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UNDERScore OF INTERPERSONAL SKILLS IN MAYOR OF CASTER BRIDGE

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ABSTRACT

The other title given to this novel is *The life and death of a man of Character*. Here Thomas Hardy clearly narrates the story of a person who completely loses his character and who does not have proper interpersonal skills. Through this novel, Thomas Hardy states that if a



man loses Interpersonal skills such as temper or emotional balance will lose the existence of life in the society. Even though he is alive others will not consider him as a human being.

KEYWORDS : Mayor of Caster bridge , interpersonal skills , roams aimlessly.

INTRODUCTION

In the novel the Mayor of Caster bridge the protagonist Michael Henchard works as a hay trusser. He does not have proper or stable interpersonal skills as he loses his temper here and there. He is very irresponsible towards his family and wife. He does not respect his wife moreover; he pays a deaf ear to her. He is addicted to drinking and loses his control over his drinking habit. His character resembles very clearly how a man fails in life if he does not have proper interpersonal skills such as negotiation skills, understanding skills, balancing of emotions at times.

In this novel, Henchard being a drunkard, in a bet initially as a joke sells his wife and baby daughter for five guineas. But unfortunately that issue becomes very serious in that imbalanced emotion he asks the merchant to take his wife and daughter. Newson the merchant rejected the offer so Henchard forces him to take his wife and daughter in his temper as he is in completely in a drunken state. In the early hours of the next day morning he wakes up and identifies his mistake that he had sold his wife and daughter regrets a lot. At that moment he takes an oath that from then onward till twenty

one years and the same number of years he is alive he does not take alcohol.

From the next moment of this incident he regrets and roams aimlessly and finally settles in a town called Casterbridge and gradually becomes a man of iron . He becomes a well known merchant and The Mayor of Casterbridge over the period of time. From that moment he becomes very meticulous to retain his position. At the same time he develops himself as a business tycoon and financially strengthens his position. He becomes a man of iron in that city.

When Henchard was about to expand his business he finds Farfrae as a diehard competitor moreover, Farfrae is young, dynamic, sportive, handsome and challenging business tycoon. However, Henchard feels jealous, curious and got his competitive spirit got triggered on seeing Farfrae who has a good following among the public of Casterbridge. Hence, Henchard feels sad and somehow wanted to unpopularize Farfrae by showing his mistakes in a magnifying manner.

Farfrae takes all these things in his stride in a sportive and challenging manner. He also tries to improve his qualities and generous nature. He manages to build a friendly relationship with Henchard. In course of time Henchard accidentally meets his deserted wife and daughter in Farfrae's residence. Henchard was at sea by seeing them as it was the most unexpected meeting between them. Moreover, the city people got unaware of his wife and daughter. Henchard who is worried about his flashback which was not so good as he was a drunkard and got rid of his own wife and daughter by selling them off. In the meanwhile Lucetta Templeton who desired to marry Henchard pins him down into commitment about their marriage. Henchard is reluctant to marry her. Under these circumstances he wanted to remarry his own wife Susan by not revealing the truth that she was his ex wife so as to remain as a good Mayor in the hearts of the people. He wanted to show case his generous nature by making the society believe that he had married Susan, a widow, the second time.

After the wedding things go awry. Owing to the sudden demise of Susan, the wife of the Mayor because of her ill health. Susan much before her death had written a letter to the Mayor by revealing the truth that Elizabeth Jane is not their daughter but was born of Newson and herself. When Newson approached Henchard and enquired about his daughter he got the reply that she was dead. This news came to Henchard as a thunder bolt and he could not swallow the bitter pill. Since then Henchard began despising Elizabeth Jane as she was not his own daughter. The other reason being, Farfrae's love affair with Elizabeth Jane.

Meanwhile Lucetta having learnt of the fact that Susan is no more alive decided to create interest in Henchard in order to make him marry her. Lucetta threatened Henchard of dire consequences that she would make public all the correspondence between them. Unfortunately without her knowledge the information in the letters is known to one and all. Incidentally Lucetta's had an affair with Farfrae. Farfrae himself fell in love with Elizabeth Jane and wanted to be united with her in a wed lock.

The attempt of the mayor to be in the good books with the public was destroyed as the people came to know his true chameleonic colors where as Farfrae began having a massive following. Henchard at brood over his past evil deeds which made him to lose all his relations, credentials, influence over the public, his business and his affections from Elizabeth Jane. On the other hand Farfrae climbed up the ladder of fame and material glory. Meanwhile Lucetta too died leaving behind the memories of the past.

Farfrae was too happy to get married to Elizabeth Jane. Henchard when he approached Elizabeth Jane, she snubbed him and behaved in a very cold manner. He left the place in a huff and later on it was discovered that he died in a countryside leaving behind a will which mentioned that he should be forgotten forever. That was his last dying wish. Henchard and Farfrae are two characters who differ in

every aspect. The will of Henchard speaks volumes about his repentance for all the misdeeds he did in his life.

Lack of Interpersonal Skills in Henchard:

It is clearly evident from our reading of the novel "**The Mayor of Casterbridge**" that Henchard seems to have lost his way and it comes to dealing with the local public. He lacked Interpersonal skills while addressing any issue or while interacting with public. He failed in his attempt to appease the public for he lacked good interpersonal skills.

To quote one or two cases from the text: He could have easily convinced the people of Casterbridge that Susan was his own wife and Elizabeth Jane was his daughter. He could have taken up the challenging of facing Farfrae both in business and in real life situations. The second case is that he could have told Lucetta about his past life and marriage with Susan instead of rejecting her harshly. He could have revealed the truth to Newson that Elizabeth Jane is alive and is living with Farfrae. In spite of developing ill healthy relationship with Farfrae he could have converted that into a healthy competition.

Hence, in our perspective is that if Henchard had got the required Interpersonal skills he could have not faced so much of music in his life, though these skills were not known nor heard of in those times when the novel "**Mayor of Casterbridge**" was published.



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