

Penguin Popular Classics

HARD TIMES

CHARLES DICKENS



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HARD TIMES

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

Hard Times is both a tragic story of human oppression and a dazzling work of political satire.

It depicts Coketown, a typical red-brick industrial city of the north. In its schools and factories children and adults are caged and enslaved, with no personal freedom until their spirit is broken. Against this social backdrop where harsh regimes are enforced by the likes of Josiah Bounderby, the pompous self-made man, and Gradgrind, the censorious disciplinarian, the personal tragedies of Louisa Gradgrind and Stephen Blackpool are played out.

Despite its vivid portrait of the horrors of the newly mechanized society, *Hard Times* is shot through with a wit, good humour and a conviction that entertainment is essential for human happiness, making it one of the most uplifting of Dickens's novels.

The cover shows a detail from *Awaiting Admission to the Casual Ward* by Sir Luke Fields reproduced by courtesy of the Royal Holloway & Bedford New College (photo: Bridgeman Art Library)

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