



Jude and Sue

Jude visits his cousin Sue at Shaston where she lives with her husband, Richard Phillotson, and works as a teacher. The text highlights the mutual attraction between Jude and Sue, but also the compromises they feel bound to make in society.

Thomas Hardy
Jude the Obscure
(1895)

Part IV, Chapter 1

'Will you be carving out¹ at that church again next week, where you learnt the pretty hymn?'

'Yes, perhaps.'

'That will be very nice. Shall I come and see you there? It is in this direction, and I could come any afternoon by train for half an hour?'

'No. Don't come!'

'What – aren't we going to be friends, then, any longer, as we used to be?'

'No.'

'I didn't know that. I thought you were always going to be kind to me!'

'No, I am not.'

'What have I done, then? I am sure I thought we two –' The *tremolo* in her voice caused her to break off².

'Sue, I sometimes think you are a flirt³,' said he abruptly⁴.

There was a momentary pause, till she suddenly jumped up; and to his surprise he saw by the kettle-flame⁵ that her face was flushed⁶.

'I can't talk to you any longer, Jude!' she said, the tragic contralto note having come back as of old⁷. 'It is getting too dark to stay together like this, after playing morbid Good Friday tunes⁸ that make one feel what one shouldn't! ... We mustn't sit and talk in this way any more. Yes – you must go away, for you mistake me!⁹ I am very much the reverse of what you say so cruelly – Oh, Jude, it *was* cruel to say that! Yet I can't tell you the truth – I should shock you by letting you know how I give way to¹⁰ my impulses, and how much I feel that I shouldn't have been provided with attractiveness unless it were meant to be exercised! Some women's love of being loved is insatiable; and so, often, is their love of loving; and in the last case they may find that they can't give it continuously to the chamber-officer appointed by the bishop's licence¹¹ to receive it. But you are so straightforward¹², Jude, that you can't understand me! ... Now you must go. I am sorry my husband is not at home.'

'Are you?'

'I perceive¹³ I have said that in mere¹⁴ convention! Honestly I don't think I am sorry. It does not matter, either way¹⁵, sad to say!'

As they had overdone the grasp of hands some time sooner¹⁶, she touched his fingers but lightly when he went out now. He had hardly gone from the door when, with a dissatisfied look, she jumped on a form¹⁷ and opened the iron casement¹⁸ of a window beneath which he was passing in the path without¹⁹. 'When do you leave here to catch your train, Jude?' she asked.

He looked up in some surprise. 'The coach that runs to meet it goes in three-quarters of an hour or so.'

'What will you do with yourself for the time?'

'Oh – wander about²⁰, I suppose. Perhaps I shall go and sit in the old church.'

'It does seem hard of me to pack you off so²¹! You have thought enough of churches, Heaven knows, without going into one in the dark. Stay there.'

'Where?'

'Where you are. I can talk to you better like this than when you were inside... It was so kind and tender of you to give up half a day's work to come to see me! ... You are Joseph the dreamer of dreams²², dear Jude. And a tragic Don Quixote. And sometimes you are St Stephen, who, while they were stoning him²³, could see Heaven opened. Oh, my poor friend and comrade, you'll suffer yet!'

Now that the high window-sill²⁴ was between them, so that he could not get at her,

- 1 Will ... carving out. Lavorerai a scolpire.
- 2 caused her to break off. La fece interrompere.
- 3 flirt. Civetta.
- 4 abruptly. Bruscamente.
- 5 kettle-flame. Fiamma sotto al bollitore.
- 6 flushed. Paonazzo, eccitato.
- 7 as of old. Come prima.
- 8 morbid ... tunes. Note macabre del Venerdì Santo.
- 9 you mistake me! Ti sbagli su di me.
- 10 I give way to. Io ceda a.
- 11 chamber-officer ... licence. Camerlengo nominato su licenza del vescovo.
- 12 straightforward. Schietto, diretto.
- 13 I perceive. Mi accorgo.
- 14 mere. Pura.
- 15 either way. In ogni caso.
- 16 As ... sooner. Poiché avevano esagerato nel tenersi per mano poco prima.
- 17 form. Banco (si trovano ancora nella scuola dove Sue insegna).
- 18 casement. Telaio.
- 19 the path without. Il sentiero fuori.
- 20 wander about. Vagabonderò.
- 21 to pack you off so. Mandarti via così in fretta e furia.
- 22 Joseph the dreamer of dreams. Si riferisce ai sogni di Giuseppe in Genesi 37:5.
- 23 they were stoning him. Lo lapidavano.
- 24 window-sill. Davanzale.



she seemed not to mind indulging in a frankness she had feared at close quarters²⁵.

50 'I have been thinking,' she continued, still in the tone of one brimful²⁶ of feeling, 'that the social moulds²⁷ civilization fits us into²⁸ have no more relation to our actual shapes than the conventional shapes of the constellations have to the real star-patterns²⁹. I am called Mrs Richard Phillotson, living a calm wedded³⁰ life with my counterpart of that name. But I am not really Mrs Richard Phillotson, but a woman
55 tossed about³¹, all alone, with aberrant passions, and unaccountable antipathies... Now you mustn't wait longer, or you will lose the coach. Come and see me again. You must come to the house then.'

'Yes!' said Jude. 'When shall it be?'

'To-morrow week³². Good-bye – good-bye!' She stretched out³³ her hand and
60 stroked his forehead pitifully³⁴ – just once. Jude said good-bye, and went away into the darkness.

Passing along Bimport Street he thought he heard the wheels of the coach departing, and, truly enough, when he reached the Duke's Arms in the Market Place the coach had gone. [...]

65 He wandered about awhile, obtained something to eat; and then, having another half-hour on his hands, his feet involuntarily took him through the venerable graveyard of Trinity Church, with its avenues of limes³⁵, in the direction of the schools again. They were entirely in darkness. She had said she lived over the way³⁶ at Old-Grove Place, a house which he soon discovered from her description of its antiquity.

70 A glimmering candlelight shone from a front window, the shutters being yet unclosed. He could see the interior clearly – the floor sinking a couple of steps³⁷ below the road without, which had become raised during the centuries since the house was built. Sue, evidently just come in, was standing with her hat on in this front parlour or sitting-room, whose walls were lined with wainscoting of panelled oak³⁸ reaching
75 from floor to ceiling, the latter being crossed by huge moulded beams³⁹ only a little way above her head. The mantelpiece⁴⁰ was of the same heavy description, carved with Jacobean pilasters and scroll-work⁴¹. The centuries did, indeed, ponderously overhang⁴² a young wife who passed her time here.

80 She had opened a rosewood work-box⁴³, and was looking at a photograph. Having contemplated it a little while she pressed it against her bosom, and put it again in its place.

Then becoming aware⁴⁴ that she had not obscured the windows she **came forward** to do so, candle in hand. It was too dark for her to see Jude without, but he could see her face distinctly, and there was an unmistakable tearfulness⁴⁵ about the dark, long-lashed⁴⁶ eyes.
85

She closed the shutters, and Jude **turned away** to pursue⁴⁷ his solitary journey home. 'Whose photograph was she looking at?' he said. He had once given her his; but she had others, he knew. Yet it was his, surely?

He knew he should go to see her again, according to⁴⁸ her invitation. Those earnest⁴⁹
90 men he read of, the saints, whom Sue, with gentle irreverence, called his demi-gods, would have shunned⁵⁰ such encounters if they doubted their own strength. But he could not. He might fast and pray⁵¹ during the whole interval, but the human was more powerful in him than the Divine.

25 at close quarters. Da vicino.

26 brimful. Colma.

27 moulds. Stampi.

28 fits us into. Nei quali ci incasella.

29 star-patterns. Configurazioni stellari.

30 wedded. Coniugale.

31 tossed about. Sballottata.

32 To-morrow week. A week from tomorrow.

33 She stretched out. Allungò.

34 stroked his forehead pitifully. Gli accarezzò la fronte compassionevolmente.

35 limes. Tigli.

36 over the way. Al di là della strada.

37 sinking a couple of steps. Scendeva di un paio di scalini.

38 lined ... oak. Ricoperte di pannelli di legno di quercia.

39 crossed by huge moulded beams. Attraversato da enormi travi modellate.

40 mantelpiece. La base del caminetto.

41 scroll-work. Spire ornamentali.

42 ponderously overhang. Sovrastavano pesantemente.

43 rosewood work-box. Scatola da lavoro di palissandro.

44 becoming aware. Accorgendosi.

45 unmistakable tearfulness. Inconfondibile tristezza.

46 long-lashed. Dalle ciglia lunghe.

47 to pursue. Per intraprendere.

48 according to. Secondo.

49 earnest. Seri, scrupolosi.

50 shunned. Evitato.

51 fast and pray. Digiunare e pregare.

**LITERARY COMPETENCE****> VOCABULARY****1 READ the text and match the highlighted phrasal verbs and collocations with their meaning.**

- 1 renounce
- 2 moved away
- 3 moved in that direction

> COMPETENCE: READING AND UNDERSTANDING A TEXT**2 READ the text again and do the following activities.**

- 1 In the first 12 lines of the extract, who is eager to see the other again – Sue or Jude?
- 2 Why, so quickly afterwards, does Sue tell Jude to 'go away' (line 19)?
- 3 What is Sue's phrase which says that women like her cannot always be faithful to their husbands?
- 4 Where are Sue and Jude during the conversation from lines 34-59? Why does Sue prefer this position?
- 5 Jude does not live in the same town as Sue. What information in the text shows this?
- 6 Sue's house is old. Describe the interior.
- 7 What does Jude hope when he sees Sue looking at a photograph?
- 8 Find the references to the church and religion in the passage.

> COMPETENCE: ANALYSING AND INTERPRETING A TEXT**3 DEFINE the kind of narration characterising the passage. Tick as appropriate and answer the question below.**

- ☐ The author can be identified with the characters, his ideas with theirs.
- ☐ Though the ideas of the author and of his characters are closely similar, co-identity is obscured.
- ☐ The author is cold and impersonal.

What impression does this kind of narration create as regards characterisation?

4 FOCUS on Sue's great passion and intellectual integrity.

- 1 How does Hardy show the physical nature of her passion – in looks, physical contact and actions?
- 2 Consider her statements about herself in lines 21-27 and 50-55. What is her predicament?
- 3 What image does Hardy use to show how the weight of Victorian responsibility imprisons and presses on Sue?
- 4 Why do you think Hardy mentions the high window-sill between Sue and Jude? What does it represent?

5 CONSIDER Jude's character.

- 1 Who does Sue compare him to? What aspects of his character do you think they describe?
- 2 Hardy describes some of Jude's uncertainties about Sue and his own moral weakness. What are they?

6 WRITE down Sue's opinions on

- friendship between the sexes;
- female beauty;
- marital fidelity;
- being Mrs Richard Phillotson.

7 EXPLAIN what Sue says in lines 26-27. What does she mean in lines 29-30?**8 DISCUSS. Sue admits to being unconventional in lines 51-55: how is this emphasised by the words 'aberrant' and 'unaccountable'?**



- 9 **HIGHLIGHT** the contrast at the end of the passage. Although the interior of the house weighs negatively on Sue, Hardy also visually cuts Jude off from her. How?

➤ COMPETENCE: ESTABLISHING LINKS AND RELATIONSHIPS

- 10 **DISCUSS.** *Jude the Obscure* was Hardy's last novel. After writing it, he gave up fiction and turned to poetry. How did his view of life develop throughout his production as a novelist?

➤ COMPETENCE: LINKING LITERATURE TO PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

- 11 **DISCUSS** your personal opinions on the issues concerning the relationship between man and woman which are explored in the passage. Do you think friendship is possible between a man and a woman? Do you agree with a man and a woman living together without being married? How far should we let civilisation mould our real shape?