

HARD TIMES FOR THESE TIMES

STUDY GUIDE

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Edited by Lizzie Perkins and Sam Kaser



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HARD TIMES

FOR THESE TIMES

Adapted and Directed by
Ensemble Member Heidi Stillman
From the Book by Charles Dickens
In Association with
The Actors Gymnasium

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THE WORLD OF LOOKINGGLASS

Lookingglass Mission and Core Values

Activities That Utilize Collaboration, Transformation and Invention

Collaboration

COLLABORATION FOR LOOKINGGLASS: Lookingglass Theatre believes that the power of the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Lookingglass sees immense value in group history and experience, a collective vision, the dynamics of teamwork, and the importance of collaborative leadership. Each performance we do is a collaboration between artists, story and audience. Collaboration informs every aspect of how we produce theatre.

COLLABORATION FOR YOU:

Where do you collaborate with people?

- On School Projects?
- On Sports Teams?
- With Friends?
- At Home?

What does collaboration look like at each of these places?
When is collaboration helpful? When is it not?
What qualities do you look for in a teammate?



COLLABORATION GAMES

A SHRINKING VESSEL

How will you stay afloat?

Rules:

- Divide the group into groups of ten
- Establish the location as a surface that gets smaller and smaller with time (a sinking ship, a piece of scrap wood in a sea of lava, etc.)
- All ten people must find a way to creatively occupy the shrinking space until they are packed like sardines
- All ten people must stay on the imaginary surface at all times

Make it More Difficult!

- Do the activity without speaking!
- Add an additional obstruction to the surface, like a chair or a box
- Make the “surface” sink faster and faster each time

GROUP STORYTELLING

Working together to tell a story is harder than you think!

Rules:

- Everyone stands in a circle and is handed either a physical object or a picture of an object.
- Someone begins a story, incorporating the object or image
- The next person continues that same story, using their object or image, and so on

Make it More Difficult!

- Give each person two objects or images that they must incorporate into their part of the story

Transformation

TRANSFORMATION FOR LOOKINGGLASS:

Lookingglass uses visual metaphor, movement and daring theatricality to create transcendent staging. Fiction and non-fiction are converted into stage pieces. Actors are often required to play multiple characters outside their traditional range. Even our theatre space reflects the core value of transformation—the seats and stage can change around in order to best suit the show that is being performed.

TRANSFORMATION FOR YOU:

- What is an example of a change that you have experienced this year? (Emotional, physical, etc.)
- What was an event that transformed or changed you?
- What are some objects or things that can be transformed?



TRANSFORMATION GAMES

BUCKET OF WATER

Don't let it spill!

Rules:

- Two people go at a time, with the rest of the group seated
- Ask the two students to hold a large, imaginary bucket—one person on either side
- The instructor fills the imaginary bucket with an imaginary hose
- The people should carry the bucket from one end of the space to the other, dumping the “water” out and then bringing the empty bucket back
- The participants should demonstrate the differences of weight of the bucket in their body language and facial expressions

Make it More Difficult!

- Add more details to the “bucket of water” and the surrounding environment: make the bucket smelly, the water freezing cold, the floor slippery or made of quicksand, etc.

MORPH THE MOVEMENT

Alter your actions with friends!

Rules:

- Participants stand in a circle large enough for a full range of motion
- One person starts out by choosing a physical action with a repetitive motion, like brushing teeth or digging a hole
- The person to their right begins to imitate their action so that they both are performing identical movements
- The first participant then stops the movement, and the second participant begins to loosen and exaggerate their action until it finds its way into a new action, like throwing a ball
- Students should try to make this transition gradual and natural, listening to their own body rather than thinking and stressing over picking a new motion
- Once the player to the second participant's right feels that they have a clear action, they begin to mimic that action. Continue with all people in the circle.

Invention

INVENTION FOR LOOKINGGLASS: Lookingglass seeks to redefine the limits of theatrical experience. We use many different kinds of arts training to innovate and invent new ways to develop and tell stories.

INVENTION FOR YOU:

- What do you like to create?
- What is the most useful invention that you use today?
- What is the difference between inventing and discovering?
- What does the quote, “Necessity is the mother of invention” mean to you?



INVENTION GAMES

FREEZE

The classic improvisation exercise—explore new scenarios with your partner!

Rules:

- Participants form a circle. Two participants begin the exercise in the middle of the circle
- The people in the circle suggest a starting location for the two participants, like a park or a dentist’s office
- The two participants act out their improvised scene until the group moderator yells out “FREEZE!”, where the participants freeze in whatever stance they are in
- One person from the circle then enters the middle, taps one of the participants out, adopts that person’s pose, and then begins a completely new scene with the other person. Continue until everyone has had a chance to be in the middle.

Make it More Difficult!

- As they gain confidence, encourage the students themselves to yell out “FREEZE!” and enter the circle of their own accord
- Allow more than one student to enter the playing space at one time

FILM AND THEATRE STYLES

Let your story live through the ages!

Rules:

- Two players take the stage in front of the rest of the group, who forms a sitting audience
- The group gives them a starting relationship, like mother/daughter or best friends, and the pair proceed to act out their scene normally
- The group moderator yells out a genre of movie or theatre, like horror, romantic comedy, or Shakespeare, and the participants immediately switch to that style of performance. Genres to be used will depend on the age level of the group and what they would be generally expected to know about
- Continue until everyone has had the chance to perform

Make it More Difficult!

- As they gain confidence, encourage the students themselves to suggest genres

Theatre Vocabulary

ACT a major division of a play, which is often used to indicate a change in time or setting. Acts are further divided into scenes. (*Between two acts, there can be an intermission. See definition for intermission below.*)

ACTOR'S TOOLS the primary tools used by an actor (mind, body, voice).

ADAPTATION the process of changing or modifying something for use in theatre, such as adapting a novel into a play.

ANTAGONIST a character that opposes the protagonist's goals and desires. The antagonist helps create the conflict of a play.

BACKSTAGE the area behind the stage that is concealed from the audience and contains the actor's dressing rooms.

BLOCKING the pattern of the actors' movement on stage.

CHARACTER the personality or role played by an actor.

DIALOGUE the words spoken by the actors onstage.

ENSEMBLE the group of actors who work together to create a play.

FOURTH WALL the imaginary "wall" at the front of a proscenium stage through which the audience sees the world of the play.

HOUSE the area in a theatre where the audience sits.

INTERMISSION the period of time between two acts of a play, which allows the run crew to change the scenery on stage if necessary.

MONOLOGUE a long dialogue delivered by a single actor.

PROPS short for stage property, props are objects used to help convey meaning, setting, and time period onstage.

PROTAGONIST the main character of a play and the character with who the audience is intended to identify with the most strongly.

REHEARSAL the process of practicing a play.

SET the scenery on stage, which helps indicate when and where the play takes place.

TECH REHEARSAL a rehearsal devoted to testing the technical aspects of a production such as: costume changes, scenery changes, and lighting and sound cues.

UNDERSTUDY an actor who learns the lines and blocking of a specific character in case the actor who usually plays that part cannot perform for any reason.

THEATRE PERSONNEL

PLAYWRIGHT the author of a play.

DIRECTOR the person who provides the vision of how a show should be presented, who works with the actors on their roles, develops the blocking, and is in charge of the rehearsals.

STAGE MANAGER the person responsible for overseeing all the backstage elements of a production (scheduling the actors, overseeing rehearsals, documenting the blocking, rehearsing the understudies, and making sure light and sound effects happen at the correct time during performances).

DESIGNERS the people who design the technical aspects of a production. *For example: the costume designer, lighting designer, scenic designer, prop designer, and sound designer.*

RUN CREW the backstage crew who are responsible for operating the technical aspects of a show, like raising/lowering the curtain or changing the scenery onstage.

SCRIPT the dialogue and instructions for a play or musical.

DRAMATURGE the person responsible for researching the historical and cultural aspects of a play in order to help the director make informed decisions.

THEATRE CONFIGURATIONS

ALLEY STAGE the stage runs down the middle of the audience, with seating on either side.

PROSCENIUM STAGE the most common type of theatre stage. All of the audience is seated on one side of the stage, looking through an "archway" to look into the set.

THEATRE IN THE ROUND the audience is seated on all sides of the stage.

THREE QUARTER THRUST STAGE a stage that extends into the audience so audience members are seated on three of its four sides.

Warm Up Exercises

Each day before rehearsal, actors need to warm up the tools that they will use in order to best tell the story; their mind, body, and voice. Stretch these muscles with these exercises!

MENTAL WARM-UP

WHO'S THE LEADER?

Try to change without being noticed!

Rules:

- Sit in a big circle. Have one student leave the room.
- The rest of the class chooses one student to be a leader, who then establishes a repetitive movement that can be performed by everyone in the circle.
- The first student is called back into the room and stands in the center of the circle, watching the movement of the rest of the class. When the student in the center isn't looking at him/her, the leader changes the movement and all the other students replicate the change.
- Try to make the changes small so the student in the center doesn't see you drastically change!
- The goal is for the student in the center to identify a leader. They are given three chances to guess who it is.

Make it More Difficult!

- Try doing this standing in a circle.
- Try doing this moving around the room.



PHYSICAL WARM-UP

SHAKE DOWN

Warm your body up as you shake your body down!

Rules:

- Standing in a circle, everyone shakes their right arm in the air, ten times. With each shake, whole group counts down with great energy from 10, saying a number with each shake ("ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one!").
- Repeat with left arm, left leg, right leg, whole body.
- Start from the top! Repeat shakedown, but begin count from the next number down ("nine, eight, seven, six...")

Make it More Difficult!

- Count from odd numbers.
- Count from even numbers.
- Count numbers divisible by 3, divisible by 5, etc.

NAME AND GESTURE

Introduce yourself by making a scene!

Rules:

- Participants stand in a circle, facing in.
- One person begins by saying his or her name while making a bold physical gesture.
- Whole group repeats the first person's name and gesture.
- The second person introduces themselves (with name and gesture) and then the group repeats both the first person's name/gesture, as well as the second person's name/gesture.
- Continue introducing yourselves, adding a new name and gesture on to the sequence each time. See how many you can remember!
- Play 'tag' with the names and gestures. While staying in the circle, participants can tag each other by saying their own name and gesture, and then someone else's, passing the movement around the circle. (Sam says "Sam, Olivia!", Olivia says "Olivia, Cody!", Cody says "Cody, Anissa", and so on).

Make it More Difficult!

- Add a descriptive term to your introduction, such as "Wild Samantha!" Make sure you add a gesture as well.
- Add a descriptive term to your introduction that begins with the first letter of your name, such as "Daring Diane!"

Warm Up Exercises

Each day before rehearsal, actors need to warm up the tools that they will use in order to best tell the story; their mind, body, and voice. Stretch these muscles with these exercises!

VOCAL WARM-UP

TONGUE TWISTERS

Warm up your articulation skills!

Rules:

- Everyone stands in a circle, and repeats one of the following tongue twisters a specific number of times. Make sure to focus on clarity and articulation!
- Unique New York, unique New York. You know you need unique New York
- Fresh fried fish, fresh fried fish, fresh fried fish
- Slippery southern snakes slide swiftly down ski slopes
- Red leather, yellow leather, red leather, yellow leather
- The sixth sheik's sixth sheep is sick
- She stood upon the balcony inexplicably mimicking his hiccuping and amicably welcoming him in
- When one black bug bled black blood, the other black bug bled blue
- Rubber baby buggy bumpers

SOUNDSCAPE

This game lets us build an environment using our voices!

Rules:

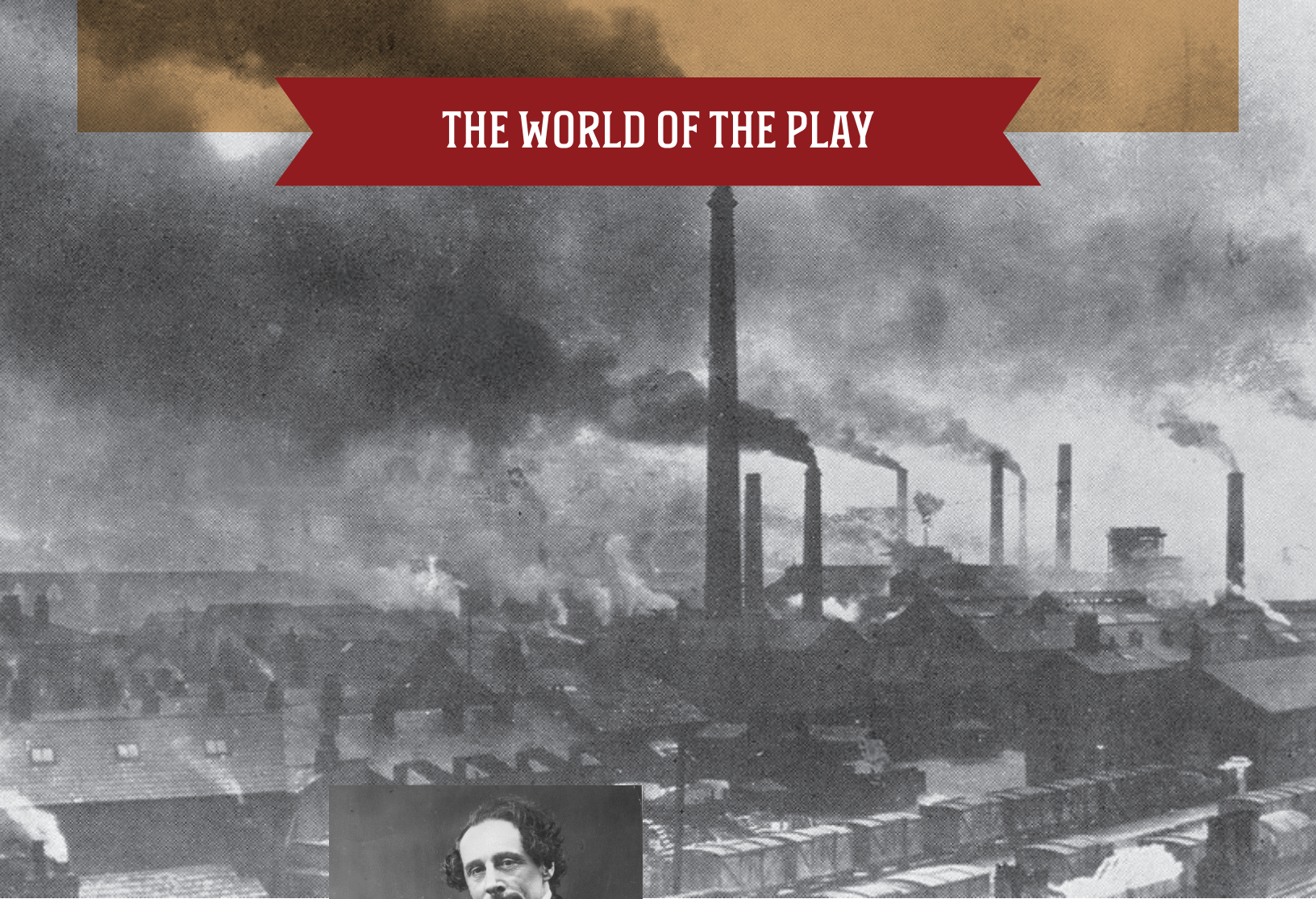
- Sit in a circle on the floor.
- The teacher will demonstrate the hand signals used in this game.
- Palm-up hand moving up towards the ceiling = "louder"
- Palm-down hand moving down towards the floor = "softer"
- Closed fist = "silent"
- Open fist = "vocal" (use your voice)
- Practice the hand movements with humming. Everyone hums softly, getting louder or softer according to the teacher's instruction.
- Now try creating different environments out of sound using your voice, but no words. If the environment is a busy office, discuss some sounds you might hear.
- Pick one of the sounds from that environment and imitate it using your voice.
- Make the environment louder or softer according to the teacher's instruction.

Make it More Difficult!

- Try other environments: a jungle, a city street, a farm



THE WORLD OF THE PLAY



Charles Dickens became known for his colorful characters, sharp satire, and deep sympathy for the working poor of Victorian England.



At the age of 12, Dickens was forced to work for a living, pasting labels on boot polish tins.

The Life of Charles Dickens

Charles John Huffam Dickens was born on February 7, 1812, in Portsmouth, England. A passionate reader at a young age, Dickens retained vivid memories of his childhood and the people around him. He later achieved prominence as a writer known for his sharp wit and colorful characters, many of whom were based on friends, family, and rivals that Dickens knew throughout his life. He flooded his novels with historical details of Victorian England, and has been praised as a champion of the poor, the working class, and children.

Charles's father John Dickens was a clerk in the Royal Navy, and consequently Dickens and his family moved around England several times, from Portsmouth to London to Kent, and back to London. His family had managed to provide him a few years of private education when, in 1824, John Dickens was forced into debtors' prison for the money he owed creditors.

Charles moved in with a family friend in London, and to support the family he sold his collection of books, dropped out of school at the age of 12, and found employment in a workhouse pasting labels on boot-blackening tins. Dickens



Pickwick Papers (1836) was Dickens's first major work of fiction. It follows the antics of a gentleman's hunting club, and established Dickens as an engaging comic writer.

remembered the experience as entirely degrading—the work was monotonous, the manager ignored him, and the workhouse was grimy and rat-infested. Dickens returned to school within a year, but this experience gave him sympathy for the working class that he would carry for the rest of his life.

Dickens left school at the age of 15, and worked as a law office clerk. He detested the work, but found joy in mimicking the clerks, lawyers, and clients around him. During this time he attended the theatre almost every day, memorizing the comic pieces of the actor Charles Matthews. In 1832 Dickens was going to audition for the theatre at Covent Garden, but missed the audition because of a cold.

Instead he worked as a journalist, then as a political cartoon caption-writer for the London newspaper *Morning Chronicle* between 1833 and 1836, under the pen-name Boz. In 1836 *Sketches by Boz*, a collection of his fiction accompanied by George Cruikshank's cartoons, became immediately popular. This led to his first serial publication, *The Pickwick Papers*, which was published in installments from March to October of 1836. Pickwick became a phenomenon overnight, inspiring merchandise and theatrical adaptations before the series was even complete. Three days after the first installment of *Pickwick*, Dickens married Catherine Hogarth, the daughter of a prominent newspaper editor.

Dickens went on reading tours from the 1840s onward, indulging his knack for performance and bringing his characters to life in hundreds of towns across Britain and America.



Charles Dickens is remembered as one of the greatest writers in British history. He was commemorated on the 10-pound note from 1992 to 2003.

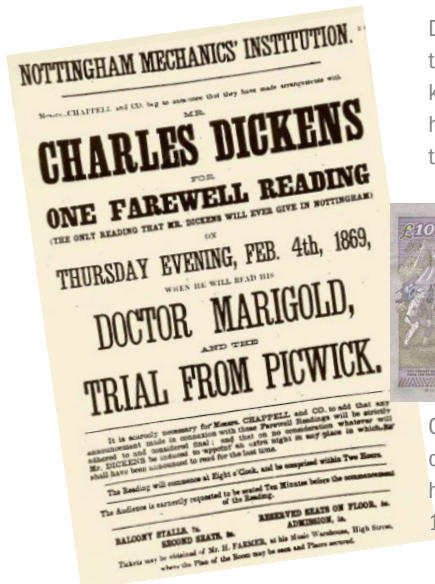
His success as a serial novelist continued with *Oliver Twist* (1837-1839), *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-39), *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41), and *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840-41). The serial format of these early novels, in which a magazine published a chapter or two per week, was helpful for Dickens as a growing writer: as a story progressed, he could monitor his audience's reaction and change plots and characterizations in upcoming installments. Serialization also opened up the world of literature to the illiterate poor, who paid to have Dickens' engaging stories read aloud to them weekly.

As his fame grew, Dickens's works became more complex with *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845), *Dombrey and Son* (1846-48), and *David Copperfield* (1849-50). A visit to Manchester to witness the conditions of factories and workhouses inspired *A Christmas Carol*—Dickens resolved to “strike a sledge hammer blow” for the poor, whose liberation he linked to the emancipation of slaves in the United States. This book also revived ‘Christmas spirit’ in Britain and America, moving the holiday's focus from religious tradition to family and generosity.

In 1851 Dickens moved his family to Tavistock House in London, where he wrote *Hard Times* (1854). In 1856 he was able to buy Gad's Hill Place in Kent, a house he had walked past as a child and dreamt of owning. In 1857 he met Ellen Ternan, an actress working on a play that Dickens had co-written, *The Frozen Deep*. The year after, he made the outlandish decision to separate from his wife Catherine—divorce would have been unthinkable for such a high-profile figure as Dickens—and continue his affair with Ternan. Catherine left with one of their children, never to see her husband again. Major works followed Dickens' personal turmoil: *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) and *Great Expectations* (1861).

Dickens had set out on reading tours starting in the 1840s, indulging his knack for performance. One tour in 1858 had Dickens reading in 49 different towns in England, Scotland, and Ireland. A visit to the United States in 1868 included 76 readings, as well as visits with American acquaintances Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. In his “farewell tour” of Britain, Dickens managed to include 87 readings, including some in the slums and opium dens of London.

Charles Dickens died in 1870 at his home in Kent while writing *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. He is buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey. Generations of writers have been influenced by Dickens, and he is consistently named one of the greatest literary figures of all time. ■



19th Century Timeline:

What was happening in Dickens' world?

1812

Napoleon's invasion of Russia fails



1812

Charles Dickens born

1815

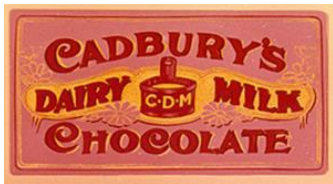
Mount Tambora in Indonesia produces the largest volcanic eruption in recorded history

1820

Discovery of Antarctica

1824

John Dickens imprisoned, Charles works in the boot-blackening factory



Chocolate became widely available to British customers thanks to new technologies and the colonization of cocoa-growing regions in Africa and South America.

1824

Cadbury Chocolate is founded

1833

Slavery is outlawed in the British Empire

1834

Poor Law Amendment Act

1836

Sketches by Boz and *The Pickwick Papers*

1836

Dickens marries Catherine Hogarth

1837

Queen Victoria is crowned



Queen Victoria had the second longest reign of any British monarch. The era when she was queen, 1837–1901, is known as the Victorian Era.

1842

Dickens and Catherine make their first tour of the United States

1842

Cotton and coal workers strike in Britain

1843

A Christmas Carol

1844

First telegraph line is established in the United States

1847

The Brontë sisters publish *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Agnes Grey*

1848

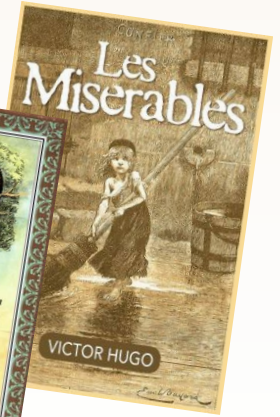
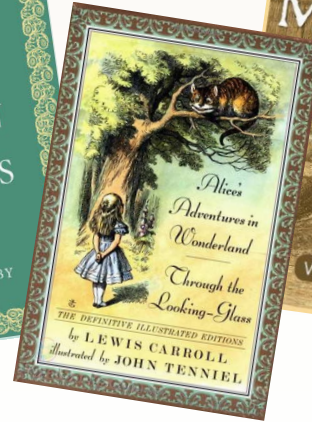
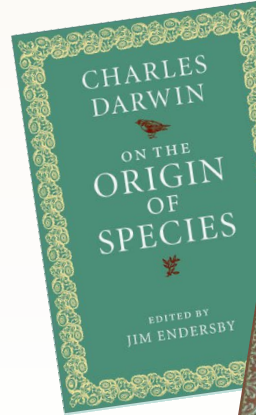
Karl Marx publishes *The Communist Manifesto*

1850

David Copperfield

1851

Herman Melville publishes *Moby Dick*



The Victorian era saw an evolution in literature as well as scientific thought; Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* introduced the theory of evolution, and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* opened up a vividly imaginative world to children and adults alike.

1853

George Sanger opens his famous British circus company, introducing live animals like lions and elephants into the touring circus

1854

Hard Times

1856

The Crimean War, the first "modern war" to use technologies like the telegraph and the railroad, ends

1859

A Tale of Two Cities

1859

Charles Darwin publishes *On the Origin of Species*

1861

Great Expectations

1861

American Civil War begins

1862

Victor Hugo publishes *Les Misérables*

1864

International Workingmen's Association formed in London, the first international trade union

1865

President Lincoln assassinated

1865

Dickens survives a major railroad crash, returning from Paris

1865

Lewis Carroll publishes *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*



1870

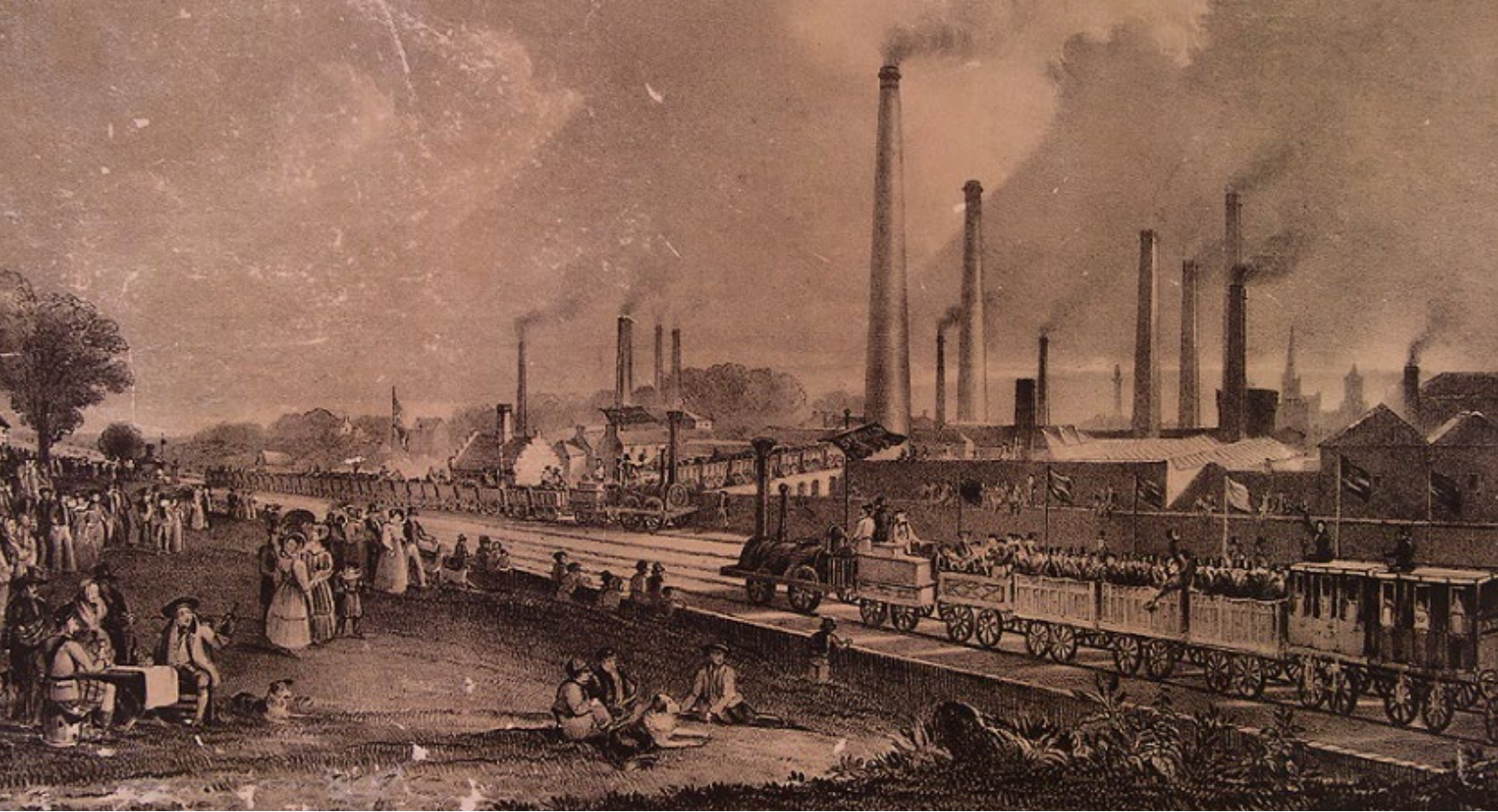
Charles Dickens dies at 58

1870

P.T. Barnum opens his traveling circus in the United States

1872

First recognized international soccer game between England and Scotland



A Guide to Life in Victorian England

❖ INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

“This muddle were here before you and I were born and will go on long after we’re dead! The strong hand will never fix it. Regulating them like they was figures in a sum or machines without loves and likings . . . this will never do it”.

—Stephen Blackpool, *Hard Times*

Charles Dickens lived during the time of the Industrial Revolution, a period in British history from about 1760 to 1840 when the economy moved from mainly agricultural to large-scale manufacturing and mining. Nineteenth century industrialization meant many goods became more widely available—like books, cloth, glass, and steel—but had severe impacts on the environment, public health, and the treatment of the poor.

The railroad was one of many new and exciting technologies of the Industrial Revolution. However, coal-powered factories polluted the air like never before.



A 19th century cartoon shows the plight of the poor in rapidly industrializing Britain.



19th century schoolgirls, in a mixed-age classroom.

❖ THE POOR LAW

Before the 1830s, each parish in Britain was responsible for raising money to support the poor. This system was put in place in the 17th century by the Poor Law. Since this money was raised by taxing the middle and upper classes, many lawmakers wanted to change this system, which cost about 7 million pounds per year by 1830.

In 1834 the Poor Law Amendment Act was passed, which forced the poor into workhouses for support. They were given clothes and food in exchange for several hours of labor every day. Workhouse life could be miserable—families were split up, and there were many stories about workers starving at the hands of workhouse managers.

“Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?” asks Ebenezer Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol* (1843), critical of small-scale charity efforts to help the poor on the streets.

After seeing the horrible working conditions in Manchester, Dickens resolved to satirize the Utilitarian movement, and in an attempt to “strike the heaviest blow in [his] power,” he wrote *Hard Times*. Coketown is similar to Manchester, but is much smaller. It is speculated to be based on 19th century Preston.

❖ VICTORIAN SCHOOLS

“How could you give me life and take from me all the things that make life worth living?”

—Louisa Gradgrind, *Hard Times*

English schools were not free until 1891, so for much of the 19th century only children of wealthy families could receive an education. Primary school education focused on the three R’s—Reading, Writing, Arithmetic—and secondary education branched out into science, history, geography, and philosophy.

The school day lasted from 9:00 to 5:00 to mirror a typical adult workday. This could include morning prayers and religious instruction, and a long break during which children could go home for lunch. Classrooms were strict and disciplined, and students could be beaten with canes for anything from lateness to laziness.

Paper was expensive, so notes were taken on slate boards with chalk. The teacher would often walk around and check that her students were taking notes correctly. At the end of every lesson, these slates would be erased—children were expected to memorize everything as they learned! But as they got older, students might use a notebook with an ink pen. A typical classroom would also include an abacus for practicing math, a globe for geography, and a chalkboard for the teacher to write on.

❁ VICTORIAN CIRCUS

“People must be amused, Squire, somehow . . . they can’t be always a-working, nor yet they can’t be always a-learning. Make the best of us, not the worst.” —Mr. Sleary, *Hard Times*

Circus was a vital part of Victorian entertainment, and its expansion during the 19th century allowed even the smallest towns in England to experience the magic of acrobats, clowns, and animal tricks.

The earliest circuses in the UK were small troupes of entertainers who appeared at fairs. Some would have small tents while others performed in the open air as the audience stood and watched from behind a wooden barrier. Performances repeated throughout the day whenever there was an audience to watch. All the performers had to play several parts, and in the days before the enclosed circus, the company would pass round a hat to collect money from the audience.

The early touring circuses were often small operations, entirely manned by a single family. The company might include a couple of acrobats, a clown, a tightrope walker, and as many horses as could be afforded—perhaps two trained to perform and two used to pull the cart from town to town.

One of the factors that made the circus so popular was that fairground entertainers traveled to their audiences. From the late 18th century circuses toured to even the smallest towns, and in the 19th century the development of the railways enabled circuses to travel further. By the 1870s huge circuses were touring across Europe and America with two or three trainloads of equipment.

Traveling circus became big business in the 19th century. In 1853 George Sanger founded Sanger’s Circus, which was the first big-name circus to feature lions and elephants in its touring show. Sanger also introduced the 3-ring circus, letting audiences focus on multiple displays at once. During Barnum and Bailey’s Circus at London’s Olympia in 1889, there were at least ten displays including aquatic acts, aerialists, elephants and an equestrian act featuring 70 horses performing in the ring at once.

Big-tent circus acts remained popular throughout the 20th century in Britain, America, and all over the world. Despite the recent closing of big-name companies like Ringling Brothers, circus continues to change with the times, removing lions and elephants in response to the criticisms of animal rights groups, and adding new elements like digital media, dance, and any unique talent that demonstrates the limits of human capability. ■

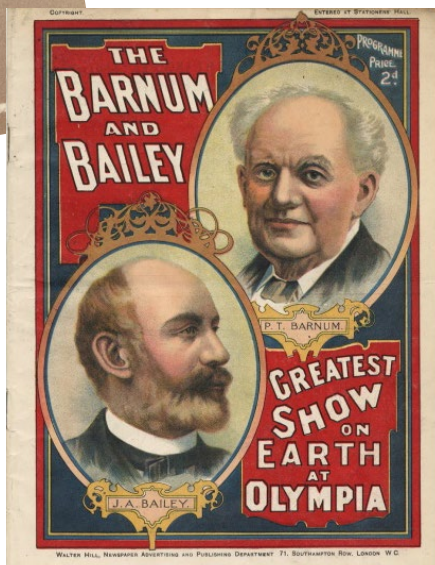


A 19th century circus family.

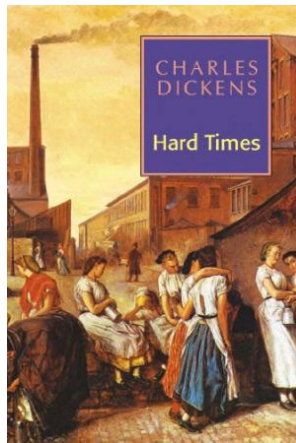
(Top) Early touring circuses were small, often family-operated businesses.



A 19th century tightrope walker.



Barnum & Bailey’s 1889 circus at the Olympia Theater in London was one of the grandest.



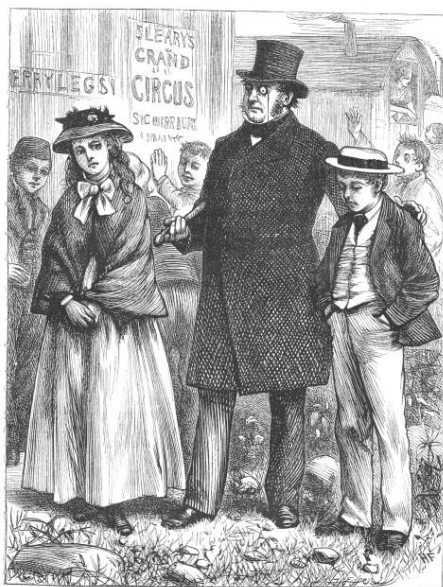
About the Novel

- *Hard Times* is the shortest of Dickens' novels, and is the only one to not have scenes in London.
- The novel was published in installments in the magazine *Household Words* between April and August 1854, concurrently with Elizabeth's *North and South*, a social novel also about class struggles and workers' rights.
- *Hard Times* is known as one of few successful novels without a protagonist, because there are many characters to follow and care about. Coketown itself is sometimes listed as the protagonist.
- In 1815, Mount Tambora of the East Indies erupted and caused a worldwide climate change of coldness and darkness. The period of 1816-1819 is known as "years without a summer." Dickens was a young child then, and many of his later portraits of grim weatherscapes and poverty are thought to be related to this climate. (Also related: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*)
- Louisa's story is similar to philosopher John Stuart Mill, who had a similar dry, analytical education that sent him into a nervous breakdown in his 20's. He believed his imagination and emotion were starved by his father's stringent emphasis on analysis and mathematics.
- Dickens said of *Hard Times*, "My satire is against those who see figures and averages, and nothing else—the representatives of the wickedest and most enormous vice of this time—the men who, through long years to come, will do more to damage the real useful truths of political economy than I could do (if I tried) in my whole life; the addled heads who would take the average of cold in the Crimea during twelve months as a reason for clothing a soldier in nankeens [cotton] on a night when he would be frozen to death in fur, and who would comfort the labourer in traveling twelve miles a day to and from his work, by telling him that the average distance of one inhabited place from another in the whole area of England, is not more than four miles. Bah!"



Meet the Characters of *Hard Times*

Mr. Thomas Gradgrind is the father of Louisa and Tom. The headmaster of his own school, he believes in a rigorous education based on facts, not fantasy. Despite almost kicking Sissy out of his school, he takes her in after her father abandons her. He is elected to Parliament halfway through the story and leaves for London. He eventually sees the error of his strictly objective beliefs, when his children's lives fall into disarray.



Thomas Gradgrind apprehends Louisa and Tom at the circus.
From an 1864 edition.

Louisa Gradgrind is the eldest child of the Gradgrind family. She has been taught to suppress her feelings and finds it hard to express herself clearly, which she sees Sissy do exceptionally well. She marries Bounderby but does not love him. She is tempted to adultery by James Harthouse, but resists him and returns to her father. Her rejection of Harthouse leads to a new understanding of life and of the value of emotions and the imagination. She reproaches her father for his dry and fact-based approach to the world.

Tom Gradgrind is the son of the Gradgrinds. Resentful of his father's education, Tom has a strong relationship with his sister Louisa. He works in Bounderby's bank, his position made easier by Louisa's marriage to Bounderby, and soon becomes addicted to gambling. Louisa never stops supporting Tom, even as he demands money from her.

Sissy Jupe holding the bottle of nine oils for her father.
From an 1872 edition.



Cecilia (Sissy) Jupe is an acrobat girl in Sleary's circus, as well as a student of Thomas Gradgrind's very strict classroom. Sissy has her own set of values and beliefs which make her seem unintelligent in the Gradgrind household, as well as at school. But while she consistently fails to 'succeed' at memorizing facts and figures, her emotional intelligence and her instincts about character allow her to keep Tom and Louisa safe throughout the story. At the end of the novel, when the Gradgrinds' philosophy of religiously adhering solely to facts breaks down, Sissy is the character who teaches them how to live.

Bitzer is a model student of Gradgrind's who is brought up on facts and taught to operate according to self-interest. He takes up a job in Bounderby's bank, working under the irresponsible Tom.

Josiah Bounderby is a business associate of Mr. Gradgrind. Given to boasting about his rise to wealth and power from humble origins, he owns a bank and mills in Coketown and employs many of the other characters in the novel. He marries Mr. Gradgrind's daughter Louisa, some 30 years his junior. Bounderby is callous, self-centered and ultimately revealed to be a liar and fraud.

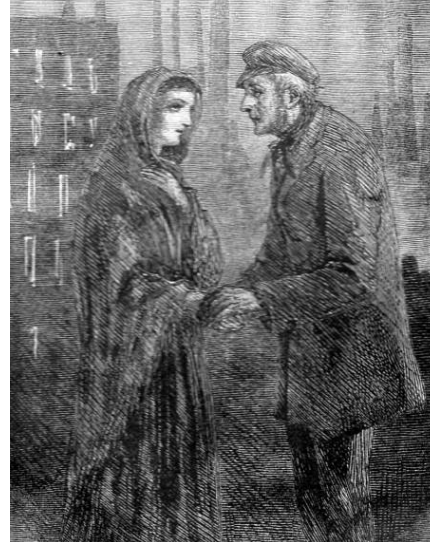


Josiah Bounderby and Mrs. Sparsit conversing over tea. From an 1867 edition.

Mrs. Sparsit is a widow who has fallen on hard times. She is employed by Bounderby, and is jealous when he marries Louisa. Her attempt to discredit Louisa is unsuccessful and she is ultimately sacked by Bounderby.

Mr. Sleary is the owner of the circus that employs Sissy and her father. He speaks with a lisp. A kind man, he wishes Sissy to leave the circus and get a formal education after her father deserts her.

Stephen Blackpool is a worker at one of Bounderby's mills. He has a wife who no longer lives with him, but who appears from time to time. He forms a close bond with Rachael, and wishes to marry her. After a dispute with Bounderby, he is fired and shunned by his fellow workers. While absent from Coketown, he is wrongly accused of robbing Bounderby's bank.



Stephen and Rachael outside the factory. From an 1867 edition.

Rachael is a factory worker, and a friend of Stephen Blackpool who attests to his innocence when he is accused of robbing Bounderby's bank. She encourages Stephen to care for his wife because of his endlessly kind heart.

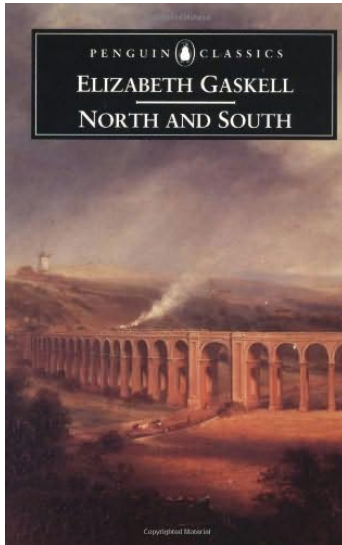
Mrs. Pegler is an old woman who sometimes visits Coketown to observe the Bounderby estate.

James Harthouse is an upper-class gentleman who attempts to woo Louisa. Having met Mr. Gradgrind in London, he travels to Coketown for "no idea, really, something governmental".

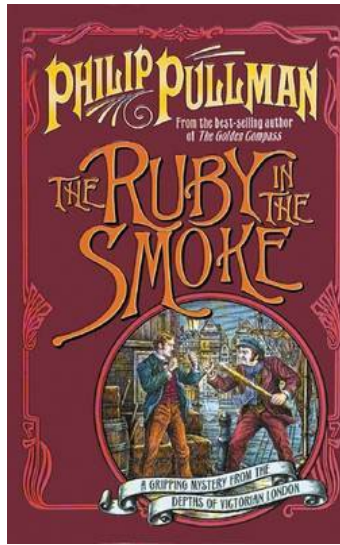


Mr. Harthouse talking with Louisa in the garden. From an 1874 edition.

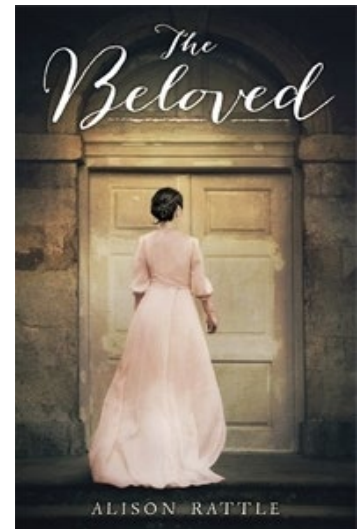
Recommended Reading: If You Liked *Hard Times*, Try...



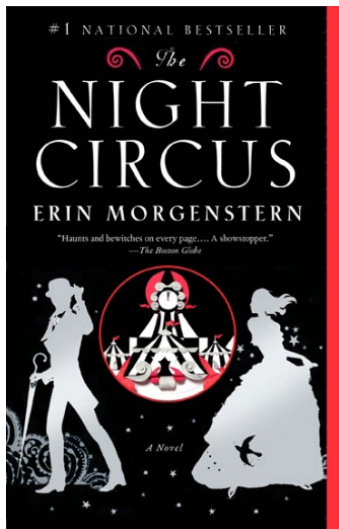
Published concurrently with *Hard Times*, Elizabeth Gaskell's ***North and South*** (1854) also deals with romance and labor rights in an industrial English town.



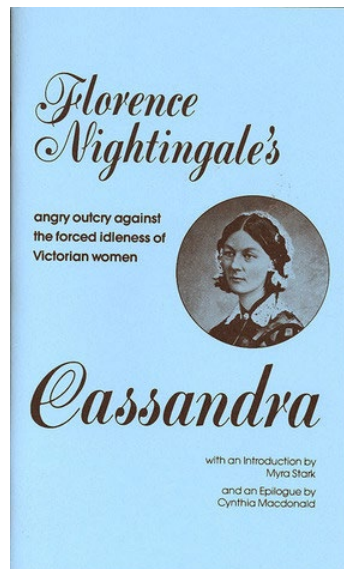
Philip Pullman, author of the *His Dark Materials* series, has another series about the mysterious adventures of a teenage girl in Victorian London. Join Sally Lockhart's adventures with ***The Ruby in the Smoke*** (1985).



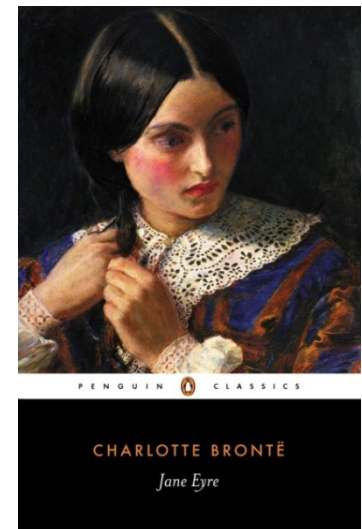
In Alison Rattle's ***The Beloved*** (2016), a Victorian girl escapes a world of restriction and finds one full of passion and imagination—but is she really free?



Erin Morgenstern's bestseller ***The Night Circus*** (2011) takes the reader into a mysterious and magical world where “the circus arrives without warning”—take a peek behind the curtain!

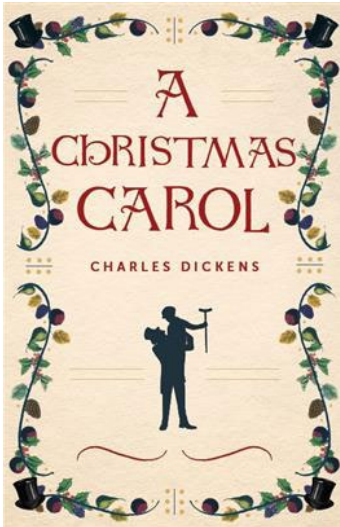


Florence Nightingale made her name fighting for better medical treatment of soldiers in the Crimean War. In ***Cassandra*** (1854), she delivers a diatribe against the “forced idleness of women” in the Victorian family.

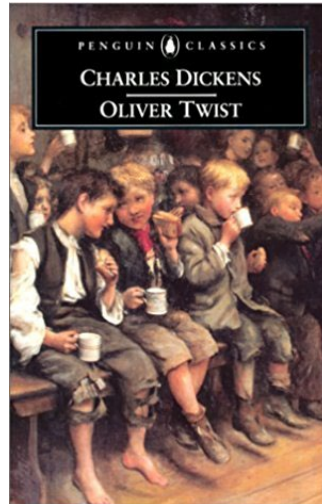


Charlotte Brontë's classic ***Jane Eyre*** (1847) dives inside the mind of Jane, an orphan who grows up to become a governess to a wealthy family. But the war raging in Jane's heart continues...

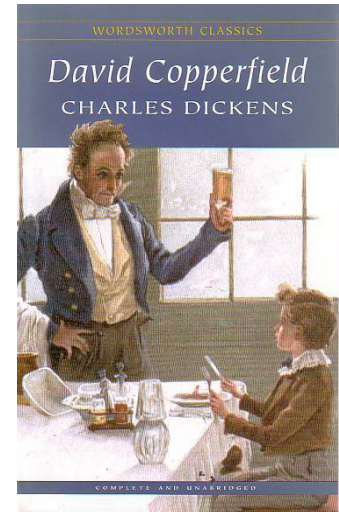
Other Works by Charles Dickens



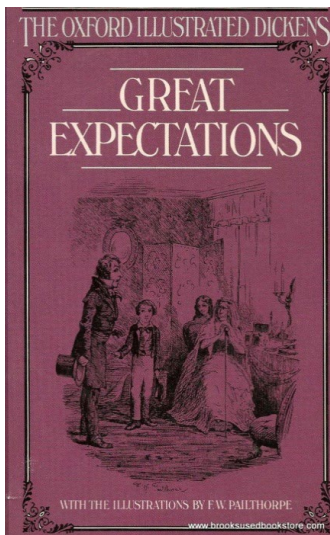
A Christmas Carol (1843) sees Ebenezer Scrooge, a mean-spirited miser, gradually persuaded into the Christmas spirit by three ghosts who give him special insight on the past, the present, and the future.



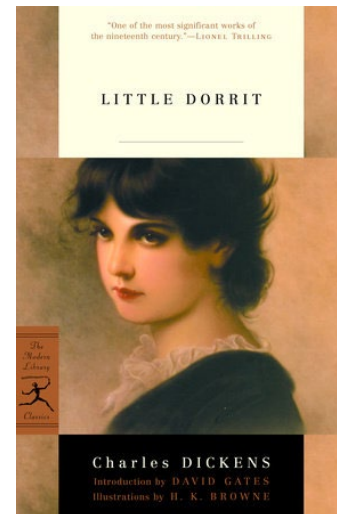
Oliver Twist (1837) follows the sordid adventures of Oliver, an orphan who is tossed between the workhouse and the streets. But everything turns out fine thanks to the generous and kind people in Oliver's life.



David Copperfield (1850) follows the life of David, who is tossed between family members and into boarding school. This novel is seen as a veiled autobiography of Dickens himself, and many moments and characters mirror those of Dickens's life.



Great Expectations (1861) deals with the life and development of an orphan named Pip. This novel is remembered for its vivid characters and scenes.



Little Dorrit (1857) is about a little girl named Amy who grows up in debtors' prison, where her father lives. As the girl grows up, she discovers long-hidden secrets and tries to follow her heart.

THE WORLD OF THE PRODUCTION



In Conversation with Adaptor and Director Heidi Stillman

Interview collected by
Audience Development Coordinator
Corinne Bass

HARD TIMES FOR THESE TIMES

Hard Times was first produced at Lookingglass more than 15 years ago. Why revisit it now?

HS: The play was first done all the way back in 2001. We performed at the Ruth Page Center, before we moved into our beautiful theatre here in the Water Tower Water Works. We are thrilled to bring the show back for our 30th anniversary season because it feels like a really seminal production for Lookingglass, and because the story is still so relevant and present. Some of the artists involved are a better age now for their parts than they were when it was first produced. Some of them have aged out of their roles, or graduated to different roles. It will be an exciting mix of new and returning cast members.

Where is the play set?

What sort of issues does it grapple with?

HS: The story takes place in post-Industrial Revolution England, in the fictional Coketown, an industrial city where the creed of Utilitarianism holds sway—until the travelling circus comes to town. I think that the technological revolution we are currently living through puts many of us in a similar position to Coketown's strict society. Work is taking over our lives: the pressures of productivity and capitalism are overwhelming, and even the privileged among us are yoked to our work. We are never away from it. The divide between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' is still mighty wide, and the issues of utility versus beauty, facts and figures versus imagination, and the rational versus the irrational are as present in America today as they were in Dickens' time.

Why is the circus such a crucial component of *Hard Times*, onstage and in the book?

HS: My big "Aha!" in developing the play was realizing that I could use the circus in a metaphoric way—as a window into the characters' secret longings—as well as using the traveling circus in a literal way onstage. Louisa's longing for a life of beauty and meaning, and how that is embodied by the circus she encounters, is brilliantly wrought by Dickens in the book. Circus is fueled by the human longing to break free from limitations, and I think it's the metaphors we see—or maybe feel—that make us love it so much. ■



About the Set

The script of *Hard Times* describes the set as follows: “The set includes two two-story, open-framework steel colonnades pivoting on castors. The units are human-driven as opposed to motorized and could stop in any position and remain static until moved again. The actors are the engines of transition and set change, conceptually adding to the atmosphere of Coketown, which is crowded, always working, and dependent on the hard physical labor of the working class inhabitants of the town. Upstage of the colonnades is a nearly full-stage-sized painted scrim surrounded by a solid black frame. The scrim is painted as Coketown, with an industrial smoke- and smog-choked view of factories and smokestacks. Behind the scrim is another playing area, where the metaphoric circus and memory images appear. The real circus scenes are played in front of the scrim, and the imagined circus scenes behind the scrim.”





Images of the set design that you will see in this play!



About the Circus

The circus is an essential element of the story of *Hard Times*, and this production uses circus to help tell the story of the characters' lives as well as their dreams. Lookingglass has partnered with Actors Gymnasium on this production to create the circus. Woven throughout the play you will see actors perform various aerial and acrobatic stunts including hoop diving, silks, and the Spanish web.



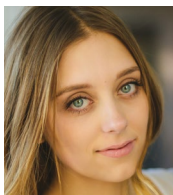


Images of the circus that you will see in this play!





Meet the Cast



AUDREY ANDERSON (Sissy) is thrilled to be making both her Lookingglass and Chicago professional debut in *Hard Times*. Born and raised in Minneapolis, Audrey moved to Chicago to study theatre at Loyola University where she is currently a senior. She has performed with numerous Minneapolis professional companies, including Children's Theatre Company and Classical Actors Ensemble, along with many collegiate productions while attending Loyola University, a few being *columbinus*, *Elephant's Graveyard*, and *FML: How Carson McCullers saved my life*. Audrey learned to fly at Xelias Aerial Arts in Minneapolis, and continued her studies at The Actors Gymnasium upon moving to Chicago.



ATRA ASDOU (Rachael, Mrs. Gradgrind, Scherezade beginning Dec. 19/Lookingglass Artistic Associate) is thrilled to return to Lookingglass now as an Artistic Associate, last appearing in *Blood Wedding* and *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*. Past performances include: *1984* (Steppenwolf for Young Adults), *A Christmas Carol* (Goodman Theatre), *Heartbreak House* (Writers Theatre), *Dirty* (The Gift Theatre), *Seminar* (Haven Theatre), and *Inana* (TimeLine Theatre). She is a graduate of Loyola University, Second City (where she is an understudy to the touring company), and iO (where she is on the Harold team, Lil' Tooties, and an ensemble member of Whirled News Tonight). She's got a heart full of adoration and gratitude for this cast, crew, and the patience of loved ones—and she thanks you kindly for coming to *Hard Times*.



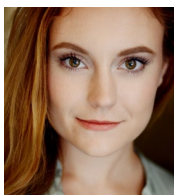
AMY J. CARLE (Mrs. Sparsit, Drunk Woman, Pufflerumpus)'s previous Lookingglass credits include: *North China Lover*, *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo*, *Peter Pan (A Play)*, and *Trust*. Other Chicago credits include: *Harvey and Orlando* (Court Theatre); *The Book of Joseph* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); *Wonderful Town*, *The Sins of Sor Juana*, *Rock 'N' Roll*, and *Desire Under the Elms* (Goodman Theatre); *The Book Thief*, *The Internationalist*, *Animals Out of Paper*, *Sex With Strangers*, and *Hedda Gabler* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company). Off-Broadway National Tour: *The Vagina Monologues*. Regional credits: *The Profane* (Chautauqua Theater Company); *Fully Committed* and *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Madison Repertory Theatre); *Or*, (Forward Theater); *Morning Star* (Kansas City Repertory Theatre). Television: *Boss* (STARZ), *Chicago Code* (FOX), *Law & Order*, *Chicago Fire*, *Chicago Med*, and *CRISIS* (NBC). Film: *Who Gets the Dog?* Amy coaches privately, and teaches at Vagabond School for the Arts.



DAVID CATLIN (Sleary/Blackpool/Lookingglass Ensemble Member)'s Lookingglass acting credits include: *The Arabian Nights*, *Our Town*, *Argonautika*, *Summertime*, *La Luna Muda*, *Manuscript Found at Saragossa*, *The Vanishing Twin*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Odyssey*, and *The Jungle*. Other Chicago performance credits include: *Marnie & Phil: A Circus Love Letter*, *Lost & Found: A Recycled Circus* and *All the Time in the World* (The Actors Gymnasium); *The Elephant & The Whale* (Chicago Children's Theatre/Redmoon Theater); *The Nutcracker* (The House Theatre of Chicago); *The Midnight Circus*. David is an artistic associate with The Actors Gymnasium and serves on the acting faculty for Northwestern University.



RAPHAEL CRUZ (Bitzer, Le Papillon), a native of San Francisco, began his journey into the circus arts at age six. Specializing in traditional Chinese acrobatics. He studied with the Founder of the Nanjing acrobatic troupe, Master Trainer Lu Yi. At the age of 15, he decided to further his training at The National Circus School of Montreal. Among many of the disciplines he learned, he specialized in Hand to Hand, which he presented in his graduation performance with his brother. After graduating, he became an original member and artistic collaborator of The 7 Fingers production of *Traces*. Raphael also studied music extensively and plays several instruments, which helped him land the role Buster in Cirque du Soleil's production of *Iris* (2012) in Los Angeles. Other credits include: Assistant Choreographer for the opening ceremonies of the Sochi Olympics; Associate Acrobatic Designer for Cirque du Soleil's Broadway production *Par amour*. Raphael is also a cast member of French contemporary dance company DCA's latest production *Courte Pointe*.



CORDELIA DEWDNEY (Louisa) joyfully returns to Lookingglass after this summer's *Moby Dick*. She has worked with Alliance Theatre, Arena Stage, and South Coast Repertory for the National tour of *Moby Dick* and has appeared on *Chicago Med*. Cordelia is a graduate of Northwestern University with degrees in Theatre and English.



MARILYN DODDS FRANK (Mrs. Pegler)'s credits with Lookingglass include: *The Last Act of Lilka Kadison*, *Metamorphosis*, *Metamorphoses*, *Hard Times*, *George*, and *The Idiot*. Broadway: *Superior Donuts*; *The Clean House* (Lincoln Center). Chicago: Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Goodman Theatre, Victory Gardens Theater, Shaw Chicago, A Red Orchid Theatre, Court Theatre, Latino Chicago, Teatro Vista, Remains Theater, Next Theatre Company, New Criminals Theater Company, Rivendell Theatre Ensemble and Piven

Theatre Workshop. New York: En Garde Arts and La MaMa. LA: The Actors' Gang and Padua Playwrights. Marilyn has performed in the premieres of four plays written and directed by Maria Irene Fornes and movies with Robert Altman, Judd Apatow, Michael Apted, and Stephen Frears, among others. Forthcoming movies directed by Chicago Independents: *Our Father*, *What They Had*, and *Slice*.



RAYMOND FOX (Mr. Gradgrind, Sissy's Father, Slackbridge/ Lookingglass Ensemble Member) last appeared at Lookingglass in *Moby Dick*. Off-Broadway/Broadway: *Metamorphoses* (Second Stage Theatre, Circle in the Square Theatre). Regional Credits: Goodman Theatre, Seattle Repertory Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Arena Stage, Arden Theatre, South Coast Repertory, Remy Bumppo Theatre Company, Route 66 Theatre, Hartford Stage, American Repertory Theatre, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Alliance Theatre, Meadow Brook Theatre, The House Theatre of Chicago, Mark Taper Forum, Court Theatre, McCarter Theatre, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, First Folio Theatre, Canada's Stratford Festival and TimeLine Theatre (*Blood and Gifts*, 2013 Equity Jeff Award for Supporting Actor). Education: Northwestern University and the A.R.T. Institute at Harvard University.



NATHAN HOSNER (Mr. Harthouse, Mr. M'Choakumchild, Kidderminster) was last seen at Lookingglass as Captain Ahab in *Moby Dick*. He recently played Lord Aster in the first national tour of *Peter and the Starcatcher*. Chicago credits include productions with Writers Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Court Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Paramount Theatre, Northlight Theatre, About Face Theatre, and First Folio Theatre. Regional credits include productions with American Players Theatre, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Indiana Repertory Theatre, New Theatre, Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Arkansas Shakespeare Theatre, Door Shakespeare, and The BoarsHead Theater. Nathan is a graduate of The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.



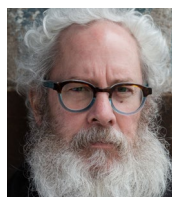
LOUISE LAMSON (Rachael, Mrs. Gradgrind, Scherezade through Dec. 17/Lookingglass Ensemble Member) is happy to return to the Lookingglass stage and to *Hard Times*, where she originated the role of Louisa Gradgrind. Other Lookingglass credits include: *The Idiot*, *The Secret in the Wings*, *The Wooden Breeks*, *Icarus* (The Getty Villa, LA), *The Brothers Karamazov*, *Our Town*, *The Arabian Nights*, *Ethan Frome*, *Metamorphoses*, *The Little Prince*, and most recently *Death Tax*. Other Chicago credits include: About Face Theatre's *Bash* (After Dark Award and Jeff Award Nomination) and *The Odyssey* (Goodman Theatre). New York credits include: *Metamorphoses* (Second Stage Theatre and Broadway) and *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* (Second Stage Theatre). Louise is a graduate of Northwestern University. She joined the ensemble in 2016.



JULIE MARSHALL (Circus Swing) is a professional aerialist based in Chicago. She is currently a staff member at Aloft Circus Arts, where she teaches aerial hoop, aerial silks, and flexibility. Other companies Julie has worked for include The Actors Gymnasium, Redmink Productions, MSA & Circus Arts, Cirque Mechanics, Angela Eve's Parlor Events, Cocktail CirquAntique, and many others. Julie would like to thank all of her circus coaches for getting her to where she is today, her parents for putting up with her, and Lookingglass for giving her the opportunity to be involved with such a wonderful production.



JJ PHILLIPS (Tom) is honored to return to Lookingglass for this seminal production. Previous appearances at Lookingglass include Kev in *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* (Jeff Award Nominee, Actor in a Supporting Role—Play), as well as Paolo in *The North China Lover*, and the understudy for Ian in last season's *Beyond Caring*. Chicago: Steppenwolf Theatre Company (Next up: *Fat Pig*, *Leveling Up*), The House Theatre of Chicago (*The Hammer Trinity*), Griffin Theatre (*Punk Rock*). Regional: Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts (Miami). Film/TV: *Chicago Fire*, *Thrill Ride*, and the upcoming web series *Kappa Force* and *Blame It On Toby*. Thanks to Heidi, Phil, and everyone at Lookingglass for the constant support. Love to Mom, Dad, and Dani. For Boppy.



TROY WEST (Mr. Bounderby/Lookingglass Artistic Associate) has been an Artistic Associate since 2002. Broadway: *August: Osage County* (also London & Sydney). Off-Broadway: *Bug* (Barrow Street Theatre) and *The Execution* (Nat Horne Theater). Steppenwolf Theatre Company: *Linda Vista*, *The Berlin Circle*, *Terry Won't Talk* and *Picasso At The Lapin Agile* (also San Francisco and LA), among others. Regional credits include: American Conservatory Theater, Arden Theatre Company, Geffen Playhouse, Indiana Repertory Theatre, and Portland Center Stage. Chicago credits: A Red Orchid Theatre, Famous Door Theatre Company, Goodman Theatre, Next Theatre Company, and Remains Theater, among others. Upcoming: The Boring Professor in the feature film, *The Pages* and recreating the role of Michael Stiles in *Linda Vista* at Center Theatre Group in LA.



THE WORLD OF THE AUDIENCE



Discussion Questions

FROM THE STORY OF HARD TIMES:

- Why do you think Louisa chooses to marry Bounderby? If you were her, do you think you would make the same choice?
- Sissy and the Gradgrinds have a great impact on each other. Do you think that impact goes both ways, or do some characters change more than others?
- Why do you think it's important to Bounderby to be known as a 'self-made man'? Why do you think he always talks about how rough his childhood supposedly was?
- What connections does Dickens make between class and morality?

CONNECTIONS TO OUR OWN LIVES

- Do you think your education focuses more on facts, or on imagination, or both? What's the value of each (facts and imagination) for learning?
- If you were to join the circus, what special talent would you like to perform?



Resources

- Culhane, John. *The American Circus: An Illustrated History*. Holt, 1990.
- Daniel, Noel, and Dominique Jando. *The Circus: 1870-1950s*. Taschen, 2010.
- Higbie, Robert. *Dickens and Imagination*. University Press of Florida, 1998
- Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism*. 1861.
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PHOTO CREDITS: Production photos feature the cast of *Hard Times*: Audrey Anderson, Amy J. Carle, David Catlin, Raphael Cruz, Cordelia Dewdney, Marilyn Dodds Frank, Raymond Fox, Nathan Hosner, Louise Lamson, Julie Marshall, JJ Phillips and Troy West; Photos also feature the designs of Dan Ostling, Mara Blumenfeld, Brian Sidney Bembridge, Andre Pluess, Isaac Schoepp, Amanda Herrmann; Circus and Choreography by Sylvia Hernandez-Distasi; Illustration by Fred Baxter and Tom Kyzivat; All photos by Liz Lauren.

HARD TIMES

FOR THESE TIMES



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