

# The Mayor of Casterbridge Study Guide

## The Mayor of Casterbridge by Thomas Hardy

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# Introduction

*The Mayor of Casterbridge*, originally entitled *The Life and Death of the Mayor of Casterbridge: A Story of a Man of Character*, was first published serially in a London periodical in 1886. The first publication in book form was later that year. Thomas Hardy was an established author at the time and had published nine previous novels (a first, unpublished novel has been lost), but *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is considered his first masterpiece; some regard it as his greatest tragic novel.

*The Mayor of Casterbridge* is, from beginning to end, the story of Michael Henchard, a skilled farm laborer who, in a drunken rage, sells his young wife, along with their infant child, to a passing sailor. Most of the novel takes place eighteen to twenty years after this event. When the sailor is reported lost at sea, the cast-off wife and now-grown daughter set out to find Michael, who has become an affluent businessman and the mayor of Caster bridge. Michael's success is temporary, though, as circumstances and his own weaknesses of character combine to bring about his downfall in spite of his attempts to right the wrong he committed years before.

## Author Biography

Thomas Hardy was born June 2, 1840, in a village near Dorchester in the southwestern region of England that would become the setting for his novels.

His father, Thomas, was a builder and mason; his mother, Jemima Hand, was a cook.

After attending schools in his village, Bockhampton, and in Dorchester, Hardy was apprenticed at age sixteen to his father's employer, an architect. While learning architecture, Hardy studied the classics with a university-educated tutor named Horace Moule. In 1862, Hardy moved to London, where he worked as an assistant architect, read widely, and began writing. Poems that he submitted to periodicals were rejected, but an article, "How I Built Myself a House," was published.

Hardy's work took him back to Dorchester and then to Weymouth, where he met Emma Lavinia Gifford, whom he married in 1874. Hardy also began writing novels at this time, and it was Emma who encouraged him to leave architecture and write full time. His first published novel, *Desperate Remedies*, came out in 1871 and was quickly followed by two others. (His first, unpublished novel has been lost.) But it was *Far from the Madding Crowd*, published in 1874, that ensured his reputation. By the late 1870s, he was an established member of England's literary elite.

*The Mayor of Casterbridge*, published in 1886, was considered pivotal in Hardy's career, as its male main character was more fully developed than those in previous novels. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* also represented a new achievement in the novel form by successfully blending a psychological portrait of one man with a depiction of the social realities of a particular time and place. Other major works of this period were a collection of short stories, *Wessex Tales* (1888), and the dark and controversial *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891). Reaction to *Jude the Obscure* (1896) was so harsh that Hardy gave up writing novels. He published his first volume of poetry, *Wessex Poems*, in 1898 and continued to write poetry throughout his remaining years.

In 1912, just after Hardy had completed a final revision of his novels, his wife died. He married Florence Emily Dugdale, who had been his secretary, in 1914. Hardy worked on his autobiography, *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy*, which was ostensibly written by his second wife, and burned his private papers. The autobiography, as well as the last volume of Hardy's poetry, *Winter Words*, was published posthumously in 1928.

Hardy was honored during his lifetime with the British government's Order of Merit (1910) and with honorary doctorate of literature degrees from Cambridge University in 1913 and from Oxford University in 1920. He died January 11, 1928, in Dorchester after a brief illness. His ashes are interred in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey in London, though his heart is buried in the grave of his first wife.



# Plot Summary

## Chapters 1-2

As the novel opens, Michael Henchard and his wife, Susan, are walking toward a village in Wessex in southwestern England. Susan is carrying their infant daughter, Elizabeth Jane. It is a late summer afternoon in the mid 1800s. Michael, a skilled farm laborer, is looking for work. Hardy describes the man and woman as being distant from each other and in low spirits. Hardy makes clear that Susan is naïve and malleable.

They enter a shop that sells furmity, a grain-based dish, and order their dinner. Michael quickly discerns that the proprietor, whom Hardy calls "the furmity woman," will spike his furmity with rum for an added payment. He gets drunk and tells those around him that he has ruined his chances for success by marrying too young and would sell his wife if he could. Michael refuses to drop this idea, and finally a sailor offers to meet the five-guinea price that Michael has set. To the shock of the crowd, the sale is made, and Susan and the baby leave with the sailor.

Michael sleeps off the rum in the furmity shop and wakes up to realize what he has done. Feeling remorse, he does two things: he goes to a church and makes a vow that he will not drink hard liquor for twenty-one years (one year for each year he has lived), and he determines to search for Susan and get her back. He searches for months but does not find Susan and the sailor.

## Chapters 3-4

About eighteen years have passed. Susan and the sailor, Newson, lived for about twelve years in Canada and then returned to England. Susan's daughter, Elizabeth Jane, knows nothing about Michael Henchard or Susan's "sale" to Newson; she believes that her mother and Newson are married and that she is Newson's daughter.

Some time ago, Susan had confided in a friend about her past and that she was not legally married to Newson. The friend made Susan understand that she was not bound to Newson in any way; that is, that her "sale" was illegal and did not obligate her to Newson or make their arrangement legal. Susan was upset by this new perspective on her situation and told Newson that she didn't know if she could continue living with him. On his next trip to sea, Newson was reported lost and presumed dead.

Susan and Elizabeth Jane then set out to find Michael Henchard. Susan hopes that Michael will be able and willing to provide some help for Elizabeth Jane—financial help or some sort of start in life—as Newson has left her very little. They return to the village where Michael sold Susan and find the furmity woman. The furmity woman tells Susan that Michael returned about a year after the sale of his wife. He instructed the furmity woman that if a woman ever asked for him, she should give the information that Michael



had gone to Caster bridge. The next morning, Susan and Elizabeth Jane leave for Casterbridge.

## Chapters 5-8

As Susan and Elizabeth Jane arrive in Caster bridge, a crowd is gathered in front of a hotel where a fancy dinner is being held. The windows have been opened so that the commoners on the street can hear what is being said at the dinner. Susan and Elizabeth Jane learn that Michael Henchard is the mayor of the town and is seated at the head of the table. He is also said to be a widower. Elizabeth Jane, who has been told that they are going to see a distant relative by marriage, is delighted to find that he is so successful. Susan is surprised that the drunken, impetuous young man she knew has become so successful, and she dreads meeting him.

During the dinner, Henchard, a grain merchant, is challenged by some in the crowd who accuse him of having sold wheat that had gone bad. Henchard responds that he did not know the wheat was bad and wishes there was some way to make bad wheat into good wheat, but as there is not, so nothing can be done.

A young Scotsman sends a note in to Henchard, who reads it and leaves the dinner to find the writer of the note. It happens that the young man, Donald Farfrae, is staying in the room next to Susan and Elizabeth Jane's at the Three Mariners inn. Thus, the two women overhear Farfrae's conversation with Henchard when the mayor arrives. Farfrae's note has told Henchard that Farfrae knows a way to make the bad wheat usable, and Farfrae shares the method with Henchard. Henchard tries to persuade Farfrae to come to work for him, but Farfrae says that he is bound for America.

Susan overhears Henchard say that he does not drink alcohol because of something shameful that he did when he was young. This gives Susan hope that Henchard might be willing to help Elizabeth Jane.

Later in the evening, Farfrae enralls the crowd at the inn's bar with his singing. Elizabeth Jane, who witnesses this because she is helping to pay for her room by serving in the bar, develops an attraction to Farfrae.

## Chapters 9-12

The next morning, Susan sends Elizabeth Jane to Henchard's house with a note asking him to meet her. When Elizabeth Jane arrives, she is shocked to see Farfrae working in Henchard's office. Farfrae and Henchard had met again early that morning, and Farfrae agreed to work for Henchard after all.

While Elizabeth Jane is waiting for Henchard, a man named Jopp appears. Henchard had promised this man the job he has now given to Farfrae, but he sends Jopp away without apology.





Michael reads Susan's note and asks Elizabeth Jane some questions. He then writes a response to Susan, setting a meeting, and encloses five guineas—the exact amount for which he sold her. The implication is that he is agreeing to take her back, although she has not asked this.

Michael and Susan meet secretly outside the town. Michael proposes to Susan that he will court her as if he has never met her before and marry her. Susan agrees. He offers to begin supporting Susan and Elizabeth Jane immediately and asks Susan's forgiveness.

Henchard returns home and tells Farfrae, whom he likes and trusts, the whole story of his past, which he has until now kept secret. Henchard tells Farfrae that there is one thing that stands in the way of his now making things right with Susan: There is a woman in another town whom Henchard has offered to marry, thinking that Susan was probably dead. Henchard had an affair with this other woman, by which she was disgraced, and he offered to marry her to repair her reputation. He now asks Farfrae to write to the woman and explain why Henchard cannot marry her after all, and Farfrae agrees.

## Chapters 13-16

Henchard provides a house and servant for Susan and Elizabeth Jane and begins courting Susan. They are married in November of the same year. The townspeople wonder why Henchard has married beneath him. Henchard moves his wife and "stepdaughter" into his house and treats them kindly.

Farfrae improves Henchard's business, and Henchard learns that the townspeople now have more respect and affection for Farfrae than for himself. Henchard humiliates a habitually tardy employee by making him go to work without his britches, but Farfrae reverses Henchard and lets the man go home and finish dressing. This causes Henchard and Farfrae to argue.

On a holiday, Henchard and Farfrae plan competing celebrations for the townspeople. Henchard's festivities are rained out, while Farfrae's dance (under a tent) is a huge success. At Farfrae's dance, Henchard angrily declares that Farfrae's term as his manager is almost over, and Farfrae agrees. In a scene that recalls the morning after Henchard sold Susan, Henchard later regrets what he said and realizes that Farfrae really plans to leave his employ.

## Chapters 17-20

Farfrae hints to Elizabeth Jane that he would marry her if he had more money. He then goes into business for himself but makes a point not to compete with Henchard. Henchard, however, treats Farfrae as an enemy and forbids Elizabeth Jane to see him.



Susan becomes ill. Before she dies, she writes a letter addressed to Henchard, which he is not to open until Elizabeth Jane's wedding day.

Soon after Susan's death, Henchard reveals to Elizabeth Jane that he is her father. In looking for proof of his original marriage to Susan (he needs this to prove that he is her father and have her name legally changed to his), he finds the letter that Susan has left and reads it. It reveals that Elizabeth Jane is not Henchard's daughter; that child died a few months after Henchard sold Susan, and the Elizabeth Jane he knows is Newson's daughter. Henchard is distraught and decides not to tell Elizabeth Jane. His behavior toward her changes, though; he criticizes her and increasingly avoids her. She feels unhappy and bereft.

Visiting her mother's grave, Elizabeth Jane encounters a woman she has never seen before and tells the woman her life story. The woman says that she is moving to Casterbridge and invites Elizabeth Jane to live with her as her companion. Elizabeth Jane agrees.

## Chapters 21-26

Elizabeth Jane asks Henchard's permission to take the companion position she has been offered, and Henchard is relieved to see her go. He is surprised, though, when he hears that a Miss Templeman will employ her. This is the woman with whom Henchard once had an affair, the woman he was about to marry before Susan arrived in Casterbridge. She has changed her name to escape the past scandal of her affair with Henchard. Henchard, now free of Susan, has heard that Miss Templeman, also called Lucetta, has just come into a large inheritance, and he wants to marry her.

Elizabeth Jane moves into Miss Templeman's house. Farfrae goes to see Elizabeth Jane but is attracted to Miss Templeman, and the attraction is mutual. Henchard asks Miss Templeman to marry him, but she delays her answer. Henchard later discovers that Farfrae is his rival in love as well as in business. Elizabeth Jane feels rejected by both Farfrae and Henchard.

Henchard now hires Jopp, the man whose job was taken by Farfrae early in the novel, and instructs him to use every legal means of ruining Farfrae's business. Henchard then foolishly speculates on rising grain prices, and when the harvest is good and prices fall, he must take out huge loans to keep his business going. Blaming Jopp for this, Henchard fires him, and he vows to get revenge.

## Chapters 27-30

Henchard forces Lucetta to agree to marry him by threatening to reveal their past affair if she will not.

Henchard, though no longer mayor, is still a local judge. He is called to hear the case of an old woman accused of public obscenity. This turns out to be the furmity woman who



witnessed Henchard's sale of his wife. The woman exposes Henchard in court, and he admits the deed. Lucetta, who had thought Henchard's wife was dead, hears of this and leaves town for a few days.

It is revealed that Lucetta married Farfrae during her absence, feeling released from her promise to marry Henchard by the news about his having sold his wife. When Henchard learns of the marriage, he again threatens to expose Lucetta's scandalous past. Farfrae moves into Lucetta's house, and Elizabeth Jane, because she has feelings for Farfrae, moves out.

## Chapters 31-37

Because of the revelation about his past and coincidental business losses, Henchard is ruined. He declares bankruptcy and moves to a cottage owned by Jopp. Farfrae buys Henchard's business, house, and furniture. Henchard asks Farfrae to give him work as a laborer, and Farfrae agrees. Henchard hates Farfrae, though, who now owns all that was once his and is married to his former lover. The twenty-one years of Henchard's oath have passed, and he is drinking again. He begins to utter threats against Farfrae.

The current mayor dies, and the town council elects Farfrae to replace him.

Henchard has some letters that Lucetta wrote him years ago, during their affair. He knows that these letters, if made public, would ruin both Lucetta and Farfrae, but he has too much feeling for Lucetta to do the deed. However, he stupidly assigns the vengeful Jopp to return the letters to Lucetta. Jopp reads the letters aloud at a tavern, and the crowd plans a "skimmity-ride," in which effigies of Henchard and Lucetta will be paraded through the town to publicize their past affair.

## Chapters 38-41

Henchard challenges the smaller, frailer Farfrae to a wrestling match to the death, but, when he is in a position to kill Farfrae, Henchard lets him go.

The skimmity-ride takes place. Lucetta is so horrified by it that she has a seizure and dies.

Newson appears at Henchard's cottage. He says that his being lost at sea was a ruse to let Susan out of their relationship. Newson has acquired wealth and now wants to share his money and his remaining years with his daughter. Henchard tells Newson that Elizabeth Jane is dead. Newson accepts this and leaves town.

Henchard and Elizabeth Jane renew their affection for each other, and she decides to take care of him.



## Chapters 42-45

About a year later, Henchard and Elizabeth Jane are running a small shop and making a living. Farfrae and Elizabeth Jane begin spending time together.

Henchard sees Newson outside of town and realizes that Newson somehow knows that Elizabeth Jane is alive and has returned for her. Unable to bear the loss of his "daughter," Henchard leaves Casterbridge. When Elizabeth Jane meets Newson and learns that he is her father, she turns against Henchard.

Farfrae and Elizabeth Jane are married. Henchard thinks that perhaps he was wrong in assuming that Newson was in Casterbridge to see Elizabeth-Jane, and, full of hope, he returns to Casterbridge on the evening of the wedding. He sees Newson dancing with Elizabeth Jane and knows he has lost her. She sees him and is cold to him, and he apologizes and leaves for good.

A month later, Elizabeth Jane feels remorse for her treatment of Henchard, and she and Farfrae set out to find him. Several miles from Casterbridge a man at a humble cottage tells them that Henchard lived there but died less than an hour previously. He has left a will requesting that Elizabeth Jane not be informed of his death and that no funeral be held for him. Elizabeth Jane, touched by his acceptance of his fate, abides by his wishes.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

As the story begins, the reader is introduced to Michael and Susan Henchard who, along with their baby, are traveling to Upper Wessex. The couple is described as poor but not destitute, and Hardy notes that Michael walks like a country dweller rather than a city laborer. Michael is a hay trusser (a person who packs and loads bails of hay) who hopes to find work in Weydon Priors. As they travel, they meet a farmer (a "turnip hoer") who tells Michael there are no jobs available for a hay trusser.

Michael and Susan learn that there is a fair in Weydon Priors so they stop to enjoy it. They go to the refreshment tent, where Michael begins drinking punch laced with rum (served by the "furmity" woman). After a few drinks and some prodding by Susan to leave and find a place to stay Michael begins talking loudly about how young men ruin their lives by marrying. A man suggests that men should auction their wives off to the highest bidder, and Michael agrees. He offers Susan to anyone and asks an auctioneer to take bids. Susan gets mad at him and tells the crowd that she will go with anyone who pays Michael.

A young sailor named Newson buys Susan and the baby (a daughter named Elizabeth-Jane). They leave together, with Susan throwing her wedding ring at the drunk and sleeping Michael in contempt. The furmity woman leaves the sleeping Michael as the chapter ends.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter starts the novel off with a shocking twist. Just as the reader is getting to know Michael and Susan, he commits an unthinkable act and sells her while he is drunk. Drinking serves two purposes in the chapter, in that Michael speaks truthfully when drunk and turns into an absolute beast. These twin purposes foreshadow Michael's resolution to give up drinking in the next chapter.

The concept of "in vino veritas" (Latin for *from wine, truth*) is older than Hardy's book. However, it is used very effectively here as the depressed Michael voices his inner regrets at choosing to be married, which he feels has kept him from being able to earn his full potential as a hay trusser. The beastliness is Hardy's way of shocking the reader, thus creating interest in the book right from its beginning. Although Michael's words are shocking and unbelievable, Hardy's description of his behavior along with Susan's description of their previous talks shows that he really does feel that he would be better off without a wife and child. His actions in the chapter make him a very unappealing character, and the reader is likely both disgusted and curious to learn more about this strange man.

There are a few different symbols in the chapter. One of the most vivid is the scene where Hardy describes two horses with their necks rubbing together, which symbolizes the difference between the unquestioning loyalty and compassion of animals and the cruelty between humans. The crowd in the refreshment tent can be likened to a Greek chorus, providing advice and encouragement to Susan as she tries to deal with Michael's awful behavior.



# Chapter 2

## Chapter 2 Summary

Michael wakes up the next morning and feels bad for what he has done. He also feels upset that Susan went with the sailor instead of recognizing that he was drunk and did not mean what he said. After some thought, he realizes that Susan is so simpleminded, that she would consider the sale binding.

Michael decides to try to find Susan and Elizabeth-Jane, but first he visits a church and swears that he will quit drinking for 21 years (a period equal to his age). He searches the surrounding countryside for any sign of his wife and child, and when he is unsuccessful he decides to use the five pounds that Newson paid him to help pay for his expenses during the search. After several months, he reaches a seaport and learns that a group resembling Susan, Elizabeth-Jane and Newson had recently left England. Michael gives up his search and decides to find a place to live in the town of Casterbridge in Wessex.

## Chapter 2 Analysis

Michael slowly wakes up from his alcohol-induced sleep, providing a brief comic interlude for the reader as he remembers the evening before one painful step at a time. His promise to find Susan and Elizabeth-Jane redeems him somewhat, as does his vow to give up the alcohol, which causes him to do foolish and impulsive things. Although he appears to be earnest in his search for his family, Hardy lets us know that his pride prevents him from exposing the details of his own bad behavior. This reluctance prevents his search from being effective.



# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary

Susan and Elizabeth-Jane return to Weydon Priors eighteen years later. Susan has been widowed, searching for Michael, although she has not told Elizabeth-Jane that he is her father. Elizabeth-Jane is described as looking very similar to her mother, although she is younger and more innocent. Susan tells Elizabeth that they are in the town where she met Newson, and that she hopes she may find news of Michael there.

Susan finds the old furmity woman and asks if she remembers a man selling his wife in her tent. The old woman says that she does, but only because Michael had come back to tell her that if the wife ever came looking for him she should tell her that he had settled in Casterbridge. Susan rejoins Elizabeth-Jane, who expresses disdain for the "low" furmity woman, and the two set off to find Michael.

## Chapter 3 Analysis

The plot elements of this chapter are fairly, simple – Susan and her daughter return 18 years later to find information about Michael. What is significant in this chapter is the way that the passage of time has affected both people and events. Susan is described as looking older, having time's "hardening mark" on her face, and the furmity woman has gone from being old to being ancient. The fair at Weydon Priors has also changed because the growth of urban areas has caused rural fairs to dwindle in size and importance. Hardy does not make clear in the chapter why Susan is looking for Michael, and so the reader is left to assume that she is hoping to reestablish a connection for financial reasons. This is especially hinted at when the Furmity woman remarks that all legitimate business has dwindled – only the "sly" business has thrived in the area.





# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

The chapter begins with Hardy telling the reader that Susan has not told Elizabeth-Jane about her real father for fear of losing her daughter's love and respect. Susan, we learn in a flashback, went with Newson to Canada before returning to England when Elizabeth-Jane was 12. She then learns from a friend that her "marriage" to Newson was not binding legally. Newson dies at sea a year later, and Susan struggles to take care of her daughter. She notes that Elizabeth-Jane is inquisitive and smart, and decides that she must find a way to advance her in the world. She sets off to find Michael, then, in order to secure the money necessary to get her daughter an education, but she worries that Michael may have impulsively "drunk himself into the tomb." Because Elizabeth-Jane does not know about Michael, Susan decides to leave it up to Michael to tell her the truth.

They journey to Casterbridge by a variety of means and Elizabeth-Jane worries about her mother's health. Hardy describes the town in detail, and Susan tells her daughter of her fear that Michael might be in a debtor's prison. Once in town they learn that bread has become very scarce because the "corn miller" sold the millers and bakers bad wheat.

## Chapter 4 Analysis

We learn about Susan's history in this chapter. As Michael had expected, she did not know that her sale to Newson was not legal so she lives with Newson for many years. When she does figure out that it is not legal, she finds herself in an awkward position – she is upset to have been duped, and yet is trapped by her situation. She is therefore relieved when Newson dies and her awkward situation is ended.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

Susan and Elizabeth-Jane continue through town, eventually reaching the King's Arms, described as the "chief hotel" in Casterbridge. By coincidence there is a public dinner party being hosted by Michael, who has become the Mayor of Casterbridge. Susan sees her husband sitting at the head of the table drinking water instead of wine, and is shocked to find that he has become prosperous. She and Elizabeth-Jane learn that Michael has refrained from drinking alcohol for exactly nineteen years as the result of an oath he had sworn.

As the chapter continues, we learn that Michael is also an important business leader in town, and that Michael is responsible for the bad bread in town. Several townsfolk confront Michael about the bad bread made from this wheat, and Michael becomes somewhat embarrassed. He responds that he was not aware of the problem, and that he will soon be hiring a manager to oversee his interests in the "corn department" ("corn" as used here refers to both corn and wheat). When a citizen asks if he will refund the millers and bakers that have suffered, he becomes angry and refuses to say more about the matter.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

Some of the mystery surrounding Michael (from Susan's point of view) is solved in this chapter as we learn that he has become a successful businessperson and politician. We also see that he has the same quick temper as he had when he was 21, and that he has followed through on his pledge to abstain from alcohol. The two empty wine glasses in front of him at the public dinner are powerful symbols of this pledge, and Longways and Coney (the two townsfolk that tell Susan and Elizabeth-Jane about Michael) hold him in great respect for his ability to resist the temptation to drink. The references to the "grown wheat" mentioned in the previous question show that Michael's business practices might be somewhat unethical, so the reader is left to wonder whether he is deliberately cheating the townsfolk or whether his explanation of being unaware of the problem is accurate.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

As the chapter begins, a new character enters the scene. He is a young Scotsman who appears fascinated by Michael's announcement that he needs a manager. While standing in the entrance to the inn, he writes a note, which he asks a waiter to pass on to Michael. He also asks for the name of a good inn nearby. Elizabeth-Jane overhears him and is fascinated by his accent, so she suggests to her mother that they stay at the same in (the Three Mariners).

The note is brought to Michael, who appears interested. He quickly gets lost in thought and then heads to the Three Mariners himself. He is able to leave unobserved because most of the people at the dinner have become drunk, which he seems to find distasteful. As Michael journeys to the inn, we learn from Hardy that it a slightly lower class of people frequent the inn. Michael tries to make him self seem a bit shabbier before he enters the inn.

## Chapter 6 Analysis

This chapter introduces the idea that random events can greatly affect people's lives. Hardy tells the reader that the Scotsman, who is a stranger in town, would have kept walking if he had not heard Michael talking about the bad bread. His decision to stay and send a not to Michael influences Elizabeth-Jane, who urges her mother to stay at the same inn. Thus, a random occurrence has brought Michael to the same location as his wife and daughter, as well as the mysterious Scotsman.

# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

Upon arriving at the Three Mariners, Elizabeth-Jane and her mother find that the inn is much too expensive for them. Elizabeth-Jane offers to work as a barmaid to help pay for their lodgings and the property owner Mrs. Stannidge agrees. One of Elizabeth-Jane's first tasks is to take Farfrae (the Scotsman) his supper. While she delivers the supper, she takes a close look at Farfrae. Mrs. Stannidge then gives her a rest to have dinner with Susan.

Elizabeth-Jane finds her mother eavesdropping on Michael and Farfrae. Michael asks Farfrae if he is the man who has applied for the job as manager. Farfrae says no, and notes that he is headed for America. He tells Michael about a process that partially restores bad wheat. Michael is impressed, and offers Farfrae the job as manager. Farfrae refuses his offer, even though Michael offers a generous commission in addition to a salary. Michael is disappointed and leaves for home.

## Chapter 7 Analysis

There are several critical elements in the chapter. The first is that Elizabeth-Jane is attracted to Farfrae, although he pays no attention to her whatsoever. The second is that Farfrae appears to offer the solution to Michael's problem, and although he is willing to share this process with Michael, he is not willing to stay and work for him. Farfrae is choosing instead to move forward to a land of new opportunities, and this establishes a significant contrast in the story: Michael represents older values and practices, while Farfrae is an innovator who is trying to use science and new ideas to move forward in the world. Susan and Elizabeth-Jane also learn in this chapter that Michael has chosen not to drink because he feels guilty about a misdeed earlier in his life.



# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

After Michael leaves, Farfrae goes down to the common room to listen to enjoy time alone. Elizabeth-Jane cleans up his room and follows him. She watches him, and although she is too shy to enter the common room, she enjoys it when he begins to sing a song about his love of Scotland. Two townsfolk, Coney and Billy Wills, also enjoy his song and urge him to continue. The townsfolk ask him why he is leaving Scotland if he loves it so much. After several more songs, they express their wish that he would stay in Casterbridge. He notes that he has already sent his luggage to Bristol to be shipped to America, and then says he is going to bed.

The proprietor sends Elizabeth-Jane to turn down his bed. She is still there when Farfrae enters, and he sings a brief song that likens her to a modest beauty. Susan overhears and expresses regret that Elizabeth-Jane is forced to serve a man with whom she may end up forming a relationship. Meanwhile, Michael has also overheard Farfrae's song and notes that he likes the singing, but that this is probably due to his own loneliness. He muses that he would offer Farfrae a third of his business if he would stay and manage his business.

## Chapter 8 Analysis

This chapter develops the character of Farfrae and shows him to have more than just scientific talents – he sings from his heart, and is able to connect with people from any socio-economic background. The meeting between Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae allows Farfrae to see her for the first time, and the attraction between them starts to develop. We also learn from Elizabeth-Jane's actions that she is modest and shy; although she has shown strength of character by persuading her mother to stay at the Three Mariners, she is too shy to be "forward" in her dealings with other people.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

Michael accompanies Farfrae the next morning as the latter leaves for Bristol and America. Michael again offers him the manager's job and offers to agree to any terms that Farfrae may suggest. Farfrae changes his mind and accepts, and immediately starts to work for Michael. Susan and Elizabeth-Jane talk over breakfast, and Susan decides that Elizabeth-Jane should approach Michael to tell him that Susan, "a sailor's widow," has returned and wishes to see him. Elizabeth-Jane sets out on this errand and is surprised to find Farfrae working in Michael's workplace when she arrives.

## Chapter 9 Analysis

Michael shows his stubborn determination in this chapter in his relentless pursuit of Farfrae. Once Farfrae finally agrees, Michael springs into action by ordering a messenger to bring Farfrae's luggage from Bristol. These actions develop Michael's character, showing him to be an impulsive character but also a shrewd businessperson. Elizabeth-Jane again shows her shyness by wandering all over town to put off her business with Michael. Hardy uses irony by having her come face to face with the man she admires when she believes that he is gone out of her life forever.



# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

As Elizabeth is waiting to see Michael, the original applicant for the position of manager (Joshua Jopp) arrives. Michael sends him away, telling him that he has hired someone else to fill the position. He then speaks with Elizabeth-Jane and learns that Susan has returned. He also finds out that Newson is presumed to be dead. He is shocked, and considers the possibility that the two women may be imposters. He rejects this thought, however, and sends Elizabeth-Jane away with a note for Susan and five guineas. The note invites Susan to meet with him just outside of town at a Roman amphitheatre that evening, and Susan is anxious for the evening to arrive.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

Michael's treatment of Jopp is a significant event in this chapter because he shows himself to be rude and blunt in his business dealings. Although the appearance of Jopp may seem like a minor occurrence, it foreshadows Jopp's role as an enemy of Michael later in the novel. Michael's treatment of Elizabeth-Jane stands in direct contrast with his dealings with Jopp. Although he is shocked by the return of his wife and daughter, he treats Elizabeth-Jane with sensitivity and respect. He also shows his desire to make up for his poor decisions of the past with his symbolic gift of five guineas.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

This chapter focuses on the meeting between Michael and Susan. Hardy describes the area as rich in Roman history, and mentions that there are many dead Romans buried throughout Casterbridge and its surrounding fields. This dark note is continued when Hardy describes how the amphitheatre, which was once used for gladiators and other blood sports, was also used for a gruesome public execution.

Susan and Michael meet and Michael explains that after his long search he had given her up for dead. She explains that she stayed with Newson at first because she believed the sale was legal and then because she felt she owed him her loyalty. Michael proposes that she move to a cottage in Casterbridge calling herself the widow Newson, and he will come to court and marry her. By doing so, he hopes to avoid having knowledge of his indiscretion become public. He also suggests that Elizabeth-Jane should remain ignorant of his identity and that he should assume the role of her stepfather. He asks for Susan's forgiveness, and when she mumbles a response that he cannot hear, he proposes that she judge him by how well he behaves from that point forward.

## Chapter 11 Analysis

The early part of the chapter, with its graphic description of the dark history of the area, shows that Casterbridge, like its mayor, is built on a foundation of nastiness and misdeeds. Michael's choice of the amphitheatre as a meeting place shows that he is planning further deceit, and although he tells Susan, it is so that Elizabeth-Jane will not learn of her true father it is clear to the reader that he is trying to protect his own reputation. Michael's plan, however, shows that he is genuinely remorseful about his drunken indiscretion eighteen years earlier. All of his dealings with Susan show that he genuinely wants to atone for his errors.





# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

The chapter begins with Michael returning to his home and offices to find Farfrae still hard at work with the account books. He watches for a little while and again admires the young Scotsman's skills. He then stops Farfrae and invites him to his home (which is next door to the office) for supper. He tells Farfrae about Susan and Elizabeth-Jane, and asks for his advice on what he should tell Elizabeth-Jane. Farfrae advises him to tell her the truth.

Michael also tells Farfrae about an affair he has been having with a woman from Jersey. He explains that this happened because he feels terribly lonely; when the affair became public, the woman was persecuted by her neighbors. He has offered to marry the woman, but now finds that he cannot because of Susan's return. He asks Farfrae to write a letter to the woman explaining what has happened, and suggests he will send her some money to compensate her.

## Chapter 12 Analysis

This chapter shows that Michael is still somewhat impulsive since he is confiding his deepest secrets to a person he just met. The chapter also reveals that although Michael has given up drinking he has had sex out of wedlock. His commitment to marry the woman, though, shows that he is an honorable man. Farfrae is surprised at the extent of Michael's indiscretions, and his relative innocence shows that he and Michael are very different characters. This is also shown when Hardy tells us that while Michael is not careful with his accounting practices, Farfrae is able to understand and improve his books quite easily.



# Chapter 13

## Chapter 13 Summary

In this chapter, Michael rents and furnishes a cottage for Susan and begins visiting her as per his plan. After a short time, he proposes to her and she agrees to marry him. Hardy tells the reader that Michael has three motives in proposing this marriage: 1) to make up for selling Susan, 2) to give Elizabeth-Jane a home and 3) to punish himself. The townsfolk are described as being confused as to why Michael would want to marry a woman of lower social and economic standing. Their misgivings are described in some detail, providing some comic relief as well as insight into the social system of the day. Despite their concerns, however, Michael and Susan are married in November with Farfrae serving as a groomsman.

## Chapter 13 Analysis

Michael's marriage to Susan is surrounded by clouds of misunderstanding, as the common townsfolk express shock that he would marry someone so far below himself. Although the townsfolk are surprised and a little jealous of Susan, their focus is mostly on Michael. Indeed, Michael's plan to marry Susan is mostly a selfish one, since it takes care of several potential problems (such as the possible damage to his reputation) all at once.



# Chapter 14

## Chapter 14 Summary

This chapter describes how Susan and Elizabeth-Jane start to fit in with Michael. Elizabeth-Jane is very pleased with her new "stepfather," but Hardy notes that her new freedom and wealth does not change her simple and friendly outlook. Michael proposes that she change her name to Henchard, and Susan objects. Michael also discusses how Elizabeth-Jane's hair has changed color, and Susan scolds him for almost letting their secret become known.

Michael's business does well under the astute management of Farfrae. One day both Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane receive notes asking to meet at a granary. Both insist that they did not write each other's note, and agree that they have both been duped by someone.

## Chapter 14 Analysis

There are many mixed signals in this chapter. Although Elizabeth-Jane is very happy, her mother becomes elusive and difficult when Michael starts questioning her about Elizabeth-Jane's hair and name. The reader is left to wonder why she objects to Elizabeth-Jane taking her rightful name. Another significant theme that develops in the chapter is Farfrae's resentment of Michael's heavy-handed approach to business. Finally, a mystery is introduced when Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae are brought together by notes written by some mysterious stranger. Regardless of who wrote it, it becomes clear that there is some spark of feeling between the two.



# Chapter 15

## Chapter 15 Summary

We learn in this chapter that Elizabeth-Jane is fast becoming the most beautiful woman in town, and that Farfrae is among her biggest admirers. Despite her beauty, though, Elizabeth-Jane feels inadequate because of her lack of an education. This chapter also highlights a power struggle between Michael and Farfrae, as the two clash over how to discipline an employee named Abel Whittle. When Whittle is late for work, Michael orders him to come to work without wearing pants. Farfrae disagrees with the order, and tells the man to wear his pants. Michael and Farfrae argue in front of the workers and Michael gives up with an indignant remark. He starts to think badly of Farfrae when he learns that people in the town like the Scotsman better than they do him. However, because Farfrae is charming and genuine, that Michael forgives him, and the two resume their friendship and good working relationship.

## Chapter 15 Analysis

This chapter develops Elizabeth-Jane's character further, revealing her to be very, insecure about her own beauty and intelligence. Although she is admired by nearly everyone in town for her beauty, she feels that she is not smart enough to be the object of their admiration. She is happy with her new situation and shows a love of fine clothes that enhance her beauty, but still feels inadequate.

The rift between Michael and Farfrae further illustrates the differences between these two characters. Michael is impulsive and has a tendency to brutally enforce his will on others; this has earned him the respect and admiration of the townsfolk. Farfrae, however, has quickly earned a reputation for his kindness and good business sense. Michael shows that he is jealous of Farfrae because of this, and Farfrae begins to resent Michael because of his heavy-handed dealings with employees and others.



# Chapter 16

## Chapter 16 Summary

In this chapter, the rift between the Michael and Farfrae becomes more pronounced, as Michael starts to be less warm and friendly to his young Scottish manager. One of the key events in the chapter occurs when Farfrae borrows some cloth to make a shelter for an upcoming public celebration. Michael agrees to give him the cloth, but soon decides he will put on his own festivities on the same day. Michael plans for his games and fun to be free, while Farfrae proposes to charge admission to his tent.

When the day of the celebration arrives, rain ruins Michael's celebrations while Farfrae's games under the tent are very popular with the townsfolk. Michael becomes very jealous of Farfrae when he hears townsfolk praising the young Scot for his ingenuity and business sense. He also sees Elizabeth-Jane dancing with Farfrae. One of his council members, Tubber, tells Michael that Farfrae is a better businessperson than he is. Michael becomes upset and tells Farfrae that he will no longer be his manager. Farfrae reacts with his usual grace and tells the townsfolk that the decision was business based. The end of the chapter sees Michael regretting his decision the next day.

## Chapter 16 Analysis

This chapter shows Michael's growing hostility towards Farfrae. Although at first he had respected the young man for his skills in business, he begins to resent the fact that Farfrae is smarter than he is. Michael is also proud of his position of wealth and power in the community, and becomes increasingly jealous as the people of Casterbridge start to respect Farfrae more than himself. He is also concerned that Farfrae's charm and popularity seems to extend to his own daughter, which foreshadows the development of their relationship later in the novel.

The events in this chapter raise several questions in the reader's mind. We wonder why Michael is so jealous of anyone else receiving praise. We may also wonder how Michael has achieved so much when his style of management and decision-making is clearly impulsive and poor. Finally, we wonder why Michael seems to fail with every choice he makes in the chapter, and Hardy lets us know that fate or "fortune" seems to be largely responsible for this.



# Chapter 17

## Chapter 17 Summary

This chapter starts with Elizabeth-Jane questioning why her stepfather was so upset about seeing her dance with Farfrae. She learns that her station as the mayor's stepdaughter means that she should not dance among the common folk, and she is embarrassed that she did not know this. She decides to leave the party, being accompanied on her walk by Farfrae. He tells her that he plans to leave town, and she notes that she wishes he would stay. He promises to think this over, and notes that he would have asked her to marry him if he had more money.

The next day Elizabeth-Jane is sad when she thinks Farfrae is leaving. She soon learns, however, that Farfrae has decided to stay in Casterbridge and will compete against Michael in business. Elizabeth-Jane is happy about this, but Michael becomes angry and tells her she cannot see Michael socially. He also writes a letter to Farfrae telling him to stay away from Elizabeth-Jane.

The reader learns that Farfrae is wildly successful in his business, although he refuses to take customers from his former partner. He is described as being strangely loyal to his "old friend" Michael, but is soon forced to wage a price war with Michael. For his part, Michael is described as bitter as he tries to turn the town council against Farfrae and he seems unable to counter the young man's energy and business sense.

## Chapter 17 Analysis

This chapter continues the development of Elizabeth-Jane's character as an innocent young girl who does not know the social conventions of her new position. She does show a desire to repay Michael's generosity toward herself and her mother by respecting his wishes, even though she cares deeply for Farfrae. She is very happy with Farfrae's attention, although out of modesty she believes that he must have just been being nice to her.

Michael continues to show his jealousy of Farfrae, and Hardy tells the reader that he is like Faust (a character from a Marlowe play who bargains with the devil for success). Farfrae, on the other hand, is described as owing his success to cool-headed management and self-reliance.



# Chapter 18

## Chapter 18 Summary

In this chapter, we learn that Susan is quite ill, and Michael hires an expensive doctor to care for her. She recovers partially after a few days. Michael's lover in Jersey, Lucetta, writes to him and we learn that she has been writing him love letters in which she expressed her displeasure that he did not keep his promise to marry her. She asks him to give these letters back to her, and tells him she will soon be passing through Casterbridge. He decides to give all the letters back to her, but she does not show up at the time and place she suggests in her letter. He also decides he will keep his promise if Susan dies.

Susan becomes ill once again, and writes a letter to Michael, which she seals and notes that it is not to be opened until the day Elizabeth-Jane is married. Elizabeth-Jane sits up with her mother for several nights, and just as she is, nearing death Susan tells Elizabeth-Jane that she wrote the letter. In addition, she arranged the clandestine meeting between Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae. She adds that she had hoped the two would marry, but refuses to reveal why she had hoped for this match. Susan dies soon after this confession, and we learn from some townsfolk that she had left detailed instructions for her burial and that her grave was desecrated by an oaf stealing the pennies used to close her eyes.

## Chapter 18 Analysis

This chapter introduces a pair of interesting new themes. The first is the character of Lucetta, whom Michael had wronged by "marrying" Susan when she returned. Her reappearance now causes Michael to think fondly of her, and he resolves that if Susan ever dies he will look for Lucetta and marry her. Her request for a meeting is a transparent attempt to get back into Michael's life, and the reader is left wondering why she does not show up for this meeting.

The other theme, coincidentally, is Susan's illness and death. Although she is repeatedly described in preceding chapters as simple, Susan shows careful thought and planning in her plans for Elizabeth-Jane and Michael following her death. Her letter to Michael is a mystery; however, as is her desire to see Elizabeth-Jane and Farfrae are married.



# Chapter 19

## Chapter 19 Summary

This chapter resolves some of the mystery surrounding Susan and Elizabeth-Jane. Michael finds himself lonely after Susan dies, and to establish closeness with someone he tells Elizabeth-Jane that he is really her father. He instructs her to write to the local paper to announce that she will now use the surname Henchard rather than Newson. He tries to find something that proves he is her father and instead stumbles on Susan's sealed letter. He opens this letter, finding out that Elizabeth-Jane is actually Newson's daughter and that his own daughter died shortly after Susan was "sold." He decides to go on with making Elizabeth-Jane believe she is his daughter, but he finds that he feels upset that his planned emotional attachment to her is lessened by his new knowledge.

## Chapter 19 Analysis

This chapter highlights Hardy's use of irony in the novel. Michael's overwhelming pride has separated him from Farfrae; Susan's death has left him alone and Lucetta has apparently deserted him. All that he has left, he believes, is Elizabeth-Jane, and in an ironic twist she turns out to be Newson's daughter and not his own. Other examples of irony in this chapter include Michael's pleading with Elizabeth-Jane to accept him as her father, despite the fact that he had sold his wife and daughter more than 18 years before.

It is interesting at this point, that fate or chance once again plays a roll in the plot. Hardy describes Michael's discovery of the truth as pure chance, coupled with his brutish lack of respect for his late wife's wishes. Although Michael's misdeeds do work against him, it does seem to the reader in this case that fate is being exceptionally cruel to him; if he could have remained in ignorance of the truth, then he may have developed a real emotional attachment with Elizabeth-Jane. Instead, his own feelings start to betray him and the reader is left to wonder how well he will be able to accept his own decision to continue the deception.





# Chapter 20

## Chapter 20 Summary

The chapter begins with Elizabeth-Jane feeling mystified at Michael's behavior; since his passionate announcement, the he is her father he has become cold and critical of her behavior. Examples of this come when he criticizes her for speaking in the "low" dialect of the area and for having an unorthodox handwriting style. He also feels that she is too nice to the servants, and becomes outraged when he learns that she had worked at the Three Mariners pub as a house cleaner and had served Farfrae. While Michael is worried about his reputation in the town, Elizabeth-Jane fears that he is acting this way because she is unlearned and so she decides to start reading and improving herself.

Elizabeth-Jane goes to visit her mother's grave, which she finds comforting. On one visit, she meets a stranger who is very kind to her. The stranger also seems to know a lot about Michael, although the reader does not learn who she is. She and Elizabeth-Jane become friends, and the woman offers to let Elizabeth-Jane stay with her as a companion. Elizabeth-Jane is very happy with this offer and resolves to leave Michael's house.

Meanwhile, Michael learns that he will not become a council member when his two-year term as mayor ends. Instead, he discovers, Farfrae will be asked to serve on the town council. Michael also decides that he should let Farfrae court Elizabeth-Jane, since he could take the girl away and end his problems. He sends a note to Farfrae telling him that he can start courting Elizabeth-Jane, but is careful to make it clear that he will not provide a "marriage portion" (a large and valuable wedding present) for any possible marriage.

## Chapter 20 Analysis

Although the revelation that Michael is not really Elizabeth-Jane's father evokes some sympathy in the reader, this is likely dissipated rather quickly when we see him constantly attacking the girl for her manners and even her handwriting. It is ironic that Michael is critical of her "low" behavior when his own mean treatment of Farfrae is lessening his reputation in the town. The irony is further deepened when the reader considers that Michael himself moved to Casterbridge as a common laborer. His continued jealousy of Farfrae could also be a source of sympathy, but the reader knows that Michael has brought on his own misfortune with his poor and impulsive decisions.

The strange woman who befriends Elizabeth-Jane is a source of mystery to the reader, although the answer (that she is Lucetta) may be rather obvious when one considers her deep knowledge of Michael's behavior and personality. This suspicion will be

deepened by the fact that she does not condemn Michael for his behavior, and excuses it by saying that Michael is a passionate and "hot tempered man."

An important symbol in the chapter is Susan's grave, which is located in the old Roman burial ground. Given the association with the death and misery of Roman rule in the area, that Hardy developed earlier in the novel it is significant that Susan has ended up in this burial ground after her difficult and deception-filled life.



# Chapter 21

## Chapter 21 Summary

Elizabeth-Jane impulsively decides to visit High-Place Hall, the home that the stranger rented, which is in the center of town. She sneaks in through an open door, but quickly leaves when she realizes how boldly she has acted. She finds that the home looks very "aristocratic" and wonders who the woman really is. As she is heading home, she sees another person headed for the house and hides. Although she does not see him, this is Michael. As soon as they are both at home, she asks him if she can leave his house to move to a place where she can better herself. Michael quickly agrees.

Elizabeth-Jane sees the woman again at her mother's grave, and discovers that her name is Miss Templeman. The two agree that Elizabeth-Jane will move in right away, and Michael offers her a small annual income to help her achieve independence. When Elizabeth-Jane tells Michael that she will be leaving that evening, he is shocked and decides to ask her to stay. Elizabeth-Jane refuses, however, and leaves. Michael is surprised when he learns that she is moving to High-Place Hall.

## Chapter 21 Analysis

The threads of the mystery surrounding the strange women are tied together somewhat in this chapter when we see Michael visiting High-Place Hall – the idea of a relationship between the two explains how she knows so much about him. It is also significant that Elizabeth-Jane considers what is appropriate when she enters and then quickly leaves High-Place Hall – it is clear that she is worried about what Michael might say if he finds out that she acted in an unladylike manner.

Money is an important symbol in this chapter, and it reinforces the theme of Michael using money to compensate for his lack of emotion. His offer of an annuity to Elizabeth-Jane follows his gifts of money to both Lucetta and Susan earlier in the novel. We also see Michael's impulsiveness when he quickly agrees that she can leave, and we see just how he has come to dread the loneliness that he described to Farfrae earlier in the novel.



# Chapter 22

## Chapter 22 Summary

In this chapter, Hardy takes the reader back to Michael's visit to High-Place Hall in the previous chapter. He has been summoned by a letter from Lucetta, which describes how she has tried to free her name from the scandal he created, and that she now expects him to keep his promise and marry her. Henchard recalls that Lucetta had told him that she would inherit a fortune from her aunt, and suspects that Lucetta is Miss Templeman since this was her aunt's surname. After Elizabeth-Jane leaves, he receives another note from Lucetta. This note assures him that she did not plan to befriend Elizabeth-Jane, but that once she had done so she realized that this would give him the perfect excuse to visit her.

We then see Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane interacting. Lucetta decides to go against an earlier resolution and discloses her past relationship with Michael to Elizabeth-Jane. She becomes worried when Michael does not visit, and realizes her plan may have been flawed when Elizabeth-Jane tells her that Michael did not like her very much as a daughter. She sends Elizabeth-Jane out of the house temporarily and then sends a note to Michael telling him to come to her house immediately. The chapter ends with Lucetta nervously preparing to meet a male visitor, but it turns out not to be Michael.

## Chapter 22 Analysis

This chapter solves the mystery of the person Miss Templeman is, and shows that she is a somewhat devious character. Although we learn that she does not love Michael as passionately as she had during their affair, she is still interested in marrying him. This may cause some curiosity in the reader, especially in light of Michael's lukewarm feelings toward her. Despite his coldness, people like Farfrae, Susan, Elizabeth-Jane, and Lucetta are available to Michael as solutions to the loneliness he claims to hate. Michael pushes these relationships aside, again causing the reader to wonder whether he is worthy of pity.

The difference between Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane is explored in this chapter as well. Lucetta is energetic and outgoing, while Elizabeth-Jane clings to the quiet meekness that is both a part of her nature and a consequence of Michael's constant criticism. Both women, however, decide they want to be respected by the townsfolk. Foreshadowing occurs when Elizabeth-Jane does not tell Lucetta that she is interested in Farfrae when she sees him walking by.



# Chapter 23

## Chapter 23 Summary

The visitor turns out to be Farfrae, who has come to see Elizabeth-Jane. He has decided to resume his courtship, in part because he now has enough money to support a family and as a way to resume his friendship with Michael. He finds himself attracted to Lucetta, and the two enjoy a brief visit. They discuss many things, and Michael arrives, but Lucetta sends him away, preferring to spend time with Farfrae. The chapter ends with Lucetta contemplating the reversal of her plan, with Elizabeth-Jane acting as a deterrent to Michael's visits rather than as an incentive!

## Chapter 23 Analysis

This chapter shows that fate, which has been a theme throughout the book, can work against other characters besides Michael. If Elizabeth-Jane had not been sent away, Farfrae would likely have married her, while Lucetta would have resumed her own relationship with Michael. However, it now seems likely to the reader that Elizabeth-Jane will lose her love, which seems surprising given that Farfrae had been described in such glowing terms earlier.

We learn a few new things about Farfrae in the chapter, including that his business acumen is based on sound judgment and a little bit of luck at judging when prices will rise. We also learn that he is a romantic at heart, and Lucetta's wild and carefree manner ignites his passions to the point that he misses a business appointment.



# Chapter 24

## Chapter 24 Summary

This chapter highlights the importance of the centrally located High-Place Hall, as both Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane keep a close eye out the windows for Farfrae when Saturday's market begins. The two women go to the market one day when a new piece of machinery, a seed drill, is being introduced to the crowd. Michael is also attending the demonstration, and he approaches Elizabeth-Jane. She "introduces" him to Lucetta, who asks about the seed drill. Michael reacts negatively, saying that the machine is doomed to fail. Elizabeth-Jane admonishes him with a look, and he slips away after muttering to Lucetta about her not agreeing to see him.

The two then meet up with Farfrae, and when Lucetta voices Michael's opinion that the seed drill is worthless Farfrae disagrees. He adds that the new equipment will change the way people farm. When Elizabeth-Jane notices that Lucetta and Farfrae are very friendly toward each other, Lucetta tells her that she and Farfrae had met before. Elizabeth-Jane becomes suspicious of their relationship.

Lucetta goes out one day, and when she returns, Elizabeth-Jane confronts her about her seeing Farfrae. Lucetta tells her that she has, and then begins to ask hypothetical questions about what a woman who likes one man better than a man she has promised to marry should do. Elizabeth-Jane refuses to provide any advice, since she knows Lucetta is talking about choosing Farfrae over Michael.

## Chapter 24 Analysis

The windows of High-Place Hall are important in this chapter because they provide both women with the chance to see Farfrae. However, Elizabeth-Jane does not know at the beginning of the chapter that Lucetta is interested in Farfrae – when she does find out, she becomes very jealous of the kind of romance the two would share. What the chapter illustrates most of all is that fate can play with both "bad" and "good" characters, but Elizabeth-Jane gets more sympathy from the reader than does her stepfather.

The technologically advanced equipment that appears at the fair highlights the differences between Michael and Farfrae's business practices. Michael is apprehensive of new technology, which reflects his lack of education. It also highlights the fact that he is falling behind in his business dealings when compared to Farfrae, who is farsighted enough to see the advantages of new technology.



# Chapter 25

## Chapter 25 Summary

The chapter begins with Farfrae coming to visit Lucetta. It becomes clear that he is more interested in Lucetta when the two converse romantically even though Elizabeth-Jane is in the same room. Elizabeth-Jane is upset because she feels that Lucetta is Farfrae's favorite, and although she wishes the situation were different, she accepts that she has lost him.

Michael finally decides to come and visit Lucetta. When he does, Lucetta evades his offer of an immediate marriage. Michael is hurt by her evasiveness and leaves, sure that she is refusing his offer to marry her. After he leaves, Lucetta decides that she will not marry Michael and will instead choose Farfrae. Elizabeth-Jane sees what is occurring between Lucetta and her two lovers, and compares them by noting that while Farfrae has youthful love, Michael covets Lucetta because she is young and beautiful. Elizabeth-Jane accepts that she has lost Farfrae to Lucetta, and the chapter ends with her wondering what "unwished-for thing Heaven might send her in place of him."

## Chapter 25 Analysis

This chapter focuses on the hurt feelings of both Michael and Elizabeth-Jane. Elizabeth-Jane is upset that Farfrae has completely forgotten about her, but she decides that he has made the right choice in courting Lucetta. The reader starts to wonder at this point about Elizabeth-Jane's character, since she seemingly has no self-esteem and accepts that fate will determine her happiness. This stands in sharp contrast to Lucetta, who decides that she will take control of her happiness as exemplified by her declaration that, "I won't be a slave to the past – I will love where I choose."

Michael suffers another blow in this chapter, but again does not engender the same sympathy from the reader. His decision to finally, visit Lucetta is presented in the novel as the result of her ignoring him; the reader is left to wonder whether he would have made his eager offer of marriage if Lucetta had continued to hound him with letters and requests for him to visit. His hurt feelings when she rejects him are real, however, and they are another example of events beyond his control causing him unhappiness. Unlike Elizabeth-Jane, though, the reader may feel that Michael may deserve this unhappiness because of his rash and mean treatment of other characters in the novel.



# Chapter 26

## Chapter 26 Summary

The chapter starts with Michael telling Farfrae about recent events (without mentioning Lucetta by name) and asking for advice (the two had discussed Michael's "Jersey situation" in an earlier chapter). Farfrae tells him that since the woman has refused his offer of marriage he is now free from any obligations. Hardy lets the reader know that Farfrae does not know the woman in Michael's story is Lucetta.

Michael soon finds out that Farfrae is his rival for Lucetta, so he decides to wreck Farfrae's business. He first hires Jopp, who was to manage his business before Farfrae appeared, and tells him to try to ruin Farfrae with "fair competition." Jopp tells Michael that he knows about his dealings in Jersey, but Michael does not notice the fact that he is talking about Lucetta. Michael concocts a plan to monopolize the corn crop in Casterbridge, believing the local weather diviner's estimate that wet weather will increase the value of this corn. When the weather is not wet, he faces financial ruin and sells all the corn he has bought. He then mortgages everything he has to cover his losses. He instantly fires Jopp, who vows to get revenge.

## Chapter 26 Analysis

Another example of irony occurs early in this chapter when Michael asks Farfrae for advice. The irony can be considered as double or blind irony, because neither character realizes the importance of the exchange: Michael does not realize that Farfrae is in love with Lucetta, while Farfrae has no idea he is "cutting in" on Michael's love affair. The reader is left to wonder whether the situation might have been different if Farfrae had realized what he was doing to his former employer.

The difference between Farfrae and Michael in business is highlighted once again in this chapter as we see Michael acting impulsively. He is clearly blinded by his rage over Farfrae's interest in Lucetta, but one of the major instances of irony in the novel is that Farfrae has absolutely no idea that Michael is plotting against him. Michael's reckless decisions bring about his downfall, although he tries to blame Jopp. Hardy's brief mention that Jopp knows about Michael's past affair with Lucetta makes Jopp's vow of revenge carry more weight, and foreshadows events later in the novel.





# Chapter 27

## Chapter 27 Summary

As the chapter begins, we see Farfrae shrewdly buying all the corn he can at the low prices caused by the year's bumper crop. The reader learns that a change in the weather makes the corn very valuable, and that Michael could have made a fortune if he had held on to his supply for a few more days. Farfrae's prosperity makes Michael believe he will soon become mayor.

Michael's hatred of Farfrae becomes even more intense, and his bitter attitude starts to infect his employees. A wagon crash outside of High-Place Hall sets employees of Farfrae and Michael fighting, which Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane witness. Michael arrives and the two women assure him that his driver was the cause of the accident. Michael admonishes his man, but Lucetta and Elizabeth-Jane slip inside and refuse to admit him. He hides outside, and catches Lucetta and Farfrae walking together and professing their love for one another.

Michael then enters Lucetta's house and waits for her to come home. When she does, he threatens to expose their affair and her subsequent disgrace if she will not marry him. Lucetta agrees to marry him, with Elizabeth-Jane standing by as a witness. Elizabeth-Jane reproaches Michael when Lucetta faints, telling her that she can now have "him" (meaning Farfrae). After Michael leaves Elizabeth-Jane questions Lucetta about why Michael was able to force her to marry him, but Lucetta refuses to tell her or allow her to plead with Michael to release Lucetta from her promise.

## Chapter 27 Analysis

In this chapter, we see Farfrae's business acumen highlighted. With cool deliberation, he takes a calculated risk, unlike Michael's impulsive decisions. His success is attributed to good business sense, while Michael seeks to blame his failure on almost everything except his own poor judgment.

Michael's blackmail of Lucetta demonstrates just how far he is willing to go to get revenge on Farfrae. All the traces of his love for her are gone now, and his desire to marry her stems solely from wanting to hurt both of them. When Elizabeth-Jane tries to stop him, he cruelly suggests that his actions will benefit her as well. While Elizabeth-Jane resists this and insists she would never do anything to hurt Lucetta, Michael's words create the suggestion of a possible rift between the two women.



# Chapter 28

## Chapter 28 Summary

Because he was mayor, Michael is still a magistrate (judge) in Casterbridge, and so as this chapter begins he is sitting in judgment of an old woman he thinks that he may recognize. Hardy lets the reader know that despite his passions Michael is a fairly, competent judge. The woman turns out to be the "furmity woman," and she reveals to everyone present that Michael once sold Susan and Elizabeth-Jane. She argues that because of this, Michael is not fit to judge her. In shame, Michael confirms quickly leaves the courtroom.

Lucetta hears about Michael's past and worries that her newly rebuilt reputation will be damaged by marrying him. Elizabeth-Jane urges her to leave town for a brief rest and becomes the woman of High-Place Hall while she is gone. Michael visits and finds out Lucetta has left Casterbridge.

## Chapter 28 Analysis

This chapter concludes, bringing shock to the suspense that has been present since the beginning of the novel, and the reader is left to wonder what will happen to Michael's reputation and fortune now that his secret is known. Lucetta is shocked by the revelation, and is seemingly trapped between having her reputation ruined one of two ways; either she marries the disgraced Michael or is disgraced herself by the revelation of their past affair. Once again, Hardy plays on the reader's sympathies: should they feel sorry for Lucetta, who has deceived Michael and stolen Farfrae from Elizabeth-Jane, or not?



# Chapter 29

## Chapter 29 Summary

Lucetta returns from her trip and she goes for a walk, hoping to run into Farfrae. Instead, Elizabeth-Jane joins her and the two women are charged by an angry bull. They soon find themselves trapped in a barn with the animal. Michael arrives and rescues them, and is then very kind to Lucetta. He offers to prolong their engagement, which makes Lucetta very happy. She offers Michael some money, but he states that he only wants her to tell his chief creditor Mr. Grower that they are getting married. His hope is to delay the repayment of his loans through the prospect of his upcoming marriage to the now wealthy Lucetta.

Lucetta refuses and reveals that she and Farfrae were married while she was away, with Mr. Grower as a witness. Michael becomes angry once again, and threatens to reveal the past affair to Farfrae. Lucetta ends the chapter by again offering Michael money to restore his business, which he refuses.

## Chapter 29 Analysis

This chapter has some action, with Michael showing some heroism in his dramatic rescue of the two women but the real shock of the chapter comes when Lucetta reveals her marriage to Farfrae, which Hardy presents as being a direct result of Lucetta's learning about his past. This makes it clear that Michael's indiscretions 18 years before are still haunting him. The bull that he has just calmed down becomes a fitting symbol of his own blind rage, rage that does nothing to advance his cause.



# Chapter 30

## Chapter 30 Summary

This chapter begins with a brief summary of the events following the wedding. Farfrae has been away on business, but has sent word to his property owner that his things are to be sent to Lucetta's house. Once both he and Lucetta are at High-Place Hall, she reveals that she has not told Elizabeth-Jane about their marriage yet. She gets Farfrae's permission to let Elizabeth-Jane stay at High-Place Hall.

When Elizabeth-Jane learns about their marriage, she is upset for two reasons. She feels that Lucetta has betrayed Michael by breaking her promise. She also recognizes that she is still in love with Farfrae. Thus, she decides to leave High-Place Hall and leaves a note for Lucetta. She finds a place to live, and realizes that the small income Michael arranged for her will allow her to live comfortably.

## Chapter 30 Analysis

We learn in this chapter, Farfrae puts his customers first, which is why he did not return to Casterbridge with his new wife. He is also thoughtful enough to allow Lucetta some time to tell Elizabeth-Jane and her servants of the change in situation. We also learn that Elizabeth-Jane is practical, proud and independent. Unable to bear the shame of living with the man she loves, she decides to move out and live on her own.



# Chapter 31

## Chapter 31 Summary

This chapter sees Michael's business falling into ruins. A mistake by one of his employees, coupled with a customer failing to pay a debt and the losses he suffered in speculating on the corn crop, cause him to go into bankruptcy. Michael honestly reveals everything he has, and all of his belongings are auctioned off. He goes to live with Jopp, who now lives by the Priory Mill. He refuses to see Elizabeth-Jane, who is sent away by Jopp.

Elizabeth-Jane then goes to her father's old business, which has been bought by Farfrae. She learns that his employees are happy to work for Farfrae, even though he pays them less. As the chapter ends, we see that Farfrae's business is a going concern and is busier than ever.

## Chapter 31 Analysis

Michael completes his journey from prominent town leader to pauper in this chapter. He shows his one redeeming quality to be honesty and honor when he reveals all of his possessions to the people at the bankruptcy auction. His refusal to see Elizabeth-Jane is not surprising, since he is ashamed of the circumstances that have led him to such poverty. It is ironic that he would seek refuge in the home of Jopp, who had earlier fired and humiliated.

Farfrae's success is presented in stark contrast to Michael's downfall, and the reader is left to marvel at the fact that he can engender loyalty in his employees even while paying them less. While Michael has fallen from the top of the social and business ladder in Casterbridge, Farfrae has quickly made his way from the bottom to enjoy the same kind of success once enjoyed by Michael.



# Chapter 32

## Chapter 32 Summary

The chapter starts with a description of two bridges in Casterbridge where the poorest people tend to congregate. One bridge is typically home to the coarsest and lowest of these, while the other tends to attract the more "polite" among the destitute. While standing by the latter bridge, Michael learns from Jopp that Farfrae has bought his old house and furniture. This makes Michael more upset than learning that Farfrae has taken over his business.

Farfrae himself walks by and offers Michael a room in the house. Michael refuses, and Farfrae reveals that he bought the furniture so that Michael could choose from anything that had been his favorites. In the next little while, Michael becomes ill from damp weather and exposure to the elements. Elizabeth-Jane nurses him back to health. Following his illness, Farfrae provides him with a job as a corn trusser, although he is careful not to come into direct contact with him. When Michael learns that Farfrae will soon be named Mayor of Casterbridge, he becomes angry with him all over again, and starts drinking again.

## Chapter 32 Analysis

There are several important events and symbols in this chapter. The bridges symbolize the two kinds of poor people in the world; those who, like Jopp, are always struggling to become accepted in society and those who have fallen from wealth. Michael finds himself in this latter group, although he is connected with the first group through Jopp. This connection suggests that Michael's impulsiveness and angry reactions mean that he could easily be a part of either group.

Another important symbol in the chapter is Michael's furniture, which Farfrae has purchased through a third party. It becomes clear that Farfrae is generously offering a way for Michael to regain some of his past status, which is reaffirmed later in the chapter when Farfrae gives Michael work. It is also significant that Michael has "hit rock bottom" and returned to the trade that brought him to Casterbridge many years before. Finally, Michael's reconciliation with Elizabeth-Jane demonstrates that he has made peace with the past and can now restart his life.

Elizabeth-Jane is also struggling to reinvent herself. From her new lodgings just across the street from Farfrae, she works to improve her education and earn a living. Hardy's brief description of her new situation make it clear that she has stopped blindly accepting what fate lays out for her and has decided instead to work to better her self.



# Chapter 33

## Chapter 33 Summary

The chapter begins with Michael at the Three Mariner's Inn, where he is about clearly drunk. He sees Farfrae and Lucetta outside, and persuades the church choir and musicians to sing Psalm 109, which contains a particularly venomous curse against a man. They object, and Michael threatens them to get them to sing. Once they have done so, he tells them that he meant the curse for Farfrae. Elizabeth-Jane comes to bring Michael home, and he tells her that he wants to be revenged on Farfrae.

Elizabeth-Jane becomes alarmed, and soon volunteers to help Michael in his work so that she can prevent him from harming Farfrae. One day Lucetta encounters Michael at work, and he acts as humble, as his coworkers do. This prompts Lucetta to write him a note urging him not to be sarcastic towards her. Michael destroys the note, even though he knows he could use it to besmirch her reputation. On another occasion, Michael is tempted to push Farfrae through a trap door. Elizabeth-Jane observes this, and resolves to warn Farfrae.

## Chapter 33 Analysis

Michael's venom toward Farfrae is scarcely hidden, but the only person who takes it seriously is Elizabeth-Jane. Though he publicly states his hate for Michael, the crowd at the pub does not do anything to warn the young Scot. Michael's actions in the barn foreshadow another event at the trap door, which will occur later in the novel.

Lucetta's note to Michael is significant, because it shows that Michael has some integrity in his dealings with her. She is as impulsive as he is, and does not realize that she has given him blackmail material. He does not use this material, however. Although he is mad at Farfrae, Michael also recognizes that the young man is being gracious and considerate of his former employer. As a result, Michael drinks more instead of plotting revenge (except for the chance incident at the trap door).



# Chapter 34

## Chapter 34 Summary

Elizabeth-Jane goes to Farfrae immediately and warns him that Michael is intent on harming him. Farfrae does not ignore her words, but he does not seem overly worried. He decides that he and the town council will rent a seed shop for Michael and visits Lawyer Joyce, the town clerk, to arrange the details. When the clerk hears of his plan, he warns Farfrae about Michael's actions at the pub. Farfrae changes his mind and returns home.

The storeowner who was hoping to rent out his store tells Michael about the plan, and notes that Farfrae was the one who stopped the plan. This makes Michael angry with Farfrae all over again, though he does not attempt to learn whether the storeowner is telling the truth. Meanwhile, Farfrae tells Lucetta about Michael's hatred. Lucetta is upset and wants to leave town, but Farfrae decides to stay after Alderman Vatt comes to offer him the job of Mayor.

A few days later Michael encounters Lucetta at the market, and she asks him to return her love letters. Michael realizes they are still in the safe in his old house, and goes to ask Farfrae to remove them. In a slightly drunken state, he starts reading the letters aloud, without revealing to Farfrae that they are from Lucetta.

## Chapter 34 Analysis

In another example of irony, we see Farfrae becoming aware of Michael's hatred—which the reader has been watching develop for several chapters. It is also deeply ironic that Michael reads love letters from Lucetta to her current husband, who has no idea that she has had an affair with Michael. However, these two instances also further show Farfrae's loyalty and generosity. He is surprised to find that Michael dislikes him, since he feels a debt of gratitude to the man who got him started in business in Casterbridge. We also see Farfrae's ambition becoming more apparent in this chapter, as he decides to choose power in Casterbridge rather than safety in another town.

The letters themselves reveal quite a bit about Lucetta, as they demonstrate that her passions seem to be intense but short-lived. It is ironic that Farfrae comments, "She must have had a heart that bore transplanting very readily," since he is unknowingly talking about his own wife. Michael once again proves his integrity by not revealing his affair with Lucetta to Farfrae.





# Chapter 35

## Chapter 35 Summary

The chapter begins with Lucetta overhearing Michael reading her letters to Farfrae. She is worried, but is relieved to learn that Michael has not told her husband who wrote the letters. She writes to Michael the next day, asking him to meet her at the Roman amphitheatre, and decides to dress plainly. Michael arrives at the ring and sees her dressed simply, which reminds him of Susan. He immediately feels bad for Lucetta and decides that he has behaved badly toward her. He promises to return her letters the next morning.

## Chapter 35 Analysis

Lucetta is extremely worried about what Michael will do, since he holds the power to ruin her newly rebuilt life. She acts in a sneaky manner to keep her past from her husband, although Farfrae would probably forgive her quite readily if she were to confess. She chooses a spot that will remind Michael of Susan, hoping that he will be as loyal to her as he was to his dead wife. While her attempt appears to succeed, Michael warns her that Farfrae will eventually find out about her past, which foreshadows later events.



# Chapter 36

## Chapter 36 Summary

In this chapter, Lucetta is accosted by Jopp on her way home from meeting with Michael. Jopp threatens to blackmail her with his knowledge of the Jersey affair unless she recommends him to Farfrae as a partner. She refuses and sends him away. Jopp returns to the cottage, and Michael asks him to deliver the sealed packet of love letters to Lucetta.

Jopp sets out the next morning, but runs into Mother Cuxsom and Nance Mockridge. These two odd characters lead him to Mixen Lane, a refuge for no-goods and lowlifes. They head to an inn called Peter's Finger, where the crowd of degenerates includes the "furmity woman." She urges him to open the sealed packet, and the group soon learns of the Jersey affair. They all laugh when they learn that the Mayor's wife has had an affair with the former Mayor. As a group, they decide to plan a "skimmity ride," an entertainment to expose a wife's cheating. A stranger gives them a sovereign to help with the plan. Jopp then delivers the letters to Lucetta, who is relieved and burns them.

## Chapter 36 Analysis

This chapter reveals some of the complexities of social structure in the town. The prosperous folk have one section of town, while the lower classes congregate in Mixen Lane. What is interesting about Hardy's portrayal of this motley group is that they all harbor resentment toward upper class figures such as Lucetta, and claim to have been injured by these people.

Jopp shows that he belongs in this lower class world when he threatens Lucetta. Michael can seemingly sense this about him, which prompts him to tell Jopp that he will never achieve the success he desires in Casterbridge. Michael shows poor judgment, however, when he trusts Jopp to carry the packet of love letters.



# Chapter 37

## Chapter 37 Summary

In this chapter, the townsfolk learn that royalty will be passing through town, and council plans a small ceremony to greet the unnamed "Royal Personage." Michael approaches the council and asks to be a part of the ceremony, but Farfrae in his new role as Mayor refuses. Michael decides to take matters into his own hands, and appears before the Royal Personage waving a flag and holding his hand out. Mayor Farfrae is concerned that Michael may ruin the ceremony, so he pushes him out of the way roughly. Michael is embarrassed and vows revenge.

The townsfolk are abuzz with shock, noting that Michael was the one who helped Farfrae get started in business, not deserving to be treated roughly. Lucetta disagrees when she overhears this, even though she was not around when Farfrae first arrived in Casterbridge. We then see Jopp getting ready for the "skimmity-ride" for that same evening.

## Chapter 37 Analysis

This chapter illustrates that the opinions of the townsfolk are extremely changeable and continues the theme of lower class resentment. While most of the townsfolk once criticized Michael for his rudeness and impulsive behavior, many are now critical of Farfrae for being rough with the former mayor. Because of their lack of manners and constant criticism of the upper classes, the reader is left to wonder just who they do respect.

The crowd also proves to be split over the "skimmity-ride," with many disapproving the custom because they respect the mayor. The lowest of the lower classes, represented by Jopp, Nance Mockridge, and the "furmity woman," do not really care what happens to Lucetta and Farfrae, since they do not benefit with jobs from the prosperous couple, nor do they have to worry about losing their social standing.



# Chapter 38

## Chapter 38 Summary

Michael is outraged at his humiliation, and challenges Farfrae to a wrestling match. The two meet in the loft where Michael almost pushed Farfrae through a trap door. Michael realizes he is much stronger than Farfrae, so to even the match he ties one hand behind his back. Michael thinks of the match as a fight to the death, while Farfrae is surprised to have to be fighting him. In spite of being handicapped, Michael easily dominates the smaller Farfrae. He finds that he cannot go through with his plan to kill the Scot. He lets him go, and leaves the corn-shed.

He returns later to apologize to Farfrae, only to find that he has left town. Michael then remembers that he had heard Farfrae say he was going to Weatherbury. Michael heads for the stone bridge outside town and, lost in his own thoughts, does not give any notice of the noise and clamor coming from town.

## Chapter 38 Analysis

Although Michael is enraged with Farfrae, he shows a real sense of fairness by tying his arm back. He then proceeds to pin Farfrae, but he finds that his anger has passed. This demonstrates graphically that Michael's actions are almost entirely dominated by his emotions – once his fit has passed, he finds himself unable to kill Farfrae as he had planned. One important symbol that has been present in the novel since Farfrae's first appearance is music; the young Scot typically sings or hums to himself, showing his carefree nature, and this music calms Michael down before the wrestling match. There is another instance of tragic irony at the end of the chapter. Michael hears the commotion going on in town but dismisses it, not knowing that the townsfolk have planned to humiliate Lucetta.



# Chapter 39

## Chapter 39 Summary

We learn at the beginning of this chapter that Farfrae had been bound for Budmouth, but had instead gone to Weatherbury after Whittle brings him an anonymous letter. The letter turns out to be a diversion sent by one of the townsfolk (Longways) to draw him away so the "skimmity-ride" can take place.

Lucetta soon sees effigies of herself and Michael being paraded through town on a donkey. She is shocked, and immediately faints and has a "fit." A doctor comes, and we learn that Lucetta is pregnant. The doctor says that Farfrae should be brought back because her condition is critical, and a messenger is sent to Budmouth to find him.

Meanwhile, Benjamin Grower hunts for the people who planned and executed the public display. None of the townsfolk will tell him anything, and even a visit to Peter's Finger produces no leads.

## Chapter 39 Analysis

The letter to Farfrae is an attempt by some townsfolk to keep him from being publicly embarrassed, but no one shows similar consideration to Lucetta because they believe she is guilty. Elizabeth-Jane intervenes, and tries to keep Lucetta from seeing the effigies. She also summons the doctor and tries to help Lucetta.

Like Michael before her, Lucetta is experiencing the results of trying to hide a checkered past. Although she has redeemed herself by being a good wife, she now knows that Farfrae will find out about the affair with Michael. The reader is left to wonder whether her sins were as bad as Michael and particularly whether she deserves to pay for her mistake with her life.



# Chapter 40

## Chapter 40 Summary

This chapter sees Michael trying in vain to get Farfrae back to Casterbridge and his ailing wife. Because he is the only one besides Whittle who knows where Farfrae has really gone, he tries to get the people at Lucetta's house to send a messenger to Weatherbury. When they refuse, he resolves to find Farfrae himself. He manages to catch Farfrae at Yalbury Bottom, and tries to persuade him to come home. Farfrae does not believe him and proceeds on his way, worried that Michael is plotting to kill him somehow.

Michael returns to Casterbridge and passes on the news that Farfrae will be gone for at least two more hours. Michael discovers that Elizabeth-Jane is a wonderful girl, and decides that he will love her like his own daughter. He returns to his small cottage and speaks with Jopp, not knowing that he was behind the rude display in town. Michael learns that a "sea-captain" of some sort has been to visit him. When Farfrae finally does return, Lucetta confesses all her past indiscretions just before she dies. The chapter ends with a restless Michael learning that Lucetta has died.

## Chapter 40 Analysis

There are three important themes explored in this chapter. The first is the fact that Michael has now lost all credibility. This is in part because of his past behavior but is also because of his affair with Lucetta, which is now public knowledge. This fact prevents him from being able to get Farfrae back to town quickly, and the reader sees that he is genuinely upset that his former lover may not get to see her husband before she dies. His behavior in the chapter confirms that he is beginning to feel repentance for his past sins.

The second theme, Elizabeth-Jane's emergent importance in Michael's life, is related to the first theme. Michael is discovering yet another area of his past that fills him with regrets, and he vows to become the best father he can be if Elizabeth-Jane is willing to have him.

The third theme is the redemption of Lucetta. She reconciles with Farfrae, and although Hardy refuses to tell the reader how much she confesses to him, it is clear that Farfrae comes to accept and understand her past.



# Chapter 41

## Chapter 41 Summary

Elizabeth-Jane comes to visit Michael the following morning to let him know about Lucetta's death. Michael insists that she get some sleep, and begins preparing breakfast for her. As she sleeps, the sea captain that Jopp had described comes to visit once more. This sea captain is in fact Newson, who tells Michael that he had staged his death / disappearance because he knew Susan was worried about the shame of her situation. He also turns out to be the man who gave a sovereign to help pay for the "skimmity-ride." Newson explains that he wants to see Elizabeth-Jane, but Michael is afraid that the reappearance of her father will destroy their new relationship. He tells Newson that Elizabeth-Jane is dead, and Newson leaves Casterbridge.

When Elizabeth-Jane wakes up, Michael sends her away quickly in case Newson returns. He then heads to a point in the river called the Ten Hatches Hole, lost in his own feelings of guilt and remorse for having lost everyone about whom he cared. He sees his own likeness in the water (the dummy used in the "skimmity-ride," which has been thrown in the river) and thinks about committing suicide. He changes his mind and instead heads back to the cottage, where Elizabeth-Jane is waiting for him. He quickly takes her back to the Ten Hatches Hole to show her his image floating in the water. She informs him that it is his effigy and, worried that he might still commit suicide, offers to stay with him at the cottage. Michael is very grateful, and decides that God has sent Elizabeth-Jane to save him.

## Chapter 41 Analysis

Newson's appearance causes Michael to act impulsively one last time when he tells him that Elizabeth-Jane is dead. He immediately regrets this action, and becomes extremely fearful that his lie will be discovered. His feelings of guilt lead him to consider suicide, and if Elizabeth-Jane had not intervened, he may very well have killed himself. His reaction to the effigy shows that Michael is very superstitious; his feelings that everyone has turned against him are compounded by what he thinks is an evil sign.

The reader is left to wonder at the end of this chapter just what will happen to Michael in the end. He is clinging to his image of Elizabeth-Jane as a savior but this image is jarred by his lie to Newson, a lie which may easily come back to haunt him. Thus while we may feel glad that Michael has "turned over a new leaf," we also know that his new world could collapse just as easily as did his former life.



# Chapter 42

## Chapter 42 Summary

The chapter starts with Michael still dreading Newson's return. We also see Farfrae deciding not to pursue the people who planned the "skimmity-ride" in consideration of both his wife's memory and Michael's reputation. The town council offers Michael a small seed store, which he accepts so that Elizabeth-Jane can restore some of her position in the town.

Michael begins to see Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane spending time together. He worries that their secret meetings will lead to a marriage, and he cannot stand the thought of Elizabeth-Jane with his rival. His main worry is that Farfrae will turn Elizabeth-Jane against him and that he will once again experience loneliness and despair. In desperation he contemplates telling Farfrae that Elizabeth-Jane is actually Newson's illegitimate daughter, but decides that this he cannot hurt Elizabeth-Jane in that manner.

## Chapter 42 Analysis

Michael and Farfrae are contrasted yet again in this chapter. While Michael has acted impulsively many times when faced with pain or distress, Farfrae proves to be calm and rational. He considers getting revenge on the perpetrators, but decides that it will destroy what is left of his dead wife's reputation. He considers her behavior, and he decides that eventually she would have acted impulsively again and caused him unhappiness. Finally, he decides to help Michael because in spite of his enmity he tried to help Farfrae the night Lucetta died.

Michael proves to be paranoid about his relationship with Elizabeth-Jane, and is worried that he will lose his last chance to connect with another person. He worries first that Newson will return, and then that Farfrae will poison her mind against him. The irony of the situation is of course that Farfrae would never react with such venom against Michael; because he never really understands or trusts other people, Michael seems to assume that people will act the same way he would.





# Chapter 43

## Chapter 43 Summary

This chapter sees many of the townsfolk discussing the new relationship between Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane. Michael is also very interested and starts using a telescope to watch their meetings. While doing so, he sees Newson, who appears to be waiting for someone, and worries that Newson will try to contact Elizabeth-Jane. Elizabeth-Jane tells Michael that an anonymous letter has requested that she meet the writer at Farfrae's house.

Michael realizes the letter is Newson, but he gives her permission to see him anyway. He then tells Elizabeth-Jane that he is leaving Casterbridge. Elizabeth-Jane worries that he is doing so because of her new relationship with Farfrae and tries to get him to stay. Michael insists on going, and tells her cryptically to remember that he loves her no matter what he has done in the past.

Elizabeth-Jane then goes to Farfrae's house and learns the truth from Newson. She is shocked and upset, and decides that she will never be able to forgive Michael for what he has done. Hoping to put him out of her mind, she begins preparing for her marriage to Farfrae.

## Chapter 43 Analysis

Michael's paranoia reaches a climax in this chapter; while the townsfolk ponder the new love between Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane, Michael starts to spy on them. The telescope shows him that the two are becoming closer, which upsets him greatly. When he sees that Newson has returned he knows that his lies will be discovered so he leaves Casterbridge for good. It is fitting that Michael leaves Casterbridge penniless and alone, exactly the way that he arrived more than 20 years previously.

We also see Elizabeth-Jane experiencing some unfamiliar emotions in the chapter. It is the first time that the reader sees her upset, but her feelings are understandable given the magnitude of Michael's lie. However, because she is not prone to these intense feelings the reader may wonder how long she will be able to sustain her anger against Michael.



# Chapter 44

## Chapter 44 Summary

In this chapter, we learn that Michael has started hay trussing again. Although he travels from one place to another, he is never too far away from Casterbridge and Elizabeth-Jane. He learns from some strangers that a wedding will occur soon in Casterbridge. He suspects that Elizabeth-Jane's wedding is "the wedding" so he decides to purchase a wedding presents. He finds a caged goldfinch and takes it to Casterbridge to give it to Elizabeth-Jane.

Michael goes to Casterbridge to give Elizabeth-Jane her present on the day of her wedding. He waits until evening, and then sneaks through the garden to enter his old house through the kitchen, leaving the bird outside. Elizabeth-Jane is surprised to see him, and the two are very awkward with one another. She insists on calling him Mr. Henchard, and scolds him for his lies. Michael takes her abuse without objecting, and apologizes for bothering her. He promises never to bother her again, and leaves without giving her the caged bird.

## Chapter 44 Analysis

Returning to his original profession changes Michael and he finally sees the gravity of the many rash decisions he has made over his lifetime. He realizes that he is getting older, and that the only chance he has left for a real meaningful relationship with anyone is to reconcile with Elizabeth-Jane. He attempts to do so, but does not have enough self-confidence to assert his reasons for being there or to give Elizabeth-Jane her present. In the end, he is forced to slink away and is completely defeated. His journey in the novel, from poverty to fame, power, and wealth and then back again, is now complete. He is no longer even a shadow of the proud figure he had been at the height of his power, and the reader can finally see that he has learned from his mistakes, but that it is now too late for him to salvage anything from his life.



# Chapter 45

## Chapter 45 Summary

Soon after she marries, Farfrae Elizabeth-Jane discovers the dead bird, still in its cage, in her garden. She realizes that it must have been a present from Michael, and she feels tremendously guilty for treating him so badly on her wedding day. She and Farfrae begin to search for Michael, but have no luck finding him for several weeks. Finally, they spot Abel Whittle near a humble cottage. They follow him and learn that Michael has just died. They find a note he has left asking that no one honor his life in any way, and asking that no one remember him.

Elizabeth-Jane is sad that Michael has died alone and unloved, but she decides to honor his wishes and not make a fuss over his death. The novel closes with Elizabeth-Jane deciding to live her life with gratitude for what she has, and she is happy.

## Chapter 45 Analysis

The last chapter shows the last occurrence of fate in the novel with the discovery of the dead Goldfinch. If Michael had given the bird to Elizabeth-Jane she would likely have forgiven him, and his life may have been spared. Instead, the bird's death of starvation symbolizes Michael's death from emotional starvation and loneliness. Although he believes himself to be unredeemable, there is a light of hope in the character of Whittle. Whittle nurses Michael in his final days out of a feeling of loyalty and respect, which is Hardy's way of letting the reader know that there still might be some who look kindly on Michael's tragic and strange existence.



# Characters

## Donald Farfrae

A young Scot who arrives in Casterbridge at about the same time as Susan and Elizabeth Jane, Donald Farfrae becomes Michael Henchard's business manager. He quickly becomes Henchard's only trusted friend and, later, his adversary in both business and love.

Hardy draws Farfrae as Henchard's counterpart in every way. He is physically small, polite and charming, careful and controlled, forward thinking, and methodical. Whereas Henchard propels his fate through moments of rash behavior, Farfrae is cool and calculating in all he does. Although his personality is friendly and engaging, Farfrae maintains a certain detachment from people and events, always considering the possible consequences of his decisions and actions before he makes them. As a result, his path through life is as smooth as Henchard's is rough.

Farfrae initiates a relationship with Henchard by providing information that is a great help to Henchard in solving a business problem and by refusing Henchard's offer of payment for the information. Henchard is so grateful and impressed that he talks Farfrae into abandoning his plans to go to America and convinces him to take a job as Henchard's business manager.

Because Farfrae is more organized and methodical than Henchard, the business prospers under his management. Farfrae is ambitious enough to eventually go into business for himself, though, and this enrages Henchard even though Farfrae, in his typically principled way, tries to minimize competition between the two firms.

Farfrae courts Elizabeth Jane and even hints that he would marry her if he were in a financial position to do so, but when he meets the newly wealthy Miss Templeman—Henchard's former lover whom he, too, is again courting—he turns his affections to her and marries her.

Farfrae's careful approach to life wins him all that was once Henchard's: at Henchard's bankruptcy sale, Farfrae buys his business, home, and furniture. He marries Henchard's former lover and, after she dies, marries Elizabeth Jane. Farfrae even becomes the highly respected and well-liked mayor of Casterbridge.

For Farfrae, though, the competition between Henchard and himself is never personal or mean-spirited. When the destitute Henchard asks Farfrae for a job, Farfrae hires him and makes sure that he himself never gives Henchard orders. Farfrae also offers to give Henchard any furniture or personal belongings that he would like to have back from the bankruptcy sale.



## The Furmity Woman

The furmity woman runs the shop in which Michael, at the beginning of the novel, gets drunk and sells Susan. She appears again eighteen years later, when Susan and Elizabeth Jane return to the village where the sale occurred to try to find Henchard. The furmity woman is still there and remembers that Henchard returned a year after the sale. She tells Susan that Henchard told her that he was moving to Casterbridge and that if a woman ever came asking for him, the furmity woman should pass on this information.

The furmity woman makes a final appearance in Casterbridge to seal Henchard's fate. Henchard is a judge, and the furmity woman, when brought before him on a public obscenity charge, recognizes him and tells the court about this shameful past.

## Elizabeth Jane Henchard

As the novel opens, Susan is carrying an infant daughter named Elizabeth Jane. She takes the baby with her when she goes off with Newson, and when readers see Susan eighteen years later, again with her daughter, Hardy gives the impression that this is the same infant grown up. Only later do readers learn that Henchard's daughter died a few months after he sold Susan and that this girl is Newson's daughter.

As Susan and the eighteen-year-old Elizabeth Jane set about finding Henchard, Elizabeth Jane knows nothing about her mother's marriage to Henchard. She thinks that her mother and Newson were legally married and that now Susan is in search of a distant relative by marriage who may be of some help to them.

Early in the novel, both Elizabeth Jane's natural beauty and her innate intelligence have been compromised by her poverty. She has no education and no prospects in life. This is why Susan is willing to risk the possibility of being rejected and humiliated again by Henchard; she sees him as her daughter's only hope for a better life.

Once Henchard begins providing for her, Elizabeth Jane blossoms both physically and socially. She becomes the town beauty and is admired by young men, including Farfrae, with whom Elizabeth Jane has been quite taken since their first meeting.

Hardy draws Elizabeth Jane as a healthy mixture of levelheadedness and deep feeling. When Henchard's money allows her nice clothes, she enjoys them but doesn't overspend or flaunt her position. She also takes advantage of her newfound leisure by reading and studying to improve herself; she has always been embarrassed by her lack of education. When Farfrae abandons her for Miss Templeman, Elizabeth Jane simply withdraws quietly although she loves him.

Unable to hold a grudge or remain bitter, Elizabeth Jane finally marries Farfrae after Miss Templeman dies. And although she lashes out at Henchard when she finds out



that he has lied to keep her from Newson, she soon forgives him and goes to find him. She is touched by Henchard's will and honors his wishes.

## Michael Henchard

Michael Henchard is the towering but tragic hero of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*; the novel is his story. He is physically large and powerful. His character is a strange mixture of the light and the dark. Henchard is true to his word. Until he hires Farfrae, he runs his business with few written records, and the townspeople know that they can trust him to keep the contracts he makes orally. Yet he sometimes says things that are rash and even cruel and then follows through on them just as if they were contracts made in good faith. Such an outburst causes him to sell his wife at the beginning of the novel. Henchard has the willpower and determination to keep an oath for twenty-one years, yet he seems to rarely think ahead, and, in a single moment of ire, he can do a deed that ruins years of effort. He is so honest that when the furmity woman exposes his past, he readily admits that she is telling the truth, and when he declares bankruptcy, he willingly turns over everything but the clothes on his back to his creditors. Yet when Newson comes looking for Elizabeth Jane, Henchard tells him she is dead.

Henchard begins the novel a young man who is poor but who at least possesses a skill, the vigor of youth, and a wife and child. Yet he is convinced that his early marriage has ruined his chances in life. After shamefully ridding himself of the wife and child, he forswears the alcohol that undoubtedly fueled the deed and almost completely forswears the company of women, channeling all his energies into his business. And so, at first, the punishments that he imposes on himself for selling Susan lead to his success.

But fate and Henchard's own abiding guilt conspire to destroy him. Fate places Donald Farfrae in his path, and Henchard chooses first to bring the man into his business and then to make him an adversary—the thoughtful, self-possessed adversary who will end up with impetuous Henchard's public office and stature, his wealth, his business, his home, his furniture, his lover, and, finally, his stepdaughter. To help cruel fate along, Henchard indulges in one self-destructive act after another. When he would like to ruin Farfrae's business, he instead speculates foolishly and ruins his own. When he wishes to return some highly inflammatory letters to a former lover, he entrusts the delivery to a man who openly hates him. When Elizabeth-Jane is all he has left in the world, he tells lies that are sure to estrange her from him.

Henchard ends up much poorer than he began, having lost, for a second and final time, his wife and her child and having lost the strength and potential of youth. At the end of the novel, he walks away from Casterbridge utterly alone and soon dies in the hut that has been his final home. He dies before he can know that Elizabeth Jane has softened toward him, and his will makes clear that he would have wanted it so. His final wish is, in effect, to be obliterated for his sins, which a lifetime of penance was insufficient to obliterate in his own mind. His will asks that Elizabeth Jane not be informed of his



death, that no ceremony mark his passing, that no flowers mark his grave, and "that no man remember me."

## Susan Henchard

Susan Henchard is Michael's wife as the novel opens. Hardy portrays her as being naïve and resigned to an existence over which she is powerless. The small efforts she makes to control her fate are useless; she steers Henchard away from what is clearly a saloon to a place that appears not to serve alcohol only to find that the proprietor in fact sells rum on the sly.

When Michael sells her to a sailor, Susan assumes that the transaction is valid and that she must stay with him. She lives peaceably with him for many years and bears him a daughter before a friend finally makes her realize that she is not bound by Henchard's act.

After the sailor is presumed dead at sea, Susan sets out to find Henchard, hoping to benefit her daughter. It never seems to occur to her that he might have an obligation to Susan herself. Once she finds out that Henchard is mayor of the town and well off, far from desiring to take advantage of him or ruin him, she wishes she could leave Casterbridge without meeting him. For the sake of her daughter, she goes through with her plan to approach him.

Even the townspeople of Casterbridge see that Susan has no sense of self; they call her a "ghost." Soon after she has seen Elizabeth Jane on her way to being established in the way Susan had hoped for, Susan dies.

## Jopp

Jopp is a lowlife villain who is driven by dark emotions. The day that Henchard hires Farfrae to be his business manager, Jopp shows up in the office having been previously offered the job that Farfrae now has. Informed that the position is no longer available, Jopp goes away steaming and bent on revenge.

Further events fuel this desire. Among other things, Henchard does finally hire Jopp but then fires him unreasonably when Henchard's own business decisions prove disastrous. Henchard foolishly gives Jopp his chance for revenge when he asks Jopp to deliver to Miss Templeman a package of scandalous letters. Jopp reads the letters aloud to a tavern crowd, which then plans the "skimmityride" (a parading of effigies through the town to call attention to adultery) that ends in Miss Templeman's death and Henchard's further humiliation.



## Newson

Newson is the sailor who buys Susan at the beginning of the novel. He shows that he does have some scruples when he says that he will take Susan only if she is willing to go with him. His relationship with Susan and with Elizabeth Jane is portrayed as kind and cordial. When Susan comes to understand that their relationship is not legitimate, Newson does her a kindness by having himself reported lost at sea, allowing her to leave his house without guilt and with a small amount of money.

Newson's basic decency is seen later in his desire to share his wealth with Elizabeth Jane, in his acceptance of Henchard's word that she has died, and in his lack of bitterness when he discovers that Henchard has lied to him. At the end of the novel, Newson lives within sight of the sea but also near his daughter.

## Lucetta Templeman

Lucetta Templeman is a superficial, unthinking woman who, like Henchard, suffers several reversals of fortune and ends badly. Henchard has an affair with her before Susan arrives in Casterbridge, and this affair ruins Lucetta's reputation. To try to repair the damage, Henchard, thinking that Susan is probably dead, offers to marry Lucetta. Before the marriage takes place, though, Susan returns, and Henchard must call off the wedding.

After Susan dies, Lucetta inherits wealth, and Henchard renews his interest in her. Lucetta is more interested in Farfrae, though, and marries him. When Lucetta's old letters to Henchard become public, the scandal of their affair returns to haunt them both, and Lucetta is so distraught by this that she suffers a seizure and dies. Farfrae soon realizes that Lucetta was not a good match for him and that, had she lived, their marriage would not have been happy.





# Themes

## Blind Fate

The idea of a blind, arbitrary fate is a central theme in Hardy's fiction. Although this fate is blind, it is not neutral but almost always cruel. It is a force that brings suffering and feels no pity or remorse.

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, blind fate manifests as a series of ruinous coincidences and un-foreseeable circumstances. Such coincidences and circumstances seem to conspire against Michael Henchard from the opening scenes. There are two shops offering food at the fair; one clearly advertises that it sells liquor, but the other seems not to do so. Susan, knowing Michael's weakness for alcohol, steers him to what seems to be the "safer" of the two establishments. But, as fate would have it, the proprietor there sells rum on the sly, and Michael is soon drunk and loudly insisting on his desire to sell his wife.

Next, along comes a coincidence in the person of a man who has both the money and the inclination to accept the offer that Henchard has been unwilling to let drop in spite of attempts by his wife and others to silence him. The man happens to be a sailor who takes Susan to Canada, far beyond Michael's reach as he searches for her.

And so the tide of fate that will carry Michael inexorably to his tragic end gathers strength. It is not swayed by Henchard's repentance, by his shame, by his vow not to drink, or by his lifelong efforts to right his wrong. It is as if a curse has been uttered and cannot be withdrawn.

## Relationship between Character and Fate

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, more than in some of Hardy's other fiction, the theme of blind fate is interwoven with a second theme that might at first seem contradictory: the theme of personal character as the molder of fate. Every coincidence or unforeseen circumstance is paired with a choice. Henchard could have refused the furtive woman's rum, but did not. He could have refused Newson's offer to buy Susan, which would have required the courage and strength of character to admit that the offer was a drunken mistake.

Circumstance and character hold a conversation throughout this novel. Each circumstance is a question that Henchard must answer, and each answer both illustrates what kind of man Henchard is and determines what kind of man he will become. In the beginning, Henchard has much control over his fate; more than once, he is presented with the opportunity to prevent the curse from being uttered. But once he has sold Susan, his choices have much less power. A line has been crossed, a process has been set in motion, a deed has been done that all of Michael's future efforts will be inadequate to erase. Although he makes many moral choices from that moment on—to



forswear alcohol and to "remarry" Susan, for example—Michael has lost control of his fate.

As these two themes of blind fate and personal character weave through the novel, Hardy leaves readers to interpret just how the two relate. Judging by Michael Henchard's end, though, Hardy's message seems to be that each choice a person makes limits future choices and that a single bad choice can put a person forever at the mercy of blind, uncaring fate. Michael Henchard can be compared to a seaman in a storm who, in a moment of carelessness, loses his grip on his ship's wheel and is never able to regain control of his course.

# Style

## Victorian Literature

It was during the Victorian period (1837-1901) that the novel became the dominant literary form, and Hardy is considered one of the major novelists of the era, along with Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, Rudyard Kipling, Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë, and many others. It was common for novels to be published serially, in magazines or in standalone sections. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* was first published serially, in twenty installments, in an English periodical called *The Graphic* in 1886. It was published simultaneously in the United States in *Harper's Weekly*. Hardy's original manuscript, with some sections missing, is at the Dorset County Museum in Dorchester.

*The Mayor of Casterbridge* was published in book form as soon as the serial publication was complete. Many novels of this period differ slightly in their serial and book forms (authors were aware of the serial format as they wrote and structured their stories to keep readers interested from one week to the next), but this book differs substantially from the serial novel. In the serial form, for example, Henchard marries Lucetta. Hardy's biography (supposedly written by his second wife but actually written almost entirely by Hardy himself) reveals that he felt this novel had been badly damaged by the demands of serial publication and that his revisions for the book publication were not adequate to repair the story. The text of the novel that is available to today's readers is the final revision that Hardy did for the 1912 Wessex Edition of his novels.

Victorian novels often deal with social issues. While social issues play a role in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the novel was a departure from the norm because it focused consistently on a single character, Michael Henchard. Because of this limited focus, the novel is shorter and has a smaller cast of characters than many novels of the time.

## Wessex Setting

Like all of Hardy's fiction, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is set in southwestern England in the region once known as Wessex. The area was invaded, settled, and named by the Saxons, who ruled it as a kingdom, in ancient times. It extended from the English Channel north to the Thames River and from Windsor Forest in the east to the Cornish coast in the west.

While most novelists set their stories in real places, Hardy is distinctive for two reasons. First, although the author traveled widely, in the writing of his novels and stories, he never strayed beyond the boundaries of his native region. In his 1912 general preface to his final, revised version of his novels, Hardy explained, "there was quite enough human nature in Wessex for one man's literary purposes." He further explained, somewhat unnecessarily, that his characters "were meant to be typically and essentially those of



any and every place . . . beings in whose hearts and minds that which is apparently local should be really universal."

Second, Hardy, unlike other authors, rarely invented features to add to the real landscape of Wessex. He describes the towns and farms, the roads and hotels, and the smallest details as they really were. When Hardy describes a house, it is likely that readers in his time knew exactly which house he had borrowed for his tale.

In some cases, Hardy used real place names; in others, he gave fictional names to real places. While Stonehenge and Southampton appear under their actual names, Casterbridge is, in reality, Hardy's hometown of Dorchester. In his 1912 preface, Hardy points out that his general rule was to use the real names of the major towns and places that mark the general boundaries of Wessex and to use fictional, disguised, or ancient names for most other places.

Even Hardy's characters are based on real people more than most fictional characters are. Most are composites of people he knew or knew of and his own embellishments. He borrowed bits of characters and story lines from the folklore and ballads of Wessex. The fact that he lived a long life in Wessex and had access to church records in his early work as an architect and church restorer gave him an intimate knowledge of local life and its too-frequent tragedies.

## Gothic Elements

Gothic fiction was popular between about 1760 and 1820. Gothic authors used threatening environments (the foreboding hilltop castle on a stormy night); brooding, malevolent characters; dark secrets; and the supernatural and occult to instill a sense of horror in their readers. Gothic fiction has influenced much of the fiction written in the past two hundred and fifty years, and Gothic elements were prominent in the novels of the Victorian age. In the novels of Charles Dickens, Sir Walter Scott, Charlotte Brontë, and others, these elements made the dark side of human nature palpable to readers.

Gothic elements appear throughout *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. One striking example is the meeting between Henchard and Susan at the old Roman amphitheater called the Ring. The Ring is outside the town, and Henchard and Susan meet there at dusk. Before Hardy narrates their meeting, he spins a long, ghostly description of the place that infuses it with a history of gloom and gore. Readers are reminded of the bloody Roman sports for which the place was built. They are told that the Ring was long the home of Casterbridge's gallows and treated to a lurid description of a murderess being "half-strangled and then burnt there in the presence of ten thousand spectators." Even now, Hardy assures readers, the Ring is the setting for violent crimes, and some old people have had visions of the amphitheater filled with cheering Roman soldiers and have actually heard their bloodthirsty roaring. By the time Hardy finally brings Henchard and Susan to the scene, he has made readers feel that there truly is something dark about their purpose here, though on the surface their meeting is cordial.



## Coincidence

Coincidence, too, was a common plot device in Hardy's time and one of which he makes frequent use in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. For example, the firmity woman happens to stumble into Casterbridge, of all towns, and at just the right time and in just the right circumstance to do Henchard great harm. The weather happens to change just when Henchard is vulnerable to ruin because of his risky attempt to destroy Farfrae.

There are two ways of looking at Hardy's coincidences. Some readers and critics say that they make the story unrealistic and therefore less effective than it would otherwise be. Others point out that coincidences are not, in and of themselves, unrealistic, as life has its fair share of them. The question, this latter group would say, is whether the coincidences themselves are realistic or not. In the case of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the answer seems to be at least a qualified "yes." The firmity woman has been cast as a merchant who travels around the region, so it is not incredible that she would show up in Casterbridge. Anyone who has ever farmed can testify that there is nothing more unpredictable, more uncontrollable, and, seemingly, more contrary to the wishes of farmers than the weather.

Hardy employs coincidence to help him—and his readers—explore the nature of fate. He leaves open the question of whether coincidences are merely chance suggesting that fate is blind or whether what appear to be coincidences are actually directed by some supernatural hand that guides men and women to the fates they "deserve."



# Historical Context

## Victorian England

The Victorian age began in 1837, when eighteen-year-old Queen Victoria ascended to the British throne, and ended with her death in 1901. Victoria and her husband, Albert, set the tone of English life and culture for most of a century. It was a time of social and moral conservatism; the "family values" of the time were similar to those touted in late-twentieth-century America. Pragmatism was valued above romance, duty above pleasure.

Beneath the veneer of gentility and commitment to duty and family, the Victorian age, like every era, had its dark side. Prostitution flourished, and lurid crime stories—both true and fictional—were popular. Hordes of small children living by their wits on the streets of London and other cities were a testament to the limits of the commitment to family. The wife-selling incident that is at the center of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is a fictional instance of a type of transaction that did, indeed, occur in rural England in the nineteenth century.

The early Victorian period was a time of social reforms. Laws were passed governing working conditions of women and children (they could not work in underground mines, for example), and attempts were made to improve conditions in prisons and insane asylums. Efforts to broaden access to education (England had no public schools at the time) stalled because of controversy over the Church of England's role in expanded education. Writers such as William Makepeace Thackeray and Charles Dickens took up the cause of reform, using their writing to point out the need for prison reforms and education and the evils of industrialization and the class system.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, England was experiencing unprecedented political, industrial, and economic power, fueled by the Industrial Revolution and by wealth from the colonies. All forms of transportation boomed; railroad ridership increased sevenfold, and the shipbuilding industry grew. Living standards of the working class and middle class were buoyed, and trade unions were formed to promote the interests of skilled workers.

By the late 1800s, Queen Victoria had ruled for fifty years. The British had consolidated their rule of India, and the empire was expanding, especially in Asia and Africa. Domestically, however, the economy was faltering. The United States and Britain took over as the world's leading producers of manufactured goods, and British farmers suffered from foreign competition. Economic hardships sparked immigration to the British colonies and to the United States. More than two hundred thousand Britons left home each year during the 1880s—as Newson did and as Farfrae intended to do in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*.



## Life in Nineteenth-Century Wessex

According to Hardy (and scholars agree), a history book could hardly give a more accurate picture of life in nineteenth-century Wessex than does Hardy's fiction. In his general preface to the final Wessex Edition of his novels, in 1912, Hardy wrote:

At the dates represented in the various narrations, things were like that in Wessex: the inhabitants lived in certain ways, engaged in certain occupations, kept alive certain customs, just as they are shown doing in these pages.... I have instituted inquiries to correct tricks of memory and striven against temptations to exaggerate in order to preserve for my own satisfaction a fairly true record of a vanishing life.

## Critical Overview

On January 2, 1886, the day on which the first installment of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* was published, Hardy wrote in his diary, "I fear it will not be so good as I meant." Although Hardy's fiction up to this point had received mixed reviews, critics generally disagreed with the author about the quality of this book and gave it high marks. Hardy's autobiography says of the novel, "others thought better of it than he did himself" and mentions that the author Robert Louis Stevenson liked the book and even asked Hardy for permission to adapt it as a play (which Stevenson never did). H. M. Alden's review in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* in 1886 began, "In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Mr. Hardy seems to have started with the intention of merely adventurous fiction and to have found himself in possession of something so much more important." Alden continued, "Mr. Hardy has never achieved anything more skillful or valuable . . . we are not sure that he has not placed himself abreast of Tolstoy and the greatest of the continental realists."

Through the decades, the consensus has remained that *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is one of the greatest novels of a great writer. Hardy's characterization—especially of Michael Henchard—has most often been singled out for praise. Martin Seymour-Smith wrote in the introduction to a 1978 edition of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* that Hardy "penetrates very deeply into character. He can show us how a man's 'being attracts his life.'" This unwavering focus on the character of one powerful man as he "attracts his life" is what set *The Mayor of Casterbridge* apart from other novels of its time. In his widely read 1949 book, *Thomas Hardy: The Novels and Stories*, Hardy scholar Albert J. Guerard wrote:

Henchard . . . stands at the very summit of his creator's achievement; his only tragic hero and one of the greatest tragic heroes in all fiction. He takes his place at once with certain towering and possessed figures of Melville, Hawthorne, and Dostoevsky.

But critics and scholars point out, too, that Hardy wrote novels for a popular audience (because he wrote to earn a living), and he was even more consistently successful with the public than he was with critics. When *The Mayor of Casterbridge* was published, it was as much talked about by readers as it was by critics. Such popularity could only be gained by telling a good story and by exhibiting an understanding of and compassion for human beings. Guerard concluded of Hardy:

His final and unmistakable appeal therefore rests . . . on the popular storytelling of a singularly uninhibited imagination . . . and, above all, on an incorrigible



sympathy for all who are lonely and all who long  
for happiness.

# Criticism

- Critical Essay #1



# Critical Essay #1

*Norvell is an independent educational writer who specializes in English and literature. She holds degrees in linguistics and journalism. In this essay, Norvell discusses two techniques that Hardy uses in his novel to make his main character both realistic and symbolic.*

Critics through the decades have agreed that Michael Henchard is one of the towering figures of literature. Henchard is powerful because he is both an individual and an icon. He seems to readers to be a real person—a person who evokes sympathy and compassion because he has the same kinds of weaknesses that readers themselves have and experiences the same kinds of loneliness, guilt, fear, and defeat. At the same time, Henchard seems larger than life—like a symbol, rather than a mere example, of humanity.

Hardy uses many techniques to give Henchard these dual aspects. This essay explores two of these techniques: Hardy's grounding Henchard in a real-life setting to make him human, and Hardy's associating Henchard with other larger-than-life characters to make him iconic.

Hardy's perennial Wessex setting and his exact historical details help to make Henchard seem like a real person who lived and suffered just as Hardy's story has it. After all, if the place is real and the way of life is real and all the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes described are really part of history, then any character who is set down in the midst of it all will seem not like a character at all but just as much a part of history as the scene it self. Hardy's specific details and historical accuracy earn him so much credibility that it is easy for readers to believe that his narrator is relating a story from memory, not from imagination, that is, that Michael Henchard's life is history, not story.

When Michael and Susan enter a shop to have dinner, Hardy tells readers that they eat furnity and then describes the archaic dish, even listing the ingredients. The author takes pains to be specific and authentic. He could have written that Michael and Susan ate potato soup and saved himself the trouble of explaining an unfamiliar meal. But Hardy is telling about a real time and place, and he feels bound to tell what people actually ate there. By doing so he makes the reader's suspension of disbelief automatic and complete. The story that contains such minute and peculiar detail must certainly be a true story, and the people in it must, therefore, be real people.

Making Henchard real and human is important because Hardy wants readers to identify with him and care about him—to be affected by his suffering and his story. But it is also important to make Henchard symbolic so that readers understand that this story is not *just* the story of one man's life; it is also about how life works for all human beings. Hardy must draw Henchard in such a way that his story is understood to be a timeless tale that has played out—the same in essence and different only in the details—countless times in countless settings and with countless players. This Hardy does through references to other such players. These references serve to associate



Henchard with his fellow tragic figures, from the biblical Saul to the Greek Achilles to Napoleon and by that association to make him timeless and enduring, as they are.

Hardy writes, when Farfrae leaves Henchard's employ and opens his own business, "Henchard was stung into bitterness: like Bellerophon, he wandered away from the crowd. Bellerophon is a character in the Greek epic *The Iliad* who is deserted by the gods and who in turn deserts human society and wanders alone.

When Henchard learns that Elizabeth Jane is not his daughter, Hardy writes, "Like Prester John's, his table had been spread, and infernal harpies had snatched up the food." Prester John is a character in *Orlando Furioso*, a well-known Renaissance poem by Ludovico Ariosto. Prester John is a wealthy king who nevertheless starves because harpies (monsters with women's heads and birds' bodies who snatch things away from their rightful owners) snatch the food from his table.

When Henchard's decline is well underway, Hardy compares him to Napoleon, writing, "That dinner at the King's Arms with his friends had been Henchard's Austerlitz: he had had his successes since, but his courses had not been upward." Napoleon won the Battle of Austerlitz, and it was both the pinnacle of his career and the beginning of his destruction. Similarly, the dinner at the King's Arms was the high point of Henchard's success but also, unbeknownst to him at the time, the beginning of his downfall. On that day Susan Henchard arrived in Casterbridge, and it was her arrival that set in motion his ruin.

A final example: When Farfrae understandably distrusts Henchard's motives and refuses to return to Casterbridge with him, Hardy writes of Henchard, "He cursed himself like a less scrupulous Job." There is probably no more well-known sufferer than the biblical Job. Here, Henchard is compared—and, with the qualifier "less scrupulous," compared unfavorably—with perhaps the greatest icon of suffering ever written and read about.

Hardy has planted Henchard's feet firmly in the dust of Wessex and thus made him real, individual, and touchingly human. But he has also drawn Henchard's shadow so that it extends beyond Wessex and the nineteenth century to distant places and times. He has made Henchard both small enough to be pitiable and large enough to be unforgettable. In that feat, Hardy created what Albert J. Guerard, in *Thomas Hardy: The Novels and Stories*, called "one of the greatest tragic heroes in all fiction."

**Source:** Candyce Norvell, Critical Essay on *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, in *Novels for Students*, The Gale Group, 2002.

# Adaptations

Unabridged audio versions of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* have been published by Books on Tape, Inc. (1983), Chivers Audio Books (1991), John Curley and Associates (1991, with Tony Britton as reader), and the Audio Partners Publishing Corporation (1998, with John Rowe as reader).

*The Mayor of Casterbridge* was made into a seven-part television miniseries in the United Kingdom in 1978. It was directed by David Giles III and written by Dennis Potter. Alan Bates starred as Henchard, Jack Galloway as Farfrae, Janet Maw as Elizabeth Jane, and Anne Stallybrass as Susan.

A 2001 made-for-television movie of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* was directed by David Thacker and written by Ted Whitehead. Ciarán Hinds starred as Henchard, James Purefoy as Farfrae, Jodhi May as Elizabeth Jane, and Juliet Aubrey as Susan.



## Topics for Further Study

Hardy originally subtitled *The Mayor of Casterbridge* "A Story of a Man of Character." What is meant by the phrase "a man of character?" Do you think it was an appropriate subtitle for the novel? Explain your answer.

Compare and contrast Michael Henchard and Donald Farfrae. What traits do they have in common, and what differences are there between the two men?

Name a single character trait that you think is the cause of Michael's downfall and explain why you think that trait, above all others, is Michael's tragic weakness.

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Susan allows herself to be "sold" and willingly goes with the man who has "bought" her. What else might Susan have done? What alternatives did she have? Do some research about rural life in England at the time, and list only alternatives that were realistically available to a woman such as Susan. Then explain which alternative you think is the best choice for Susan—one of those you have listed or the action she takes in the novel—and why.

Hardy set all of his novels in the Wessex region of England where he was born. In *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and other novels, he used real places—towns, roads, bodies of water, and even shops and hotels. He used the real names of some of these places and gave fictional names to others. Imagine that you are going to write a novel set in the region where you live. Draw a map of the region, showing the towns, roads, and other places that will appear in your novel. For each place, decide whether you will use its real name or make up a name and write the names on your map. Finally, write a one-page description of the region shown in your map. Make your description as detailed as possible to give readers a feel for the place; describe the landscape, people, animals, weather, sounds, smells, and so on.



## Compare and Contrast

**Late Nineteenth Century:** The price of English grain is falling due to competition from overseas farmers. Better transportation and refrigeration mean that foreign farmers can ship grain to England and undercut local farmers. Large estates in the grain-growing regions of England, such as Hardy's Wessex, face falling profits and in some cases are broken up into smaller holdings. Unemployment is high among farm workers. Dairy and fruit farmers prosper, however, as they do not face foreign competition.

**Today:** England imports most of its food, including grain. England's crop income is only about one-third of that from livestock and dairy products, but southern England is still an important farming region. Farms are much smaller than they were in Hardy's time, averaging less than two hundred fifty acres, and are much more mechanized. Major crops are wheat, potatoes, barley, sugar beets, and oats.

**Late Nineteenth Century:** The Third Reform Bill of 1884 extends the vote to male farm workers in England; previously, only men of the upper social classes were allowed to vote. In addition, laws are changed to make it possible for upper-class women to retain their property when they marry, to vote in local elections, and to attend universities. Working-class women such as Susan in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* still have virtually no rights under the law.

**Today:** All men and women in England have the right to vote in all elections, and well over one hundred women serve in Parliament. Women also have property rights and access to higher education that equal those of men.

**Late Nineteenth Century:** Queen Victoria, namesake of the Victorian age, celebrates her golden jubilee—fifty years of rule—in 1887 and her diamond jubilee in 1897.

**Today:** Queen Elizabeth II takes the throne in 1952 and will celebrate her golden jubilee in 2002.

## What Do I Read Next?

Hardy's *Far from the Madding Crowd* was published serially in 1874 and is ranked as a Victorian classic. It is the story of a woman farmer and her three suitors. Author Virginia Woolf commented that this book "must hold its place among the great English novels." It has the distinction of being Hardy's only novel to offer readers a happy ending.

Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* was published in 1891 and has always been one of his most popular novels. It tells the tragic story of Tess, a young farm worker on the estate of the wealthy D'Urbervilles. Working to support her drunken father and the rest of her family, she is raped and impregnated by a son of her employer. When her baby dies, she moves away and is courted by a hardworking young man. But tragedy continues to follow her.

*Selected Poetry: Thomas Hardy* (1996), edited by Samuel Hynes as part of the World's Classics series from Oxford University Press, is a good introduction to Hardy's poetry. The collection spans Hardy's writing career and includes poems that influenced later poets, including Ezra Pound and W. H. Auden.

*Wuthering Heights*, by Emily Brontë, was published in 1847 and is also considered one of the classics of Victorian literature. The novel is a story of romance and revenge. Like Henchard in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, the main character of this novel undergoes more than one reversal of fortune.

*Little Dorrit*, by Charles Dickens, was first published serially in 1857. Another Victorian classic, Dickens's book tells the story of Amy Dorrit, born in the debtors' prison where her father lives. Major themes are social class, financial reversals, and romance.

*Vanity Fair*, by William Makepeace Thackeray, was published serially in 1847-1848 in London. Like *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Vanity Fair* focuses on the personal characters of its major players and on how their integrity (or, in most cases, the lack of it) affects their lives and fates. Its central figure, Becky Sharp, is one of the most infamous characters in all of literature.

*The Cambridge Companion to Thomas Hardy* (1999), edited by Dale Kramer, is a collection of essays that provides a comprehensive overview of Hardy's life and work, including how the philosophy, science, and religion of his time influenced his work.



## Further Study

Armstrong, Tim, *Haunted Hardy: Poetry, History, Memory*, St. Martin's Press, 2000.

This volume focuses on Hardy's poetry and its frequent references to death and ghosts—particularly ghosts of lost children.

Betty, J. H., *Rural Life in Wessex, 1500-1900*, Sutton Publishing, 1989.

This nonfiction look at rural Wessex before and during Hardy's time offers an in-depth view of the part of England in which Hardy set much of his work.

Mallett, Phillip, ed., *The Achievement of Thomas Hardy*, Palgrave, 2000.

These essays explore Hardy's fiction and poetry, covering elements such as the nature of storytelling and the relationship between poems and songs.

Mitchell, Sally, *Daily Life in Victorian England*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996.

This comprehensive look at both city and country life in Victorian England covers social classes, morals, economics and finance, laws, and more. It includes excerpts from primary source documents and illustrations.

Turner, Paul D. L., *The Life of Thomas Hardy: A Critical Biography*, edited by Claude Rawson, Blackwell Publications, 1998.

Each of this book's thirty-two chapters explores the biographical and literary context of one of Hardy's works. One interesting aspect of Hardy's life covered here is his self-education in Greek and Latin and the later influences of Greek tragedy, Latin poetry, and Shakespeare on his work.



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Alden, H. M., Review of *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, November 1886, pp. 961-62.

Guerard, Albert J., *Thomas Hardy: The Novels and Stories*, Harvard University Press, 1949.

Seymour-Smith, Martin, Introduction, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Penguin Books, 1978, p. 21.



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## **Introduction**

### **Purpose of the Book**

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's □For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels



frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

### Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals—helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

### How Each Entry Is Organized



Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).



- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an "at-a-glance" comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

### Other Features

NfS includes "The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature," a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.



Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

### Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

### We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: [ForStudentsEditors@gale.com](mailto:ForStudentsEditors@gale.com). Or write to the editor at:

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