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**محاضرات مادة الرواية للمرحلة الثانية - قسم الترجمة**

**STUDY GUIDE**  
**TO**  
**THOMAS HARDY'S *THE RETURN OF***  
***THE NATIVE***

**BY**  
**DHEYAA W. GHAFEEER**

This work is totally based on:

**BRIGHT NOTES: The Return of the Native**

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## LECTURE 2: INTRODUCTION TO THOMAS HARDY

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### HARDY'S BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

Thomas Hardy was born in Upper Bockhampton, Dorsetshire, England, on June 2, 1840. His father was known then as a master builder (today we would call him a contractor) who employed up to ten or twelve men on his buildings. Hardy's mother came of a family long established in Dorset as cultivators of the land. Ernest Brennecke in his *Life of Thomas Hardy* says she was ambitious in a literary way; her interests included the classical Latin poets, Virgil, French romances and tragedies. From her Hardy developed his love of reading. It was she who arranged what formal education Hardy received: first the village school; then her own tutoring in Latin; then a French governess for a year. Thereafter Hardy was his own tutor, teaching himself Greek, and reading eagerly and thoughtfully.

### YOUTH

In 1856 Hardy, ages sixteen, was apprenticed to a Dorchester architect, whom he helped in the restoration of old churches. In 1862, at twenty-two, he went to London to work in another architect's office. He won a prize for an essay, "The Application of

Coloured Bricks and Terra Cotta in Modern Architecture.” During his time in London Hardy attended night classes offered by King’s College. In his spare time he wrote poetry. He spent much time at concerts and in the art museums. Hardy endured London for five years before he returned to Dorset in 1867 to work for the same architect who had apprenticed him.

## **LATER YEARS**

Through his work on restoring a church in Cornwall, Hardy met the church organist, Emma Lavinia Gifford, whom he married in 1874. During their early married years, after a honeymoon in Paris and Belgium, they lived in Dorset, London, and at times in a Paris flat. Although he preferred writing poetry, he turned to writing novels as a means of earning money. His novels were first published in installments in popular magazines. Between 1883 and 1885 he built, near Dorchester, his own home which he called Max Gate. In 1912 he rarely moved from his beloved Wessex country. In 1912 the first Mrs. Hardy died. In 1914 Hardy married his secretary, Florence Emily Dugdale. She was a writer herself, and after Hardy’s death, in 1928, she devoted her time to assembling his biography from his papers and her own reminiscences. Her *Life of Thomas Hardy* was first published in 1933.

## **HARDY’S PERSONALITY**

Albert Guerard, a noted critic, speaks of Hardy as having the tenderness of a Saint Francis toward children, animals, and all unfortunates, Katherine Anne Porter, in an essay in *Modern Literary Criticism*, says that Hardy was painfully sensitive to what he believed to be a universal pervasiveness of needless misery for humans and animals. All his life he suffered underlying selfless discomfort for the suffering of all animate beings. H. M. Tomlinson, in an essay in *The Saturday Review Gallery*, believes that the only thing that could arouse Hardy’s anger was cruelty to humble and insignificant people or to animals. His greatness lay in simple, modest thoughts and concerns. He liked to talk of nature, the birds and the signs of the weather; he liked to ramble on about

the village inns and the characters who frequented them. The little things of life interested him for he was a man of simple tastes and habits.

## LITERARY CAREER

At the outset of his book on Hardy, Henry Duffin gives a chronology and classification of Hardy's literary works. Hardy began writing as a poet and ended writing as a poet. Poetry was his favorite means of expression; but writing poetry did not provide a livelihood; so he turned to writing popular novels.

Hardy wrote fourteen Wessex novels between 1871 and 1895. *The Return of the Native* (1878) is the sixth of those novels. Hardy classified his fiction as: Novels of Character and Environment; Romances and Fantasies; Novels of Ingenuity and Experiment. *The Return of the Native* he called a Novel of Character and Environment. Mr. Duffin suggests another classification - Tragedies, Tragi-comedies, Comedies - and lists *The Return of the Native* as a Tragedy.

The last of the Wessex novels, *Jude the Obscure*, published in 1895, created such a furor in ecclesiastical circles that Hardy, a devout churchman, gave up writing novels and returned to his first love, poetry. The dates of the poetry volumes range from 1898 to his death in 1928.

Critics differ as to which of Hardy's novels is his greatest: *The Return of the Native*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, or *Jude the Obscure*. From the number of editions of *The Return of the Native* now published, it seems that this novel is the most popular at the present time.