



The Return of the Native (Barnes & Noble Classics)

Thomas Hardy

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A haunting tale of romantic self-deception, *The Return of the Native* focuses on mismatched lovers who see in each other only what they want to see, and decidedly not what is actually there.

Clym Yeobright, the native of the title, returns to **Hardy**'s fictional Egdon Heath determined to be a force for social progress. Dazzled by the beauty of Eustacia Vye, he imagines they're soul mates, woos and wins her, and enters into what is at first a passionate marriage. He soon discovers that what she really wants is a passport to a more exciting and sophisticated life, away from provincial England. Surrounding them are Clym's mother, strongly opposed to his marriage; Damon Wildeve, in love with Eustacia but married to Clym's cousin, Thomasin; and the oddly ambiguous observer Diggory Venn, whose frustrated love for Thomasin turns him into either a guardian angel or a jealous manipulator—or perhaps both. This stew of curdled love and conflicting emotions can only boil over into tragedy, and the book's darkly ironic ending marks it as both a classically Victorian novel and a forerunner of the modernist fiction that followed it.

Lauren Walsh teaches a writing seminar at Columbia University, where she is completing her Ph.D. in English and Comparative Literature.

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