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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 4

# THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE

### TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

### BOOK FIRST: THE THREE WOMEN

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#### CHAPTER 1: A FACE ON WHICH TIME MAKES BUT LITTLE IMPRESSION

The time is November - a Saturday afternoon approaching twilight. The place is Egdon Heath, covered by a sky completely overcast. Imagine being in a vast rounded tent made of clouds with the heath as the floor. The dark brown heath and the whitish sky make it seem that night has come while day still lingers. "Looking upwards, a furze-cutter [furze is an evergreen shrub] would have been inclined to continue work; looking down, he would have decided to finish his faggot [bundle] and go home." Thus the dark face of the heath could "hasten evening," "intensify midnight," "retard dawn," and "sadden noon." The approach of night seems to bring the heath to life. Darkness becomes a living, pulsing being, exhaled by the heath to meet the waning light from the heavens. As all else sinks to sleep, the heath awakens and becomes an intent listener. It seems to be waiting, "a lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities," friend to the wind, beloved of

the storm. Twilight combines with “the scenery of Egdon Heath to evolve a thing majestic . . . impressive . . . emphatic . . . grand”: a “sublimity” or appeal to the soul, often lacking in places famous for scenic beauty.

The human soul has suffered oftener from a place too smiling for its reason than from oppressive surroundings “oversadly tinged.” As our race has advanced in years, the more thinking among mankind have found “closer harmony with external things wearing a sombreness”: “the chastened sublimity of a moor, a sea, or a mountain” - or “a gaunt waste in Thule.” Egdon Heath answers to this call from the spirit of man. Its intensity is the sort “arrived at during winter darkness, tempests, and mists.” It invites the illusion of strange phantoms - the wild regions which harass “in midnight dreams of flight and disaster.”

History, recording in the *Domesday Book* (record of old English landowners) the length and breadth of this wilderness, shows that the area of Egdon has not diminished. Mention of the right of heath-turf cutting occurs in the early charters of the district, but any changes in the land have not been made “by pickaxe, plow, or spade.” They remain as “finger-touches of the last geological change.” Here the scene is set: on the brown heath breathing darkness toward the twilight sky. The light of the sky in its turn serves to mark out the sole brightness of the land - a sandy road winding like a thread along the lower hollows between rounds and rises from one horizon to the other.

## **Comment**

This chapter sets the tone for the whole book. We are introduced to Egdon Heath, the center of all the action. To Hardy, Egdon Heath is much more than a place; it is a living being responding to the whims of nature; it is a mood, casting a spell over all who know it. Hardy casts its spell over us. He uses “November” and “Saturday afternoon” and “twilight” to establish a somber, darkening mood. He uses the shifting clouds in the sky as contrasts, to add stormy motion to the mood. He is telling us that this is to be a story of strong emotions, midnight calamities, mysterious events; a story of the people of the heath country and how they are affected by this environment. Egdon Heath will have a powerful effect on the characters of the story, moving them to love or to hate, to despair

or to resignation. Egdon Heath holds the threads of a grim and tragic tapestry - the separate, lonely lives of its people. With the mood well set, Hardy reveals to us the first tangible link of the heath with humanity - the road.