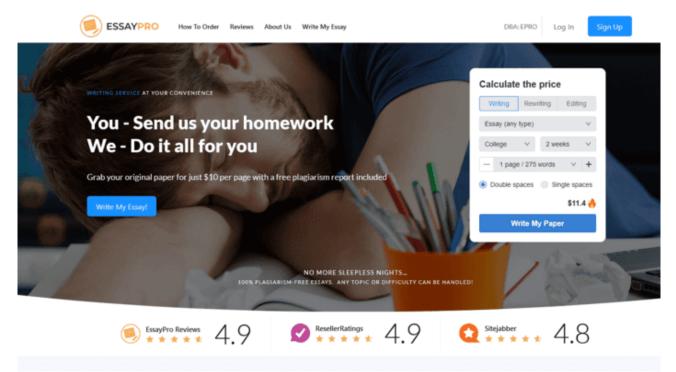
Role of Men in Louisa's Life in Hard Times



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Role of Men in Louisa's Life in Hard Times

In Hard Times Charles Dickens portrays Louisa Gradgrind as a realistic character who faces conflict from the start of her life. Louisa encounters three major psychological conflicts in the form of three different men: Mr. Gradgrind, Mr. Bounderby, and Tom Gradgrind. Men play a very important role in the shaping of Louisa's life. Instead of being her own person and expressing her own feelings, Louisa falls under the <u>realm</u> of these three men.

Since the beginning of her life, Louisa isn't allowed to express herself because her father continually stresses the facts. Mr. Gradgrind suppresses Louisa's imagination and all she can do is wonder. One example of Louisa attempting to view the unknown occurs when she and Tom peep through a loophole in order to see a circus (8). This is the first time both Louisa and Tom have seen such a sight. When asked why they were there, Louisa curiously answers, "Wanted to see what it was like" (8), a response any normal child would have. Her "starved imagination" (8) is curious and needs some sort of avenue for release. As Louisa blossoms into a young lady, the young Miss Gradgrind enchants one particular suitor. Her father thought that it was time for Louisa to marry and had a suitable

<u>companion</u> in mind. When Mr. Gradgrind asks Louisa if she would like to be Mrs. Bounderby, all Louisa can utter is, "You have been so careful of me, that I never had a child's dream. You have dealt so wisely with me, father, from my cradle to this hour, that I never had a child's belief or a child's fear" (63). Mr. Gradgrind interprets his daughter's words as a compliment to him and his strict belief in teaching only the facts. But Louisa means she has not experienced life and has never been given the chance. Her childhood has been murdered by her father's strict insistence on the <u>perpetuation</u> of facts only. Although Louisa realizes she has been enslaved by the theories of fact, she willingly enters yet another bondage to Mr. Bounderby allowing the process of her suppression to continue.

Mr. Bounderby is yet another man in Louisa's life who expects her to conform to the system implemented by men in society. This young girl, more than half his junior, appeals to Josiah Bounderby and soon they wed.

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