

~~Howes~~ demonstrates the importance of imagination in a person's growth and development'

~~Howes~~ tells the tale of the dire consequences an upbringing devoid of fancy can have on its characters' abilities to develop emotionally. Mr. Gradgrind's insistence that his children were to be raised on 'fact alone' crushes their sympathetic imaginations, and both Louisa and Tom's stunted emotional growth ultimately leads to their downfall. This is juxtaposed against Sissy, who nurtured her imagination which eventually aids her in her clarity of understanding people. Ultimately, through the fates of the various characters in ~~Howes~~, it is shown that the deprivation of imagination can only inhibit their capacity to reach their full capacity as human beings.

Dickens derisively introduces facts as 'the one thing needful', however, it is clear that the 'sowing' of 'facts alone' without the aid of fancy has a detrimental impact. Louisa Gradgrind is introduced with; '...a light with nothing to rest upon, a fire with nothing to burn, a starved imagination keeping life in itself somehow.' The suppression of this 'light' is what eventually gives way to Louisa's apathy in her response to her marriage to Bounderby; 'What does it matter?' Gradgrind's oppressive utilitarianist ideology forces Louisa to submit to the opposite of the embodiment of Victorian femininity; 'cold, silent and unfeeling' as a result of her upbringing. While her nature rebels somewhat against this; she has 'an ardent impulse towards some region where rules were not quite absolute', the fact that she was the 'triumph of Gradgrind's system' and thus prohibited from engaging in any fanciful activity ultimately leads to her stunted emotional growth and apathy that leads to her eventual breakdown. While, with Sissy's help, Louisa regains her sense of self, as the novel concludes, she remains unmarried and childless, mostly due to her emotional damage, which further emphasises the effect of Mr. Gradgrind's philosophy.

Raised on the same principles, devoid of imagination, Tom Gradgrind is also refused any scope for imagination, which instead of 'killing' the fancy, 'maims and distorts' it. The destructive image presented is only exemplified as Tom is described as being a 'complete monster'. His upbringing made him prey to his stunted emotions as 'grovelling sensualities' and is often shown through extreme violence; his wish to 'collect all the facts...and blow them up altogether'. This coupled with the coldness and rationality of his final scheme, shows a lack of emotional wisdom, which ultimately leads to his demise, alone, uncared for and friendless.

The stunted emotional growth of both Tom and Louisa is sharply contrasted against Sissy's generous nature. She alone withstands Gradgrind's influence through her childhood of 'Fairies...and the Dwarf...and the Hunchback, and the Genies' that nurtured her imagination and connections with her heart. While she is dehumanised by the education system from the start of the novel (girl number twenty), she is described as being 'affectionate, earnest and good.' The circus, where Sissy grew up, is shown as enclosing Fancy, in its 'remarkable gentleness and childishness...and

readiness to help and pity one another' as a result of people who allow and cherish imagination. Sissy's upbringing and Christian values; 'do unto others as I would that they should do unto me,' makes her one of the more stable characters in the novel, and it is the nurturing of her imagination that helps her clarity in understanding people like Harthouse, helps her see through Louisa and Bounderby's marriage and helps her in healing Louisa. Through her colouring, Dickens shows her to be more connected to the earth, more grounded, substantial and real. This physical display of strength reflects the inner strength Sissy possesses. She alone ends up with a happy home, showing the superiority of the 'Faith, Hope and Charity' that the nurturing of her imagination left her with.

~~Conclusion~~ Dickens shows that nurturing Fancy instils compassion and emotional maturity, which are essential to lead a meaningful life. Through the fate of various characters, Dickens shows to readers that the values that are 'truly needful' are enriched by the imagination, and that a life starved of imagination is one destined for failure.