

B.A. Second

The Return of the Native By Thomas Hardy : Important Short Questions Part I

1. 'The untamable, Ishmaelite thing that Egdon now was it always had been' – What is meant by Ishmaelite thing? Why Egdon is called Ishmaelite thing?

The phrase 'Ishmaelish thing' refers to a person or thing cast off from others. In the Bible Ishmael was the son of Abraham by Hagar. Abraham cast out Hagar and Ishmael in-to the desert. Hence the sense of an outcast comes.

Hardy describes Egdon as Ishmaelish thing, because it is cast off from the civilized world. It is an enemy to civilization.

2. "The great inviolent place had an ancient permanence which the sea cannot claim" – Name 'the great inviolent place'. How does the speaker establish the 'ancient permanence' of the place which even the 'sea' can not claim?

'Egdon Heath' is the name of the great inviolent place.

Egdon Heath is an awesome presence. It had stood there with its unchanged complexion for centuries as a stern witness to many crises and now waiting one past crisis – 'the final overthrow'. Civilization seemed to be an enemy of the Egdon. Since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same ancient brown dress, which is the natural and invariable garment. On seeing the heath it can easily be assumed that everything around and underneath the heath, had been since pre historical times. Just as the stars on the sky, Egdon has remains unaltered and adrift on change. Everything around the Egdon has changed, whether it is the sea, or the rivers, or the fields or even the village another people, but the Egdon remained unchanged and unaltered. Thus the speaker establishes the 'ancient permanence' of the place which even the 'sea' cannot claim.

3. What is a 'reddle man'? What is the name of the reddleman in this novel? What was the profession of the man before he becomes riddle man?

A riddle man is one who sells a red ochre colour to the farmers for redding their sheep.

Diggory Venn is the name of the reddleman in this novel.

He was a dairy farmer by his profession before he became a reddleman.

4. Who was the girl inside the van of the reddleman? When and how she get into the van?

Thomasin leobright is the name of the girl inside the reddleman's van.

The reddleman chanced to meet Thomasin in her wretched condition, while moving about a mile out of Anglebury. She looked pale and faintly sought help from the reddleman and told that she was in trouble and needed his help to ride her down to her name. The girl had returned home alone from Anglebury, where she and Wildeve went to marry earlier in that particular day. But a mistake in the license stopped the marriage.

5. "The figure perceptively gave up its fixity shifted a step or two, and turned round" – Which figure was seen by the reddleman at the top of the barrow and when? Why the figure did suddenly disappeared?

The reddleman noticed the figure of a woman, who was actually Miss Eustacia Vye at the top of Rain barrow on 5th November, while carrying back Thomasin to her aunt's house, when his horses were resting near a bank.

The sudden departure of the figure was due to some rustics who were approaching the barrow. Eustacia did not like herself to be seen by the rustics. So she left the place.

6. The third chapter of The Return of the Native is called 'The custom of the country' – which custom is mentioned here? Whose name is linked with the custom of 'lighting bonfire'? Who lit the bonfire in Captain Vye's house and why?

The custom referred to in the third chapter of The Return of the Natives indicates the custom of lighting bonfire on the 5th November.

The Catholic conspirator Guy Fawkes name is linked with the custom of lighting bonfire.

Miss Eustacia Vye lit the bonfire in Captain Vye's house. She did so for Wildeve whom she had once loved. This fire was a kind of signal fire on her part, to call Wildeve.

What is the gunpowder plot?

The famous gunpowder plot in 1605 was Fawkes' attempt to blow up the parliament and to kill the king. In Hardy's idea of the custom, however it is more a pagan festival of celebrating the beginning of winter.

7. "Their Tartarian situation might by some have been called an imprudent one for two unattended women" – who are the 'two unattended women'? What is meant by 'their Tartarian situation'?

Olly and Mrs. Teobright are the two unattended woman.

The adjective 'Tartarian' comes – from 'Tartarus' which means the lowest part of hell in Greek and Roman mythology. So the phrase 'Tartarian situation' refers to a dark, frightening and painful situation. Here the phrase is used to describe the dark atmosphere in which two lonely women Olly and Mrs. Teobright were descending the barrow.

8. 'Wildeve came like Amerigo – Vespucci' – who was Amerigo Vespucci? What is the significance of comparing Wildeve to Amerigo Vespucci?

Amerigo Vespucci was an Italian explorer, after whose name America was named.

Hardy here compares Wildeve to Amerigo Vespucci. Vespucci was not the first person to reach the coast of America. He reached there after some others, but he received the honour due to the person who first reached America. Likewise the plot of land possessed by Wildeve was actually cleared and made cultivate by the labours of two previous owners. But now it is known as 'Wildeve's Patch'. Like Vespucci Wildeve enjoys the honour due to the first owner.

9. Why did Wildeve's first attempt to marry Thomasin failed?

It was a stupid mistake which prevented the marriage of Thomasin and Wildeve in their first attempt Wildeve had made the license of their marriage out for Budmouth but he went to Anglebury instead, where the license was declared invalid. As a result the marriage did not hold at their first attempt.

10. Who was employed by Eustacia to keep the bonfire burning and in what exchange?

Johnny Nunsuch, the little boy was employed by Eustacia to keep the bonfire burning in the exchange of six pence.