

# the return of the native summary

**The Return of the Native** is a profound novel written by Thomas Hardy, first published in 1878. Set in the fictional Egdon Heath, the story explores themes of love, fate, and the conflict between nature and civilization. Hardy's rich prose and intricate character development allow readers to delve deep into the lives of the characters, making it a classic exploration of human emotions and societal constraints. This article will provide a comprehensive summary of the novel, examining its main characters, themes, and the overarching impact it has had on literature.

## Overview of the Plot

The narrative of *The Return of the Native* revolves around the lives of several key characters, all of whom are influenced by the desolate yet beautiful landscape of Egdon Heath. The story begins with the return of Clym Yeobright, who has spent years in Paris and seeks to return to his roots. Upon his return, he encounters his childhood love, Eustacia Vye, a passionate and willful woman who longs for escape from the confines of her rural existence.

The plot unfolds as Clym and Eustacia's relationship develops, intertwined with the lives of other characters such as Thomasin Yeobright, Clym's cousin, and Damon Wildeve, a local innkeeper who is also in love with Eustacia. The tension escalates as personal desires clash with societal expectations, leading to tragic consequences.

## Key Characters

1. Clym Yeobright: The protagonist, Clym is a man of intelligence and ambition who returns to Egdon Heath with dreams of becoming a teacher. His return sets off a chain of events that ultimately leads to his personal and emotional downfall.
2. Eustacia Vye: A beautiful and enigmatic woman, Eustacia is dissatisfied with her life on the heath and yearns for excitement and adventure. She becomes infatuated with Clym, believing that he can help her escape her mundane existence.
3. Thomasin Yeobright: Clym's cousin, Thomasin represents the traditional values of the community. Her love for Wildeve and struggles with societal norms form a critical subplot in the narrative.
4. Damon Wildeve: An innkeeper and a former lover of Eustacia, Wildeve is torn between his feelings for her and his commitment to Thomasin, creating a love triangle that complicates the plot.
5. Mrs. Yeobright: Clym's mother, who embodies the values of the rural community. Her relationship with Clym deteriorates as his choices lead him away from her expectations.

# Thematic Exploration

The Return of the Native is rich in themes that reflect Hardy's views on life, society, and human nature. The following themes are particularly prominent:

## 1. Nature vs. Civilization

One of the central themes of the novel is the struggle between nature and civilization. Egdon Heath, described in vivid detail, is almost a character in itself, representing the untamed aspects of nature. The characters' interactions with the heath reveal their inner struggles and desires. Eustacia, in particular, embodies this conflict; she is drawn to the heath's beauty but feels trapped by its limitations.

## 2. Fate and Free Will

Hardy often explores the idea of fate and its impact on his characters. The novel suggests that despite their desires and ambitions, the characters are ultimately at the mercy of external forces. Clym's aspirations are thwarted by circumstances beyond his control, leading to a sense of inevitability that permeates the narrative. The tragic outcomes of the characters' choices highlight the tension between personal agency and predetermined fate.

## 3. Love and Desire

Love is portrayed as a powerful yet destructive force in the novel. The relationships between Clym, Eustacia, Thomasin, and Wildeve are fraught with tension and miscommunication. Eustacia's passionate love for Clym contrasts sharply with Thomasin's more conventional and pragmatic approach to love. The novel examines the complexities of desire and its consequences, illustrating how passionate love can lead to ruin.

## 4. Social Class and Isolation

The rigid social structures of Victorian society play a crucial role in the characters' lives. Eustacia's desire to escape her rural existence is driven by her awareness of the limitations imposed by her social class. Similarly, Clym's return to Egdon Heath and his subsequent disillusionment reflect the tensions between ambition and social expectation. The isolation experienced by the characters highlights the alienation that can arise from unfulfilled aspirations.

# Symbolism in the Novel

Hardy's use of symbolism enriches the narrative, providing deeper insights into the characters' motivations and the thematic concerns of the novel.

## 1. Egdon Heath

Egdon Heath serves as a powerful symbol of the struggle between nature and civilization. Its vastness and wild beauty mirror the characters' internal conflicts and desires. The heath is both a place of refuge and a source of entrapment, reflecting the duality of the characters' relationships with their environment.

## 2. The Stone Circle

The stone circle on Egdon Heath symbolizes the passage of time and the persistence of nature. It serves as a reminder of the characters' mortality and the cyclical nature of life. The stone circle's ancient presence contrasts with the transient struggles of the characters, highlighting their insignificance in the grand scheme of existence.

## 3. Fire

Fire is a recurring motif in the novel, representing both passion and destruction. Eustacia's fiery spirit is a driving force in her relationships, but it also leads to her downfall. The destructive potential of fire mirrors the intensity of the characters' emotions and the consequences of their choices.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, *The Return of the Native* is a masterful exploration of love, fate, and the human condition. Thomas Hardy's keen insights into the complexities of human relationships and societal constraints resonate throughout the narrative. The characters' struggles against the backdrop of Egdon Heath create a rich tapestry of emotion and conflict, making the novel a timeless classic. Through its exploration of themes such as nature vs. civilization, fate and free will, and the intricacies of love, the novel invites readers to reflect on their own lives and the forces that shape their destinies. Hardy's poignant prose and profound symbolism ensure that *The Return of the Native* remains a significant work in the canon of English literature, continuing to inspire and challenge readers to this day.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What is the main theme of 'The Return of the Native'?

The main theme of 'The Return of the Native' revolves around the conflict between individual desires and societal expectations, as well as the struggle between nature and civilization.

## Who are the central characters in 'The Return of the Native'?

The central characters include Clym Yeobright, Eustacia Vye, Wildeve, and Thomasin Yeobright, each representing different facets of love, ambition, and societal constraints.

## How does the setting of Egdon Heath influence the story?

Egdon Heath serves as a symbol of nature's indifference and the backdrop for the characters' struggles, shaping their lives and decisions throughout the narrative.

## What role does fate play in 'The Return of the Native'?

Fate plays a significant role in the novel, as the characters often find themselves trapped by their circumstances and choices, leading to tragic outcomes that highlight the theme of inevitability.

## How does Hardy portray the concept of love in the novel?

Hardy portrays love as complex and often destructive, showcasing different types of love—from passionate and idealistic to unrequited and pragmatic—illustrating its impact on the characters' lives.

## [The Return Of The Native Summary](#)

The Return Of The Native Summary

## Related Articles

- [the prince and the pauper answer key](#)
- [the reluctant fundamentalist mohsin hamid](#)
- [the secret to a successful marriage](#)

[Back to Home](#)