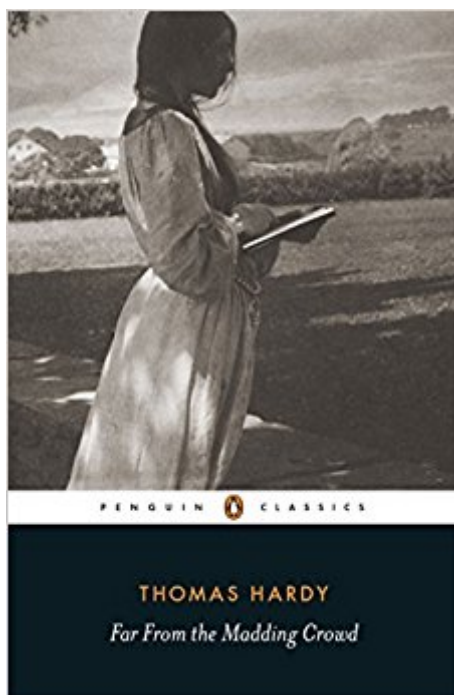


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Far From The Madding Crowd (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Thomas Hardy's impassioned novel of courtship in rural life. In Thomas Hardy's first major literary success, independent and spirited Bathsheba Everdene has come to Weatherbury to take up her position as a farmer on the largest estate in the area. Her bold presence draws three very different suitors: the gentleman-farmer Boldwood, the soldier-seducer Sergeant Troy, and the devoted shepherd Gabriel Oak. Each, in contrasting ways, unsettles her decisions and complicates her life, and tragedy ensues, threatening the stability of the whole community. One of his first works set in the semi-fictional region of Wessex, Hardy's novel of swift passion and slow courtship is imbued with his evocative descriptions of rural life and landscapes, and with unflinching honesty about sexual relationships. This edition, based on Hardy's original 1874 manuscript, is the complete novel he never saw published, and restores its full candor and innovation. Rosemarie Morgan's introduction discusses the history of its publication, as well as the biblical and classical allusions that permeate the novel. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Few literary settings are more distinctive than Thomas Hardy's Wessex, a hilly, chalky, bucolic quilt of pastures and villages occupying the southwest of England, its residents sworn to the immutable cultural traditions of centuries long past. But it is not the goal of "Far from the Madding Crowd" to be merely a sentimental portrait of a region for which Hardy has a great affection, but a grandiose drama about the eventual union of a man and the woman he loves. In summary, Hardy does accede to a Happily Ever After ending, but how he gets to this point is why his novel deserves to be read. It's not surprising that the novel was originally attributed to George Eliot because the protagonist, Gabriel Oak, as the novel's moral anchor, is very similar in character to Eliot's Adam Bede. Oak is trying to make a living on his own as a farmer, but a stroke of bad luck compels him to take a job as a shepherd for a beautiful young woman named Bathsheba Everdene who has recently inherited her uncle's farm and commands a large number of workers and servants. Oak iconically personifies the rustic setting, not only because of his surname but because of the intimacy with which he communes with nature, and his fondness for playing the flute seems designed to evoke an image of Pan. Oak has an awkward history with Bathsheba -- he had known her before her windfall, but in her independent spirit she spurned his love. As the head of Weatherbury farm, however, she can't get by on her independence alone, and she needs Oak's expertise in ensuring her sheep are healthy and fit for wool production. Her romantic attention turns toward a profligate soldier named Francis Troy who, through an unlikely error, has just barely avoided wedding Fanny Robin, one of the Weatherbury servants.

Far From the Madding Crowd is a wonderful story about an honest and good man. This man is Gabriel Oak, a small time shepherd trying to gain his independence as a farmer. In his quest for independence he meets Bathsheba Everdene, a very pretty young woman, and falls instantly in love. On a whim he goes and asks Miss Everdene for her hand in marriage, even though he has barely known her for a week. She rejects farmer Oak's proposal. The next week Bathsheba moves away to a far away town. Even though he is rejected by Miss Everdene he vows that he will always love her, and being the honest man that he is Oak did exactly that. Not long after Miss Everdene's rejection Oak finds himself in financial ruin. A young, inexperienced sheep dog that farmer Oak owns, carelessly chases all two hundred of Oak's sheep off of a cliff killing them. After this devastating blow Oak sells everything that he owns and moves away in search of new work. On the road to finding new work Oak happens upon a small structure that is on fire. Oak immediately jumps into action to help save the surrounding structures from also burning to the ground. After he has accomplished this good deed Oak finds out that the owner of the buildings he has just saved is no

other than Miss Bathsheba Everdene. He also finds out that she is now the mistress of a large estate on which these buildings are located. In his desperate situation he asks Miss Everdene if she would like to hire a shepherd and out of her thankfulness she gives Oak a job. Oak continues to work for Miss Everdene through good times and bad, he is very faithful to her. Even after Miss Everdene marries a man that is less than good Oak's good nature and love for Miss Everdene forces him to stay by her side.

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