Far from the Madding Crowd

Before Reading

ACTIVITY 1 BEFORE READING
Encourage discussion. The best answer is probably 2, or possibly 3.

‘Madding’ is an archaic word, meaning ‘frenzied, acting in a mad way’. The phrase comes from a famous poem by Thomas Gray (1716–1771), *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*: ‘Far from the madding crowd’s ignoble strife, / Their sober wishes never learn’d to stray . . .’

ACTIVITY 2 BEFORE READING
Encourage discussion. Sentences 3 and 5 are correct.

ACTIVITY 3 BEFORE READING
Open answers. Encourage students to speculate and to make guesses, but do not tell them the answers. They will find out as they read that Bathsheba marries first Sergeant Troy, and later Gabriel Oak, so numbers 2, 3, and 7 are correct.

While Reading

CHAPTERS 1 TO 5 WHILE READING
1 F Gabriel Oak rented a farm and had two hundred and fifty sheep, but they were not yet paid for.
2 T
3 F The girl saved Gabriel’s life in his shepherd’s hut.
4 F Bathsheba refused Gabriel’s offer of marriage, because she didn’t love him.
5 T
6 F Bathsheba was grateful to Gabriel for saving her wheat and offered him employment as a shepherd.
7 T
8 T
9 F At the weekly market Mr Boldwood did not seem to notice Bathsheba.
10 T

CHAPTERS 6 TO 10 WHILE READING
1 He asked Gabriel Oak whose writing was on the envelope.
2 Because she arrived too late at the church, which made him look a fool.
3 Because she felt guilty that she had encouraged him to fall in love with her by sending him a valentine.
4 Because he told her the truth about her thoughtless behaviour, and because she was angry with him for not saying he still cared for her.
5 The note that Bathsheba sent him, which ended, ‘Gabriel, do not desert me!’
6 Walking along a path at night, Bathsheba passed Troy and her skirt got caught on the spur of his boot.
7 Because he had invited her to watch his sword practice, and she very much wanted to see it.
8 He kissed her on the lips.
9 He advised her to marry Mr Boldwood, and to be careful of her behaviour towards Troy.

ACTIVITY ANSWERS

BEFORE READING ACTIVITIES (PAGE 92)

BEFORE READING CHAPTER 11
Encourage students to speculate and to make guesses, but do not tell them the answers. They will find out as they read that the ‘yes’ answers are numbers 2 and 5.

CHAPTERS 11 AND 12 WHILE READING

1 Boldwood to Bathsheba, about her letter saying she could not marry him, and how that would never change his love for her.
2 Bathsheba to Boldwood, about the valentine she sent him.
3 Boldwood to Bathsheba, about Sergeant Troy being the cause of his misery.
4 Gabriel Oak to Bathsheba, when he and Jan Coggan caught up with the horse and cart, and found it was Bathsheba driving, and not a thief.
5 Sergeant Troy to Boldwood, about marrying Fanny Robin, which he knew he should do, but couldn’t afford to do.
6 Mr Boldwood to Troy, about Bathsheba, when he realizes that she and Troy are lovers, and before he knows they are married.
7 Troy to Boldwood, about the money Boldwood tried to bribe him with, first to marry Fanny Robin, then to marry Bathsheba.
8 Troy to Gabriel Oak and Jan Coggan, about his position as Bathsheba’s husband.

CHAPTERS 13 TO 15 WHILE READING

1 Why . . .? Because if they were not covered, they would be damaged by the rain in the storm.
2 Who . . .? Gabriel Oak, with some help from Bathsheba.
3 Why . . .? Because they were asleep, drunk, in the barn, after Troy had given them brandy at the harvest supper.
4 Why . . .? Because he couldn’t think about anything else except Bathsheba.
5 Where . . .? At the Casterbridge workhouse.
6 What . . .? A curl of Fanny Robin’s yellow hair.
7 How . . .? As well as he knew himself.
8 What . . .? The dead woman and her dead child.
ACTIVITIES ANSWERS

BEFORE READING CHAPTERS 16 AND 17
Encourage students to speculate and to make guesses, but do not tell them the answers. They will find out as they read that Troy leaves Weatherbury and is reported drowned; Bathsheba loses interest in farming, and can’t quite believe that Troy is dead; Boldwood begins to hope that Bathsheba will marry him one day; and Gabriel continues his sensible, farming life, eventually taking over the management of both Bathsheba’s and Boldwood’s farms.

CHAPTERS 16 TO 18 WHILE READING
1 Troy ordered the best possible gravestone for Fanny.
2 Bathsheba asked Gabriel to fill in the hole in Fanny’s grave.
3 Troy was rescued from drowning by sailors.
4 Gabriel became the farm manager for both Bathsheba and Boldwood.
5 Troy returned to England as a circus horse-rider.
6 Boldwood asked Bathsheba to promise to marry him in six years’ time.
7 Bathsheba asked Gabriel’s advice on whether to give this promise.
8 At the Christmas party, when Bathsheba cried out in fear, Boldwood took a gun and shot Troy.

BEFORE READING CHAPTER 19
Encourage students to speculate and to make guesses, but do not tell them the answers. They will find out as they read that Troy is dead, Mr Boldwood gives himself up and is eventually sent to prison for life, and Bathsheba marries Gabriel at last.

Encourage students to describe the ending they would prefer, and why they would prefer it.

After Reading

ACTIVITY 1 AFTER READING
Suggested answers:
• Bathsheba Everdene was an independent-minded and determined young woman, but she was vain and could also be very thoughtless. She was foolish and much too trusting when deciding who to marry.
• Frank Troy was selfish, thoughtless, and could not be trusted. He lived only for the present, and was too interested in chasing pretty girls.
• Gabriel Oak was a sensible and hard-working young man. He was independent-minded, and a good friend, who always gave honest opinions. He was also reasonable, and very patient.
• William Boldwood was a respectable, wealthy, middle-aged farmer. He was a very serious person, and had very strong feelings, which could lead him to do or say foolish things.

ACTIVITY 2 AFTER READING
Open answers. Encourage students to discuss their ideas with reference to the characters’ qualities.

ACTIVITY 3 AFTER READING
Any appropriate answers are acceptable. Suggested answers:
Liddy: Oh, miss, we’ve all been so worried! Where have you been?
Bathsheba: I’ve been to Bath. And, Liddy, you should call me ma’am now.
Liddy: Call you ma’am? You mean you went to Bath and got married? Oh, miss, I mean, ma’am, who did you – is it . . . ?
Bathsheba: Yes, it’s Sergeant Troy.
Liddy: Oh, I do hope he’ll make you a good husband, I really do.
Bathsheba: Don’t speak badly of him, Liddy, please! He’s a good man, really he is.
Liddy: I’ll try to say only good things about him, ma’am. But it’s so sudden! Did you plan to marry him when you went to Bath?
Bathsheba: No, I didn’t. In fact, I went there to break off our relationship.
Liddy: But I don’t understand. If you went there to break off your relationship, then why did you marry him?
Bathsheba: Because he told me he’d seen a woman more beautiful than me, and if I wanted him, I would have to marry him at once.
Liddy: Seen a more beautiful woman than you? Oh, ma’am, he was lying! He probably just said that to make you jealous!
Bathsheba: Well, it did make me jealous. I was wild with love and jealousy – so I married him!
Liddy: So now he’ll have to stop chasing other girls, won’t he?
Bathsheba: He loves me, Liddy, and he says that he’ll never look at another woman in his life!
Liddy: Well, he would say that, wouldn’t he? But I hope it’s true. Oh, dear. Poor Mr Boldwood is going to be so unhappy!
Bathsheba: Yes, he is. Oh Liddy, I’m afraid of him.
Liddy: Afraid of him? Why?
Bathsheba: Because when he got my letter saying I wouldn’t marry him, he was so angry. He said he would fight Frank when he found him.
Liddy: But he won’t fight now Mr Troy’s your husband, surely?
Bathsheba: I don’t know, Liddy. I hope not, but he seemed so desperate, and he’s so madly in love with me.
Liddy: Yes, that’s true. Everybody knows he’s madly in love with you. Oh ma’am, you do lead a complicated life!
ACTIVITY 4 AFTER READING

1 Bathsheba was the wife of Uriah the Hittite (in the Bible). She became one of the wives of King David, who had caused her husband to be killed in battle, and was the mother of Solomon. She was famous for her beauty. Hardy wanted readers to recognize his Bathsheba as a beautiful woman.

2 An oak is an English woodland tree. It appears in many stories and events in history, and always stands for strength, great size, long life, reliability. Gabriel Oak is described as an honest, true countryman; he is strong and solid and dependable, like an oak tree.

3 Frank means honest, direct, truthful, and is the opposite of Sergeant Troy, who does not always tell the truth and cannot be trusted. Perhaps Hardy wanted us to see Troy as Bathsheba sees him. At first she trusts him and thinks he is ‘frank’; it is only later that she realizes that he is dishonest and deceitful.

ACTIVITY 5 AFTER READING

Acceptable answers are any words that have an appropriate meaning and fit the grammar of the sentence. Students might like to check each other’s work and discuss alternative answers. Some alternatives are given below.

I shouldn’t have agreed to meet him alone, but somehow he persuaded me. He is so handsome! I went to the place he had told me about. It was a deep, round hollow in the ground, completely hidden from the house and the path. And there he was, in his wonderful red uniform! I had to stand in front of him and not move, while his shining sword flashed through the air all around me, but never touched me. At first I was afraid he would cut me, but he told me the sword was not at all sharp. But suddenly, a curl of my hair fell to the ground! He had cut it off without my realizing!

Then he said he would kill an insect on my dress, and in horror I saw his sword coming towards my heart. I was sure that this time I would die, but I felt almost happy that my death would be at his hands. When I opened my eyes, and saw the dead insect on the point of the sword, I realized how close I’d been to death. He confessed he’d lied about the sharpness of his sword, and I felt so weak! I had to sit down. He put the curl of my hair in his pocket, next to his heart, and bent down to kiss me on the lips! I could not stop him, nor did I want to. I shall never forget that kiss.

ACTIVITY 6 AFTER READING

4+9 1+7 12+5+3 6+11 2+10+13+8

Yesterday evening a man was shot and killed at the Boldwood farm in Weatherbury, and early this morning Farmer William Boldwood, aged 43, was arrested for the murder. The dead man was Sergeant Frank Troy, husband of Bathsheba Troy, who owns the Everdene farm in Weatherbury. Mrs Troy has believed herself to be a widow since her husband was reported drowned over a year ago, although his wife had not yet been informed of his return. When Sergeant Troy unexpectedly arrived at the party, Mrs Troy seemed so frightened of him that Mr Boldwood, wanting to protect her, took down a gun from the wall and shot him.

ACTIVITY 7 AFTER READING

Open answers. Encourage discussion of the themes of the story, and what makes, or doesn’t make, a good title. Students could work in groups to devise six or eight titles, and then compare and discuss their lists. Possible titles might include:

- A Foolish Valentine
- Heartache among the Wheatfields
- Harvest of Love
- A Patient Shepherd
- The Sword and the Valentine
- Beauty’s Harvest
- Never Trust a Soldier
- Valentine for a Farmer
- For Love of Bathsheba Everdene
- Beauty and the Sword
- A Vain Woman
- The Wheatfields of Despair