

under the greenwood tree book

Under the Greenwood Tree Book: A Comprehensive Guide to Thomas Hardy's Classic Novel

Introduction to *Under the Greenwood Tree*

Published in 1872, *Under the Greenwood Tree* is a beloved novel by the renowned English author Thomas Hardy. Often regarded as one of Hardy's most charming and pastoral works, the book captures the idyllic rural life of 19th-century England, blending romance, humor, and social commentary. Its nostalgic tone and vivid descriptions make it a timeless piece that continues to resonate with readers who appreciate classic literature and rural settings. In this comprehensive guide, we will explore the novel's plot, themes, characters, historical context, and its significance in Hardy's literary career.

Overview of the Plot

Summary of the Storyline

Under the Greenwood Tree centers around the romantic relationship between two young schoolteachers, Fancy Day and Dick Dewy, in the small rural village of Mellstock. The narrative unfolds against the backdrop of a close-knit community, emphasizing the simplicity and authenticity of country life.

Key plot points include:

- 1. Introduction of Characters:** Fancy Day, an educated and spirited young woman, arrives to teach at the village school. Dick Dewy, a charming and good-hearted musician, is one of the local choirmasters.
- 2. The Village's Social Life:** The community's traditions, seasonal festivities, and church activities play a central role in the story. The villagers' interactions reveal their values and social dynamics.
- 3. The Romance Blossoms:** As Fancy and Dick spend time together, their mutual affection develops, but social expectations and misunderstandings pose obstacles.
- 4. Climax and Resolution:** The story culminates in a joyful union, emphasizing themes of love, community, and the enduring charm of rural life.

Setting and Atmosphere

The novel vividly depicts the rural Gloucestershire landscape, capturing:

- The lush greenery of the Greenwood
- The rustic charm of Mellstock's church and village life
- The seasonal changes and their impact on the community

This setting creates a nostalgic and peaceful atmosphere, inviting readers into a bygone era of English country living.

Main Themes of *Under the Greenwood Tree*

1. Rural Life and Nature

Thomas Hardy's affection for the countryside is evident throughout the novel. The detailed descriptions of the landscape underscore the harmony between humans and nature, celebrating the simplicity and beauty of rural existence.

2. Love and Courtship

The story explores various aspects of romantic relationships, emphasizing sincerity, societal expectations, and the importance of genuine affection. The relationship between Fancy and Dick exemplifies honest love overcoming social barriers.

3. Community and Social Traditions

The novel highlights the significance of community bonds, local customs, and shared celebrations. Hardy portrays the village as a microcosm of society, where tradition and social cohesion are vital.

4. Change and Progress

While the novel celebrates rural traditions, it subtly hints at the inevitable changes brought by modernization, such as the encroachment of new technologies and social shifts.

Major Characters and Their Significance

Fancy Day

- A young, bright schoolteacher with a lively personality
- Represents innocence, education, and progressive ideas
- Her interactions with the villagers highlight her empathetic nature

Dick Dewy

- A talented musician and village choir master
- Embodies charm, kindness, and connection to traditional rural arts
- His relationship with Fancy is central to the narrative

Mr. and Mrs. Maybold

- Local landowners and patrons of the community
- Their social status and opinions influence the storyline

Other Villagers

- Include various characters like the church organist, musicians, and farmers
- Serve to portray the diverse social fabric of rural life

Historical and Literary Context

Thomas Hardy's Literary Style

Hardy's writing combines realism with poetic descriptions, capturing the nuances of rural life. His use of local dialects and detailed characterizations enhance authenticity.

Historical Background

Set in the Victorian era, the novel reflects societal values, gender roles, and class structures of the time. It also subtly critiques social inequalities and the impact of modernization on traditional communities.

Comparison with Hardy's Other Works

Under the Greenwood Tree is often contrasted with Hardy's more tragic novels, such as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. It offers a gentler, more optimistic portrayal of rural life and love.

Significance and Legacy

Literary Importance

The novel is celebrated for its warm depiction of rural England and its poetic language. It provides insight into Hardy's early writing style and thematic interests.

Cultural Impact

Under the Greenwood Tree has inspired adaptations, including stage plays, radio dramas, and inspired other rural-themed works. Its portrayal of community and love continues to appeal to modern audiences.

Educational Use

The book is frequently included in curricula exploring Victorian literature, rural sociology, and the evolution of English novel-writing.

Why Read *Under the Greenwood Tree* Today?

Readers today find value in Hardy's nostalgic portrayal of community, tradition, and nature. The novel's optimistic tone and timeless themes make it an engaging read for those interested in:

- Classic English literature
- Rural and pastoral themes
- Historical perspectives on Victorian society
- Romantic fiction rooted in social context

Furthermore, Hardy's vivid descriptions and memorable characters foster a deep appreciation for the simple joys of country life.

Conclusion

Under the Greenwood Tree stands as a testament to Thomas Hardy's literary mastery and his affection for rural England. With its charming characters, picturesque setting, and exploration of love and community, the novel remains a cherished classic. Whether you are a lover of literature, history, or pastoral themes, this book offers a delightful journey into a bygone era of simplicity, beauty, and heartfelt human connection. Embrace Hardy's timeless storytelling and discover why *Under the Greenwood Tree* continues to enchant readers around the world.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the main plot of 'Under the Greenwood Tree' by Thomas Hardy?

The novel centers around Fancy Day, a young schoolteacher, and her romantic relationship with Dick Dewy, a cheerful and popular clerk, set against the rural backdrop of Mellstock in 19th-century England.

Who are the main characters in 'Under the Greenwood Tree'?

The main characters include Fancy Day, Dick Dewy, Fancy's father Mr. Day, and the villagers such as the choir members and schoolchildren.

What themes are explored in 'Under the Greenwood Tree'?

Key themes include love and courtship, rural life and community, tradition versus change, and social class distinctions.

Is 'Under the Greenwood Tree' a romantic novel?

Yes, it is primarily a romantic novel that explores the developing relationship between Fancy Day and Dick Dewy.

How does 'Under the Greenwood Tree' reflect Hardy's view of rural life?

The novel portrays rural life with nostalgia and affection, highlighting community bonds, local traditions, and the simplicity of country living, while also acknowledging the changes brought by modernization.

When was 'Under the Greenwood Tree' published, and is it considered a classic?

It was published in 1872 and is considered a classic work of Victorian rural literature, showcasing Hardy's gentle humor and vivid depiction of countryside life.

What is the significance of the title 'Under the Greenwood Tree'?

The title references a line from Shakespeare's 'As You Like It' and symbolizes a peaceful, idyllic rural setting where simple joys and love flourish.

Has 'Under the Greenwood Tree' been adapted into other

media?

Yes, the novel has been adapted into stage plays, radio dramas, and even a musical, reflecting its enduring popularity.

Where can I find a copy of 'Under the Greenwood Tree'?

The book is widely available in bookstores, libraries, and online retailers in various editions, including free versions in the public domain.

Additional Resources

Under the Greenwood Tree Book: An In-Depth Exploration of Thomas Hardy's Romantic Classic

Under the Greenwood Tree book by Thomas Hardy stands as a quintessential piece of Victorian literature that captures the idyllic rural life, complex human relationships, and subtle social commentary of 19th-century England. First published in 1872, this novel has endured as a beloved classic, not only for its romantic narrative but also for Hardy's masterful depiction of the English countryside and his nuanced characterization. In this investigative review, we delve into the origins, themes, literary significance, and enduring legacy of Under the Greenwood Tree, providing a comprehensive understanding for readers and scholars alike.

Origins and Historical Context

Thomas Hardy's Literary Beginnings

Thomas Hardy, born in 1840 in Dorset, England, was primarily known as a novelist and poet whose works often explore the tension between individual desires and societal expectations. Under the Greenwood Tree was Hardy's second novel, written during a period of transition as he was establishing his reputation. Hardy initially published the novel anonymously, a common practice at the time, perhaps reflecting his modesty or uncertainty about the work's reception.

Victorian Society and Rural Life

The Victorian era was characterized by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and a complex social hierarchy. Hardy's choice to set Under the Greenwood Tree in a rural village reflects a nostalgic longing for a simpler, pastoral existence that was rapidly changing or disappearing. The novel provides a window into the social fabric of rural Dorset, emphasizing community bonds, local traditions, and the influence of the church and landowning classes.

Literary Influences and Hardy's Style

Hardy's early literary influences include Romantic poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge, whose appreciation for nature and rural life resonates in Under the Greenwood Tree. The novel's style is marked by Hardy's keen observational detail, lyricism, and a subtle irony that underscores the tension between idealism and reality.

Plot Summary and Main Characters

Overview

Under the Greenwood Tree narrates the story of two young schoolteachers, Fancy Day and Dick Dewy, and their romantic entanglement set against the backdrop of a small Dorset village. The novel explores themes of love, social class, tradition, and change, portraying the idyllic yet sometimes harsh realities of rural life.

Key Characters

- Fancy Day: The spirited and charming schoolmistress who embodies innocence and youthful optimism.
- Dick Dewy: The cheerful, honest schoolmaster who shares a close bond with Fancy and is rooted in traditional rural values.
- Mr. Maybold: The local landowner and a figure of authority within the community.
- Rosie Bradbury: A village girl and potential love interest, representing rustic simplicity.
- Mrs. Maybold: The landowner's wife, who embodies societal expectations and propriety.

Major Plot Points

1. Introduction of the Village and Its Inhabitants: Hardy paints a vivid picture of village life, emphasizing its customs, music, and social hierarchy.
2. The Arrival of Fancy and Dick: Their roles as teachers introduce themes of education, progress, and social mobility.
3. Romantic Developments: The subtle courtship between Fancy and Dick unfolds amid community events, music gatherings, and local traditions.
4. Conflict and Social Expectations: External pressures, including societal class distinctions and personal ambitions, threaten the couple's happiness.
5. Resolution and Enduring Optimism: Despite obstacles, love triumphs, and the novel ends on a hopeful note, emphasizing the enduring power of rural community and tradition.

Literary Themes and Symbolism

Nature and the Countryside

Hardy's vivid descriptions of the Dorset landscape serve not only as a scenic backdrop but also as a symbol of stability, tradition, and timelessness. The countryside reflects the characters' inner lives and the overarching pastoral ideal Hardy venerates.

Love and Courtship

The novel explores various dimensions of love—from innocent flirtations to mature commitments. Hardy examines how social class, community opinion, and personal morals influence romantic pursuits.

Social Class and Community

Hardy subtly critiques the rigid class structures of Victorian society. While the villagers are depicted as close-knit, their interactions are governed by societal expectations that influence personal choices.

Change and Progress

Set during a period of societal transition, the novel juxtaposes traditional rural customs with the undercurrents of modernization and change, symbolized through music, education, and social mobility.

Music and Entertainment

Music festivals and singing gatherings are recurrent motifs that symbolize communal harmony and cultural continuity. They also serve as moments of romantic tension and social bonding.

Critical Analysis and Literary Significance

Hardy's Narrative Technique

Hardy employs a third-person omniscient viewpoint, allowing insight into multiple characters' thoughts and motivations. His detailed descriptions evoke sensory richness, immersing readers in the rural setting.

Use of Humor and Irony

While Hardy's tone is generally gentle and nostalgic, he employs irony to critique social conventions subtly. The playful depiction of village life adds humor and depth to the narrative.

Character Development

The protagonists, Fancy and Dick, are portrayed with depth and realism, embodying Hardy's ideal of honest rural virtue. The supporting characters contribute to themes of community and tradition.

Literary Style

The novel's lyrical prose and poetic descriptions elevate the narrative, bridging Hardy's poetic sensibilities with his storytelling craft. The musical references and pastoral imagery reinforce the novel's themes.

Critical Reception and Legacy

Initially modestly received, *Under the Greenwood Tree* has gained recognition as a beautifully crafted pastoral romance. It is often lauded for its vivid portrayal of rural life and its subtle critique of societal norms. Hardy's depiction of innocence lost and the inevitable march of change resonates with readers and scholars alike.

The Enduring Legacy of *Under the Greenwood Tree*

Influence on Literature

Hardy's pastoral idealism and nuanced social commentary in *Under the Greenwood Tree* have influenced subsequent rural literature and romantic narratives. The novel's depiction of village life has become emblematic of rural English identity.

Adaptations and Cultural Impact

While less adapted than Hardy's more famous *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* or *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Under the Greenwood Tree* has inspired stage adaptations, radio dramas, and literary studies exploring Hardy's rural aesthetics.

Academic Scholarship

Scholars have examined the novel's themes of tradition versus change, the role of music and community, and Hardy's use of rural symbolism. Its position within Hardy's oeuvre offers insights into his evolving worldview and literary craft.

Relevance Today

In an era of rapid technological change and urbanization, Hardy's nostalgic portrayal of rural life invites reflection on the importance of community, tradition, and connection to nature—topics still widely relevant.

Conclusion

Under the Greenwood Tree book by Thomas Hardy remains a vital literary work that captures the essence of Victorian rural life with poetic grace and social insight. Its themes of love, community, and change echo beyond its historical setting, offering timeless reflections on human nature and societal evolution. As both a romantic novel and a social document, Hardy's work continues to enchant, educate, and inspire generations of readers and scholars. Whether approached as a nostalgic pastoral or a subtle critique of societal norms, *Under the Greenwood Tree* endures as a testament to Hardy's literary mastery and the enduring charm of the English countryside.

[Under The Greenwood Tree Book](#)

under the greenwood tree book: [Under the Greenwood Tree](#) Hardy T., 19?? Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) was an English novelist and poet. The wonderful story of the romantic entanglement between church musician, Dick Dewey, and the attractive new school mistress, Fancy Day. «Under the Greenwood Tree» is one of Thomas Hardy's most gentle and pastoral novels.

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under the greenwood tree book: Under the Greenwood Tree Thomas Hardy, 2016-01-01

PREFACE This story of the Mellstock Quire and its old established west-gallery musicians, with some supplementary descriptions of similar officials in *Two on a Tower*, *A Few Crusted Characters*, and other places, is intended to be a fairly true picture, at first hand, of the personages, ways, and customs which were common among such orchestral bodies in the villages of fifty or sixty years ago. One is inclined to regret the displacement of these ecclesiastical bandsmen by an isolated organist (often at first a barrel-organist) or harmonium player; and despite certain advantages in point of control and accomplishment which were, no doubt, secured by installing the single artist, the change has tended to stultify the professed aims of the clergy, its direct result being to curtail and extinguish the interest of parishioners in church doings. Under the old plan, from half a dozen to ten full-grown players, in addition to the numerous more or less grown-up singers, were officially occupied with the Sunday routine, and concerned in trying their best to make it an artistic outcome of the combined musical taste of the congregation. With a musical executive limited, as it mostly is limited now, to the parson's wife or daughter and the school-children, or to the school-teacher and the children, an important union of interests has disappeared. The zest of these bygone instrumentalists must have been keen and staying to take them, as it did, on foot every Sunday after a toilsome week, through all weathers, to the church, which often lay at a distance from their homes. They usually received so little in payment for their performances that their efforts were really a labour of love. In the parish I had in my mind when writing the present tale, the gratuities received yearly by the musicians at Christmas were somewhat as follows: From the manor-house ten shillings and a supper; from the vicar ten shillings; from the farmers five shillings each; from each cottage-household one shilling; amounting altogether to not more than ten shillings a head annually—just enough, as an old executant told me, to pay for their fiddle-strings, repairs, rosin, and music-paper (which they mostly ruled themselves). Their music in those days was all in their own manuscript, copied in the evenings after work, and their music-books were home-bound. It was customary to inscribe a few jigs, reels, horn-pipes, and ballads in the same book, by beginning it at the other end, the insertions being continued from front and back till sacred and secular met together in the middle, often with bizarre effect, the words of some of the songs exhibiting that ancient and broad humour which our grandfathers, and possibly grandmothers, took delight in, and is in these days unquotable.

under the greenwood tree book: *Under the Greenwood Tree (1872)* Thomas Hardy,

2019-10-11 *Under the Greenwood Tree: A Rural Painting of the Dutch School* is a novel by Thomas Hardy, published anonymously in 1872. It was Hardy's second published novel, the last to be printed

without his name, and the first of his great series of Wessex novels. Whilst Hardy originally thought of simply calling it *The Mellstock Quire*, he settled on a title taken from a song in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (Act II, Scene V). The plot concerns the activities of a group of church musicians, the Mellstock parish choir, one of whom, Dick Dewy, becomes romantically entangled with a comely new schoolmistress, Fancy Day. The novel opens with the fiddlers and singers of the choir—including Dick, his father Reuben Dewy, and grandfather William Dewy—making the rounds in Mellstock village on Christmas Eve. When the little band plays at the schoolhouse, young Dick falls for Fancy at first sight. Dick, smitten, seeks to insinuate himself into her life and affections, but Fancy's beauty has gained her other suitors, including a rich farmer and the new vicar at the parish church.

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under the greenwood tree book: Under the Greenwood Tree Thomas Hardy, 2017-09-15 First published anonymously, *Under the Greenwood Tree* is a novel by the renowned English writer Thomas Hardy. The story's protagonist is Dick Dewy, a young man from the lower middle class who is a church musician and a member of the Mellstock choir along with his own father and grandfather. When a new music teacher named Fancy Day is introduced to the group, Dick is enchanted by her beauty and tries his best to gain her appreciation and love. Fancy is not necessarily against the idea of being engaged to Dick, yet she receives more than another suitor among the most important and the richest men in town. These include the church's vicar Mr. Maybold who considers replacing the whole choir by Fancy and her modern organ. Although Fancy becomes attracted and then engaged to young Dick, Mr. Maybold succeeds in seducing her for a while mainly through the affluence and the comfortable life that his position and social status promises. The vicar asks Fancy to marry him and she accepts. Only one day after, their engagement was mutually annulled while Dick remains completely oblivious of all this. By the end, the novel culminates in Fancy's happy marriage to Dick

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Thomas Hardy, 2016-05-24 Thomas Hardy, (2 June 1840 - 11 January 1928) was an English novelist and poet. A Victorian realist in the tradition of George Eliot, he was influenced both in his novels and in his poetry by Romanticism, especially William Wordsworth. Charles Dickens was another important influence. Like Dickens, he was highly critical of much in Victorian society, though Hardy focused more on a declining rural society. *Under the Greenwood Tree: A Rural Painting of the Dutch School* is a novel by Thomas Hardy, published anonymously in 1872. It was Hardy's second published novel, the last to be printed without his name, and the first of his great series of Wessex novels. Whilst Hardy originally thought of simply calling it *The Mellstock Quire*, he settled on a title taken from a song in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. The plot concerns the activities of a group of church musicians, the Mellstock parish choir, one of whom, Dick Dewy, becomes romantically entangled with a comely new school mistress, Fancy Day. The novel opens with the fiddlers and singers of the choir—including Dick, his father Reuben Dewy, and grandfather William Dewy—making the rounds in Mellstock village on Christmas Eve. When the little band plays at the schoolhouse, young Dick falls for Fancy at first sight. Dick, smitten, seeks to insinuate himself into her life and affections, but Fancy's beauty has gained her other suitors, including a rich farmer and the new vicar at the parish church. The vicar, Mr. Maybold, informs the choir that he intends Fancy, an accomplished organ player, to replace their traditional musical accompaniment to Sunday services. The tranter and the rest of the band visit the vicar's home to negotiate, but reluctantly give way to the more modern organ. Meanwhile, Dick seems to win Fancy's heart, and she discovers an effective stratagem to overcome her father's objection to the potential marriage. After the two are engaged secretly, however, vicar Maybold impetuously asks Fancy to marry him and lead a life of relative affluence; racked by guilt and temptation, she accepts. The next day, however, at a chance meeting with the as-yet-unaware Dick, surprised Maybold learns from him of his engagement to Fancy. The vicar follows by prompting her by letter, while expressing being taken aback by such news, to be honest to Dewy and withdraw her commitment to him if she indeed intended to become married to Maybold. Fancy responds by withdrawing her consent to marry Maybold and asking him to keep her initial acceptance of his proposal forever a secret. Maybold replies by urging her again to be honest with Dick and admit she accepted the vicar despite having already committed herself to the young tranter, assuring her she would be forgiven. However, as she marries Dewy who is so in love he readily dismisses what he previously (rightly) considered exhibits of her fickleness and rejoices at what he perceives at the prospect of a happy union based on honesty, given Fancy's effusive and seemingly frank admission to some (minor) infidelities, while he assumes they would never keep any secrets from each other, she resolves never to disclose the truly incontrovertible and damning evidence against her character in her having so readily accepted Maybold despite her engagement to Dewy. The novel ends with a humorous portrait of Reuben, William, Mr. Day, and the rest of the Mellstock rustics as they celebrate the couple's wedding day. The mood is joyful, but at the end of the final chapter, the reader is reminded that Fancy has married with a secret she would never tell (her final flirtation and brief engagement to the vicar). While *Under the Greenwood Tree* is often seen as Hardy's gentlest and most pastoral novel, this final touch introduces a faint note of melancholy to the conclusion.....

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the new vicar at the parish church.

under the greenwood tree book: Under the Greenwood Tree Thomas Hardy, 2020-09-20
Under the Greenwood Tree: A Rural Painting of the Dutch School is a novel by the English writer Thomas Hardy, published anonymously in 1872. It was Hardy's second published novel, and the first of what was to become his series of Wessex novels.

under the greenwood tree book: Under the Greenwood Tree Thomas Hardy, 1977-08-01
The romance of Dick Dewy and Fancy Day, which follows its course through the four seasons of one Wessex year, is counterpointed by the activities of the rustic members of the Mellstock church choir

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Under the Greenwood Tree Thomas HARDY (1840 - 1928) This novel is subtitled The Mellstock Quire, A Rural Painting of the Dutch School. The Quire is the group of musicians who accompany the hymns at the local church and we follow the fortunes of one member, Dick Dewy, who falls in love with the new school mistress, Fancy Day. Another element of the book is the battle between the traditional musicians of the Quire and the local vicar, Parson Maybold, who installs a church organ. This battle illustrates the developing technology being introduced in the Victorian era and its threat to traditional country ways. The novel was published anonymously in 1872 and is often seen as Thomas Hardy's most gentle and pastoral novel. In 2005 Under the Greenwood Tree was adapted for a television version by Ashley Pharoah. (Summary by Rachel Lintern) Genre(s): Romance, Published 1800 -1900 Language: English

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