

Thomas Hardy Short Stories

The Withered Arm

Tony Kytes



Your name is Rhoda Brook. You work as a milkmaid. You are unhappy and feel rejected. You are the mother of a young boy. You were once very good friends with Farmer Lodge, so you are now very jealous of his new wife, Gertrude. You are visited in your dreams by an evil spirit. You feel very guilty about the events that follow.

When people were hanged, the local people treated it as a holiday and came to watch.

There were no cars. People travelled in large wooden carts pulled by horses.

Understanding Vocabulary

conjuror
(a male witch)

incubus
(evil spirit which visits people in their sleep)

drawn
(white and strained)

Clarifying Cultural Differences

Everyone in the village knew a lot about everyone else.

The rich landowners had servants who did all the cooking and cleaning.



Thomas Hardy Short Stories

This is a collection of material developed for The Withered Arm and Tony Kytes Archdeceiver by originally devised by Zoe Livingstone, Kathy Coombs, Jenny Clarke, Jane Harris and Christine Child from schools in Leicester and Loughborough in 1998.

All the materials which also include pictures and chapter summaries culminated in a storyboard activity which was designed to be constructed before the story was read. Like many of our literature activities they were designed to make students curious and enthusiastic about approaching the story, rather than pick up the pieces, when students had already found the stories difficult or unapproachable.

All these strategies can be and have been adapted to other stories, and we would encourage you to share any work you produce with other members of our network.

This activity was last partly revised and updated 18th March 2017.

The webaddress for this activity is:

<<http://www.collaborativelearning.org/thomashardy.pdf>>

COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECT

Project Director: Stuart Scott

Supporting a cooperative network of teaching professionals throughout the European Union to develop and disseminate accessible teaching materials in all subject areas and for all ages.

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BRIEF SUMMARY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES BEHIND OUR TEACHING ACTIVITIES:

The project is a teacher network, and a non-profit making educational trust. Our main aim is to develop and disseminate classroom tested examples of effective group strategies across all phases and subjects. We hope they will inspire you to use similar strategies in other topics and curriculum areas. We run teacher workshops, swapshops and conferences throughout the European Union. The project publishes a catalogue of activities plus lists in selected subject areas, and a newsletter available by post or internet: 'PAPERCLIP'.

*These activities were influenced by current thinking about the role of language in learning. They are designed to help children learn through talk and active learning in small groups. They work best in mixed classes where children in need of language or learning support are integrated. They are well suited for the development of speaking and listening. They provide teachers opportunities for assessment of speaking and listening and other formative assessment.

*They support differentiation by placing a high value on what children can offer to each other on a particular topic, and also give children the chance to respect each other's views and formulate shared opinions which they can disseminate to peers. By helping them to take ideas and abstract concepts, discuss, paraphrase and move them about physically, they help to develop thinking skills.

*They give children the opportunity to participate in their own words and language in their own time without pressure. Many activities can be tried out in mother tongue and afterwards in English. A growing number of activities are available in more than one language, not translated, but mixed, so that you may need more than one language to complete the activity.

*They encourage study skills in context, and should therefore be used with a range of appropriate information books which are preferably within reach in the classroom.

*They are generally adaptable over a wide age range because children can bring their own knowledge to an activity and refer to books at an appropriate level. The activities work like catalysts.

*All project activities were planned and developed by teachers working together, and the main reason they are disseminated is to encourage teachers to work effectively with each other inside and outside the classroom. They have made it possible for mainstream and language and learning support teachers to share an equal role in curriculum delivery. They should be adapted to local conditions. In order to help us keep pace with curriculum changes, please send any new or revised activities back to the project, so that we can add them to our lists of materials.

<http://www.collaborativelearning.org/thomashardy.pdf>

Thomas Hardy Short Stories

Notes for teachers

1. Rural life at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

This was a way of converting what would normally be a class discussion into group work with action. Students would be answering the question:

“Would you like to return to the beginning of the nineteenth century?”

Each group (four or five students) would have a large sheet of paper divided thus:

Reasons why it would be a good idea to return.	Reasons why it would NOT be a good idea to return.

They could first write down some of their own assumptions and then take the statements, and decide where they would fit on the chart. Some statements are ambiguous and would be a good starter for a subsequent class discussion.

2. Character cards.

The instructions are fairly self explanatory, and we have used this activity for a lot of work in English and humanities. It is a good idea to print the sets of cards in different colours since this will give you an ideal way to organise groups in ways you want to by dealing them out to the class judiciously.

3. Difficult and dialect word and phrases quiz/questioning game.

We have adapted this activity to a variety of stories with difficult bits in.

4. Commentaries.

The Tony Kytes commentary can be used in a number of ways. It can be cut up for groups and they can reorder them in the right sequence. It can be used as a prediction exercise: commentary given out in order bit by bit and groups make predictions on what comes next.

The Withered Arm commentary is organised in sections. The three sentences in each section are not in the correct order. We gave different groups different sections to decide on the order and then read out to the rest of the class. If you have a smaller class groups can have more than one section.

5. Storyboard materials.

Pictures/quotes and information from the other activities can all be used by children to construct a version of the story before they hear/read the original.

Thomas Hardy Short Stories - Statements about the early years of the nineteenth century.

Children who worked on farms did not have to go to school.	When people were hanged. the local people treated it as a holiday and came to watch.
A few people were rich, but most were very poor.	There were no cars. People travelled in large wooden carts pulled by horses.
People in country had big parties and festivals with lots of music and dancing.	Children as young as seven and eight used to work on the farms.
Most people used to work outside in the fresh air.	People did not have toilets in their houses, but had sheds at the bottom of the garden.
Many people never travelled further than the nearest town in their whole lives.	Everyone in the village knew a lot about everyone else.
People working on farms ate mostly bread, potatoes and vegetables from their gardens.	The rich landowners had servants who did all the cooking and cleaning.
People believed all all kinds of strange superstitions and magic.	The local pub was a very important part of village life.
People could get everything they wanted in their own village.	Farm workers were paid very little money.
People used natural herbs and strange medicines and even magic to try to cure illnesses.	Every village was supposed to have its own witch, who put curses on the people who lived there.
People working on farms sometimes had to walk miles to get to work.	The law was very strict and people were killed for stealing.
Although there were a few newspapers, people were more likely to spread news by talking to each other.	People who were rich were not supposed to be friends with people who were poor.

Thomas Hardy Short Stories: The Withered Arm

Character Cards or Two Minute Autobiography

Everyone in the class takes or is given a character card. Everyone should read the information on the card two or three times. You do not have to remember the card word for word, but have a good idea about the information on it.

Put the card in your pocket or out of sight, and then find someone else in the room with the same coloured card as you. Pretend to be the character and introduce yourself to your new partner:

eg. "Hello! My name is Farmer Lodge. I own a large dairy farm with many cows....."

Your partner should do the same to you. Remember! if either of you get stuck, you can take out your card and look at it. But only if you are stuck. Listen carefully to each other.

Now go to find another two people with the same colour card as you. Now you are four, you have to introduce your partner to the others and they have to introduce each other to you.

eg: "Hello! Can I introduce you to my partner Her name is Rhoda Brook and she works as a milkmaid on my farm..."



Your name is Rhoda Brook. You work as a milkmaid. You are unhappy and feel rejected. You are the mother of a young boy. You were once very good friends with Farmer Lodge, so you are now very jealous of his new wife, Gertrude. You are visited in your dreams by an evil spirit. You feel very guilty about the events that follow.



Your name is Gertrude Lodge. You are pretty, young, frail and kind. You are newly married to Farmer Lodge. You meet Rhoda Brook and feel sorry for her. You try to make friends and give her some boots for her son. Your arm becomes withered and you are worried that you will lose the love of Farmer Lodge. To cure the arm you visit Casterbridge gaol to touch the neck of a hanged man.



Your name is Farmer Lodge and you own a large dairy farm. You have just brought your new wife Gertrude home. She is delicate and beautiful. You have been proud of showing her off in church. However, now there is something wrong with her arm, and you think that she may become disfigured.



You are the son of Rhoda Brook, and Farmer Lodge is believed to be your father. You are very poor and have a hard life. You are devoted to your mother, and you often steal rabbits to feed you both. Your mother wants you to find out about Gertrude, Farmer Lodge's new wife. You seek her out and think that she is very beautiful.

Thomas Hardy Short Stories: Tony Kytes: the Arch Deceiver

Character Cards or Two Minute Autobiography

Everyone in the class takes or is given a character card. Everyone should read the information on the card two or three times. You do not have to remember the card word for word, but have a good idea about the information on it.

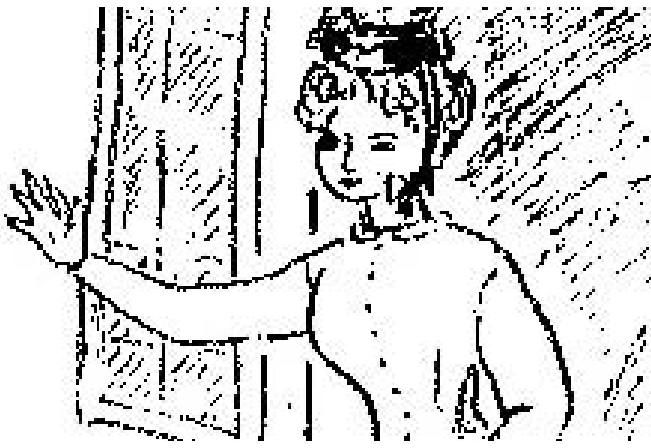
Put the card in your pocket or out of sight, and then find someone else in the room with the same coloured card as you. Pretend to be the character and introduce yourself to your new partner:

eg. "Hello! My name is Tony Kytes! My father says I should get married but I can't really decide who to choose....."

Your partner should do the same to you. Remember! if either of you get stuck, you can take out your card and look at it. But only if you are stuck. Listen carefully to each other.

Now go to find another two people with the same colour card as you. Now you are four, you have to introduce your partner to the others and they have to introduce each other to you.

eg: "Hello! Can I introduce you to my partner Her name is Hannah Jolliver....."



Hello,
I'm Millie Richards. I live at home still with my parents, but that won't be for long now. You see I am engaged to be married to Tony Kytes, a local man, a bit of a catch really. The date hasn't been set yet but I hope that it will be really soon.



Hello,
I'm Unity Sallet. I've lived around here all my life. I've got to know everyone. Well you do when it's a small place. I thought I'd be married with a place of my own by now, but my ex, Tony, left me for someone else. I'm still hurt by it really, well you would be, wouldn't you? I really don't know what Tony sees in her.



Hello,
My name is Hannah Jolliver. I live round here with my dad. He's alright, wants the best for me, wants to see me well settled. I upset him the other day when he found out that I'd started up with Tony Kytes again. Well, we were seeing each other a while ago, and dad didn't like him then either.



Hello,
I'm Tony, Tony Kytes. I am almost engaged to Millie Richards, a nice enough girl, lives local. I've been seeing her a while now, and my dad thinks I should get things settled soon. Only the thing is, I've got a couple of other girls on my mind at the moment.

Thomas Hardy Short Stories - The Withered Arm

Difficult and dialect words and phrases quiz/questioning game.

1. Work in pairs, shuffle the word cards and divide the set between you.
2. Take turns to ask you partner the meaning of each word or phrase. If they are wrong you should provide the answer: if correct then give the card to your partner to keep in a separate pile. The 'winner' is the student with the most answered cards in their pile.
3. Make a separate pile of words you are still unsure of for later class discussion.

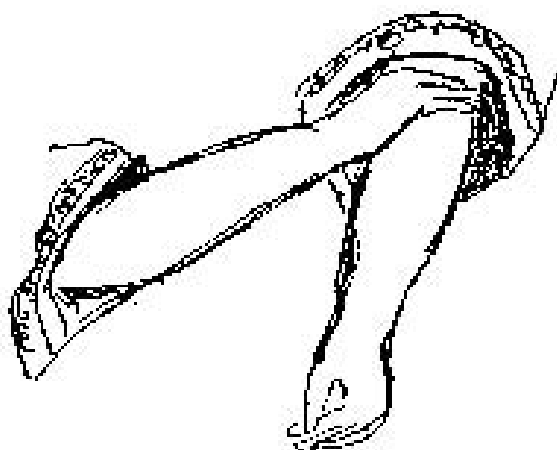
These cards can subsequently be used for a storyboard.

Thomas Hardy Short Stories - The Withered Arm difficult and dialect words and phrases quiz.

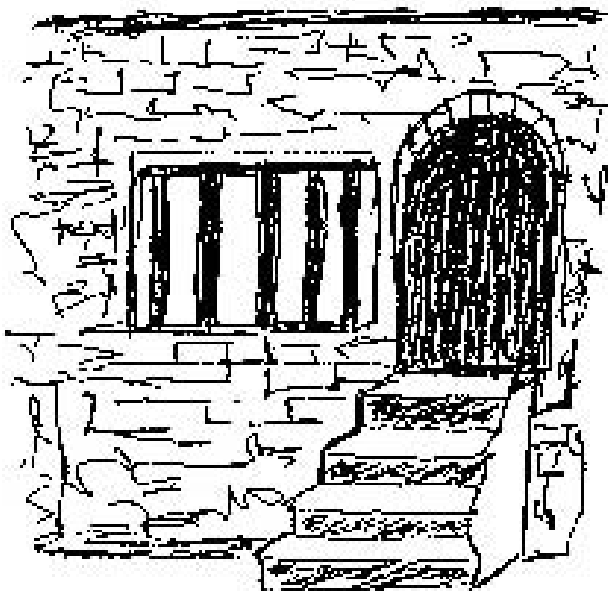
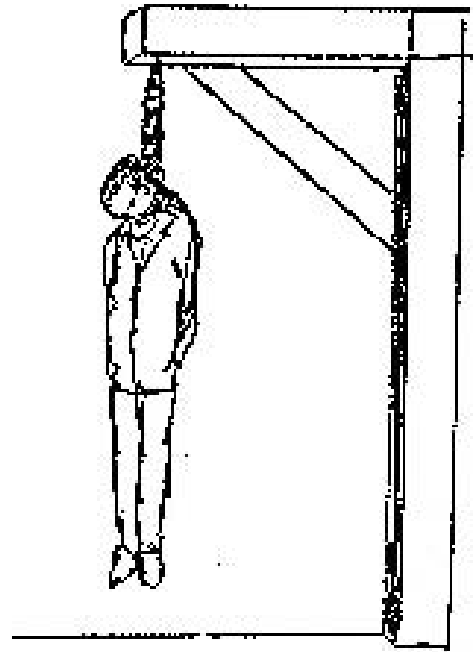
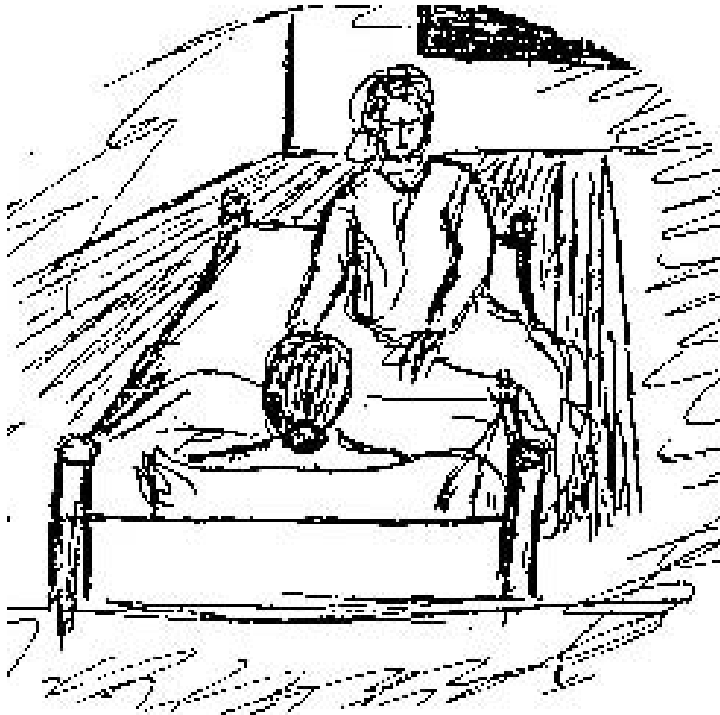
<p>Milkmaid <i>(a woman who milks cows and makes butter and cheese)</i></p>	<p>aversion <i>(dislike, horror)</i></p>
<p>lom <i>(abandoned and unhappy)</i></p>	<p>transfixed <i>(stunned, rooted to the spot)</i></p>
<p>barton <i>(farmyard)</i></p>	<p>malignant power <i>(harmful power)</i></p>
<p>water meads <i>(low lying grass land often flooded)</i></p>	<p>afflicted <i>(wounded)</i></p>
<p>Egdon Heath <i>(a wide expanse of wild barren moorland)</i></p>	<p>fiend <i>(devil)</i></p>
<p>marks of the lady <i>(signs of coming from the upper class)</i></p>	<p>impress on the arm <i>(a mark or imprint on the arm)</i></p>
<p>yeoman <i>(farmer who owned his land)</i></p>	<p>conjuror <i>(a male witch)</i></p>
<p>gig <i>(two wheeled carriage)</i></p>	<p>apparition <i>(vision, ghost)</i></p>
<p>comely <i>(pleasing to look at)</i></p>	<p>cot <i>(cottage, small house)</i></p>
<p>gallows <i>(wooden structure for hanging people)</i></p>	<p>incubus <i>(evil spirit which visits people in their sleep)</i></p>
<p>remorse <i>(repentance)</i></p>	<p>confronting spectre <i>(a threatening apparition, ghost)</i></p>
<p>drawn <i>(white and strained)</i></p>	

Thomas Hardy Short Stories - The Withered Arm
Pictures for story board.

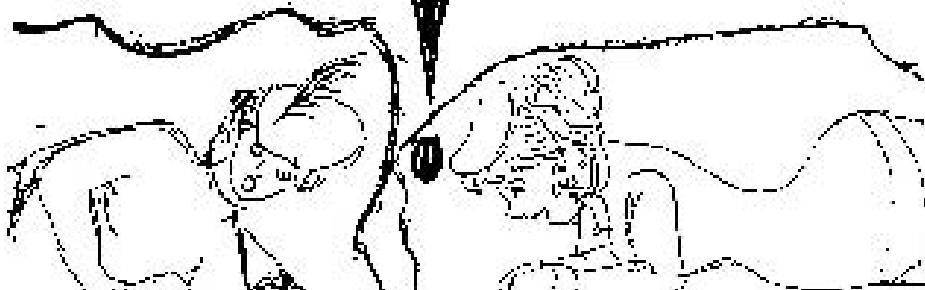
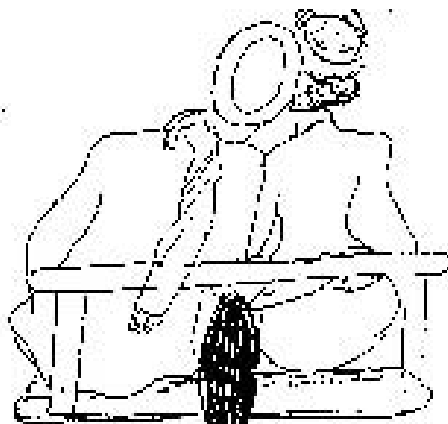
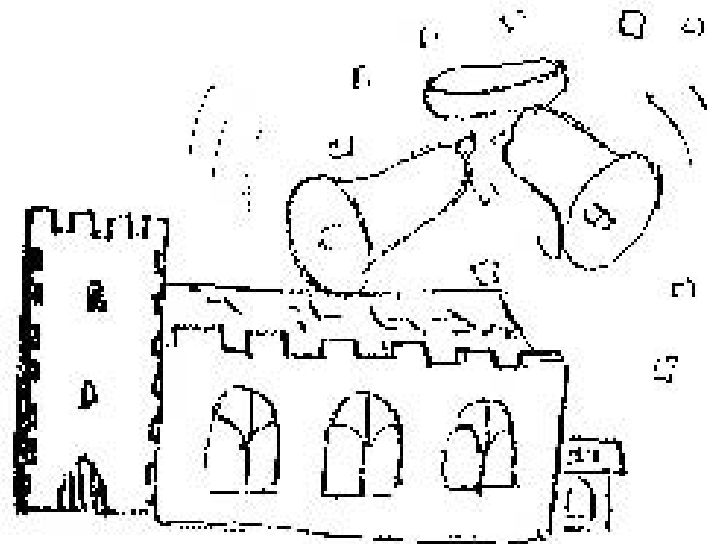
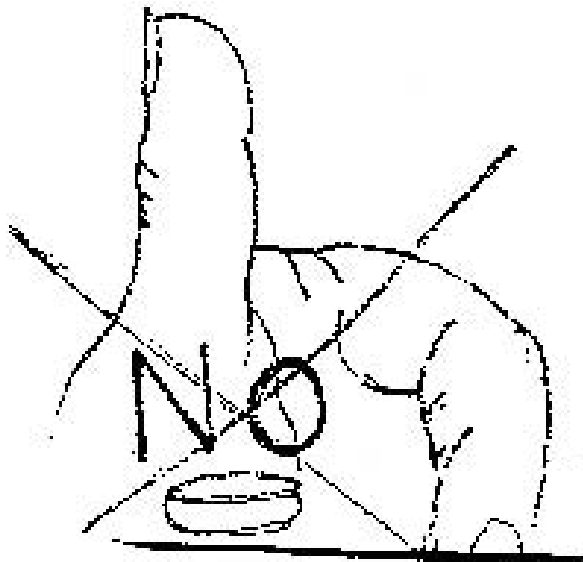
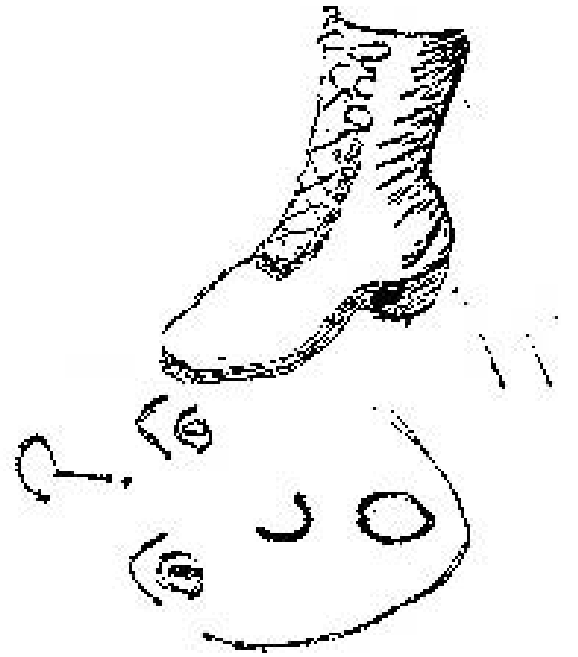
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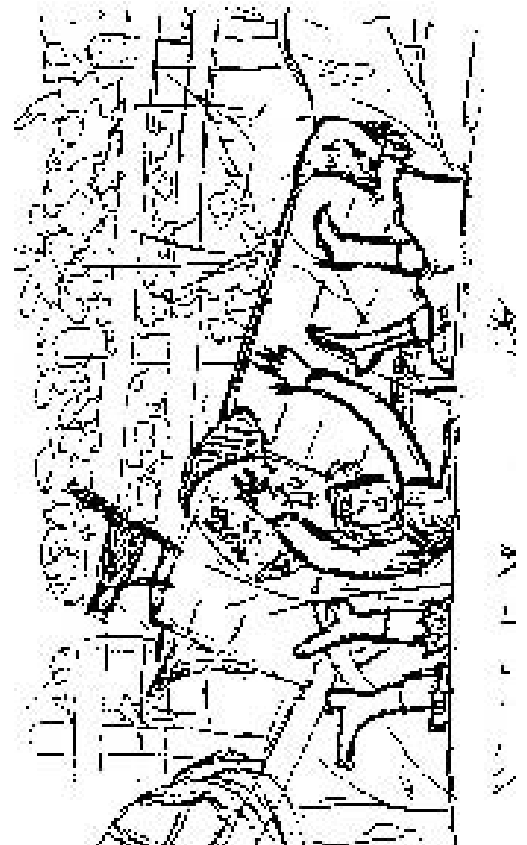
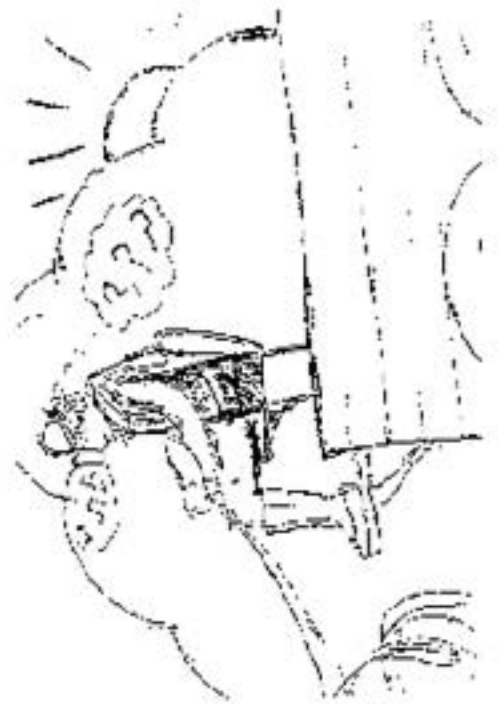
Thomas Hardy Short Stories - The Withered Arm
Pictures for story board.



Thomas Hardy Short Stories - Tony Kytes
Pictures for story board.



Thomas Hardy Short Stories - Tony Kytes
Pictures for story board.



As the story starts:

Some villagers are returning to their homes in Longpuddle after a visit to the local market town. They travel in a large horse drawn cart. A stranger joins them. He grew up in Longpuddle, and after spending most of his life abroad, is now returning to his village. He is eager to hear of people he knew as a boy. The cart driver, or "carrier", chooses to tell the story of Tony Kytes.

Commentary

Tony is a serious-looking and handsome young man. He is very popular with the local girls, and enjoys flirting with them.

Commentary

Tony get engaged to Milly Richards. One day he is driving back to Longpuddle from market when a girl who used to be his sweetheart - Unity Sallet - stops him for a lift. As they travel on, Unity tries to persuade Tony that she would make him a better wife than Milly.

Commentary

Tony persuades Unity to hide under a sheet in the back. Milly Richards, who has been waiting for Tony, climbs aboard his wagon. Soon, he sees one of his very first girlfriends, Hannah Jolliver, looking out of a window.

Commentary

Tony persuades Milly to hide under some sacks in the front of the wagon, saying that he does not want any trouble from Hannah if she sees them together. Hannah, like Milly, asks Tony to drive her home to Longpuddle. He tries to get out of it but Hannah insists.

Commentary

Hannah joins Tony on the driving seat. He now has three female passengers on board his wagon. Tony and Hannah enjoy riding together. They gaze fondly into each other's eyes. Tony starts to wonder why he ever thought of proposing to Milly or Unity when Hannah is so attractive.

Commentary

In answer to Hannah's question, Tony says that his marriage to Milly is most definitely not fixed. He promises to try to break off his engagement to Milly and propose to Hannah instead. Hannah is thrilled. However, Milly has heard their conversation from her hiding place under the sacks. She shows signs of coming out.

Commentary

Tony tells Hannah it's only ferrets - and quickly changes the subject. Seeing his father signalling to him, Tony is relieved to dismount from the wagon. The situation is getting out of hand. Mr Kytes is astonished to learn that Milly, Unity and Hannah are all on board.

Commentary

Tony admits that he is in a mess and asks his father which one of the girls he ought to marry. At this point, Tony's horse bolts. On the wagon, Milly has crawled from beneath the sacks and comes face to face with Unity. They squabble.

Commentary

Hearing female voices in the wagon behind her, Hannah nearly passes out with shock. She loses control of herself and the horse. Tony's wagon overturns at the next corner. The three girls are thrown out - and end up in a heap on the road.

Thomas Hardy Short Stories - Tony Kytes Commentary

Commentary

The girls are hysterical. Tony decides to speak what he calls the 'truth'. He says that he and Hannah are about to announce their marriage in church. Hannah's father arrives. He urges her to refuse Tony.

Commentary

Tony asks each of the three girls in turn to marry him. Two of them refuse. He marries the one who does not as soon as possible. Their marriage in Longpuddle is celebrated with great rejoicing - by most people at least.

Thomas Hardy Short Stories - Tony Kytes Sentences for Storyboard

three maidens

took off his hat out of respect

Take her leavings! I'd scorn it.

fair and square

it was a rare party

asked her to be mine and she is willing

have spirit enough to refuse him

whiche'er of them did not ask to ride with thee

if yer virtue is left to 'ee and you run no risk

it do seem as if

fate had ordained it

put up the banns

Thomas Hardy Short Stories - Tony Kytes Sentences for Storyboard

driving home the wagon in the afternoon

I never knowed you was so pretty before

what should he see but the feather in her hat

will ye, to avoid all unpleasantness, lie down in the back part of the wagon?

looked up with a little pout at him

another beauty of the place

would ye creep in the front of the wagon?

empty sacks

tarpaulin

my bonnet and jacket

spoke tenderer and tenderer

there's mice in the wagon!

I declare!

a moan as if something had broke its heart

come, come, this won't do

pride and dread of being laughed at

thunderstruck

a'most in a swoond

let go the reins together

Thomas Hardy Short Stories - Withered Arm - Commentary

1. A Lorn Milkmaid

Rhoda and her son go home to a simple cottage in the countryside. Rhoda tells her son to find out what Farmer Lodge's bride is like.

Milkers in the dairy on Farmer Lodge's land, discussing his recent marriage.

One of the milkers, Rhoda Brook, does not join in the discussions and is separate from the others. Two of the milkers say how hard the new marriage is for Rhoda, and that Farmer Lodge has not spoken to Rhoda for years.

2. The Young Wife

At the dairy the dairyman, who knows of Rhoda's past, tries to keep the gossip from upsetting her.

Farmer Lodge returns with his young wife. Rhoda's son walks along by the carriage and stares at Mrs Lodge. She is beautiful.

Rhoda asks her son in great detail about Gertrude. Rhoda refuses to see Gertrude herself, but knows enough to have a good mental image of her.

3. A Vision

The following day Gertrude visits Rhoda, bringing new boots for her son. Gertrude's looks are as Rhoda imagined, but her manner and character are different.

Gertrude visits regularly and a friendship develops. Gertrude shows Rhoda the injury she has on her left arm! On seeing the bruise marks, Rhoda recognises them and feels guilty.

Rhoda is obsessed by Gertrude and hates her because she has replaced herself in Farmer Lodge's affections. In the night Rhoda sees a vision of Gertrude, but she is ugly and old. Rhoda grasps the vision's left arm and throws it to the floor.

Thomas Hardy Short Stories - Withered Arm - Commentary

4. A Suggestion

Gertrude's arm is worse and she decides to see Conjuror Trendle. She asks Rhoda to lead her, secretly, to where the exorcist lives. Rhoda, although worried agrees to take her.

Gertrude tells Rhoda how upset she is by her husband's reaction to her arm. Rhoda has grown fond of Gertrude. However, her feelings of guilt increase and she wonders if she has witchlike powers.

Gertrude tells Rhoda that local people have suggested she seek healing from an old 'conjuror', an exorcist. Rhoda thinks this means people believe the cause of the injured arm is supernatural and that she is responsible.

5. Conjuror Trendle

Gertrude and Rhoda meet in secret and walk to Conjuror Trendle's cottage. It is a long and difficult walk and both are very quiet.

Conjuror Trendle and Gertrude go inside the cottage and he conjures up the face of the person who has put a curse on her. Gertrude leaves pale and shaken, and becomes cold and distant to Rhoda. Local people believe that Rhoda has bewitched Gertrude. Rhoda and her son leave the area.

Conjuror Trendle has the powers of a 'white wizard', but prefers to thought of as a humble agricultural worker. Immediately, he tells Rhoda her injury does not have a physical cause, and he notices something strange about Rhoda.

6. A Second Attempt

Conjuror Trendle tells Gertrude that to cure her arm she must touch the neck of a man who has just been hanged. She will have to go to the County Gaol on the day of an execution.

Six years later, Gertrude feels that Farmer Lodge is uninterested in her. She is more desperate to find a cure for her arm, and has become increasingly sad and lonely.

Gertrude decides to visit Conjuror Trendle again. She goes alone. He says he cannot cure her arm.

Thomas Hardy Short Stories - Withered Arm - Commentary

7. A Ride.

In Casterbridge preparations are being made for the hanging. Gertrude takes a room at an inn, and people assume she has come to see the execution on the following day.

Secretly, Gertrude sets out for Casterbridge gaol. She plans to tell her husband about it later, as long as the plan to cure her arm succeeds.

Gertrude decides to visit Casterbridge gaol and try Trendle's cure. A man is going to be hanged, and she plans to 'use' his corpse. Gertrude's husband plans to be away so she will not be missed.

8. A Waterside Hermit

The hangman agrees with Conjuror Trendle that 'blood turning' is the only cure for her arm. He is willing to let Gertrude touch the corpse after he cuts it down for a small amount of money.

Davies tells Gertrude what to do for the following day.

Gertrude goes to the hangman's cottage. She speaks to Davies the hangman, and he is willing to tell her about the execution. The man is going to be executed for arson. He is 18 and is unlikely to get a pardon.

9. A Re-Encounter

The following day Gertrude waits inside the gaol. The young man is hanged, and his corpse is carried into the prison in an open coffin.

Following Gertrude's funeral, Farmer Lodge sells his land and moves to the coast. He dies two years later. Rhoda cannot be found, but eventually returns to Holmstoke to work in the dairy.

Gertrude, terrified with fear, bares her withered arm. Davies' hand grabs it and rubs it along the red rope burn on the dead man's neck. Gertrude's arm is cured. Gertrude hears Rhoda's voice, and beside her is Farmer Lodge. The hanged man is their son and they have come to take the body for burial. Gertrude falls unconscious, due to shock, and never recovers.