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Behind the Shadows

Selena Ramirez Ahilon

Nebraska College Preparatory Academy

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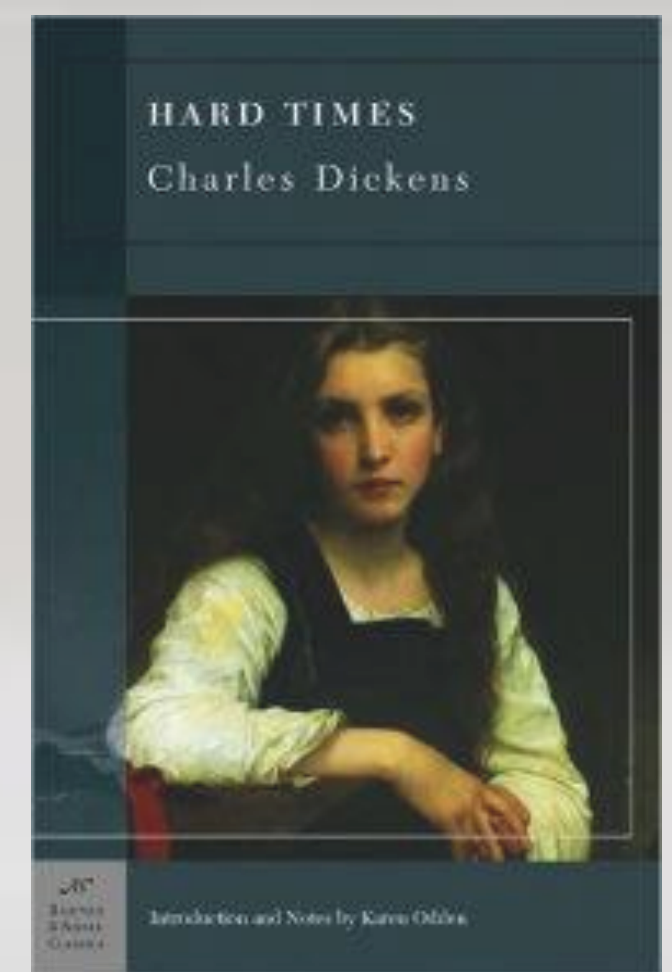
Behind the Shadows

Selena Ramirez Ahilon

Nebraska College Preparatory Academy

Grand Island Senior High School 2017

University of Nebraska-Lincoln



Abstract

The nineteenth century is classified as the Victorian era, a period in which the middle class rose in power as a result of industrialization. As the middle classes living standards rose the middle class became reliant on utilitarianism values. This ideal appeared to offer a more comfortable life for both men and women, however, by classifying the position of women as the “heart” and men as the “head” of the house, women were hindered to a society in shadows. Women were restricted in every aspect of life because men were in power, and the ideal Victorian woman became the one who expressed self-denial and maintained herself at home and away from society. Middle-class women became humans without a sense of direction. Dickens alludes to the inner emotions of the middle-class women, emotions that were hidden from society, by uncovering them through the characterization of Louisa Gradgrind in his novel *Hard Times*.

Key Points

- Louisa Gradgrind, demonstrates how utilitarianism can be negative.
- The ideal Victorian middle-class was not truly victorious.
- To gain true happiness life can not solely be based on facts, instead life must involve creativity.

Conclusion & Discussion

In order to live a *true* happy life one must not be influenced by the standards of society, instead one must recognize one’s feelings and make those feelings the true determinants of one’s purpose in life. In conclusion if one permits society to take control of one’s life, one will fall into a deep state of self-denial, representing the values of society rather than one’s own personal aspirations. Instead of taking the easy path created by society, the true purpose of life lies in the hands of each individual and it must be up to them to uncover that purpose and reveal it to the world; if this is not accomplished, voices will remain unheard and change will never occur.

Further Research

- What reforms occurred to increase the opportunities for women during the nineteenth century?
- How did the Victorian Era affect women in the lower class?

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