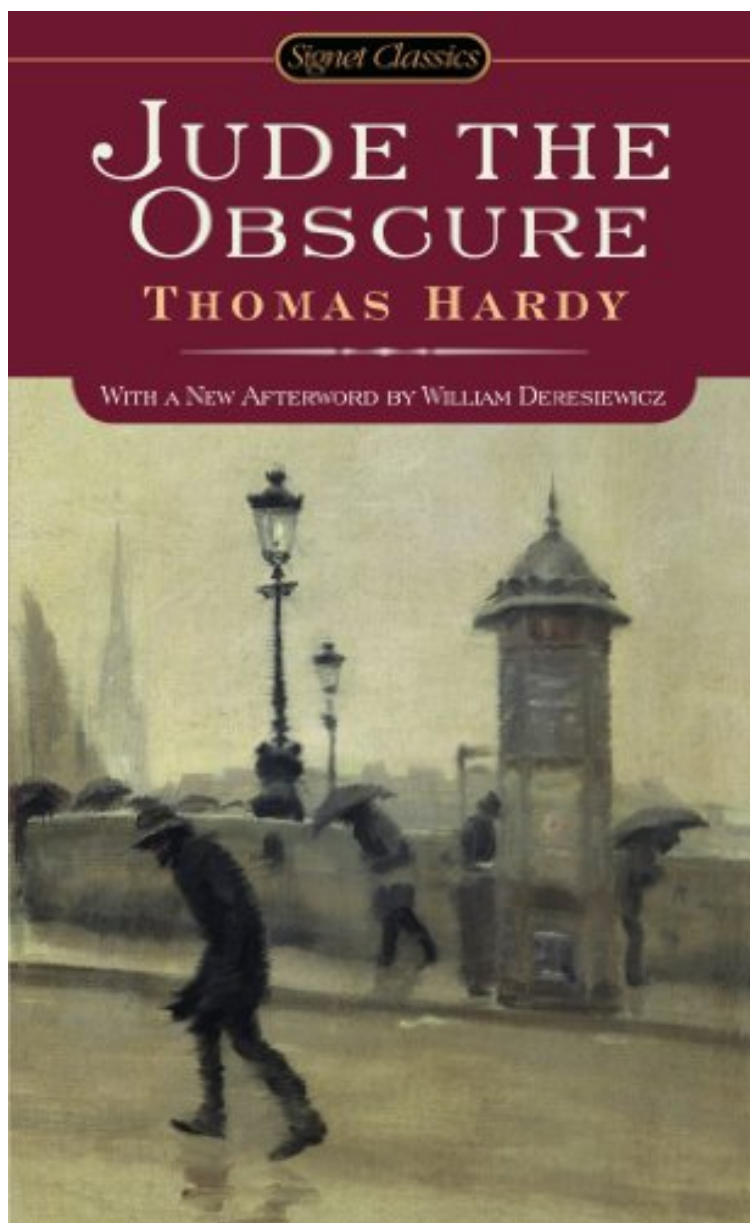


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# Jude the Obscure



*Par Thomas Hardy*  
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**Par Thomas Hardy : Jude the Obscure** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jude the Obscure:

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**Description :** Description du produitBecause of its frank treatment of human sexuality and its unflinching fatalism, Jude the Obscure aroused such a storm of controversy upon its publication in 1895 that, partly in response, Thomas Hardy abandoned the art of novel-writing altogether and devoted the rest of his life to poetry. Though we have come a long way in our social attitudes in the ensuing century, nothing about Hardy's masterpiece has lost its power to shock us and disturb our dreams.

Prsentation de l'diteurUpon its first appearance in 1895, Thomas Hardys Jude the Obscure shocked Victorian critics and readers with a frank depiction of sexuality and an unbridled indictment of the institutions of

marriage, education, and religion, reportedly causing one Angli-can bishop to order the book publicly burned. The experience so exhausted Hardy that he never wrote a work of fiction again. Rich in symbolism,

Jude the Obscure is the story of Jude Fawley and his struggle to rise from his station as a poor Wessex stonemason to that of a scholar at Christminster. It is also the story of Jude's ill-fated relationship with his cousin Sue Bridehead, and the ultimate tragedy that causes Jude's undoing and Sue's transformation. Jude the Obscure explores man's essential loneliness and remains one of Hardy's most widely read novels. Extrait The boy stood under the rick before mentioned, and every few seconds used his clacker or rattle briskly. At each clack the rooks left off pecking, and rose and went away on their leisurely wings, burnished like tassets of mail, afterwards wheeling back and regarding him warily, and descending to feed at a more respectful distance. He sounded the clacker till his arm ached, and at length his heart grew sympathetic to the birds' thwarted desires. They seemed, like himself, to be living in a world that did not want them. Why should he frighten them away? They took upon them more and more the aspect of friends and gentle pensioners - the only friends he could claim as being in the least degree interested in him, for his aunt had often told him that she was not. He ceased his rattling and they alighted anew. 'Poor little dears!' said Jude, aloud. 'You shall have some dinner - you shall. There is enough for us all. Farmer Troutham can afford to let you have some. Eat, then, my dear little birdies, and make a good meal!' They stayed and ate, inky spots on the nut-brown soil, and Jude enjoyed their appetite. A magic thread of fellow-feeling united his own life with theirs. Puny and as sorry as those lives were, they much resembled his own. His clacker he had by this time thrown away from him, as being a mean and sordid instrument, offensive both to the birds and to himself as their friend.

All at once he became conscious of a smart blow upon his buttocks, followed by a loud clack, which announced to his surprised senses that the clacker had been the instrument of offence used. The birds and Jude started up simultaneously, and the dazed eyes of the latter beheld the farmer in person, the great Troutham himself, his red face glaring down upon Jude's cowering frame, the clacker swinging in his hand. 'So it's 'Eat, my dear birdies,' is it, young man? 'Eat dear birdies' indeed! I'll tickle your breeches if you say, 'Eat dear birdies' again in a hurry! And you've been idling at the schoolmaster's too, instead of coming here, ha'n't ye hey? That's how you earn your sixpence a day for keeping the rooks off my corn!' Whilst saluting Jude's ears with this impassioned rhetoric, Troutham had seized his left hand with his own left, and swinging his slim frame round him at arm's-length, again struck Jude on the hind parts with the flat side of Jude's own rattle, till the field echoed with the blows, which were delivered once or twice at each revolution. 'Don't 'ee, sir - please don't 'ee!' cried the whirling child, as helpless under the centrifugal tendency of his person as a hooked fish swinging to land, and beholding the hill, the rick, the plantation, the path, and the rooks going round and round him in an amazing circular race. 'I - I - sir - only meant that - there was a good crop in the ground - I saw 'em sow it - and the rooks could have a little bit for dinner - and you wouldn't miss it, sir - and Mr. Phillotson said I was to be kind to 'em - O, O, O!' This truthful explanation seemed to exasperate the farmer even more than if Jude had stoutly denied saying anything at all; and he still smacked the whirling urchin, the clacks of the instrument continuing to resound all across the field, and as far as the ears of distant workers - who gathered thereupon that Jude was pursuing his business of clacking with great assiduity - and echoing from the brand-new church tower just behind the mist, towards the building of which structure the farmer had largely subscribed, to testify his love for God and man. Presently Troutham grew tired of his punitive task, and depositing the quivering boy on his legs, took a sixpence from his pocket and gave it to him in payment for his day's work, telling him to go home and never let him see him in one of those fields again. Jude leapt out of arm's reach, and walked along the trackway weeping - not from pain, though that was keen enough; not from the perception of the flaw in the terrestrial scheme, by which was good for God's birds was bad for God's gardener; but with the sense that he had wholly disgraced himself before he had been a year in the parish, and hence might be a burden to his great-aunt for life. With this shadow on his mind he did not care to show himself in the village, and went homeward by a roundabout track behind a hedge and across a pasture. Here he beheld scores of coupled earthworms lying half their length on the surface of the damp ground, as they always did in such weather at that time of year. It was impossible to advance in regular steps without crushing some of them at each tread. Though Farmer Troutham had just hurt him, he was a boy who could not himself bear to hurt anything. He never brought home a nest of young birds without lying awake in misery half the night after, and often reinstating them and the nest in their original place the next morning. He could scarcely bear to see trees cut down or lopped, from a fancy that it hurt them; and late pruning, when the sap was up and the tree bled profusely, had been a positive grief to him in his infancy. This weakness of character, as it may be called, suggested that he was the sort of man

who was born to ache a good deal before the fall of the curtain upon his unnecessary life should signify that all was well with him again. He carefully picked his way on tiptoe among the earthworms, without killing a single one. From Library Journal Jude the Obscure created storms of scandal and protest for the author upon its publication. Hardy, disgusted and disappointed, devoted the remainder of his life to poetry and never wrote another novel. Today, the material is far less shocking. Jude Fawley, a poor stone carver with aspirations toward an academic career, is thwarted at every turn and is finally forced to give up his dreams of a university education. He is tricked into an unwise marriage, and when his wife deserts him, he begins a relationship with a free-spirited cousin. With this begins the descent into bleak tragedy as the couple alternately defy and succumb to the pressures of a deeply disapproving society. Hardy's characters have a fascinating ambiguity: they are victimized by a stern moral code, but they are also selfish and weak-willed creatures who bring on much of their own difficulties through their own vacillations and submissions to impulse. The abridgment speeds Jude's fall to considerable dramatic effect, but it also deletes the author's agonizing logic. Instead of the meticulous weaving of Jude's destiny, we get a somewhat incoherent summary that preserves the major plot points but fails to draw us into the tragedy. Michael Pennington reads resonantly and skillfully, his voice perfectly matching the grim music of Hardy's prose, but this recording can only be recommended for larger public libraries.-John Owen, Advanced Micro Devices, Sunnyvale, CA  
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