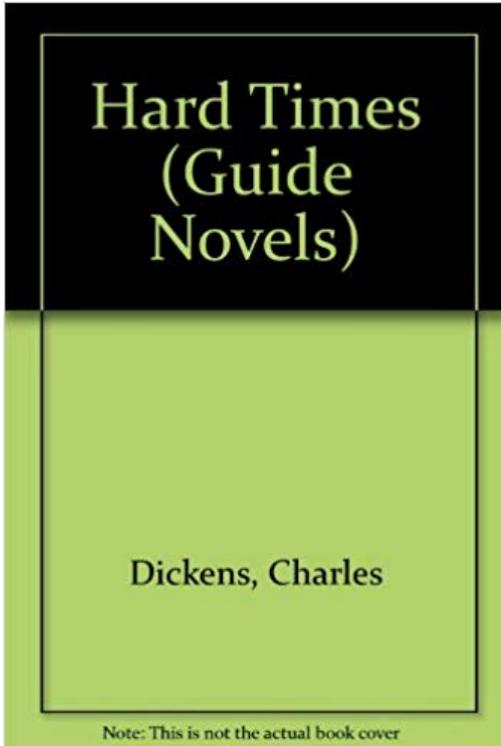


Hard Times (Guide Novels)



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The 'terrible mistake' was the contemporary utilitarian philosophy, expounded in *Hard Times* (1854) as the Philosophy of Fact by the hard-headed disciplinarian Thomas Gradgrind. But the novel, Dickens's shortest, is more than a polemical tract for the times; the tragic story of Louisa Gradgrind and her father is one of Dickens's triumphs. When Louisa, trapped in a loveless marriage, falls prey to an idle seducer, the crisis forces her father to reconsider his cherished system. Yet even as the development of the story reflects Dickens's growing pessimism about human nature and society, *Hard Times* marks his return to the theme which had made his early works so popular: the amusements of the people. Sleary's circus represents Dickens's most considered defence of the necessity of entertainment, and infuses the novel with the good humour which has ensured its appeal to generations of readers.



Reviews of the *Hard Times (Guide Novels)*

Ganthisc

I was a little hesitant to read this novel because I had heard it was boring and flat, but I chose to do so because I had read four of Dickens books already, and enjoyed them very much (especially "David Copperfield"), and because it looked like a fairly quick read. (Quick for Charles Dickens, that is!) It was not disappointing! So good! I enjoyed every page of this great classic! The plot is intriguing, and

how all the characters turned out at the end of the book. It is made up of three sections, "Sowing", "Reaping" and "Garnering". It shows the disadvantages of living life by fact, and fact alone. It doesn't have that light-hearted of an ending, but it is resolute. Like most Dickens books, the characters are all distinct and very non-forgettable.

So, if you're looking for a classic, check out this book!

Siatanni

This novel was a challenge to me albeit a shorter story than most, not so much the content but with his very creative colorful characters he also incorporated one with a lisp, that couldn't pronounce his "s" and another that spoke in a very "cockney" accent. In able to understand the content I needed to slow down and read the passages aloud. Very clever and somewhat playful Mr. Dickens. As with his other novels he wrote about the down trodden, misunderstood and serious difficulties of the lower members of society. The story takes place in Coletown, a dreary place to be sure with all the smoke from factories polluting the environment. There is not one or singular protagonist in the story, many have a story to tell. A child abandoned by her father who is a circus performer and has lost his touch and wants a better life for her. An educator who believes all children should learn only facts and nothing but facts so even his own children don't know how to deal with society or relationships in general. A bank and mill owner who lives a lie. A poor mill worker, stuck with an alcoholic wife. Dickens even has added one of those ladies who is in everyone's business and a libertine. Very entertaining even though melancholy at times I highly recommend.

Chi

Hard Times by Charles Dickens was very good and engaging at all times. This was Dickens answer to Adam Smith. He posits that compassion and understanding are as important for a good life as acting in one's own self interest. He mocks the idea that fate responds only to self interest. I recommend this book highly. You can never go wrong with Dickens!

Mora

Hard Times is a story of our times as well as those as Mr. Dickens'. The characters and situations may be dressed in period garb, but their thoughts and actions are timeless. In a period when so many were downtrodden and society severely crippled with the "haves" and the "have nots" ... when compassion was underestimated and governments of self interest the norm.... Dickens writes a tale devoted to finding truth within truth, heart within those predisposed to see heartlessness a virtue, and understanding slow to grow within hearts and minds so poorly exercised. His portrait might be one of our current century and circumstances with slight changes in locale, transport, and occupation. Those duped are still duped today, government stooges still rule a scene of inequities and hold fast the status quo, those of power based on tremendous wealth still pontificate while pulling the strings of political hacks (some even ARE THE POLITICAL HACKS), --- and the righting of wrongs, leveling of the field, fixing of the broken institutions is still the domain of the few ---- with little success. Yet 50% of our population, often more, against their own self interests...elect those persons whose strings are pulled and this same population sides with those who offer corrupt and absurd solutions (or none) or blame the poor for being poor. Dickens wrote a true tale when few wanted to know the truth. I wonder if those same statistics are etched in stone rather than in the hearts of men and women. I do not know why we continue to follow such dangerous footsteps.

Rko

Hard Times is a timely novel considering it was written in the nineteenth century. It deals with class warfare. The main characters are chewed up and spewed out of Coketown. They were expendables who were part of the factory. I see many parallels with today's worker who's used up by corporate culture and government. Now many people want to do away the safety nets and resort to "survival of fittest." Homelessness is a symptom of such a society which doesn't value its citizens.

Use_Death

Dickens is the consummate story teller. He weaves a tapestry of personality and place with an unerring eye for detail and authenticity. In *Hard Times* he creates a contrast between those who live by objective standards and those who exist in a world of sense and feelings. His characters, especially the more mature, remind one of some they might have known, who reflected similarly, their life experiences. Some real other imagined. The benefit of reading this Classic lies in the timeless and true messages. A young person might enrich their decision making ability by learning from the mistakes of someone in the story who alters their life by making the wrong ones. At the end, regardless of the readers age, you are left with much to think about.

Brialelis

I will always love Dickens for his anger and sharp criticism of the cold institutions of his time and wonder what he would write about our present circumstances. I think his words would be sharp on deed

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