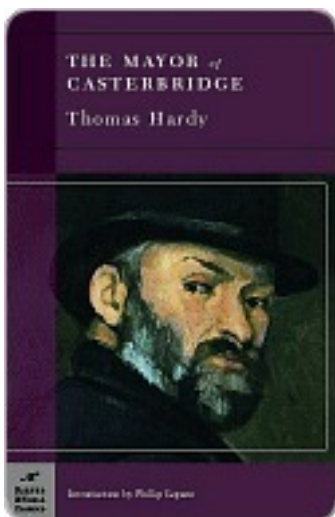


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# Thomas Hardy

## The Mayor of Casterbridge



Title: The Mayor of Casterbridge

Author: Thomas Hardy

Format: Kindle Edition

Language:

Pages: 0

Publisher: , 0

ISBN:

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Download: allowed

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## Description

**'Here - I am waiting to know about this offer of mine. The woman is no good to me. Who'll have her?'**

The moving, humane tragedy of a deeply flawed and self-destructive man, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is the story of Michael Henchard, who sells his wife and baby daughter at a country fair in a fit of drunken anger. Over the following years he establishes himself as a respected pillar of the community of Casterbridge, but cannot escape his shameful past - or himself.

Subtitled 'The Life and Death of a Man of Character', Hardy's intense drama, tragically played out against the rituals of a close-knit Wessex town, is one of his greatest works.

With an essay by Robert Langbaum.

## Insightful reviews

Ellen Allen: I read a little Hardy when I was at university but after reading *Jude the Obscure* and being completely depressed, I gave him up. I like real life, but he's always so, well, downbeat. Now with the release of *Far From the Madding Crowd* and having seen the stylish BBC adaptation of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, I opened the first page of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and got a shock. It was a true masterclass in how to hook a reader; a man fed up with his wife and child, and very drunk, auctions them off to the highest bidder in a bar. He wakes up hours later slumped on the very same bar stool, only to realise that his wife and child did actually go with the man, in exchange for 5 pounds. Years later, he has worked his way up to become the Mayor of a town called Casterbridge, when his wife and child re-emerge. And so begins his downfall...

It was a depressing read, as I expected it to be, but at least this one had the remnants of happiness in places for some of the other characters (it's no spoiler to know that the mayor, Henchard, meets an unhappy ending). Surprisingly, I thought the female characters were a little more drawn out than the male. I wanted to know more about what drove Henchard to do what he did and what he felt as a result. The same was true of his nemesis, Donald Farfrae, a man who we follow but never really understand in the same way as the women who love and are loved by them.

He's obviously a very good writer and it's a good introduction to Hardy's work because it's not quite so depressing and short-ish enough to know if you want to read on...

Catie: It's been about 12 years since I've read a Thomas Hardy novel (he was a big favorite in the dark teenage years). I was a huge classics buff as a kid. Ironically, I've spent my adult years reading a ton of cheesy YA. Apparently the universe has a sense of humor. Not in a Thomas Hardy novel though. In his world, the universe is capricious and exacting. Don't get too comfortable or make plans, because nothing is permanent and difficulty abounds.

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This book opens with Michael Henchard – out of work, travelling by foot with his wife and infant daughter, and unhappy with his lot. Upon reaching a local fairground, he becomes drunk and in a moment of misery and loathing, decides that he will be much better off without his family. He then proceeds to auction them off, jestingly at first, until a man takes him up on his offer. So, of course that will *never* come back to bite him on the ass. Obviously. I really thought that I knew where this book was going several times over, only to be completely disproven each time. Apparently I should have expected much more from the guy who actually *invented* the cliffhanger (it's true!). This story has more twists and turns than a Mexican soap opera. Every time I would get settled in, it was like Thomas Hardy was there saying, "But wait! There's more!" Henchard awakes the next morning, full of remorse, and makes a vow to abstain from alcohol for 21 years (as long as he's been alive). He then makes his way toward Casterbridge, "a old hoary place o' wickedness, by all account." There he finds his fortune quickly reversed. But when his wife and daughter return eighteen years later, can his fortune hold?

I loved the setting of Casterbridge – the town itself is as much a character as any of the main players. The people are kind and open, but also fickle and resentful of the wealthy elite. Donald Farfrae is the perfect epitome of progress – he's young and ambitious, and he brings wealth to the town, but he also brings ruin to those following the old ways. Also, apparently Thomas Hardy was aware of the supreme rule of male popularity that every romance novel writer knows: a young Scottish guy who occasionally wears a kilt and sings heartbreaking ballads about his "hame" will beat out any other type of guy every single time.

I was initially bored with Elizabeth Jane, but by the end I felt that she really embodied Hardy's ideal of surviving life's struggle. She's realistic and stoic. She calmly tells Henchard, "I don't quite think there are any miracles nowadays." She ends in prosperity, but lives on with the knowledge that the worst is always around the corner. It's easy to read this book and think that Hardy's message is, basically, "life sucks and then you die." But I think that he's much more...well, hopeful's just not the right word. Hardy has always shown accurately the world's cruel and unexpected turns of fate, but I think what he's really saying here is that none of it is really worth anything if you can't spend the harsh, horrifying journey with someone you love. But love can't be forced, and if you can't appreciate the love that's right in front of you, you don't deserve to keep it.

Sue: It seems The Mayor of Casterbridge can end only in one direction as this Mayor is continually victimized by his own shortcomings. As the novel begins, we witness the famous selling of his wife while he is in a drunken stupor, not caring about anything or anyone else in the world. Years later, he has his chance to make changes, amends but his essential character prevents this. He sees evil and devils where there are none and increases small faults to large. He turns friends to enemies and enemies to people who will do him wrong.

I used to think that Hardy was about fate (when I was young) but now I see him as about character. His people earn the good and bad that happens by how they interact with the world around them, by their meanness or their generosity, their straightforwardness or their double-dealing. Fate watches and smiles or cries.

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A strong 4 stars.

3/15/13...Rating changed to 5 stars after wonderful group discussion with Classics section of Constant Reader. This made me realize just how much I enjoyed this book and how well it is written.

Ron Nie: I learn this for a category on sociology and the Victorian novel, quite it subsequent to Heather Love's piece on description with out presumption - how having a look from a distance and documenting, rather than witnessing (her proposal of witnessing necessitating one of those emotional response that could vague real occasions and alter them with empathy), should be a, possibly now not better, yet various approach of studying texts. Basically, it is anti-humanist, and she's on board with altering up the technique from analyzing to describing. With this in mind, it was once fairly neat to determine how Hardy negotiates POV, how he dips into one character's brain to relate events, then dips into another's to re-narrate these occasions from a unique perspective. It additionally made me discover that he describes places, people, and animals in beautiful equivocal terms, which makes me imagine that the person turns into contentious floor during this novel. Anyway, this e-book was once neat that is all i am out gnight.

Jason Koivu: i might heard Hardy was once a little bit a chore, so out of all of his chunky novels I selected The Mayor of Casterbridge to be my first. i am not certain it was once a sensible choice. now not simply because i assumed it was once undesirable by way of any means. The writing's really good, the tale held my interest, yet jeez louise this can be bleak stuff! tales in keeping with drunken missteps that linger into lifelong regrets don't quite often lend themselves to frivolity. No, this isn't a believe stable generator. Are any of Hardy's? Is there a smart choice? i have no longer heard so, yet i presumed I had this sort of temperament to deal with such stuff. However, now i am dragging my ft with the intention to Tess of the d'Ubervilles, by way of the top of which I worry i could are looking to get as faraway from the Madding Crowd as possible!

Gary the Bookworm: this can be a actual roller-coaster ride. Following the mayor from his drunken choice to promote his spouse and youngster daughter to his ultimate act of desperation is an engrossing story of perfidy and happenstance. At its ethical heart is Elizabeth-Jane, the mayor's lengthy misplaced daughter who bears a powerful resemblance to Jane Eyre, one other 19th century heroine who does not anticipate a lot from lifestyles other than the liberty to stay in line with her personal code of honor. there are many plot twists and richly evocative descriptive passages. lifeless humans and misplaced letters resurface and forgotten acts of kindness or cruelty encourage characters to act. Like existence itself it strikes inexorably to its dramatic and relocating conclusion.

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