

MR. BOUNDERBY

Hard Times, chapter 4

Mr. Bounderby is an extract from the chapter 4 of the novel *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens. The novel was written in 1854 is a social criticism novel; it takes place in an imaginative place (Coketown) and his main characters are Thomas Gradgrind and Josiah Bounderby, who seems to be at the center of Dickens' denunciation. Thomas Gradgrind is a utilitarian, founder of the school system of the imaginary city and Josiah Bounderby is an industrialist, banker and trader with a presumptuous character. The extract mainly concerns the character's description through different categories of characterization between Thomas Gradgrind and Josiah Bounderby.

The first sequence starts with an immediate description of the two characters in relationship with each other.

The second sequence starts with Mr. Bounderby's physical description and role in society. Dickens describes Mr. Bounderby as a person of great value (given the listing of all his roles) but at the same time as an "inflated balloon". Dickens uses, as in his previous novels, exaggeration and grotesque in the physical description of the character to make the reader laugh and at the same time make him reflect. So once again Dickens gives to the perspective reader an ironical and negative image of the character who is constantly ridiculed and denounced. His physical appearance seems indeed connected to his way of behaving: his lack and disorder of hair seemed to be in a way or another his boastfulness's punishment.

The third sequence sees the passing from the point of view in which Mr. Bounderby with a sort of flashback tells of his situation during his youth, completely opposite to the actual one. Once again, Dickens wants to give an image to the reader of a man who has made himself and through his past experience, to describe what is his current character influenced by this.

The fourth sequence reports the characterization of another character (Mr. Gradgrind's wife Mrs. Gradgrind). After a short description of the woman, there is another part of showing consisting of a dialogue between a two about the ditch where Mr. Bounderby has been compelled to live for one day. All the adjectives have the aim to touch the reader's heart at first, but then to show Mr. Bounderby's sense of superiority towards the woman, described as "imbecile". The text ends with Mr. Bounderby saying that what he had been using to fight this situation was his determination and strenght.

Only at the end of the novel will Dickens denounce the rich bourgeoisie established in the Victorian age to defend those who have experienced a difficult situation in those years.