

Louisa is the practical daughter of a powerful industrialist. Sissy is the imaginative daughter of a clown. What will happen when two such different lives collide?

A disappearing father, an unhappy marriage, a handsome suitor and a bank robbery all bring challenges to Louisa's life. Will she be able to control her powerful emotions, or will they lead her to ruin?

Set amongst the noisy, dangerous factories of a northern industrial town, where the workers struggle to survive, *Hard Times* explores the power that people can have over others, and the suffering that is caused when human emotions are ignored.

Lexile® Level	AR Level	Word Count
790L	5.0	4,977

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“**Miniature
masterpieces**”

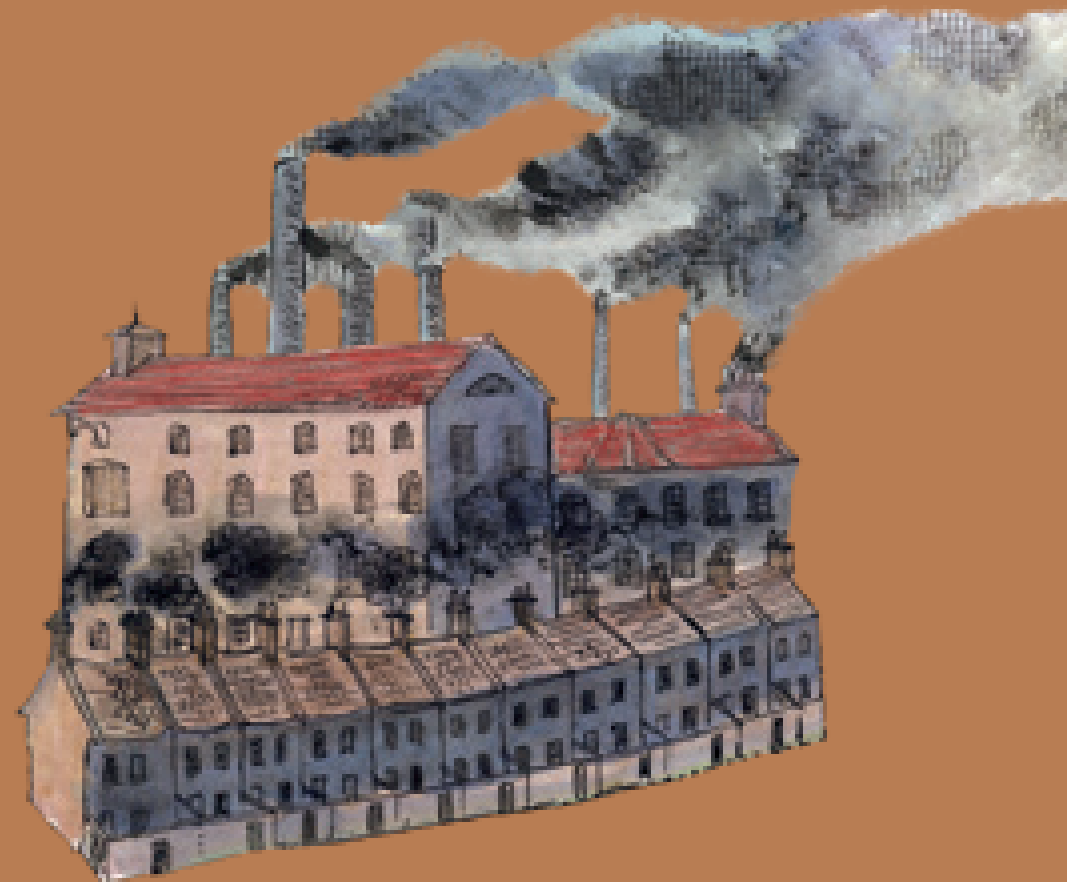
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CHARLES DICKENS

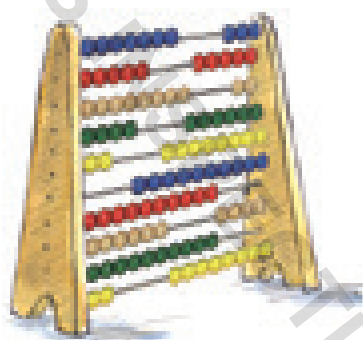
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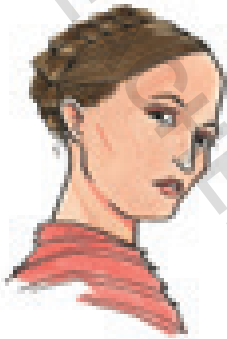


CONTENTS

The Characters	4
Hard Times	7
Looking Closer	55



THE CHARACTERS



Louisa Gradgrind

Louisa has been brought up by strict logic. Will her natural energy and passion be her downfall?



Tom Gradgrind

Louisa's brother.

Tom is unhappy, bored and selfish, but is he a criminal?



Mr Gradgrind

A powerful man. He runs a school with Bounderby. Will his practical, logical approach help him to control his children?



Mr Bounderby

A wealthy factory owner.

Can anybody be free or happy when he is around?



Sissy Jupe

A clown's daughter.

Will her father ever return?

Will she and Louisa ever be friends?



Stephen Blackpool and Rachael

Thoroughly good but very poor people. Can such people ever find happiness?

James Harthouse

A handsome, clever young gentleman. Will he lead Louisa to shame and ruin?





HARD TIMES

The flame flared, then died immediately as the man put it into his mouth. Its reflection still flickered in Louisa's fascinated eyes. Everything on the other side of the fence was colour and sound – a pony trotted past, ribbons flying and bells tinkling; the fire-eater's fierce flame roared again. Nearby, a girl of about fourteen was helping a clown to dress. She was painting a wide red smile onto his sad white face. Next to them, a child was singing a song that was new to sixteen-year-old Louisa.

'Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.'

Louisa heard her brother Tom gasp beside her. As she strained to see what wonderful sight had caught his eye, an iron-like hand clasped her shoulder.

Louisa realised her mistake. 'Father!' The fire died in her eyes. Like machines, she and

Tom allowed their father to lead them silently back to Stone Lodge.

Once home, Mr Gradgrind stood solidly before his two children. 'Those people are worthless vagabonds. You two have had a thorough, practical education in our school. What can you possibly find of interest in that dreadful circus?'

Tom stared at the floor, but Louisa raised her eyes proudly to meet her father's. 'We were just wondering what ...'

'Wondering!' exclaimed Mr Gradgrind in disbelief, 'No child of mine has been taught to wonder! Never wonder, it is idle imagination and serves no logical purpose. I won't have any wondering here. All I want is facts, facts, facts.'

Louisa rolled her eyes at Tom. As her father continued in his inflexible, dry tone, Louisa thought how well his opinions matched his square body. His shoulders, his forehead, even the end of the finger he was wagging at them,



could be done more quickly, people could travel more quickly, and money could be made more quickly than ever before. This was both exciting and terrible.

As machinery began to replace people, many manual workers in the countryside were made redundant. At the same time, huge factories were developing which needed workers to operate machines. This led to a mass migration from the countryside to towns and cities.

Working life in the factories was harsh. Pollution made working and living conditions unhealthy, the machinery was dangerous, the working day was long and the pay poor. Workers had few rights and were controlled by regular beatings. Women, and children as young as six years old, worked in these conditions alongside the men.

Factory owners like Bounderby grew wealthy through their exploitation of their workers.

Queen Victoria represented all that the ideal Victorian woman should be. Their responsibility was to maintain domestic stability through marriage, family values and motherhood. Had Louisa become more

seriously involved with Harthouse, she would have been disgraced forever.

Finding out more

We recommend the following books and websites to gain a greater understanding of Charles Dickens's and the Gradgrinds' England:

Books

- Terry Deary, *Vile Victorians* (Horrible Histories), Scholastic, 1994.
- Ann Kramer, *Victorians* (Eyewitness Guides), Dorling Kindersley, 1998.
- Peter Hepplewhite and Mairi Campbell, *All About the Industrial Revolution*, Hodder Wayland, 2002.
- Stewart Ross, *Witness to History: Industrial Revolution*, Heinemann, 2004.
- John Malam and David Antram, *You Wouldn't Want to be a Victorian Schoolchild: Lessons You'd Rather Not Learn*, Hodder, 2002.
- Peter Ackroyd, *Dickens*, BBC, 2003.