

Hard Times

The following passages are short summaries of the chapters, along with questions for discussion and analysis. These are to allow you to think of the story in a deeper way than to see it as mere superficial events. For your own sake, you still need to read the chapters and not rely only on these summaries. All the best.

Chapter Eight

In this chapter there is a long conversation between Louisa and her brother Tom, in which the reader could perceive clearly the differences between both characters. Although they may have lived together in the same environment, having been forced to follow the education and beliefs in facts, they do differ in personalities, and have other future plans for themselves. Louisa is obviously more negative and has a darker view on what is to come, whereas Tom believes that his happiness will come soon. Try to analyze their words and way of thinking in order to know their points of view, but also to understand the coming events in a better way.

Chapter Nine

Back to M'Choakumchild' school, Sissy shows barely any progress and does not know how to deal with facts, instead of using her imagination as she is used to. Why do you think facts are so difficult for her? Also, through Sissy's conversation with Louisa, the reader could see how she thinks about the departure of her father and whether she thinks of him negatively or positively. How do you see that? As Sissy and Louisa are living together, do you think Sissy will be convinced to think in facts, or will it be the other way around?

Chapter Ten

A new character is introduced: Stephen Blackpool. As names written by Dickens often reflect personalities, what do you think of his name?

A description is given on how Stephen looks like and it is clear from the start that he has led a miserable life. He is the first 'Hand' that readers know about, followed by Rachel, who plays an important role in his life, in which way? As he comes home, another woman appears to exist in his life, but she does not leave a good impression upon the reader, nor does she seem to make Stephen any happier.

Chapter Eleven

There is a strong contrast shown between the wealthy upper-class and the workers in the way they live and eat. This is one of the negative outcomes of the industrialization. How does Dickens criticize this aspect?

Stephen is shown to ask Bounderby for a solution to his miserable life, as he cannot stand his unhappy marriage any longer. Does Bounderby sympathize in any way, and how does he react to Stephen's request?

Chapter Twelve

A strange woman speaks to Stephen asking about Bounderby and how he is doing. Stephen does not know her, but he still replies that Bounderby is doing well. She seems to think that life of a factory is a wonderful place for all, not knowing that the conditions of workers are very painful and miserable. Stephen continues walking while pondering about how much he wishes to marry the one he truly loves. Why is this not possible for him? Try to understand Stephen by reading his train of thoughts in this chapter.