

Reading Skill

DRAW CONCLUSIONS ABOUT SOCIAL CONTEXT

The **social context** of a work refers to the social conditions that inspired or influenced the writer. When Hardy was writing, the social context included these circumstances:

- Many people were moving from rural areas to large cities. Many social critics feared that this move would lead to the loss of old customs, traditions, and values.
- Growing industry brought financial profit for some and technological progress, but also created poor living conditions for many people living in poverty.
- Harsh living conditions also suggested that nature and society did not care about the suffering of the individual.

Directions: In the first column of the chart, record lines that you believe reveal something about the era in which they were written. After you read, use your notes to draw conclusions about the social context. One example has been done for you.

Text Clues	Notes on Social Context
"The ancient pulse of germ and birth/Was shrunk hard and dry . . ." (The Darkling Thrush," lines 13–14)	These lines refer to the seeds of spring, usually a symbol of hope and rebirth, but here the speaker describes them as hard and lifeless. This might reflect the pessimism or unease about the future common in this era.

THE DARKLING THRUSH /
AH, ARE YOU DIGGING . . .