

Major themes in the novel 'hard times' essay sample

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Charles Dickens is known for criticizing the social class system of the Victorian era, and the exploitation of the poor. Hard Times is no exception to this rule.

Dickens attacks the Utilitarian education, the arrogance of the middle and upper class, and the industrial revolution. He praises the working class on their morals and their ability to earn an honest living.

Hard Times

Hard Times is the title of the book and a theme. Every character in the novel faces hard times at some point. We can examine some of the major characters in the story. Gradgrind faces hardship when his philosophy falls apart; Sissy Jupe loses her father, but never gives up on him; James Harthouse is restless, and bored, and when he finally falls for Louisa and expresses his love to her, she runs from him. Mr. Bounderby loses his wife and is exposed as an outright liar etc etc...

The head V's the heart

The Head V's the heart is a major theme. Mr. Gradgrind represents wisdom of the head; he believes in facts, figures and statistics. If it can't be calculated then Mr. Gradgrind passes it off as pure fancy and imagination.

Sissy Jupe, daughter of a run away clown; considered simple and uneducated represents wisdom of the heart. She is loving, kind and understanding. When Gradgrind see his philosophy break down, Sissy proves to him that the wisdom of the heart is not just something of the imagination. She brings

kindness and goodness to a number of characters in the novel; including Gradgrind.

Wisdom of the heart wins the battle in the end. This is an example of Dickens criticizing the Utilitarian system.

The industrial revolution

Hard times was written for the middle class, this is evident because the story is written from a middle class point of view. Dickens very cleverly refers to the effects of the industrial revolution. Reference to the poor living and working conditions, the unsanitary environment and dangerous machinery in the factories is mentioned continually as a way to describe settings, and as an underlying criticism of the Victorian middle class era.

There are a number of sub themes that could also be mentioned. For example: Loyalty, hypocrisy, double standards, education.