

## Tess of the d'Urbevilles

*The hot weather of July had crept upon them unawares, and the atmosphere of the flat vale hung heavy as an opiate over the dairy-folk, the cows, and the trees. Hot steaming rains fell frequently, making the grass where the cows fed yet more rank, and hindering the late haymaking in the other meads.*

*It was Sunday morning; the milking was done; the outdoor milkers had gone home. Tess and the other three were dressing themselves rapidly, the whole bevy having agreed to go together to Mellstock Church, which lay some three or four miles distant from the dairy-house. She had now been two months at Talbothays, and this was her first excursion.*

*All the preceding afternoon and night heavy thunderstorms had hissed down upon the meads, and washed some of the hay into the river; but this morning the sun shone out all the more brilliantly for the deluge, and the air was balmy and clear.*

*The crooked lane leading from their own parish to Mellstock ran along the lowest levels in a portion of its length, and when the girls reached the most depressed spot they found that the result of the rain had been to flood the lane over-shoe to a distance of some fifty yards. This would have been no serious hindrance on a week-day; they would have clicked through it in their high pattens and boots quite unconcerned; but on this day of vanity, this Sun's-day, when flesh went forth to coquet with flesh while hypocritically affecting business with spiritual things; on this occasion for wearing their white stockings and thin shoes, and their pink, white and lilac gowns, on which every mud spot would be visible, the pool was an awkward impediment. They could hear the church-bell calling -as yet nearly a mile off.*

Tess of the d'Urbevilles.  
Thomas Hardy.

## QUESTIONS

1. How far was Mellstock Church from the farm?
2. How long had she been there?
3. Was it Tess' first excursion?
4. Was there a pond in the lane? Why?
5. Why didn't they want to cross the pond on that occasion?
6. Do you think the church service was going to start? Why?
7. Vocabulary.
  - Opiate
  - Hinder
  - Bevy
  - Flesh
  - Flood