

The background features abstract, overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of green, ranging from light lime to dark forest green. These shapes are primarily located on the left and right sides of the page, framing the central text. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

Hard Times

Book 1

Chapter one

- ▶ detailed and repulsive physical description of Mr. Gradgrind : A scary-looking man with a square forehead and deep-set eyes
- ▶ He tells them (the teacher and the children in the class room) that the most important thing for them to learn is facts, "nothing but Facts!", for he believes that facts alone will be of use to them.

Chapter 2

- ▶ The first girl Mr. Gradgrind calls "girl number twenty" instead of by her real name Cecilia "Sissy" Jupe shows how he wants a factory, is unable to define a horse
- ▶ Bitzer responds correctly but in an unnaturally emotionless manner.

Chapter 3

- ▶ Louisa and Tom , Mr. Gradgrind's children
- ▶ They go to the circus without understanding their father, Mr. Gradgrind
- ▶ In walking back to his home, Stone Lodge, Mr. Gradgrind thinks with satisfaction about the education of facts that his young children are receiving, both at home and at school. But he cannot believe his eyes when he sees his two children, Louisa Gradgrind and Tom Gradgrind, in the circus.
- ▶ The very name of the Gradgrind household reflects how stony its owner's heart is.
- ▶ This circus, by the way, features a horse-rider named Signore Jupe who seems likely to be Sissy's father.
- ▶ He angrily pulls them away from the circus because he believes children should focus solely on facts and not on imagination and fun.
- ▶ Louisa, who is sixteen and a good deal older than Tom, speaks clearly in defense of herself that her curiosity compelled her to get a glimpse of the circus, and tries to clear her brother of any blame by saying she brought him along.
- ▶ Mr. Gradgrind just scolds (blame) them as he takes them home, and adds, "What would Mr. Bounderby say?"

Chapter 4

- ▶ Mr. Bounderby is a close family friend, and takes an interest in the children, particularly Louisa.
- ▶ Mr. Bounderby's physical description corresponds to his internal qualities, i.e. his huge, swelling body is representative of his huge, swelling ego.
- ▶ The two men discuss what ought to be done, and Bounderby, discovering that Sissy Jupe (whose father is involved in the circus) goes to the same school as Louisa, decides that they ought to go into town and confront Sissy, who he thinks is likely a bad influence on Louisa.
- ▶ Mr. Bounderby's interest in Louisa as a potential future wife.

Chapter 5

- ▶ Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby stroll into industrial Coketown, once a red brick town but now discolored, having been blasted with ashes and smoke from the factories.
- ▶ On their way to the Jupes' home, Gradgrind and Bounderby collide with Sissy Jupe and Bitzer.
- ▶ Gradgrind asks a frightened Sissy what she was doing and where she was going, and she tells the two gentlemen that she was going home to her father with a bottle of oils for him, that ought to heal his bruises from the circus.
- ▶ she leads them to where she and her father are staying.

Chapter 6

- ▶ Gradgrind wants to take her in and raise her with his education of facts, while Bounderby doesn't want to do anything for her
- ▶ She comes with them to circus. She is greatly distressed, however, when she can't find her father there. (because of his shame in his failure to earn their living, he had left there)
- ▶ As Gradgrind and Bounderby wait for her return, they meet some of the other members of the circus (They are dirty, poor, and uncivilized, but they are also kind, gentle, and generous, and are very sad to hear that Sissy might be leaving them)
- ▶ Sissy returns in tears upon discovering her father's desertion, and accepts Mr. Gradgrind's offer to take her into his home and educate her.

Chapter 7

- ▶ Mr. Bounderby returns to his own home, where he lives with a previously well-connected and elderly widow named Mrs. Sparsit.
- ▶ Mrs. Sparsit's relationship to Bounderby is never fully described (do they just live together or is there something more?) but she clearly dislikes Bounderby's interest in Louisa, as it threatens her own comfortable position in Bounderby's rich house.
- ▶ Mr. Gradgrind, Louisa, and Sissy enter the room. Louisa and her father read many fairy tales together.
- ▶ Louisa's initial coldness shows how her own education of facts is affecting her, though her kinder reaction when Sissy begins to weep shows that she may still have a little sympathy in her.

Chapter 8

- ▶ This chapter also captures the relationship between Louisa and Tom: she clearly loves Tom, as her open affection shows. But he seems more interesting in *using* Louisa to get what he wants. Louisa's expressionless reaction to the mention of Bounderby forebodes the nature of her future relationship to him, in which she passively allows herself, despite a lack of love or even like, to be married to him.

Chapter 9

- ▶ After a lot of time spent with Mr. Gradgrind's education of facts, Sissy hasn't made much "progress."
- ▶ Their conversation turns to Sissy's parents, and Sissy reveals her mother was a dancer and her father was a clown, who read her many wonderful fairy tales and made her very happy. She also tells Louisa how desperate her father was in his misery when he couldn't please the crowds, and of his increasing depression, and how she still hopes for some word of her father. Louisa is won over, and waits as eagerly as pitiful Sissy for word of Signore Jupe (which doesn't come).

Chapter 10

- ▶ Stephen Blackpool, a worker or a "hand" at Mr. Bounderby's factory, is waiting for a woman by the name of Rachael on a dark and wet night after work. He is an older, grey-haired man who has evidently suffered a lot. Rachael, a woman with a beautiful and peaceful face, eventually comes, and the two walk a ways together. They are not married (for they go their separate ways after a while) but Stephen evidently has a deep affection for Rachael. Upon returning home, he is aghast to find his bed occupied by a drunk and filthy woman, more creature than human. By their conversation, it comes out that they are acquainted with each other.

Chapter 11

- ▶ After a morning of tiring work with hundreds of other hands in the factory, Stephen pays a visit to the factory owner, Mr. Bounderby. Bounderby is home, eating a rich lunch and accompanied by Mrs. Sparsit.
- ▶ Stephen asks him if there is anything he can do to dissolve his unhappy marriage. Bounderby maintains that the law is the law, and that the sanctity of marriage must be preserved. As Stephen unhappily protests, he scandalizes Mrs. Sparsit. Bounderby refuses to give Stephen any help in what he describes as Stephen's unlawful and unholy quest to leave his marriage. Stephen, sighing, departs from Bounderby's residence.
- ▶ Bounderby is uninterested in helping his workers, and casts Stephen's desire to escape his marriage as being both illegal and against the tenets of religion. Mrs. Sparsit just seems upset that Stephen would dare protest the words of Bounderby, as if he is a lesser being than Bounderby. It's worth also noting that Dickens was unhappily married and in love with other women, so his seeming vendetta against marriage in the novel is not unsurprising.

Chapter 12

- ▶ As Stephen is walking away from Bounderby's house, he runs into an old, neatly-dressed woman who closely questions him as to Bounderby's well-being. Upon his replying that Bounderby seems well, she is satisfied. She walks with him back to the factory as he heads to his afternoon shift. When they arrive, she marvels at the looms and seems to think Bounderby's factory must be a marvelous place.
- ▶ As the day ends and Stephen finishes his shift, he thinks longingly of Rachael and how his unhappiness would disappear if only he were free to marry her.

Chapter 13

- ▶ Upon returning home in the rain after his shift, Stephen finds that Rachael is there, caring for his wife. Rachael mentions that this is a duty of friendship she feels she owes his wife, as they grew up together and were best friends when Stephen proposed to his wife. Stephen groans at this reminder.
- ▶ He awakes to the sight of his sick wife sitting up in bed, attempting to end her life by poisoning herself. Stephen freezes, but Rachael snatches the poison away from her just in time. The sick woman again falls asleep, and Rachael sorrowfully takes of her leave of unhappy Stephen and his unconscious wife.
- ▶ Stephen's hesitation in preventing his wife from committing suicide shows just how much he wishes he could escape from his marriage. That Rachael acts immediately despite her own clear love for Stephen shows what an incredibly good and unselfish person she is.

Chapter 14

- ▶ The novel makes clear that Sissy's early "education of fancy" is responsible for the good-hearted young woman she has grown into.
- ▶ In contrast to Sissy, Louisa's fact-based education has made her sad and reserved—it seems to have made her distant from herself and from others, distant from feeling.
- ▶ Tom is following in Bounderby's footsteps.
- ▶ the novel indicates that Parliament's actions and laws do not take into account real people, real lives, or involve any humanity or compassion.

Chapter 15

- ▶ Mr. Gradgrind informs Louisa that Mr. Bounderby has asked for her hand in marriage. She doesn't react at first, then responds that she doesn't love Bounderby. Gradgrind recommends that she substitute Fact for sentiment in their marriage. Because there is no history of confidence or the sharing of emotions between her and her dry father, though, she says nothing, and instead assures him that thanks to his education, she has never received nor looked for romantic attention.
- ▶ When he inform this news, Louisa sees the look of shock, sorrow, and pity on Sissy's face. From then on, she places a cold distance between her and Sissy.

Chapter 16

- ▶ The day of the wedding comes, and Louisa and Mr. Bounderby are married.
- ▶ Mrs. Sparsit's belief that this will be an unhappy marriage, and she will do everything she can to make it unhappy.
- ▶ Tom thinks only of all the advantages he will gain by this marriage, such as how Mr. Bounderby will have to treat him better now.