



# The Return of the Native

*Thomas Hardy*

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## **The Return of the Native** Thomas Hardy

On the evening of Guy Fawkes Night, reedleman Diggory Venn drives slowly across Egdon Heath, carrying a hidden passenger in the back of his van. When darkness falls, the country folk light bonfires on the surrounding hills, emphasizing - not for the last time - the pagan spirit of the heath and its denizens. The Return of the Native, with its deeply flawed heroine and its open acknowledgement of illicit sexual relationships, raised eyebrows when it first appeared as a serial in Victorian Britain. Due to the novel's controversial themes, Thomas Hardy's sixth novel had some difficulty finding a publisher. Eventually, The Return of the Native became one of Hardy's most popular novels. Hardy's choice of themes - sexual politics, thwarted desire, and the conflicting demands of nature and society - makes this a truly modern novel. Underlying these modern themes, however, is a classical sense of tragedy, using as his setting an ancient heath steeped in pre-Christian history. In this original and ingenious book, perceptions are questioned, morals and ethics are up for grabs, and doubt and ambiguity mark its view of human nature itself.

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