

Desire Under the Elms Literary Device

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Symbols

Elm Trees: The elm trees near the farmhouse stand for the power of women like Maw and Abbie. They seem to protect the house but also make it dark and heavy. Just like the trees, Maw's memory and Abbie's love both comfort and control the men. They show love that protects yet traps.

The Farm: The Cabot farm is the symbol of greed, pride, and inheritance. Everyone—Ephraim, Abbie, and Eben—wants to own it. This land becomes more important than love or peace. It makes them jealous and cruel. The farm shows how the desire for property can destroy family bonds and bring only pain.

Stones: The stones in the play stand for hard work, suffering, and faith. The rocky land makes farming difficult. It shows how life is full of struggle. Cabot thinks God wants him to work on the stony farm. He believes God wants to make him suffer to make him strong. But to his sons, stones mean endless labor and a life without freedom or joy.