idea of the New Woman – a new woman was supposed:

- to have received an adequate education and be able to use her knowledge adequately;
- to earn money and, in turn, be ‘financially independent’;
- to participate in political discussion and decision making;
- to decide herself if, when and whom she wants to marry and how many children she wants to have;
- to show outward signs of being different by wearing more comfortable clothes;
- and, generally, to defy convention and social norms in order to create a better world for women.

✚ Find textual examples where Sue represents the idea of a Victorian ‘New Woman’

✚ How far does Sue Bridehead fulfil the Victorian ideal of the ‘New Woman’?

✚ How do you think the Victorian reader of *Jude the Obscure* would have reacted to this presentation of Sue?

Hardy & 'The New Woman' ideal

Hardy like many novelists of the period adopted the notion of the 'New Woman' ideal in his fiction because it was a central societal debate of the period. In *Jude the Obscure*, Sue Bridehead is, to a greater or lesser extent, a representation of the 'New Woman' ideal: she is, for example, more intelligent than the two men who court her affections, self-sufficient and able to express political and theoretical ideas of her own.

The 'Fallen Woman'

The notion of the 'Fallen Women' is an example of the Victorian attitude to women; it was the name given to women who had engaged in acts of sexual intercourse outside marriage. More broadly, the term came to be used to describe prostitutes; prostitution became a major social issue as urbanisation continued unabated because of industrialisation. The 1851 census identified a 4% imbalance in the favour of women which meant that some women would remain unmarried, and, in turn, in economically and socially precarious positions. This caused an explosion in the number of women turning to prostitution, for example, in order to earn a living. This brought to the fore questions of sexual morality in Victorian Britain and they extended beyond women in prostitution to women generally.

Victorian society responded to the question of social immorality by establishing organisations to 'reclaim' and 'reform' fallen women so that they might be 'cleansed' and 'purified' of their sin and re-admitted to mainstream society.

Inherent to the notion of the 'fallen woman' is the idea that such women should be 'cleansed' and 'purified' of their immorality before being 'accepted' back into mainstream society. This exemplifies, once more, the nature of Victorian orthodoxy and the way that society excluded and condemned those who deviated from social expectations.

- ✚ How do the final sections of the novel imply that Hardy invokes the idea of the 'Fallen Woman' in the novel?
- ✚ What actions does Sue commit that might make us read her as a 'fallen woman'?
- ✚ How do you react to the idea that Hardy firstly creates Sue as a 'New Woman' but by the end of the novel she is more akin to the 'Fallen Woman'?
- ✚ What do you think caused Hardy to construct this trajectory for Sue's character?
- ✚ It is clear that the two concepts, 'The New Woman' and 'The Fallen Women' operate in opposition to one another in *Jude the Obscure*.

Why do you think Hardy has put the two concepts in opposition to one another in the novel?

What broader social point is Hardy trying to make in terms of the following:

- the frustrations of Victorian women like Sue Bridehead?
- the response of Victorian society to their attempts to break free of male subservience?
- The role of the novelist in presenting ideas like 'The New Woman' in opposition to the accepted social conventions of the time?

Jude the Obscure: Conflicting Narrative Voices & The Omniscient Paradox

Literature & Narration

Literary texts have at their centre a narrator; a voice that bridges the gap between the constructed world of the fiction and reality; that is, the time and place in which the audience read the text.

There are two types of narration:

1. **First Person** - a story told directly by the protagonist. This is used when the writer wants to allow the reader to access the immediate emotions, interpretations and ideas of the narrative's central character; it allows the audience a much closer relationship with the protagonist, such that the narrative becomes almost an intimate set of experiences shared with the reader. This style of narration is one of the central features of novels like Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and Melville's *Moby Dick*, where the success of the narrators is derived from the relationship that they have with the reader.
2. **(Third Person) Omniscient Narrator** - in direct opposition to the first person narrator, the omniscient narrator offers a panoramic overview of the characters, events and emotions in a literary text. The intermediary relationship between narrator and reader in first person narrations is contrasted in this form by a more distant and removed narrative voice. In turn, we see the world of the narrative in a more naturalistic way: that is, as an observer rather than an intimate associate of the narrator.

Issues of Reliability

One of the central critical debates about literary narration surrounds the question of 'reliability'; that is, how far narrators represent an impartial, balanced perception of their respective narrative worlds and the characters who inhabit them. The question of reliability is important when we consider texts, and our responses to them, because the voice that allows us access to the fictional world, by definition, influences, to some extent, our perceptions of that world.

Generally speaking, the tension between 'reliability' and 'unreliability' is characterised by the opposition between the first person and omniscient voices: that is, the questions of reliability are raised most frequently in narratives told from the first person perspective while the omniscient narrator, in their God-like distance from the events, is considered to be an impartial observer of events. In other words, a first person narrator may have certain motivations or a specific agenda for presenting the world of the narrative in a specific way and, as we depend on them to be guided through the events of the text, we are forced to identify why they might present particular events or characters in specific ways. However, the omniscient narrator should, theoretically, be relied upon to provide an overview of events, perhaps changing the focus from one character to another but never drawing us exclusively into the psychological world of just one like the first person narration.

Nineteenth Century Narration & The Omniscient Paradox

Nineteenth Century literature poses a difficulty when we try to identify narrative perspective: that is, the very broad general parameters of narration and narrative voice converge to create a hybrid of omniscience and intimacy. Many nineteenth century writers wrote critical assessments of contemporary society, Hardy being one of the most famous, in which the narrative voice appeared to both observe events and also pass judgement simultaneously. In turn, when we look closely at narration during this period we see a tension that conflicts with our expectations of an omniscient narrator: on the one hand, the narrator appears to maintain a distance from the narration, while, at the same time, being a voice of judgement and commentary.

Narrative Voice & *Jude the Obscure* – see also: “Narrative Style” section in study guide

As outlined in the study guide, Hardy’s narration in *Jude the Obscure* is conflicted and contradictory. Indeed, the tension between a distant, omniscient narrator who observes events and one who appears to be identifying with the inner-turmoil of individual characters, is central to Hardy’s thematic intentions in the novel. Equally, it runs counter to our expectations of an omniscient narrator – an observer or intermediary between the world of the narrative and the place of its reception – which in turn, leads us to question the function of Hardy’s narration. Indeed, the narrative voice becomes a character representative of opposing forces in the novel: an ever-present force controlling the destiny of the characters; a punisher of sin and a voice for the emotional horror that they suffer as retribution. However, each of these, is in a sense, ironic. Hardy’s novel exists as a protest against the injustices of Victorian society – as Virginia Woolf suggests the novel is ‘a case against society’ – and Hardy’s narration is representative of the outside forces – that he opposes – acting against the characters he has created. Yet, simultaneously, it provides a vehicle for an expression of the unspoken emotional pain the characters endure at the hands of those same outside forces. In essence, the novel is interesting for its experimentation with narrative voice: at different points throughout, the narrator exemplifies the harshest judgements of Victorian society but then aligns itself with the victims – Hardy’s characters – of Victorian orthodoxy, which in turn, gives a voice to the voiceless, so that the reader might share in, and be appalled by, the social conventions, prejudices and orthodoxy that Jude and Sue strive to overcome throughout the novel.

1. The Narrator as Distant Force

In some sections of the novel Hardy’s narration acts as a distant force that compliments the sense of pre-determined destiny that pervades Jude’s early life. The idea of a destiny which propels Jude on a trajectory towards Christminster is a central component of the novel’s tragic outcome; that is, Jude’s death, alone and ignored by Arabella, is made more tragic because it has been foreshadowed from the beginning of the novel. Jude’s aspiration to become a scholar quickly turns to one of the many failed dreams that erode his idealism and faith in the novel. In the Marygreen section of the novel, the narrator plays a central role in the inevitability of Jude’s failure.

We can trace the development of Hardy’s narrator as a force that foreshadows the inevitable tragedy that is caused by Jude’s determination to be a scholar. Superficially, it is only because Jude travels to Christminster that his relationship with Sue becomes a possibility; having failed to find work Jude ‘again thought of his cousin’, almost implying that the hopes of being accepted by Christminster – either as a worker or academic – have become secondary to a determination to find Sue.

By looking at the quotations below, it becomes possible to trace how the narrator acts as a force of destiny in the novel – impacting on both Jude and at the same time working against him.

- a. The schoolmaster was leaving the village, and everybody seemed sorry. The miller at Cresscombe lent him the small white tilted cart and horse to carry his goods to the city of his destination, about twenty miles off, such a vehicle proving of quite sufficient size for the teacher’s effects...the only cumbersome article possessed by the master, in addition to the packing-case of books, was a cottage piano that he had brought at an auction during the year in which he thought of learning instrumental music. But the enthusiasm having waned he had never acquired any skill in playing, and the purchased article had been a perpetual trouble to him ever since in moving house.
(Part I, Chapter 1)

The opening paragraph of Hardy’s novel has, at its centre, the idea of education: the aspiration, the reality and its failure. As the schoolmaster leaves the narrator notes that ‘everybody seemed’ to be ‘sorry’, almost instantly delineating a tension between the reality and appearance, and this creates an overriding sense of ambivalence towards education: the idea that it is accepted but not embraced by the inhabitants of Marygreen. Indeed, the narrator seems to imply that the schoolmaster is being exiled from Marygreen to Christminster as they help him to prepare his possessions for transit. Hardy refers to the residents collectively (‘everybody’) almost as if to imply Phillotson’s leaving has the consent of the entire village and he further undermines the schoolmaster’s status by invoking his failed attempts to learn the piano. What we see here is almost contempt for Phillotson’s desire to learn as his ‘enthusiasm waned’ implying a weakness of spirit on the part of the schoolmaster. In turn, the object of his learning – the piano – becomes a burden and ‘perpetual trouble’ in moving to Christminster. Consequently, this idea of learning as a burden foreshadows later events in the sense that it is exactly Jude’s determination to have a

classical education that leads to his downfall: the burden of his failure as a Christminster scholar underpins the tragedies that befall him thereafter.

Hardy then aligns Jude with Phillotson – as if to determine that a fate of broken aspiration awaits Jude too in his pursuit of education. Jude’s affinity with Phillotson is a central feature of the narrator’s foreshadowing of the novel’s eventual tragedy.

- b. The smith and the bailiff started to see the practicability of the suggested shelter, and the boy and the schoolmaster were left standing alone.

‘Sorry I am going, Jude’ asked the latter kindly.

Tears rose into the little boy’s eyes, for he was not among the regular day scholars, who came unromantically close to the schoolmaster’s life, but one who had attended the night school only during the present teacher’s term of office. The regular scholars, if the truth must be told, stood at the present moment afar off, like certain historical disciples, indisposed to any enthusiastic volunteering of aid.

(Part 1, Chapter 1)

The proximity of the characters to, and away from, one another is telling. While the otherwise anonymous ‘smith’ and ‘bailiff’ concern themselves with matters of ‘practicability’, Jude and Phillotson are ‘standing alone’ isolated from the other members of Marygreen society. In turn, the narrator creates a physical representation of the tension between education and practicability that pervades Marygreen. Phillotson, is removed from the ‘regular scholars’ who like ‘certain historical disciples’ – a clear invocation of biblical betrayal – deny their former master as he prepares for exile. Yet, Jude is aligned with Phillotson, which creates a sense of foreboding as other, more knowledgeable characters, maintain a distance. Jude becomes almost the single character of faith, for him, Phillotson’s departure is not just the loss of an adult role model, but a watershed moment that marks the beginning of an absence of education in his life. In turn, Jude must, and does, attempt to fill the void left by the departure of his inspiration. However, Hardy undermines Jude’s admiration of Phillotson noting how ‘tears rose into the little boy’s eyes’, emphasising his immaturity and, in turn, his idealism. This is to become central to the novel: Jude imbues two characters with a romantic idealism that is ultimately betrayed, firstly Phillotson, and then Sue. In both he identifies an ethereal quality, yet the events of the narrative imply that this is misplaced, the wishful romanticism of an idealist. In each case, we can trace the beginnings of Jude’s propensity for misplaced faith back to this moment in the narrative: Hardy’s invocation of a biblical betrayal and the careful proxemics of this event suggest a character who places value in his aspirations and idealism at odds with – as implied by the distance of the scholars and labourers of Marygreen in this extract – the will of society. In turn, it is this resistance to social conformity, and Jude’s determination to pursue his aspirations, that undermine him throughout.

Without the physical presence of Phillotson, the focal point of Jude’s aspiration becomes the distant Christminster which the narrator imbues with mythical qualities.

- c. Some way within the limits of the stretch of landscape, points of light like topaz gleamed. The air increased in transparency with the lapse of minutes, till the topaz points showed themselves to be the vanes, windows, wet roof slates, and other shining spots upon the spires, domes and free-stone work, and varied outlines that were faintly revealed. It was Christminster, unquestionably; either directly seen, or miraged in the peculiar atmosphere.

(Book 1, Chapter 1)

This is the central moment of epiphany for Jude: from the confined, insularity of Marygreen, Christminster is ‘revealed’ to him, almost as if simultaneously he has an experience of self-awakening that his destiny lies there. The presence of forces of fate – beyond the comprehension of both Jude and the reader – is achieved by the atmospheric revelation that occurs as the ‘air increase[s] in transparency’ unveiling the ‘topaz points’ to Jude – a symbol of Jude’s childlike desire to be there and the inherent value that his desire to be educated holds. There are telling details that help the narrator to undermine Jude’s grand aspirations; instead, conveying the notion that they are the product of youthful enthusiasm rather than Jude’s logical understanding of his social status. The description, on closer reading, appears to be contradictory: that is, the narrator creates a mythical place illuminated in the colours of semi-precious topaz, while at the same time implying Christminster is not beyond Jude’s physical grasp as it is ‘within the limits of the stretch of landscape’. Instead, Jude is undermined by the narrator because he does not understand that despite its relative proximity, Christminster may be attainable physically, but in terms of being accepted by its society, Jude is deluded as the narrator implies commenting on the town as a ‘mirage’, symbolic of Jude’s hopes of academic achievement. In turn, the apparent incongruity of the description allows the narrator to illustrate Jude’s naivety and convey a sense of impending betrayal:

the mythological Christminster that Jude observes holds a reality that he cannot understand because of his idealistic hope that it will free him from Marygreen. Ultimately, the narrator acts as a distant force that presents Christminster as a mythical holy land, compelling Jude to travel there, where he will be betrayed by the reality of Victorian prejudices; meanwhile the reader enters into an uncomfortable shared knowledge with the narrator: that Jude has been the victim of a deception, fuelled in part by his own naivety, that will, in time, have horrific consequences. The reader feels a sense of powerlessness, one that is created by the distant narrator, who allows Jude to be fooled, while the reality that awaits – exclusion and rejection by the academic classes – is withheld. Jude, by definition, is allowed to be seduced by the promise of hope and self improvement.

2. The Narrator as Voice of Victorian Prejudice & Punisher of Jude

While on the one hand the narrator acts as a passive observer of Jude's journey to Christminster – facilitating his rejection and betrayal – it also takes on the role of punisher. That is, as Jude bears the burden of academic – and consequently – social rejection, the narrator works against the novel's protagonist, punishing and condemning him for the delusion that he might advance himself in spite of Victorian social prejudices. This is another of the incongruities that characterise the novel's problematic omniscient narration.

This contrast is most apparent when we consider Jude's next meeting with Phillotson some time later in Christminster:

- a. That after all these years the meeting with Phillotson should be of this homely complexion destroyed at one stroke the halo which had surrounded the schoolmaster's figure in Jude's imagination ever since their parting. It created in him at the same time a sympathy with Phillotson as an obviously much chastened and disappointed man. Jude told him his name, and said he had come to see him as an old friend who had been kind to him in his youthful days.

‘I don't remember you in the least,’ said the schoolmaster thoughtfully.

(Book 2, Chapter 4)

Jude's admiration of, and belief in, Phillotson is punished as the schoolmaster struggles to recall Jude. Bound up in this moment is the betrayal of Jude's hope that the man who inspired him to seek an education in Christminster has ultimately failed; and in turn, so will Jude. The domesticity of their meeting forms part of the rejection: Jude having left the utilitarian setting of Marygreen, and having been left by Arabella following his domestic inadequacy, finds himself once more amongst the normality of a domestic surrounding: a contrast to the setting of his ideals. That Hardy should force Jude into the realisation that he has been forgotten by his academic inspiration is further retribution for his precociousness. Interestingly, the narrator reconstructs the significance of Jude's and Phillotson's parting and inflects upon it a meaning counter to our initial reading in the Marygreen section of the novel. As Jude recounts the parting of the then teacher and pupil, Phillotson's regret that he had not kept his 'own counsel' – referring to how he outlined his aspirations to become an academic – is telling because it implies that he too was thinking beyond the limits afforded by his social status. Inherent in Phillotson's regret is a sense of shame; shame for articulating that which should have only been fantasy, but also for daring to believe that he might break through the barriers of the academic establishment. Phillotson goes on to inform Jude that his academic aspirations were 'given up years ago', suddenly the very basis of his own academic aspirations deserts Jude. In turn, the events in the opening chapter, and the delusions that formed the very basis of Jude's aspirations, are undone. Most importantly, the narrator allows the events of the opening chapter to be constructed in such a way that they offer Jude optimism and hope that he might be free of the claustrophobic life he lives in Christminster. Yet, by the time he revisits, Phillotson, the narrator punishes Jude by betraying exactly the ideals that he created for him as a child. This is the point at which the narrator comes to represent the voice of Victorian social prejudice: the almost whimsical way in which the events of chapter one – that have underpinned the narrative thus far – are reduced to fragments of fantasy, is symbolic of Victorian prejudice. That is, the narrator now takes on the presence of the academic classes smirking wryly at lives built on the premise of self-improvement, while always limited by the closed academic establishment of the time.

This hybrid of narration – on the one hand representative of contemporary prejudices; on the other punisher of those who dare to challenge them – is revived again when Jude is forced to take lodgings in Mildew Lane, separate from Sue and the children.

- b. They started in their quest of their lodging, and at last found something that seemed to promise well, in Mildew Lane – a spot which to Jude was irresistible – though to Sue it was not so fascinating – a narrow lane close to the back of a college, but having no communication with it. The little houses were darkened to gloom by the high collegiate buildings, within which life was so far removed from that of the people in the lane as if it had been on opposite sides of the globe.

(Book 6, Chapter 1)

The narrator's ironic invocation of a 'quest' exemplifies most clearly its inclination as a presence of punishment in the narrative. Whereas Jude's quest was once to go to Christminster, now, in the aftermath of his dismissal and rejection by society, he is forced into finding a place that will simply accept him as an outsider. Furthermore, the name of the location – an example of Hardy's blatant contrivance in parts of the novel – is symbolic: the reference to a destructive fungus illustrates how far Jude's aspirations have been corrupted and destroyed. Despite its proximity to the colleges, Jude's new lodgings are isolated and hidden from view by the 'high collegiate walls' which serve to symbolically ostracise him still further. The narrator condemns Jude to living closely alongside the places of his aspirations, yet always denying him access to them. That Jude should be 'fascinated' by the location is the narrator mocking him, that is having failed in his attempts to access the academic institutions, he must now content himself with living in their shadow. That Jude should find this fascinating demonstrates his eroded self-respect. The cyclical trajectory that Jude has experienced is reflected in the idea of a 'globe', Jude is now still no closer to realising his aspirations as a scholar than when he looked into the distance from Marygreen to see Christminster revealed to him by the mist; he has, in essence, returned to the beginning – distant from, and excluded by, the academic classes he once aspired to join. At this point the reader and the narrator enter into a pact of *schadenfreude*: that is, the narrator appears to revel in the implied suffering that Jude endures by being so close to the colleges yet unable to access them. That Jude is unaware of this adds to the savagery of the narrator's condemnation, and we are left instead, it appears, with a protagonist oblivious to his own demise. Equally, we see again the narrator as the voice of Victorian prejudice: in condemning Jude to live in Mildew Lane, he obscures him from view – as the towering walls of the college suggest – leaving him out of sight; the punishment of a society for daring to challenge its rigid values.

The narrator's presence as a force for retribution against Jude is drawn to its logical conclusion in the protagonist's death:

- c. An occasional word, as from some one making a speech, floated from the open windows of the Theatre across to this quiet corner, at which there seemed to be a smile of some sort upon the marble features of Jude; while the old, superseded, Delphin editions of Virgil and Homer, and the dog-eared Greek Testament on the neighbouring shelf, and the other volumes of the sort that he had not parted with, roughened with stone-dust where he had been in the habit of catching them up for a few minutes between his labours, seemed to pale sickly cast at the sounds. The bells struck out joyously; and their reverberations travelled round the bedroom.

(Book 6, Chapter 6)

In death, Jude is once more separated – and obscured – by Victorian society, and more specifically the academic classes, who enjoy the annual Christminster festivities while he lies dead and forgotten. The acoustic invocations of the final moments of the narrative are crucial because they establish a central dichotomy between the interior and exterior of the closing passages. That is, outside the academics celebrate the customs of academia – speeches, ceremonial bell ringing – while inside the remnants of Jude's academic aspirations are tarnished with his failure to fulfil his ambitions. Jude's exclusion from the academic classes is finally affirmed in his death in a 'quiet corner', just like his lodgings in Mildew Lane, the scene of his death is a place in which the narrator taunts him by locating him within proximity to the academic celebrations, but, in which, he is unable to participate. The ornate state of his corpse and its 'marble features' are again a twist of irony by the narrator; the 'smile' that seems to adorn Jude's face conveys a final condemnation on the part of the narrator – this is the death of one who almost seems contented by his closeness to – but inevitable exclusion from – his life-long aspiration. There is a cruelty in Jude's death, he dies alone with his decayed and 'superseded' versions of Homer and Virgil his only companions. Yet, unlike the heroes of either text, Jude dies, not a heroic warrior in his own time, but alone; and beside the 'dog-eared' Greek Testament from which the novel's opening epigraph is taken. In turn, this geometrical patterning of the novel delivers a final revelation: Jude's aspirations, like the words of the Apocrypha, are forbidden: he lies in death – a final punishment for his aspirations and sins – unknown and unremarkable. The tolling of the bells at the end of the section appear to carry the

consent of Victorian society to Jude's death: that is, the sense of a natural order having been maintained in the face of Jude's rebellion; while the rebel lies dead, the orthodoxy of society is upheld. The 'reverberations' of the bells, most tellingly, travel around the room, almost as if Jude was not even there and so, in death, as life, the narrator condemns Jude to the ultimate anonymity.

3. The Narrator as Voice of the Characters' Torment

The novel's narrator appears to fulfil one final paradoxical role: that of the voice for the characters' inner torment as the tragic events of the narrative befall them. However, in order to achieve this end, the narrator must first overcome the obstacle of the traditional omniscient narrator; that is, he must overcome the conventional distance of this style of narration and align himself with the characters, almost like the inner voice of their emotional selves. This is another paradox of the novel's omniscient narration: where at times the narrator has taken on the role of distant force allowing events to be determined by an existing destiny, and then acting as a force for retribution against the characters' sins, it then also becomes the voice of their inner emotional responses to their rejection and punishment.

We can see this most clearly when we consider the aftermath of the murder-suicide that forms the tragic act of retribution against Jude and Sue.

The boy's face expressed the whole tale of their situation. On that little shape had converged all the inauspiciousness and shadow which had darkened the first union of Jude, and all the accidents, mistakes, fears, errors of the last. He was their nodal point, their focus, their expression in a single term. For the rashness of those parents he had groaned, for their ill-assortment he had quaked, and for the misfortunes of those he had died.

(Book 6, Chapter 2)

Obvious here is a sense that this is both a retrospective interpretation and construction of Little Father Time's justification for the murder-suicide. Yet, his own reasoning is articulated in the simplistic register of a child in the suicide note that he leaves, 'Done because we are too menny', and therefore we must assume that this is Sue's own perspective on the suicide. As she observes the body of her dead children – for reasons that might be interpreted as the ultimate failure in her role as mother – Hardy implies an alignment with Sue, by offering an insight into her perception of the tragedy that has unfolded. But equally, he fulfils the role of the God-like presence in the fictitious construct of the narrative: that is, he justifies the brutality of the event almost as divine retribution for the 'rashness' of Sue's and Jude's decision to become a couple in a society where it was been forbidden. The idea of a divine retribution, combined with a sense that the narrator is articulating Sue's own guilt, is created when we consider the references to the physical terror and pain of the death that Little Father Time has endured. The invocation of Little Father Time's groans and quaking imply both a visceral immediacy, in other words closeness to the death that might only be envisioned by a mother, and therefore demonstrating that the narrator is aligning himself with Sue. Equally, it also conveys a distance, the presence of an omniscient, God-like figure observing the death and recounting its justification almost with a coldness that serves to suggest that the deaths were retribution for the past sins of Jude, Arabella and Sue.

Ultimately, what we see is Hardy allowing the narration to appear at once distant and subservient to the presence of higher forces at work in the destiny of the characters, but then becoming involved at moments of retribution and judgement in the narrative. In so doing, Hardy establishes a world which is underpinned by two fundamental forces – both determined by the emphasis on religious subservience – sin and retribution: that is, we witness the sins of the characters from a distance – almost powerless to intervene in acts that we know will bear horrific consequences - but suffer their retribution up close. In turn, this helps Hardy to make one of his most damning criticisms of Victorian society: the over-zealous piety of Victorian orthodoxy.

4. Conclusion – Conflicting Voices and the Omniscient Paradox

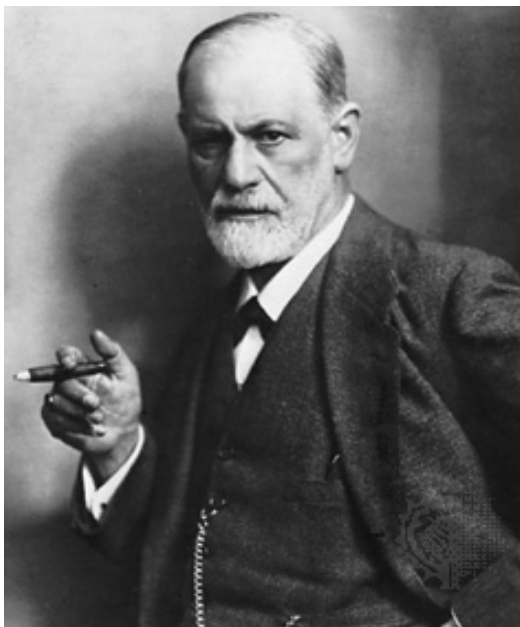
Hardy's narration of the novel is conflicted in that at different stages it fulfils the role of distant force at work driving the characters towards their destiny, punisher of their sins, and, finally, the voice of their emotional torment. Each of these contradictory functions create the brutality of the novel: that is, the narrator serves to project the characters along an irreversible path that they are powerless to halt, expose them to the most brutal and callous retribution for their sin, while at the same time, articulating their emotional terror. The moral compass of the novel appears to be dictated by the narrator who, in his omniscient, god-like presence, gives the characters the freedom to err and then exacts horrific retribution upon them. As the suffering of the characters becomes unbearable for the reader, Hardy allows the narration to express the inner-most feelings of guilt that the characters harbour. And thus, the reader is

locked into a horrific cycle in which sin is observed at a distance and retribution dealt up close. This is the essence of the novel's visceral qualities, this is what makes the suffering of the narrative so relentless.

The conflicting voices of Hardy's narration combine to create a devastating whole and, in turn, give the novel its powerful ideological centre. Soon after the murder-suicide, the narrator comments that Sue is haunted by 'a sense of Jude and herself fleeing from a persecutor' and she tells him that 'it is no use fighting God'. The novel, in turn, can be read as an attack on the orthodoxy of Victorian religion. Hardy's narration is central to this end; the conflicting voices of the narrator construct the presence of an Old Testament representation of God in the novel. That is, a God of revenge and punishment, the same God who - to use Sue's own word - 'persecutes' the Israelites in revenge for the sin of man. That Sue should soon after renounce her former atheism for the church is symptomatic of her desire to purge herself of sin, however her acts of self-sacrifice are not in the hope of redemption, but instead, to appease the will of an abominable nemesis. Hardy uses the conflicting narrative voices in order to exemplify the mindset of God-fearing Victorians, who, despite their efforts to refute religion, return to orthodoxy to end the suffering inflicted upon them for straying from faith. Hardy's distant narration allows the characters to be tempted into sin for which they are severely punished, and the articulation of their suffering thereafter serves only to expose the reader to the terror of their fate. Therein lays the novel's greatest criticism of the period: the existence of an all pervasive orthodoxy that controls, inflicts suffering and punishes without reason.

The novel's omniscient paradox is Hardy's literary representation of the wider religious paradox that he is attacking in the novel. While his narrator on the one hand brutally punishes the characters for sin but then aligns itself with them to give a voice to their suffering, Hardy is attempting to recreate the contradiction at the heart of contemporary religious orthodoxy. That is, the notion of a religion with - at its centre - a message of redemption, manipulated as a tool of social control. Jude and Sue are subjugated by the academic, affluent classes in the novel, who in their attempts to maintain their place in society depend on the prevalence of religious orthodoxy to repress those who question the social and moral order. In turn, the social rejection and brutal vengeance exacted upon them is perceived as divine retribution, and thus -as in the novel - it becomes necessary to appease the anger of God by submitting oneself again to the subservience of religious orthodoxy.

Jude the Obscure: Freud – Eros, Libido & The Death Drive (Thanatos)



Sigmund Freud is the co-founder of the psychoanalytic school of psychology. Freud, an Austrian-Jewish man, was concerned with devising analytical interpretations of human behaviour in order to determine explanations for the ways that human beings reacted to, and acted on, events in their lives. Some of Freud's central theories concern the concept of 'repression' as a defence mechanism that allow humans to reconcile the instinctive self with the demands of civilisation. Equally, Freud was concerned with human sexuality and the function of dreams and how they might be interpreted.

Freud & Literary Criticism

Freud has come to be central to the 'psychoanalytical' school of literary criticism; that is, critics of literature use Freud's ideas in order to rationalise the otherwise 'irrational' and, at times, counter-intuitive behaviour of literary characters, in other words, their willingness to perform acts which seem to lead to their destruction. This is why Freudian Critics of literature have become one of the central critical voices in literature throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: because Freud is concerned with arguing that the actions of human beings are derived not just from conscious, rational sources, but, instead, from the unconscious self. In essence, Freud, and Freudian Critics, are concerned with identifying the subconscious explanations for human behaviour, and, in turn, the behaviour of literary characters.

Freud: A Health Warning

Critics who argue against Freudian criticism point out, unassailably, that his ideas are flawed because of their inherent sexism, determinism and fixation with the middle classes. Equally, that they neglect key historical and cultural factors acting externally on the internal life of human beings. The greatest single weakness in Freudian psychoanalysis is its subjectivity: that is, it is impossible to prove – his ideas, and their application, are based on the **interpretation** of the reader who then constructs an argument to show the parallels between Freudian argument and the narrative or character in which they discern a similarity. However, the most constructive way to use Freudian ideas in our reading of literature is to look for common ground in both fields: for example, where Freud was concerned with love and hate, the conscious and unconscious, literature, too, is driven by these same basic human instincts and realms of existence. Therefore, our interpretation can be enriched by our understanding of the commonality of purpose between Freud and literature: an understanding of the forces that drive people.

✚ Try to define in your own words what it meant by:

- the 'conscious' being
- the 'unconscious' being

✚ What do the two words, 'conscious' and 'unconscious' imply about the way that both parts of the 'self' operate?

✚ Which of our human characteristics do you think can be located in:

- the 'conscious'?
- the 'unconscious'?

✚ Try to explain why you have grouped the characteristics as you have – think about the idea of people as 'instinctive' creatures operating within the 'rules' of a civilised society.

- ✚ As a result of what you have thought about so far, can you identify an inherent contradiction in the composition of human beings – if so try to explain some or all of what you think it might be.

Freud Before *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*

First published in German in 1920, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* marks a significant development in Freud's thinking. Prior to 1920, Freud is believed to have placed two instincts at the centre of explaining the instincts which dictate our actions:

The Sexual Instincts:

1. Eros – the instinct that works towards creativity, harmony, sexual connection, reproduction and self preservation
2. Libido – the instinct which is characterised by sexual desire and the instinctive need to fulfil that desire.

Freud argued that these two instincts co-existed and that Eros and the desire to work towards social harmony forced us to repress those elements of the libido that were at odds with the behaviour of people living in civilised societies.

In other words, while we might have instinctive sexual desires, we repress them in order to conform to norms of social acceptability. Here we see the difference between the 'instinctive self' and the 'civilised self' that must conform to the rules of our civilised societies.

Freud argued that the 'libido' – a selfish urge to fulfil sexual desire – had to be turned into 'socially useful energy that contributes to the harmonious functioning of society. This process of negating our instinctive desires in favour of conforming to society is called sublimation.

- ✚ Make a list of the social rules and conventions in Victorian Society that make it socially unacceptable for Jude and Sue to fulfil their instinctive sexual desire.
- ✚ Find textual examples showing where the characters are caught between their 'instinctive sexual desires' and an awareness of social acceptability.
- ✚ Do the characters 'sublimate' their instincts or act upon them?
- ✚ Find examples of where the characters explain or justify their actions, how does their language and explanation imply a parallel with Freud's ideas of the tension between Eros and Libido?

Freud's idea of sublimation is linked to his idea of '**repression**'. According to Freud repression occurs when we **psychologically exclude desires and impulses** from our **consciousness** and subdue them in our **subconsciousness**. Repression is an **unconscious mechanism** and in turn is considered highly detrimental to the mental stability of the individual who is repressing particular desires, even if it is to ensure they conform to social acceptability. In turn, the individual exhibits symptoms of what is termed the '**return of the repressed**' which are physical behaviours that imply a repressed desire. A banal example of a repressed sexual desire, for example, might be when an individual uses the name of the person they desire in the context of a discussion about someone else accidentally. In this instance, the repressor has, alluded to the presence of that person in their subconsciousness without intending to do so. This, argues, Freud, is a characteristic of the repressed desire resurfacing in a relatively innocuous way, yet at the same time, alluding to a much more complex psychological process of repression having occurred in the individual.

- ✚ Consider the events of chapters 5 and 9 in Part Sixth, how do Sue's physical actions towards Phillotson as he attempts to initiate intimacy with her, exemplify symptoms of the 'return of the repressed'?
- ✚ What has Sue been attempting to repress and why is it important that she repress it at this point in the narrative?

- ✚ How do the physical descriptions of Sue in this section imply that her 'repression' has been to the detrimental of her well-being?
- ✚ Consider the reasons that Sue has had to repress her desires, the situation that she finds herself in as a consequence and explain how you react emotionally to this situation in terms of:
 - the (in)humanity of the situation;
 - what it suggests about Victorian society
- ✚ Consider the events in chapter 8, Part Sixth – is Jude forced into a similar repression?

Think about:

 - where he chooses to meet Sue and the inherent symbolism of the location;
 - how he acts upon his instincts during this meeting.
 - how he responds to Sue's reaction to what happens during the meeting.
- ✚ How does Sue's initiation of physical contact with Jude paradoxically exhibit her repression at this point?
- ✚ Does the gender of the characters – and the social expectations placed on either gender – play a role in Sue's need to enter into repression?
- ✚ If you read a disparity in terms of who is forced to repress their desires, how do you react to it?

Beyond the Pleasure Principle

In 1920, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* marked a progression in Freud's thinking. Where initially, he had placed Eros and Libido in opposition to one another, Freud then determined that the processes that cause cell destruction in the body, might be expanded to create an inherent 'death drive' in human beings. Freud's argument continues that there is an 'urge inherent in all organic life to restore an earlier state of things' taken to mean the protected existence of being in the womb. However, as human beings cannot replicate the protected experience of being in the womb, Freud argues that, instead, human beings have a desire to find the peace and tranquillity of death.

The Death Drive – a warning

Freud's 'death drive' principle has suffered considerable derision, predominantly because it implies a fundamentally inherent paradox with the purpose and value of life. In broadly pragmatic terms, it supposes that people are born and in an attempt to regain the calm of life in the womb, they then pursue a trajectory toward death. However, more interesting interpretations of the 'death drive' suggest a theory that is helpful to us in our explanation of literary characters and events.

Principles of the *Death Drive*

- Humans have an inherent urge to return to 'the inanimate state';
- Humans re-enact traumatic events that have caused physical or emotional pain that have occurred in order to 'master them';
- In re-enacting events, humans inflict pain on themselves to the detriment of their physical and mental well-being -
- By re-enacting events that cause pain, humans exacerbate the desire to return to the 'inanimate state' characterised by its stability and absence of pain.
- The death drive is a destructive instinct that directly opposes Eros with its principles of stability and harmony.
- An individual's death drive may bring about the death or destruction of parts of the external world.

The Death Drive and Masochism

The 'death drive' is inherently linked to the concept of 'masochism'. Masochism is concerned with the deriving of gratification from suffering pain. Although the word has very specific sexual connotations, it can be broadened to encompass pain of other kinds, for example, emotional pain. Freud's 'death drive' places considerable emphasis on the re-enactment of physically or emotionally traumatic events in an attempt to control them, and, in turn, obliterate the anxiety created by the pain originally experienced by the event. In turn, we can read into this the idea that people are driven towards inflicting pain on themselves – physical or emotional – in re-enacting traumatic events. This is what we mean by emotional or psychological masochism. In turn, Freud's logic appears to be contradictory: that is, as humans seek the calm and stability of the 'inanimate state' they expose themselves to the physical and emotional trauma that drives them to desire death.

- ✚ Look again at Jude's early conversations with Aunt Drusilla in Part First, Chapter two and then again in the final chapter of Part First; how do her ideas about marriage imply that it will be potentially traumatic?
- ✚ How does Jude's pursuit of Sue, despite Aunt Drusilla's warning, link to Freud's idea about the re-enactment of 'traumatic' events?
- ✚ Find textual examples where Jude's pursuit of Sue and his inherent dismissal of Aunt Drusilla's warning, shows a willingness to inflict pain upon himself – comment specifically on how the language reveals a sense of pain.
- ✚ How does Jude's pursuit of Sue, and the consequent relationship that they have, exemplify Freud's ideas in terms of:
 - 're-enacting traumatic events';
 - inflicting pain on himself;
 - causing the destruction of his external world;
 - the pursuit of a 'previous inanimate state'?

Give **precise** reference in your response.

- ✚ Consider Jude's relationship with Christminster and comment on how the following parallel with Freud's ideas about the 'death drive':
 - his distant longing for Christminster in Part First;
 - his initial exploration of Christminster in Part Second;
 - his experience of, and reaction to, events and institutions in Christminster
 - His return to Christminster in Part Sixth and the events that take place consequently
 - His death at the end of the novel.
- ✚ Consider the novel in its entirety: how does a Freudian interpretation of the text, impact upon our reading of *Jude the Obscure*? How does it develop our understanding of the characters and events, and alter our emotional reaction to the text?

Writing about Freud in an Essay – a warning

Jude the Obscure was first published in 1895 some twenty five years before Freud published his ideas about the 'death drive'. Therefore it is inaccurate to suggest that what you understand about Freud was also understood by Hardy. In writing *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy did not have access to the information that we do about Freud. It is, in turn, inaccurate to suggest, for example, that Hardy 'invokes' or 'employs' Freudian ideas to make the text more dramatic.

Instead, you can discuss the text in Freudian terms, but must show by your use of language that you are doing so retrospectively. Provided that you show you are aware that a Freudian interpretation of the text is retrospective then you are legitimately able to interpret the text in this way. What our understanding of Freud does allow us is a discourse for exploring the events of the narrative; in other words, it explains the possible forces and instincts driving the characters towards their fate in the novel. You should marry your analysis of the text and your understanding of Freud by thinking about it in those terms: that it is a framework for analysing the text devised after it was written.

Section C

Coursework Questions on *Jude* *the Obscure*

GCSE ENGLISH - PROSE STUDY COURSEWORK
Jude the Obscure
Coursework Questions

Choose one of the following questions:

Question 1

Using the Marygreen section of the novel as a starting point, discuss the ways that Hardy creates the character of Jude Fawley as a man destined for tragedy.

Question 2

Using the moment when Jude discovers his murdered children in Part Sixth, Chapter two as a starting point, discuss the ways in which the characters suffer retribution in the novel

Question 3

Beginning with the moment when Sue submits her body to Phillotson in Part Sixth, Chapter nine, discuss the ways that Hardy presents inter-gender relations in the novel.

Question 4

Using the novel's opening paragraph as a starting point, discuss the role of the Narrator in *Jude the Obscure*.

Question 5

Beginning with the moment when Sue declares that 'Leaving Kennetbridge for this place is like coming from Caiaphas to Pilate!', in Part Sixth, Chapter one, explore the function of Hardy's religious invocations in *Jude the Obscure*.