

***Far From the Madding Crowd***  
**Critical Discussion Questions**  
**Review for Unit Exam**

1. In Chapter IV, Bathsheba tells Gabriel, "I want somebody to tame me; I am too independent: and you would never be able to, I know." How is Bathsheba "tamed" over the course of the novel, and who is responsible for her transformation?
2. The title of Hardy's novel comes from Thomas Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (1751), certainly in Hardy's day one of the most well known poems in the English language. Gray's "Elegy" is readily available online and in poetry collections available at the library. Given the overall tenor of the poem, why might Hardy have wanted to allude to it, to establish it as a comparison text in the minds of his readers?
3. Time is a theme that weaves throughout the story. One example may be found in Chapter XVI, when Frank Troy stands rigidly in All Saints Church awaiting Fanny's delayed arrival while a "grotesque clockwork" agonizingly marks each passing moment. Where else does Hardy employ the theme of time, and what purpose does it serve?
4. Two particular episodes in *Far from the Madding Crowd* are often cited for their profound sensuality: Sergeant Troy's seduction of Bathsheba through swordplay (Chapter XXVIII), and Gabriel's sheep-shearing scene (Chapter XXII). What elements does Hardy employ to make these scenes so powerful?
5. At the end of the novel, Hardy describes the remarkable bond between Gabriel and Bathsheba: "Theirs was that substantial affection which arises . . . when the two who are thrown together begin first by knowing the rougher sides of each other's character, and not the best till further on, the romance growing up in the interstices of a mass of hard, prosaic reality." How does this relationship serve as a contrast to other examples of love and courtship throughout the novel? Consider Bathsheba and her three suitors, as well as Fanny Robin and Sergeant Troy.
6. What evidence is there that Hardy believed life was ruled by fate, or sheer luck? Cite instances where luck, fate and/or coincidence played a strong role in the story. How does this relate to the tragicomedy genre, and where are elements of the tragicomedy seen?
7. Both Gabriel and Bathsheba's names allude to Biblical history. To what do their names allude? How are these names appropriate for their characters?
8. Why is the pastoral landscape of this novel important? Why could this novel not have taken place in a different setting?
9. How is Gabriel Oak connected to nature? Cite instances in the novel where he shows his deep connection with nature. Discuss how this connection works to his benefit, and how it benefits or hurts those around him.
10. In Gabriel Oak, Sergeant Troy, and Farmer Boldwood, Hardy has depicted three very different suitors in pursuit of Bathsheba Everdene. What distinguishes each of these characters, and what values does each of them represent?