

# HARD TIMES

CHARLES DICKENS



EDITED BY FRED KAPLAN  
AND SYLVÈRE MONOD

**A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION**  
THIRD EDITION

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

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Charles Dickens

HARD TIMES



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AN AUTHORITATIVE TEXT

CONTEXTS

CRITICISM

THIRD EDITION

*Edited by*

ALAN SYLVÈRE MONOD

LEONARD  
BLOOMBERG CENTER,  
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# Preface

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In the almost 150 years since its publication, *Hard Times* (1854) has had a rich and controversial reception among its generations of readers. This Third Edition of the Norton Critical Edition attests to its continuing vitality. The novel's first readers immersed themselves in what its critics condemned as the most un-Dickensian of Dickens' novels, a work without the range of characters, the fullness of development, and the comedic elements associated with Dickens' career from the publication of *Pickwick Papers* (1837) to *Bleak House* (1854). In fact, the Dickens novel *Hard Times* has most in common with is *Oliver Twist*, published in 1837. *Hard Times* also is comparatively short and noticeably singular in its focus. But whereas *Oliver* has as one of its *minor* organizing thrusts its author's outrage at the community's treatment of its poor, *Hard Times* focuses its major attention on the plight of industrial workers, particularly on class, economic, and ideological conflicts between owners and workers, and on associated issues: unreasonable divorce laws, the pernicious influence of mechanistic rationality, and the absence of Christian brotherhood in the disposition of economic and class tensions.

The first readers of *Hard Times*, expecting something of the *Christmas Carol* in every Dickens novel, were mostly disappointed. The Coketown setting seemed unrelievedly grim, the plot bleak, the love interests frustrated, the ending either disappointment, or dispersal, or death, both for the redeemed and the damned. Rather than point the way to solutions for some of the social issues mid-Victorian England agonized about, *Hard Times* anticipated a hundred years and more of labor-management strife, of the dominance of "hard facts" mechanism, and of class tensions that still have force in the modern democracies of the Western world. By the end of the nineteenth century, those readers of *Hard Times*, like John Ruskin, George Gissing, and George Bernard Shaw, who had read Marx and Engels, found the novel rivetingly topical. Its issues seem even more pertinent in Third World countries today and in the global economy of the twenty-first century.

Unlike any other Dickens novel, *Hard Times* has had multidisciplinary usefulness in university curricula precisely because it effectively dramatizes an important stage in the history of the factory system, the industrial revolution, the rise of the working class, the formation of labor unions, and the utilitarian mind and philosophy. Like the previous Norton Critical Editions of *Hard Times*, this Third Edition encourages an emphasis, though not an exclusive one, on this aspect of the novel. The renamed "Contexts" section retains all the selections except one, and adds excerpts from Carlyle's *Chart-*

ism and *Past and Present* and a modern essay, R. D. Butterworth's "Dickens the Novelist: The Preston Strike and *Hard Times*" (1992). The three headings remain: "Industrialism," "Education," and "Utilitarianism and the Science of Political Economy." Some of the modern critical essays in the "Criticism" section support this approach to *Hard Times*, particularly those by Johnson, Beauchamp, and Toker, which have not appeared previously in the Norton edition. The "Criticism" section has been revised to provide a selection from what the editors think the most helpful and representative of recent approaches to the novel. Two of the new essays take a special interest in how gender is presented in *Hard Times*, and the selection from "The Literary Imagination in Public Life" reminds us how pertinent the issues of the novel are to current considerations about the relationship between literature and society.

Ten of the essays are carried forward from the Second Edition. Five of them represent distinctive and important voices in the history of *Hard Times* criticism: Taine, Ruskin, Gissing, and Shaw called attention to *Hard Times* as a rivetingly forceful, effective primer on class and on economic injustice. Leavis' influential role in the late 1940s was to argue with some success that *Hard Times* had impressive values as a literary work, independent of its social preoccupations. His argument, though at the cost of devaluing Dickens' longer novels, became a lightning rod for discussion of the novel and of Dickens in general. Though the focus has shifted in recent decades to other approaches, Leavis remains a landmark in critical attitudes toward the novel. The remaining essays retained from the Second Edition provide variations on Leavis' literary register: they treat matters of literary skill and imagination, reminding us that whatever its interdisciplinary uses and whatever one's view about its relative value in the Dickens canon, *Hard Times* is a powerful work of literary art by a great novelist.

There have been a number of other significant changes from the Second to this Third Edition. The selection from Dickens' letters, under the heading "Dickens' Comments on the Composition of *Hard Times*," has been expanded; the texts have all been taken from the authoritative *Pilgrim Edition*; and any names previously unidentified have now been briefly described in the annotation. A considerable amount of additional annotation has been provided for the text; the Second Edition was sparing with its explanatory notes. Our new annotation has benefited from the publication of Margaret Simpson's *The Companion to Hard Times* (1997).

The text of the novel, as printed in this Third Edition, results from a serious reappraisal of our procedures. Between the first and second editions, the findings of the Japanese scholar Takachi Terauchi had proved stimulating and helpful to us. A similar part has been played this time by Joel J. Brattin's austere and substantial review article "Recent Norton Critical Editions" published in the *Dickens Quarterly* in December 1991. Without pretending that it made pleasurable reading to us or that we agree with every point raised in the article, we readily admit that it has exerted considerable and profitable influence over the third edition. If we have not adopted all the suggestions offered in his and other articles or letters, that is because, on careful reexamination of the documents, we found in several cases no reason to prefer other people's readings to our own. We know that we are not

infallible, but neither are our critics. On the other hand, what Brattin says about our earlier treatment of the 1854 edition in book form is perfectly justified and has caused a radical revision, not of our theoretical position, which he was kind enough to approve, but of our practical method. It is true that we did not—and still do not—regard questions of spelling, hyphenation, and punctuation as always of great interest and importance; we are still not ready to double the number of textual notes by adding to them variants about such minor details. But because we chose the 1854 edition as our copy text, we should have printed it with minute accuracy and listed the few points at which we departed from it. This is what we do in the Third Edition, in which the text is completely reset and an Emendations list is provided.

We also admit that the 1854 text possesses a kind of freshness and authenticity not to be found elsewhere and that the sense it gives, through its sometimes idiosyncratic punctuation, of the rhythm of Dickens' speech, is worth recreating.

The editors gratefully acknowledge the help of Susan O'Brien in locating and evaluating recent critical articles.

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Since the appearance of the Second Edition of the Norton Critical Edition of *Hard Times*, one major change has been determined not by our editorial policy but by fate. George Ford, who had been the moving spirit of the First and Second editions, died in 1994. He had already done much excellent work for Norton when we met for the first time at a Dickens Conference in Boston, in June 1962; two years later he invited me to join him in editing *Hard Times*. That was the starting point of a close collaboration that soon ripened into a warm friendship between the editors and their families. There were many exchanges of visits in our respective countries and meetings in other places, like Turkey, Poland, Scotland, and Canada. George Ford was both a great scholar and a fine personality in every respect. His death was and is a grievous loss to the world of Dickens studies. It seemed to leave a great void. We have been fortunate in obtaining the enthusiastic consent of Fred Kaplan when he was asked to fill the gap. The previous editions required a good deal of updating; even in the relatively short space of ten years, much had been written about *Hard Times*. Fred Kaplan is one of the greatest experts on the life and works of Dickens; he was a much admired friend of both former editors and their wives. His readiness to succeed George Ford as co-editor of the Norton Critical Edition of *Hard Times* is what made the Third Edition possible.

[S. M.]

### *The Editors*

FRED KAPLAN is Distinguished Professor of English at Queens College and The Graduate Center, City University of New York. A biographer and literary scholar, he is the author of *Gore Vidal: A Biography*, *Henry James: The Imagination of Genius*, and *Charles Dickens: A Biography*. His *Thomas Carlyle: A Biography* was nominated for the National Book Critics' Circle Award and for the Pulitzer Prize. His *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Fiction*, *Dickens and Mesmerism: The Hidden Springs of Fiction*, and *Miracles of Rare Device: The Poet's Sense of Self in Nineteenth-Century Poetry* are contributions to the study of Romantic and Victorian British literature and culture. He is currently at work on a biography of Mark Twain.

SYLVÈRE MONOD is Professor of English, Emeritus, at the Sorbonne. He is the author of *Dickens the Novelist*, *Histoire de la littérature anglaise de Victoria à Elizabeth II*, *Martin Chuzzlewit: A Critical Study*, and the novel *Madame Homais*. He is editor, with George Ford, of the Norton Critical Edition of *Bleak House*, and of numerous French editions of works by Charles Dickens, Joseph Conrad, Rudyard Kipling, and the Brontës. He is a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor and a Commander of the British Empire.

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