

HIGH SCHOOL | BLUE VALLEY DISTRICT NOVEL RATIONALE

## ***Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy**

### **English Language Arts, 12th Grade**

#### WHAT'S THE STORY?

After her impoverished family learns of its noble lineage, naive Tess Durbeyfield is sent by her slothful father and ignorant mother to make an appeal to a nearby wealthy family who bear the ancestral name d'Urberville. Tess, attractive and innocent, is seduced by dissolute Alec d'Urberville and secretly bears a child, Sorrow, who dies in infancy. Later working as a dairymaid, she meets and marries Angel Clare, an idealistic gentleman who rejects Tess after learning of her past on their wedding night. Emotionally bereft and financially impoverished, Tess is trapped by necessity into giving in once again to d'Urberville, but she murders him when Angel returns.

Tess of the D'Urbervilles is as famous for its heroine as for its notoriously tragic plot. Originally shunned by critics upon its publication in 1891 because of "immorality," the novel traces the difficult life of Tess Durbeyfield, whose victimization at the hands of men eventually leads to her horrific downfall. Tess spares the reader none of the bitterness inherent in English country life, and Hardy's often romanticized love for the landscape of Wessex is balanced by the novel's grimly realistic depiction of social injustice.

#### CONNECTIONS TO CURRICULUM\*

*The following are some, but not all, of the connections to curriculum for this novel.*

- **Unit 2: Complex Issues**
  - Essential Questions: "How can examining complex issues from different perspectives influence people?" "How can we effectively present ideas and address other viewpoints?"
- **Unit 3: Personal Responsibility**
  - Essential Question: "How does personal responsibility affect not only the individual but also the world as a whole?"
- **Unit 4: Universal Human Experience**
  - Essential Question: "How can reading reveal universal truths about the human experience?"

#### KEY STANDARDS ADDRESSED

- Read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems. RL.12.13
- Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development, including how they interact and build on one another to

- produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text. RL.12.2
- Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging. RL.12.5
  - Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. RL.12.1
  - Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 11–12 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies. RL.12.11
  - Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings. RL.12.12