



The Return of the Native

Thomas Hardy (1840 - 1928)

Read by:	Multiple readers	Format:	MP3 CD in DVD case
Length:	17 hours 30 minutes	Catalog:	DB-1032
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Style:	Collaborative	MSLP:	\$11.99
Genre:	Fiction		

The Return of the Native was Thomas Hardy's sixth novel. It was serialized in *Belgravia* magazine in 1878 before publication in book form. It was initially structured in the format of classical tragedy into five books, but a sixth book with a happy ending was added to accommodate the demands of the market. The story commences on Guy Fawkes Day and takes place over the course of a year and a day in which the characters carry on a series of illicit relationships that undergo changes of heart and unexpected twists of fate. The setting of the ancient, pagan Egdon Heath and the Greek chorus of the townspeople reinforce the sense of inescapable destiny and the message that those who try to escape will only hasten their self-destruction.

Some comfort is taken in the end as the patient, meek and kind find peace and prosperity. *The Return of the Native* has become one of Hardy's most popular novels, not surprisingly, as its storyline and issues it raises could be right at home in contemporary media.

Thomas Hardy (June 2, 1840 – January 11, 1928) was an English novelist and poet noted for his realistic novels set in southwestern England in the fictional region of Wessex. He was born in Dorset in a hamlet known as Upper Bockhampton. His father was a builder and stonemason; his mother was well-read and tutored him before he attended Mr. Last's Academy for Young Gentlemen. He was apprenticed to a local architect before moving to London in 1862 to enroll in King's College London. After five years he returned to Dorset to pursue writing due to health concerns and an acute awareness of his social inferiority in the unforgiving English class system. The success of *Far From the Madding Crowd* in 1874 enabled him to give up architectural work and write ten more novels over the next twenty-five years. Like Dickens, his work challenged the morals of the day: *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) was criticized for its sympathetic portrayal of a "fallen woman" and *Jude the Obscure* (1895) was for its frank treatment of sex. He gave up writing novels and turned to poetry, publishing *Wessex* in 1898. He wrote in a variety of forms, often in colloquial diction, and centered on themes of disappointment and the perversity of fate. Hardy is now considered one of the finest twentieth century poets, having influenced Robert Frost, Dylan Thomas, W.H. Auden, and Philip Larkin. He died in 1927 of pleurisy and is buried in Poet's Corner in Westminster Abbey.