

Brief summary of Ch. 4, bk. 1 (Mr Bounderby)

Mr Bounderby is introduced to the reader. He reminds Mrs Gradgrind that he was born in a ditch, abandoned by his mother, and raised by a cruel and alcoholic grandmother. At this point, Gradgrind enters and tells Bounderby about his children's misbehaviour. Bounderby and Gradgrind decide that Sissy is bad influence on the Gradgrind Children, and set off to inform her father that she must stop attending the school. Bounderby demands a kiss from Louisa before they leave.

Brief summary of Ch. 5, bk. 1 (the key-note)

Dickens's famous description of Coketown: 'It was a town of red bricks, . . . etc. On their way to find Sissy's father, Gradgrind and Bounderby encounter Sissy who has been out buying oils for her father's pains. However, Sissy agrees to take Bounderby and Gradgrind to her father.

Commentary:

Dickens creates a fictional town, 'Coketown', which places emphasis on Dickens's technique, as 'Coke' is a type of coal that gas has been taken out of, therefore we can say it is coal with the life taken out of it. This is satirical as 'Coketown' represents filled with people who have had the life taken out of them. The only life one has in this town is to be educated with facts and then to go on working to keep the industry running. The same as name of Gradgrind evokes the monotonous grind of his children's lives as well as the grind of the factory machines.

Brief summary of Ch. 6, bk. 1 (Sleary's Horsemanship)

It is discovered that Sissy's father has lost his ability as circus performer and has abandoned his daughter in shame. Gradgrind offers to take her in and to provide her with an education. Sissy complies and feels sorry to leave the circus entertainers because they have been like a family to Sissy during her childhood.

Commentary:

The new character in this chapter is Kidderminster is a gruff young boy who plays role of Cupid in the circus. Cupid is an ancient Roman god of love, represented by a naked baby. However, we find in this chapter a desire to make the circus a particular feature of the novel. Mr Sleary's circus entertainers represent a world of fantasy and beauty from which the young Gradgrind children are excluded. In this regard, it might reveal that opposition between the imagination and joyful world of circus entertainers and Gradgrind's philosophy in importance of fact. The entertainers have the ability to transform the magic and excitement simply by using their imagination. Therefore, in doing so it is distasteful for Gradgrind. We have noticed that the entertainers win the spectators' hearts because they bring pleasure to other. , The narrator implies that fancy is at least as important as fact in a balanced, fulfilling existence. Chapters 5 through 8 thus serve to reinforce the relationship between fact and fancy.