

NAXOS
AudioBooks

**CLASSIC
FICTION**

Thomas Hardy
**Tess of the
d'Urbervilles**

**THE
COMPLETE
CLASSICS**

UNABRIDGED

Read by **Anna Bentinck**



NAX86712D

1	Chapter 1	6:42
2	'And shall we ever come into our own again?'	5:47
3	Chapter 2	6:02
4	The young girls formed, indeed, the...	5:37
5	Among these on-lookers were three...	6:11
6	Chapter 3	5:21
7	'I'll rock the cradle for 'ee, mother,' said the daughter...	5:28
8	The <i>Compleat Fortune-Teller</i> was an old thick volume...	5:37
9	Chapter 4	5:32
10	While this question was being discussed...	5:41
11	It was eleven o'clock before the family...	5:35
12	The renewed subject, which seemed to have...	4:41
13	By this time the mail-cart man...	5:32
14	Chapter 5	3:39
15	Rising early next day...	5:37
16	Everything on this snug property...	5:02
17	This embodiment of a d'Urberville...	5:14
18	They had spent some time wandering...	6:01
19	Chapter 6	5:54
20	Tess seemed for the moment...	6:13
21	Chapter 7	5:24
22	'Not for less than a thousand pound!'	6:29

23	Chapter 8	6:09
24	He drew rein, and as they slowed...	5:53
25	Chapter 9	5:04
26	The birds that the two girls had brought in...	5:26
27	He suited the action to the word, and...	4:14
28	Chapter 10	3:53
29	Approaching the hay-trussers...	5:17
30	'You shall catch it for this, my gentlemen...'	5:12
31	' 'Tis treacle,' said an observant matron.	6:50
32	Chapter 11	5:08
33	'Why, where be we?'	5:05
34	Having buttoned the overcoat...	4:37
35	Chapter 12	5:14
36	' 'Tis quite true.'	4:46
37	He emitted a laboured breath...	5:31
38	'No,' said she...	6:16
39	Chapter 13	4:14
40	Parishioners dropped in by twos and threes...	4:00
41	Chapter 14	6:09
42	Her binding proceeds with clock-like monotony.	6:32
43	A resolution which had surprised...	5:14
44	Tess had drifted into a frame of mind...	5:02

45	The most impressed of them said...	4:58
46	Having the natural feelings of a tradesman...	3:28
47	Chapter 15	3:42
48	She had held so aloof of late...	3:42
49	Chapter 16	4:50
50	The bird's-eye perspective before her...	4:59
51	Tess Durbeyfield, then, in good heart...	4:31
52	Chapter 17	4:47
53	The milkers formed quite a little battalion...	4:46
54	'Oh yes; there's nothing like...'	5:01
55	'Take it gentle, sir; take it gentle,' said the dairyman.	5:30
56	Chapter 18	4:41
57	It had never occurred to the straightforward...	5:07
58	So we find Angel Clare at six-and-twenty...	5:06
59	The early mornings were still sufficiently cool...	5:16
60	Chapter 19	5:37
61	Tess was conscious of neither time nor space.	5:08
62	Tess, on her part, could not understand why...	5:09
63	'Tess, fie for such bitterness!'	4:42
64	Chapter 20	5:31
65	The mixed, singular, luminous gloom...	4:47
66	Chapter 21	5:42

67	While the listeners were smiling...	5:10
68	'So have you – so have we all,' said Marian...	4:25
69	Chapter 22	4:38
70	'Upon my soul and body, this here stooping...'	3:14
71	Chapter 23	5:49
72	Marian had lowered herself upon his arm...	6:13
73	Tess's heart ached.	6:25
74	Chapter 24	6:04
75	Clare had studied the curves of those lips...	4:59
76	Chapter 25	5:22
77	To encounter her daily in the accustomed manner...	4:53
78	Clare knew her well.	4:59
79	Angel sat down, and the place...	4:55
80	'I suppose it is farming or nothing for you now...'	4:34
81	Chapter 26	5:22
82	'Mercy Chant is of a very good family.'	5:28
83	His mother made him sandwiches...	6:07
84	Chapter 27	5:22
85	'I've got to go a-skimming,' she pleaded...	5:13
86	You quite misapprehend my parents.	5:17
87	Chapter 28	6:32
88	Although the early September weather was sultry...	3:34

89	At last she got away, and did not stop...	3:27
90	Chapter 29	5:40
91	It all turned on that release.	4:59
92	Clare had resolved never to kiss her until...	3:59
93	Chapter 30	6:25
94	'Londoners will drink it at their breakfasts...'	6:46
95	'I like the other way rather best.'	5:14
96	Chapter 31	5:15
97	They unaffectedly sought each other's company...	5:25
98	Her affection for him was now the breath and life...	5:23
99	'But,' she timidly answered...	4:50
100	'Are you sure you don't dislike me for it?'	3:24
101	Chapter 32	5:02
102	'So that, seriously, dearest Tess,' he continued...	5:27
103	Next, he wished to see a little of the working...	6:16
104	Chapter 33	5:06
105	'Oh, nothing, dear,' he said from within.	5:31
106	Her perception that Angel's bearing towards her...	5:38
107	Upheld by the momentum of the time...	5:42
108	'O my love, why do I love you so!'	3:47
109	Chapter 34	5:44
110	'That cock knew the weather was going to...'	5:28

111	Suddenly he said with enthusiasm...	5:49
112	Angel, suddenly recollecting that Tess...	6:02
113	'O yes! I am sure that – '	4:24
114	Chapter 35	6:42
115	'Sit down, sit down,' he said gently.	6:35
116	Behold, when thy face is made bare...	4:04
117	They wandered on again in silence.	3:41
118	Having nothing more to fear...	3:53
119	Chapter 36	5:14
120	'My position – is this,' he said abruptly.	5:16
121	'Well, since you say no, I won't....'	4:57
122	He spoke such things as these and more...	5:49
123	Her eyelids, weighted with trouble...	4:42
124	'Quite sure. We ought to part...	4:00
125	Chapter 37	5:11
126	Ah! Now she knew what he was dreaming of...	5:08
127	It suddenly occurred to her to try persuasion...	5:03
128	To make the call as unobtrusive as possible...	5:04
129	'Until you come to me I must not try to come to you?'	3:06
130	Chapter 38	6:38
131	'Well, well; what's done can't be undone!'	6:48
132	Chapter 39	5:51

133	'We had your brief note three weeks ago...'	5:55
134	""Who can find a virtuous woman?...""	6:23
135	Chapter 40	5:35
136	Hearing a footstep below, he rose...	5:04
137	'I am going to Brazil alone, Izz,' said he.	5:04
138	'Well, but, Izz, we'll part friends, anyhow?'	3:21
139	Chapter 41	4:53
140	Her reluctance to communicate with her...	5:18
141	Among the difficulties of her lonely position...	4:39
142	In the midst of these whimsical fancies...	4:31
143	Chapter 42	4:35
144	Towards the second evening she reached...	4:19
145	She pulled off in disgust a bandage...	4:50
146	Chapter 43	5:28
147	So the two forces were at work here...	5:36
148	Then one day a peculiar quality invaded the air...	5:57
149	Putting on their gloves, all set to work...	5:40
150	After this they continued for some long time...	5:47
151	Chapter 44	5:00
152	It was a year ago, all but a day...	5:49
153	The second peal had been louder, and still...	5:17
154	'Some imposter who wished to come into the town...'	5:39

155	'The people are gone to afternoon service, I suppose?'	4:24
156	Chapter 45	5:00
157	As soon as she could reflect, it appalled her...	4:46
158	'I have done nothing!'	5:32
159	Tess, who had been quite unconscious of her action...	5:19
160	Tess, half frightened, gave way to his importunity...	4:50
161	Chapter 46	5:35
162	Tess still did no more than listen...	4:42
163	'Do not ask what I do not wish to tell!'	5:34
164	'If so be you make an agreement to work for me...'	4:53
165	'But I have. Though I don't believe in anything...	4:55
166	'What, you have really arranged to preach, and – '	5:29
167	Chapter 47	5:13
168	The old men on the rising straw-rick talked of the...	5:25
169	Tess continued to eat her modest dinner...	5:25
170	'Well, never mind,' he resumed.	5:57
171	Chapter 48	5:21
172	The time for the rat-catching arrived...	5:54
173	Angel, I live entirely for you.	5:22
174	Chapter 49	5:05
175	Angel's original intention had not been emigration...	4:52
176	He thought of Tess as she had appeared on the day...	4:26

177	To perfect the ballads was now her whimsical desire.	3:47
178	Chapter 50	5:57
179	She liked doing it after the confinement...	5:27
180	'A jester might say this is just like Paradise...'	5:53
181	Chapter 51	6:17
182	'Didn't you see me?'	6:22
183	Tess remained where she was a long while...	5:53
184	Chapter 52	6:18
185	The distance was great – too great...	6:04
186	In the interim Tess, left with the children...	5:43
187	Chapter 53	5:48
188	He soon retired to bed; and the next morning...	5:58
189	Chapter 54	5:22
190	Some man, apparently the sexton, had observed...	4:47
191	Chapter 55	5:58
192	Tess appeared on the threshold...	5:36
193	Chapter 56	5:15
194	She need not have done so, however...	4:38
195	Chapter 57	5:45
196	By degrees he was inclined to believe...	5:12
197	'I think we may as well steer in a general way...'	5:01
198	Chapter 58	5:30

199	Not more than a minute had elapsed...	5:11
200	'A very Temple of the Winds,' he said.	5:16
201	He kissed her to avoid a reply...	4:16
202	Chapter 59	5:21

Total time: 17:42:17

Thomas Hardy

Tess of the d'Urbervilles

Please be aware that elements of the plot are discussed in these notes

Tess of the D'Urbervilles was Thomas Hardy's penultimate novel, and like its successor *Jude the Obscure* was greeted with such opprobrium by the moralists of his time that his frustration eventually decided him to abandon the form altogether and concentrate on poetry. The principal reason for the mixed reception of both novels was their treatment of sex and marriage, topics pretty much guaranteed to drive late Victorian critics to apoplectic rants (the Bishop of Wakefield actually burned a copy of *Tess*; one critic of *Jude* threw it across the room in righteous indignation) unless the image was of a happy, sanctified union as a reward for socially acceptable honour, or stoic determination in the face of evident villainy. For Hardy, life was more profoundly complicated than that, more contingent, more driven by a combination of personality and fate. He dismissed the conventional ideas of virtue as held by his contemporary critics,

insisting upon a more humane valuation of an individual's worth, and a far less dogmatic reading of what was right and wrong. But this radical morality, and its translation on the page into literary theory, is not what makes *Tess* such a popular novel (such a combination rarely does) – it is the brilliant balancing of complex ideas, living characters, tragic plot and fully realised landscape, all expressed by an author with a great deal to say and fully-exercised literary muscles to say it with.

The story is so powerful that it can seem counter-intuitive to imagine *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* as a novel of ideas. The innocent heroine is seduced, betrayed and abandoned; there follow desperate and heartbreaking consequences; love found then lost; brief, sublime happiness; and then final, climactic tragedy. But this dark romance is far more than a gothic love-story. It begins when an antiquarian mentions to a feckless drunkard (Durbeyfield) that he may in fact be a member of the aristocracy, a family whose lineage was thought to have died out. The

drunkard sees this as a means of justifying his constitutional laziness and thus forces his family into further indigence. Meanwhile, the adoption of an ancient name (D'Urberville) is seen by another family as a means of giving them some spurious respectability to cover their arriviste credentials. The two families are thus brought together by ancient history and new money, by the British infatuation with status as an indicator of nature, and between them they contrive to destroy the life of an innocent (well, sort of innocent. More on that later). At the same time, there runs through the story the gradual erosion of traditional farming life through industrialisation. Then there are arguments over old-fashioned theology and fanatical evangelism, as well as traditional liberal Anglicanism and the new rationalism, influenced by Darwinian theories of evolution. These themes – family, farming, faith – all reflect the idea of the old in its perpetual struggle with the new, and all are presented as possessing as many vices as virtues. That is just one of many themes throughout the novel; and they all find expression not just in pedagogic narratorial asides but in the settings, the situations, the plotlines, the brilliantly evocative tableaux, the style of the book itself and, perhaps most fully of all, in the characters.

Tess the book is dominated by Tess the person. She is Angel's Arcadian ideal of innocent womanhood, his willing pupil and helpmate; Alec's passionate victim; honest friend of the milkmaids; and hard-working provider for her family. But she is not just a passive. She also exists outside others' imaginations, as a woman of deep and abiding love, sensual and sensuous, dutiful yet independent and concerned with her relationship to God and the Church. Hardy is ambiguously coy about his Tess. He admitted that he was effectively in love with her himself (and in later life became more than a little infatuated with an actress portraying her), and implied that there was even more to her than the readers of his book could discover. But despite declaring that she had one, he would not indicate precisely what her theology was, fudging the occasions when she could describe it. More significantly, there is the issue of will, desire and consent with regard to her involvement with Alec and (to a lesser extent) Angel. This is not to suggest that she is anything other than a victim of Alec D'Urberville; but there is a degree of ambivalence about her desire for him. She does not leave him immediately after her rape, for example, and her eventual acquiescence to return to him cannot be

satisfactorily explained entirely by necessity. She finds herself at one and the same time asking why she should be the victim of such cruelty on the part of Fate, and demonstrating an independence of mind and action. This rich layering of personality is not confined to the heroine. Angel – bookish, tender, literate, quietly rebelling against the religion of his father – turns out to be conventional, cruel and morally trite in his condemnation of Tess for not being the perfect innocent of his imagining. But he too – like Tess and Alec – is afforded the chance to change, to realise the moral and ethical value of his profoundest emotions and truer nature, irrespective of how it offends the ludicrous and suffocating strictures of the world that saw Tess – a victim of a man's desire – as effectively a harlot.

Nature, both in human terms and in terms of the landscape, has the same significance in *Tess* as the narrator or any of the characters. The Wessex that Hardy created is essentially Devon and Dorset, but it is so comprehensively recreated on the page that it has an almost tangible reality of its own. The lush pastures at milking, the desperate bleakness of the turnip fields, the veiled eroticism of the milking parlour or the misted forests are created

with striking and vivid delicacy. Into these landscapes come events and characters that both propel and mirror events: the strange landmark suggesting either a holy place or a murder; the biblical messages written on buildings and by the roadside; carrying milkmaids across streams; sleepwalking to a tomb; falling asleep in Stonehenge. These startling and dramatic creations are all prefigurations of the tragedy of Tess's life, and also part of Hardy's continuing work in linking all the issues that make up the story – predestination, free will, organised religion, paganism, social and emotional freedom, the class system, sexual hypocrisy, money, love, lust, idealism, Paulinism, pragmatism, beauty, fate, farming, faith, family and many others.

In creating arguably his greatest and most affecting tragedy, Hardy mixes his objective, ironic convictions concerning the tragedy of Tess's fate with a passionate involvement with her, something readers have continued to do since the book was first published – except perhaps the Bishop of Wakefield.

Notes by Roy McMillan



Anna Bentinck trained at The Arts Educational School and has made over 800 broadcasts for BBC radio. Animation voices include the series *64 Zoo Lane*, and on TV she has played Mary Dickens in *Charles Dickens* and Mary Rutherford in the *Marie Curie* series. Her many audio books range from *Lyra's Oxford* by Philip Pullman and *A Little Death* by Laura Wilson to *Queen Victoria* by Evelyn Anthony. She has also recorded *Five Children and It*, *The Phoenix and the Carpet*, *Our Island Story* and *The Story of the Amulet* for Naxos AudioBooks.

Cover picture: Lionel P Smythe, A country girl gleans after the oat harvest
Courtesy Mary Evans Picture Library

Thomas Hardy Tess of the d'Urbervilles

Read by **Anna Bentinck**

Tess of the D'Urbervilles tells the story of Tess Durbeyfield, forced by her family's poverty to claim kinship with the wealthy D'Urbervilles. Violated by the son, Alec, her hopes of rebuilding her life with the gentle and bookish Angel Clare founder when he learns of her past.

Set among the lush pastures and bleak uplands of Hardy's imagined Wessex, and filled with unforgettable images of tenderness and tragedy, the story examines conventional morality through Tess herself, one of the best-loved characters in English literature.

Socially critical and emotionally complex, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is Hardy's masterpiece.

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