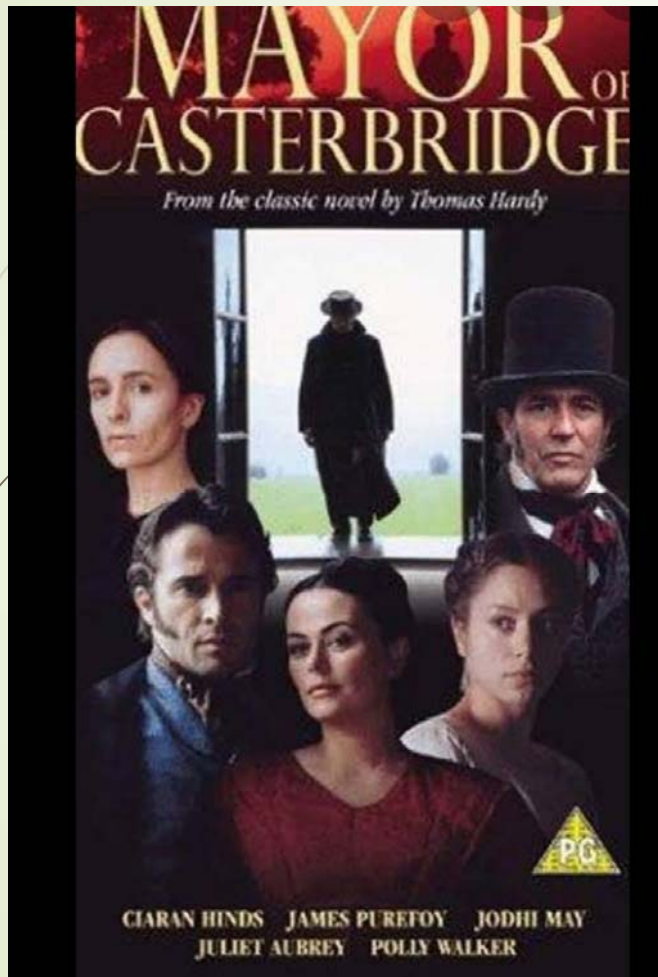




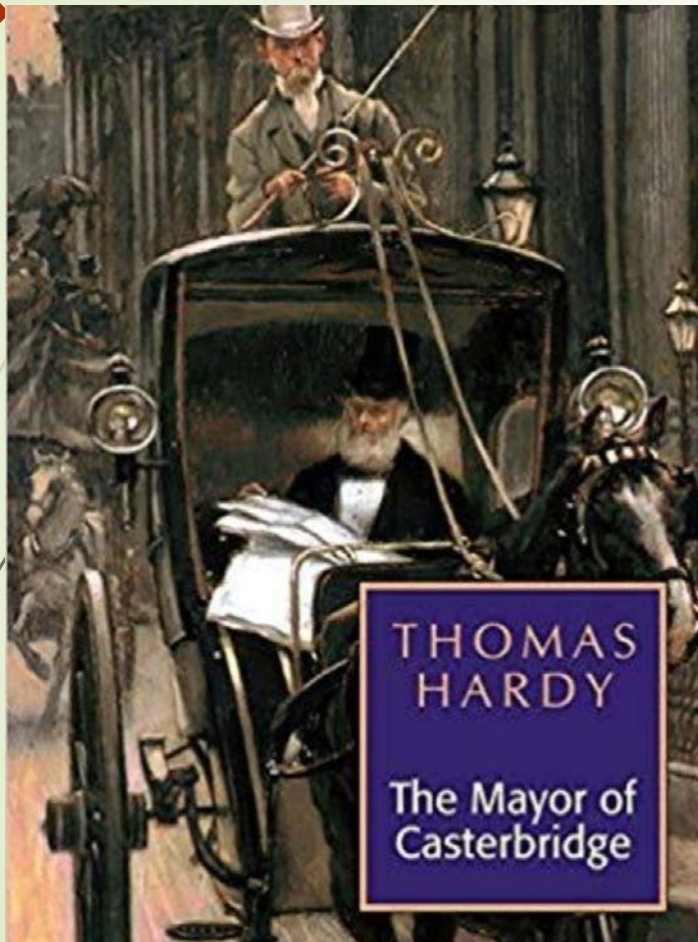
MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE

By:-
Dr. Vandana Sharma
(Assistant professor)
JKP(PG) College, muzaffernagar



THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE

Author	Thomas Hardy
Illustrator	Robert Barnes
Country	United Kingdom
Language	English
Genre	Novel
Published	London
Publisher	Smith Elder & Co
Publication date	1886



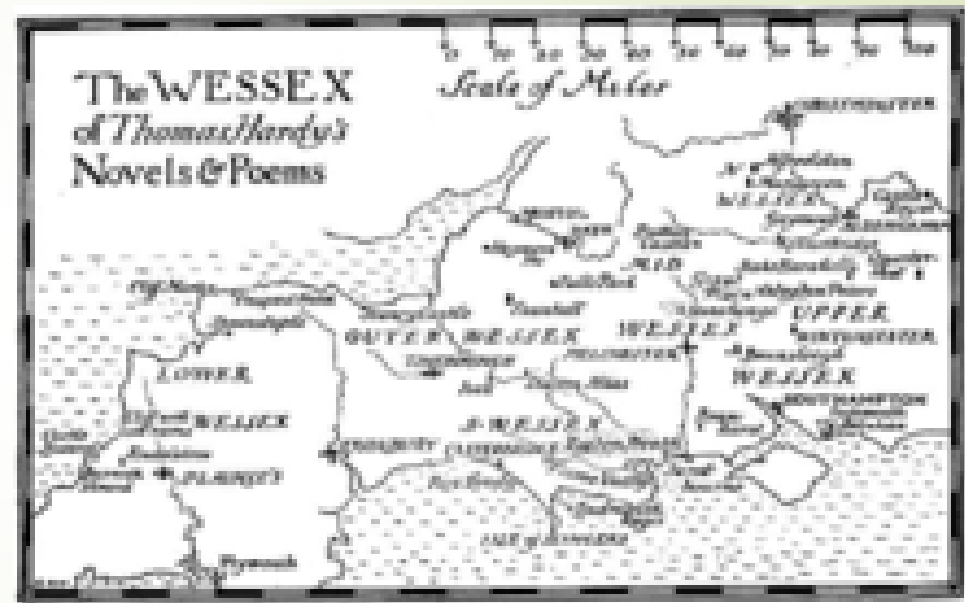
The novel is considered to be one of Hardy's masterpieces, although it has been criticised for incorporating too many incidents: a consequence of the author trying to include something in every weekly published instalment.



Principal characters

- ▶ *Michael Henchard: hay trusser who becomes Mayor of Casterbridge*
- ▶ *Susan Henchard (Newson): wife of Henchard, sold to Newson*
- ▶ *Richard Newson: sailor; purchases Susan and lives with her for many years as her de facto husband*
- ▶ *Elizabeth-Jane: daughter of Susan by Henchard; dies as an infant*
- ▶ *Elizabeth-Jane: daughter of Susan by Newson; marries Farfrae*
- ▶ *Donald Farfrae: becomes Mayor of Casterbridge after Henchard; Scotsman*
- ▶ *Lucetta Templeman (Le Sueur): native of Jersey who has an affair with Henchard; marries Farfrae*
- ▶ *Joshua Jopp: sometime manager with a grudge against Henchard.*

The book is one of Hardy's Wessex novels and is set largely in the fictional town of Casterbridge, based on [Dorchester](#) in [Dorset](#). The author intended Casterbridge to be an imaginative presentation of certain aspects of the town as he remembered it in the "dream" of his childhood.



Summary



In a fit of drunken irritation, Michael Henchard, a young, unemployed hay-trusser, sells his wife Susan and his infant daughter Elizabeth-Jane to a sailor during a fair in the village of Weydon-Priors. Eighteen years later, Susan and Elizabeth-Jane return to seek him out but are told by the "furmity woman," the old hag whose concoction had made Henchard drunk at the fair, that he has moved to the distant town of Casterbridge. The sailor has been reported lost at sea.

Susan and Elizabeth-Jane, the latter innocent of the shameful sale eighteen years before, reach Casterbridge, where they discover that Henchard has become the mayor and one of the wealthiest businessmen in the area. Henchard, out of a sense of guilt, courts Susan in a respectable manner and soon after remarries her, hoping that one day he will be able to acknowledge Elizabeth-Jane as his daughter.



Summary

- Concurrently with Susan's return, Henchard hires Donald Farfrae, a young Scotsman, as his business manager. After a short while, Susan dies, and Henchard learns that his own daughter had died many years earlier and that Elizabeth-Jane is really the illegitimate daughter of Newson, the sailor, Susan's second "husband."
- Lucetta Templeman, a young woman from Jersey with whom Henchard has had a romantic involvement, comes to Casterbridge with the intention of marrying Henchard. She meets Farfrae, however, and the two are deeply attracted to each other. Henchard, disturbed by Farfrae's prestige in the town, has dismissed him, and Farfrae sets up his own rival business. Shortly after, Farfrae and Lucetta are married.

Summary



- ▶ Lucetta, now at the height of her fortunes, has staked everything on keeping her past relationship with Henchard a secret. Her old love letters to him, however, find their way into the hands of Henchard's vengeful ex-employee, Jopp, who reveals them to the worst element in the town. They organize a "skimmity-ride," in which Henchard and Lucetta are paraded in effigy through the streets. The shock of the scandal kills Lucetta.
- ▶ Now an almost broken man, Henchard moves to the poorest quarters, where his life is made tolerable only by Elizabeth-Jane's kindness and concern. Even his comfort in her affection is threatened, however, when Newson, the sailor, returns in search of his daughter. Henchard's lie to Newson that Elizabeth-Jane has died is eventually discovered, and Elizabeth-Jane, his last source of comfort, turns against him.

Summary




Farfrae, after a period as a widower, renews his interest in Elizabeth-Jane. They are married and Henchard, when he comes to deliver a wedding gift, finds Newson enjoying his position as the bride's father. Heartbroken, Henchard leaves and shortly afterwards dies in an abandoned hut, attended only by the humblest and simplest of his former workmen. The novel closes when Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane find the place where he has died and read his terrible will of complete renunciation.



Important texts

- ▶ The difference between the peacefulness of interior nature and the wilful hostilities of mankind was very apparent at this place. In contrast with the harshness of the act just ended within the tent was the sight of several horses crossing their necks and rubbing each other lovingly as they waited in patience to be harnessed for the homeward journey. Outside the fair, in the valleys and woods, all was quiet. The sun had recently set, and the west heaven was hung with rosy cloud, which seemed permanent, yet slowly changed. To watch it was like looking at some grand feat of stagery from a darkened auditorium. In presence of this scene after the other there was a natural instinct to abjure man as the blot on an otherwise kindly universe; till it was remembered that all terrestrial conditions were intermittent, and that mankind might some night be innocently sleeping when these quiet objects were raging loud.


- Michael henchard (chapter 1)



Important texts

- He advertised about the town, in long posters of a pink colour, that games of all sorts would take place here; and set to work a little battalion of men under his own eye. They erected greasy-poles for climbing, with smoked hams and local cheeses at the top. They placed hurdles in rows for jumping over; across the river they laid a slippery pole, with a live pig of the neighborhood tied at the other end, to become the property of the man who could walk over and get it. There were also provided wheelbarrows for racing, donkeys for the same, a stage for boxing, wrestling, and drawing blood generally; sacks for jumping in.

(Several times throughout the novel)

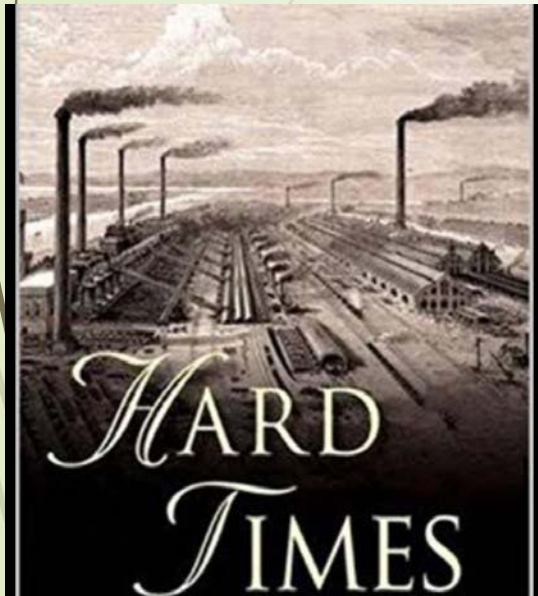


Important texts

- ▶ Character is Fate, said Novalis, and Farfrae's character was just the reverse of Henchard's, who might not inaptly be described as Faust has been described—as a vehement gloomy being who had quitted the ways of vulgar men without light to guide him on a better way.

This passage from Chapter XVII relates to Farfrae's enormous business success after Henchard requests that he leave his employment and stop courting Elizabeth-Jane.

Important texts



➤ MICHAEL HENCHARD'S WILL

That Elizabeth-Jane Farfrae be not told of my death, or made to grieve on account of me.

& that I be not bury'd in consecrated ground.

& that no sexton be asked to toll the bell.

& that nobody is wished to see my dead body.

& that no murners walk behind me at my funeral.

& that no flours be planted on my grave.

& that no man remember me.

To this I put my name.

Michael Henchard