



NAXOS
AudioBooks

COMPLETE
CLASSICS
UNABRIDGED



The **THOMAS HARDY**
Woodlanders

Read by **Stephen Thorne**

1	The Woodlanders	5:44
2	The vehicle had a square black tilt...	6:46
3	Chapter 2	7:14
4	The girl's bosom moved a very little.	7:35
5	Chapter 3	9:25
6	He was silent a while...	10:33
7	Chapter 4	7:37
8	Winterborne, seeing that Melbury had not arrived...	9:03
9	'You'll be, then, ready, Giles?'	9:41
10	Chapter 5	5:43
11	Marty, of course, went to the front shop...	7:00
12	There was a little delay in their setting out...	5:02
13	Chapter 6	7:48
14	Thus these people with converging destinies...	6:44
15	Having concluded her perambulation...	8:22
16	Chapter 7	7:03
17	The auctioneer adjusted himself to circumstances...	8:24
18	Chapter 8	7:21
19	There was something so sympathetic...	5:51
20	Often during the previous night, after his call...	7:25

21	Chapter 9	7:59
22	When Winterborne was gone the timber-merchant went...	9:41
23	Chapter 10	6:54
24	At last the time came for breaking up...	6:28
25	Chapter 11	6:26
26	It was one morning later on, while these things...	5:45
27	Chapter 12	5:04
28	That evening he called her into his room...	7:59
29	Chapter 13	7:51
30	Winterborne's face grew strange...	6:31
31	The fog of the previous evening still lingered...	6:01
32	Chapter 14	9:51
33	The doctor then departed...	2:23
34	Chapter 15	5:39
35	The postman's time for passing...	6:27
36	In the evening, while he sat quietly pondering...	6:25
37	Chapter 16	8:57
38	The doctor had started on his way...	8:43
39	Chapter 17	8:57
40	As may be inferred from the tone of his conversation...	6:40

41	Chapter 18	6:36
42	Without replying or considering the notes...	8:31
43	Chapter 19	8:31
44	The timber-merchant was on foot leading the horse...	7:22
45	Fitzpiers lingered yet.	8:02
46	Chapter 20	7:15
47	Soon the listeners could hear nothing of their proceedings...	8:45
48	Chapter 21	6:33
49	Chapter 22	6:39
50	As for the departed visitor, his own last words lingered...	7:54
51	Chapter 23	5:17
52	The day of Fitzpiers's return arrived...	8:58
53	Chapter 24	5:48
54	Melbury then by degrees admitted that he had mentioned...	5:49
55	From this hour there was no serious attempt at recalcitration...	6:33
56	Chapter 25	5:01
57	She wondered why he never looked towards her open window.	7:14
58	He looked at her with a droll sort of awakening.	6:45
59	Fitzpiers experienced a profound distaste for the situation.	6:23
60	Chapter 26	7:27

61	Fitzpiers caught it, and having lit up, regarded her...	9:15
62	Chapter 27	5:24
63	Fitzpiers contradicted this idea in his most vibratory tones...	7:47
64	Fitzpiers had seated himself near her.	6:57
65	Chapter 28	9:16
66	Herr Tannhauser still moved on...	7:16
67	Chapter 29	9:16
68	They entered the stable, and saw the pale shape...	9:17
69	Chapter 30	9:24
70	He expected a scene at breakfast...	9:08
71	Chapter 31	5:08
72	After wistfully regarding Winterborne a while...	7:23
73	Chapter 32	5:57
74	'I am an old man,' said Melbury...	7:02
75	Chapter 33	8:54
76	Mrs. Charmond was now as much agitated as Grace.	7:47
77	Grace reflected.	8:34
78	Chapter 34	5:57
79	This letter contained, in fact, Marty's declaration...	5:20
80	The large square hall, with its oak floor, staircase, and wainscot...	7:00

81	Chapter 35	5:39
82	These were the last words that Fitzpiers uttered in his seat...	8:58
83	Before Grace had answered somebody else came...	8:40
84	Chapter 36	5:56
85	She ran across into the dining-room...	7:13
86	Chapter 37	5:46
87	Here they sat down to the rum...	5:34
88	He set out for London the next morning...	5:59
89	Chapter 38	7:43
90	Grace directed the man to set her down there in the midst...	7:26
91	To hear these two poor Arcadian innocents talk of imperial law...	9:41
92	Chapter 39	6:25
93	The sad sands were running swiftly through Time's glass...	6:54
94	She started back suddenly from his embrace...	6:48
95	Chapter 40	7:09
96	In the darkness of the apartment to which she flew...	9:43
97	Chapter 41	4:42
98	She bolted the window as directed, and he retreated.	6:38
99	'He has been walking fast, in order to get here quickly,'...	9:55
100	Chapter 42	6:15

101	While speaking thus to herself she had lit the lantern...	5:43
102	She hastily made him as comfortable as she could...	8:06
103	Chapter 43	8:44
104	Fitzpiers left the cot...	7:33
105	This antecedent considerateness in Fitzpiers...	7:46
106	Chapter 44	6:33
107	She could indulge in mournful fancies like this to Marty...	5:59
108	Chapter 45	5:41
109	Without consulting her father, or any one in the house...	7:58
110	Fitzpiers could hardly help showing his satisfaction...	8:51
111	Chapter 46	9:03
112	Fitzpiers did not exaggerate when he told her...	8:11
113	Chapter 47	6:05
114	Obedient to his order, Suke had gone to bed...	6:57
115	Fitzpiers had often studied the effect of these instruments...	9:09
116	Chapter 48	9:05
117	'I'd gie her a good shaking if she were my my maid...'	8:55

Total time: 14:19:03

Thomas Hardy

(1840–1928)

The Woodlanders

Thomas Hardy seems to have been in the habit – conscious or not – of alternating the writing of his major, tragic works with lighter novels, and in 1887, following *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and before *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, he produced *The Woodlanders*. The title of *The Woodlanders* inevitably recalls his earlier novel, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, and its opening scenes suggest that this too will be a country idyll. The setting is the tiny hamlet of Little Hintock, isolated even by the standards of rural Dorset, where human lives merge with that of the woodlands that extend for some miles around, and with which the people live in symbiosis, their occupations being exclusively concerned with timber, apples and cider-making.

The story is evidently to be that of the love, growing since childhood, between

the upright, attractive woodsman, Giles Winterborne, and Grace Melbury, the beautiful daughter of a local timber-merchant. But this idyllic expectation is unfulfilled, for the novel takes another direction, firstly because Grace is sent away to be educated, so that her father conceives higher ambitions for her; and secondly because Hardy introduces two outsiders into the enclosed world of Hintock, outsiders whose character and conduct are greatly at odds with those of the rural folk. With Giles and Grace, these two outsiders make up a quartet of crossed lovers – one of Hardy's favourite themes – whose feelings for each other vacillate, and whose perplexities arise largely from their social differences. Consequently *The Woodlanders* becomes to a great extent a social novel, not a rural idyll. Hardy probably conceived it as

a tragedy, but whether it achieves tragic status is questionable; although it is full of pathos, none of the characters are magnificent enough or decisive enough to be felt as tragic.

Although Hardy is famed for his pessimistic view of the universe as hostile, and of nature and fate as implacable and blind to human happiness, he was just as concerned with society, its laws and conventions. Society embodied 'the crookedness of things' which was built into the universe as a whole, and which led to human misery. The barriers between the classes estranged man from man, and more especially man from woman. Hardy himself was deeply in thrall to the nuances of class, and his characters are always precisely located within the social scale. Encounters between his Wessex folk and their superiors, are central to his books. He was drawn to portray the 'finer natures' of these people, who possessed imagination, feeling and culture. This undoubtedly reflected Hardy's own life and character: only a little above the peasantry by birth, yet distanced from his roots through his education and his

emotional nature, he was determined to show that he understood and shared this 'finer nature'. There was also the novelist's commercial motive, for Hardy knew very well that the public wished to read about 'superior people' – moneyed people who lived interesting or dramatic lives, rather than about the peasants of the countryside and their bleak, humdrum existence.

Yet the peasants are essential to his novels for they function like a chorus in a Greek play, commenting on the action, and they make articulate truths that are often invisible to the central characters. They are not characters, they are voices. Their language, like their way of life, is earthy, wise, stoical and comical, but they are not capable of noble, passionate or tragic experiences. They keep their heads below the parapet, avoiding the storms and stresses of life, leaving all that to their betters, yet seeming to pass ironic judgements on the folly and futility of all life's striving. Between the peasants and the active protagonists of the drama, there is almost always an intermediary figure, a peasant with exceptional instinct

and understanding who has links with both groups, in other words a self-portrait of Hardy himself. In *The Woodlanders* this is clearly Giles Winterborne, but it is also Marty South, the girl with the secret love for Giles, the girl who stands outside the love-quartet, but who sees and understands what is going on within it. Hardy should have given us more of Marty, for she is a character more intensely alive than the mysterious lady of the manor with the laughable, theatrical name of Felice Charmond. Felice is an apt foil for the other outsider, Edred Fitzpiers, the implausible young doctor, who studies the occult, kills his patients, and manages to conduct simultaneous affairs with three women in a tiny village – all without getting himself run out of Hintock.

So the four lovers are shown meeting, and very often losing their way, in the dark towering trees of Hintock Woods, making their plans and their assignments, misunderstanding themselves and their emotions, deceived by the false veil of social convention and ambition. There could perhaps be a parallel here with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, except that

Hardy is determined that this dream must end in death and tragedy, or at least in unhappiness, as indeed it does for all of them. He hints at the inner tensions of sex and marriage, but the inhibitions of nineteenth-century fiction prevent him from speaking of them explicitly. The details of Hardy's life provide a number of clues to his genius, his obsessive themes, and his tragic view of life.

Hardy was born in the village of Higher Brockhampton near Dorchester in 1840, the son of a stonemason. After leaving school at fifteen, he was apprenticed to a local architect, where he worked for some years before moving to London to continue his career. In his youth he possessed a strong religious faith, and even dreamed of ordination and a life as a country clergyman. These ideas faded rapidly, and he became a convinced atheist. His early novels, written around the age of thirty, were sufficiently successful to enable him to become a full-time writer. He returned to Dorset, and soon married Emma Gifford. This proved a childless marriage, which later descended into estrangement and bitterness. For the

last dozen or more years of their marriage, they lived in separate parts of their house, in a condition of mutual antagonism. Rumours of Hardy's earlier, unhappy love affairs have never been substantiated, but, together with his bleak marriage, they offer a possible explanation for his habitual depiction of love as both transient and tormenting. Hardy abandoned novel writing in the mid-1890s, after the adverse criticism that greeted *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*, which were accused of being irreligious and immoral, and he devoted himself to poetry. Emma Hardy died in 1912, and two years later Hardy married Florence Dugdale, a much younger woman who had been acting as his secretary. He died in 1928.

Notes by Peter Whitfield



Stephen Thorne has made over 2,000 broadcasts for BBC Radio and has worked extensively in theatre and television. He has recorded over 300 audiobooks, including Simon Schama's *A History of Britain*, all the *Brother Cadfael* novels, and works by Dickens and Hardy. He received the Talkies Award for his reading of *Enigma* by Robert Harris and has won several Golden Earphone Awards from *AudioFile* magazine. For Naxos AudioBooks, he has performed in *Henry V*, *Othello* and *King Richard III*.

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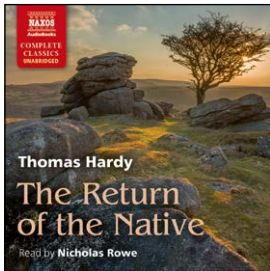
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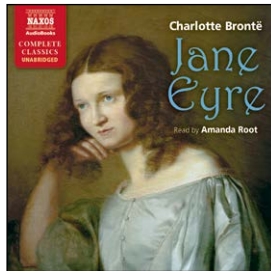
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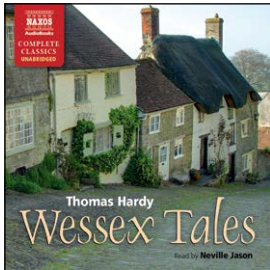
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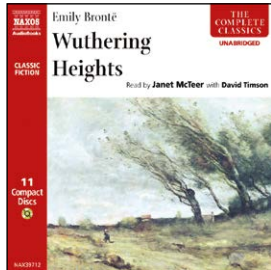
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THOMAS HARDY

The Woodlanders

Read by **Stephen Thorne**

Set in the tiny hamlet of Little Hintock, *The Woodlanders* tells of love, deception, ambition and tragedy, all unfolding themselves against the background of the majestic forest where the simple inhabitants live in harmony with nature. Two sets of characters, the woodlanders and the sophisticated outsiders, meet and interact, and learn too late to distinguish emotional truth from falsehood. Filled with his familiar themes and characters, this is a classic Hardy novel in which human care and striving are overshadowed by the eternal rhythms of nature.



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