



Egdon Heath Analysis “The Return of the Native”

Created By: Hedy Vinson and Allan Che
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Characteristics of the Heath

□ Physical Description

▣ Barren land with infertile soil

- “Not a plough had ever disturbed a grain of that stubborn soil. In the Heath’s barrenness to the farmer lay its fertility to the historian.” Book 1, pg 10, chapter 2

▣ Open and wild land

- “...the vast tract of unenclosed wild known as Egdon Heath embrowned itself...” Book 1, pg 1, chapter 1

▣ The majority of plant life consists of unwanted plants

- “...tillage, after holding on for a year or two, had receded again in despair, the ferns and furze-tufts

Characteristics of the Heath

□ Timelessness

- ▣ Egdon Heath is known for its unchanging environment
 - Valley location creates the isolation (pg 3, last paragraph)
 - “The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages, and the people changed, yet Egdon remained.” Book 1, pg 4, chapter 1
- ▣ No official time is kept in Egdon Heath
 - “On Egdon there was no absolute hour of the day.” Book 2, pg 97, chapter 1
- ▣ Egdon remained constant from the beginning to the end

Characteristics of the Heath

- Timelessness - 2
 - ▣ Egdon Heath is lost from modern times and stuck in the past
 - “To many persons this Egdon was a place which had slipped out of its century generations ago, to intrude as an uncouth object into this.” Book 3, pg132, chapter 2



Characters and the Heath

□ Clym Yeobright

- ▣ Looks beyond the bleakness of the Heath and sees the true beauty of it
 - “If anyone knew the heath well it was Clym. He was permeated wit its scenes, with its substance, and with its odours.” Book 3, pg 132, chapter 2
- ▣ Clym loves the Heath as much as Eustacia hates it
 - “Take all the varying hates felt by Eustacia Vye towards the heath, and translate them into loves, and you have the heart of Clym.” Book 3, pg 132, chapter 2

Characters and the Heath

- Eustacia Vye and Damon Wildeve
 - ▣ Directly opposes Clym's opinion of the Heath
 - ▣ Wildeve: "You hate the heath as much as ever; that I know."
 - Eustacia: "I do. 'Tis my cross, my shame, and will be my death!" Book 1, pg 64, chapter 9
 - ▣ Eustacia is however, fearless of the Heath and knows her way around it
 - "I know the way home, and the Heath has no terror for me." Book 4, pg 197, chapter 3

Effect of Heath on the Plot

- The Heath is a method of foreshadowing...for DEATH!
 - ▣ "...it had waited thus, unmoved, during so many centuries, through the crises of so many things, that it could only be imagined to await one last crisis – the final overthrow." Book 1, pg2, chapter1
 - ▣ "It [Heath] had a lonely face, suggesting tragical possibilities." Book 1, pg3, chapter 1
 - ▣ "There was too much reason to think that he and Eustacia both were for ever beyond the reach of stimulating perfumes." Book 5, pg 287, chapter 9

Correlation of Weather and Plot

- Throughout the book, the severity of the weather directly relates to the intensity of drama in the plot
- Mrs. Yeobright's Death
 - "The sun had branded the whole heath with its mark, even the purple heath-flowers having put on a brownness under the dry blazes of the few preceding days. " Book 4, pg 322, chapter 5
 - "Every Valley was filled with air like that of a kiln." same
 - "In cool, fresh weather Mrs. Yeobright would have found no inconvenience in walking to Alderworth." same

Correlation of Weather and Plot

- Wildeve and Eustacia's Death
 - ▣ The weather during their deaths was stormy and rainy
 - "...the rain flew in a level flight without sensible descent, so that it was beyond all power to imagine..." Book 5, pg279, chapter 8
 - "At this time it was in her view a windy, wet place, in which a person might experience much discomfort, lose the path without care, and possibly catch cold. " same
 - "Egdon was made for such times as these " Book 3, pg 160, chapter 6

