

# Mayor of Casterbridge

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Irony in The Mayor of Casterbridge The noblest efforts of a hero, ironically involves him in guilt and leads him to misery. Thomas Hardy's novel, The Mayor of Casterbridge concentrates mainly on the life and events of a certain Michael Henchard.. The primary element of irony embraces also the main theme of the story, that life is a sum product of consequences of one's personal choices and that of simple destiny. The Mayor of Casterbridge clearly features many ironic twists in the plot, both obvious ones such as Henchard discovering Elizabeth-Jane's true parentage at such an inappropriate time, and more subtle uses of irony as when Mrs. Goodenough only betrays Henchard's past because Susan and Elizabeth-Jane remind her of it. He endures many severe events as the Mayor of Casterbridge and his fate seems to constantly oppose him. Fate plays an enormous role in the life of Michael Henchard and indeed, whenever he seems to recover from his previous misfortune; as a consequence of his stubborn characteristics, his fate stands resilient in his path to happiness once again. Certainly, Michael Henchard's fate is an outcome of his behavior towards his family and friends but it is also evident that Henchard's fate was not in favor of him from the day of his birth. Conversely, Henchard does possess some positive aspects and therefore, this implies that character is not directly proportional to fate. Henchard's only possession at the conclusion of the novel is his fate yet this fate is the cause of all the tragedies with his loved ones and above all, himself. Michael Henchard is a complex character with many differing characteristics and throughout the entire novel it is extremely complex to decide whether Henchard is in actual fact a desperate and innocently self-seeking man or an irrational operator. Indeed, Henchard is a victim of his

own delusions. He has falsely believed and is being psychotically driven to accept a misconception about who he truly is. Contributing to his life's outcome was because of his daunting past that was caused by his own foolishness in his moment of weakness. Should that incident of being drunk did not happen in the first place, we could fairly make an assumption that he will not end up where he is at the end of the story. Essentially, Henchard is very much affected if not haunted by his past and he laments that he cannot undo it. He relates grown wheat metaphorically to the mistakes of the past that, neither can be taken back. Although Henchard learns this lesson at the end of Chapter IV, yet he fails to internalize it. As the story progresses, we come to see that Henchard is merely moved by his guilt more than anything else and he cannot forgive himself nor forgo his prior faux pas. Somehow, Henchard's character managed to portray a seemingly passionate disposition. Whatever he may feel--be it love, hate, desire, or contempt; he feels it overpoweringly. In light of this statement, it can be seen through his guilt over selling his wife, Susan, which tracks him from Weydon-Priors to Casterbridge, where it overshadows his life for twenty years. In fact, his conviction to turn over a new leaf began at sunrise the next day after that fateful incident. This is shown clearly through his act of repentance when Henchard intensely takes his solemn oath, kneeling at the altar and said 'before God here is this solemn place that I will avoid all strong liquors for the space of twenty one years to come'. His earnest and sincere desire to right these past wrongs and his awakening that he deserves to suffer for them, accounts for his suffering as much as any malignant force of the universe. Could this possibly be the reason why he was fated for such turn of

events in his life? Or did his perception mislead him into thinking that he would pay the heavy price for his unseemly actions of the past? Perhaps, if Henchard had not been possessed by the devastating delusion of his mind, he would not have to suffer for a series of unfortunate events following by his state of disrepute. 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. Fate is natural and irony is a part of fate. Irony's importance is no greater and no less than the importance of fate in Thomas Hardy's novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Michael Henchard's ultimate flaw is his own character. His impulsive, quick tempered and sometimes selfish personality causes his downfall. Many ironic twists take place that seem to be fated to happen to Henchard. One's own pride can destroy your reputation, for once a title is tainted it is impossible to fully restore.