



# The Mayor Of Casterbridge, By Thomas Hardy: "Some folks want their luck buttered."

*Thomas Hardy*

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Thomas Hardy (2nd June 1840 – 11th January 1928), celebrated poet and writer, was born in a modest thatched cottage near Dorchester in the West country, to a builder father. His mother came from a line of intelligent, lively and ambitious women so ensured her son had the best formal education available for their modest means although this ended when he was 16. He became a draughtsman specialising in the building of churches was able to give it up to be a full time writer and poet with the publication of *Far From the Madding Crowd* which became a bestseller and like much of his work was serialised. His writing reflects his passionate beliefs for social reform and exposes the hypocrisy of the rules of the Victorian age which constrained many freedoms with convention and restricted the transcending of class boundaries. His novels are almost entirely set in rural Wessex which although fictional is clearly rooted in the SW counties of England where he was born and lived most of his life. Hardy's writing caused controversy in his lifetime but despite this he was highly praised and showered with honorary doctorates from many universities, a knighthood, which he refused and in 1910 the prestigious Order of the Merit. The Mayor of Casterbridge is Michael Henchard who prior to becoming such a prominent man was a drunk who sold his wife and daughter to a sailor for five guineas at a county fair. Despite his remorse and despair and his forsaking all alcohol, he finds his past deed shapes his fate. Casterbridge is Hardy's fictionalised Dorchester providing a peaceful landscape in contrast to the inner turmoil of our tragic hero and the other three main characters who are closely interlinked. This tightly knit novel with its vivid characterisation and striking descriptions has often been described as the greatest in the English language and sees Hardy at his best.

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