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Moral Justice
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The moral traits of each of character in The Mayor of Casterbridge determines his fate. Those of weak moral determination, such as Michael and Susan Henchard and Lucetta Templeman suffered a terrible fate. Those of strong moral conviction such as Donald Farfrae and Elizabeth-Jane Newson enjoyed relatively happy lives. Richard Newson, a man of middling morality, lived through good and bad times.

From the beginning of the novel, Michael Henchard displayed a very questionable moral code. He habitually got drunk and many times offered to sell his wife in public. As a result, he lost his wife and child. Following the incident and his vow of temperance, Henchard raised himself to a high social position. Shortly after the return of his family, however, Henchard returned to his old ways, lying to his daughter-in-law, distrusting his employees Donald Farfrae and Joshua Jopp, and poorly treating an old love Lucetta Templeman. These considerable breaches in moral character returned him to the virtual poverty of a journeyman and he lost his wife Susan Henchard, his friend Donald Farfrae, his love Lucetta Templeman, and his daughter-in-law Elizabeth-Jane Newson.

Susan Henchard suffered similarly. By allowing herself to be sold, lying to her daughter about her relation to Michael Henchard, and lying to Michael about the death of his daughter, she condemned herself to a life of worry about the truth behind her lies being revealed and she died an early death.

Lucetta Templeman' committed a moral indignity when she returned to Michael Henchard from a separation after their love affair only to fall in love with and marry Donald Farfrae, by then a bitter enemy of Henchard's. She also tried to cover up her past relationship with Henchard. She paid for these actions by spending her final days dreading that Farfrae would find out her secret and she died just like Susan Henchard.

On the other hand, Donald Farfrae enjoyed success and happiness because of his strong moral code. In the face of his termination as Michael Henchard's assistant manager, he did not

seek revenge, he simply began a new business for himself, being careful not to encroach on his former employer's business. He was honest about his love for Lucette Templeman and did not try to hide his past from anyone. He was rewarded with the mayorship of Casterbridge, marriage to Elizabeth-Jane Newson, and tremendous wealth and happiness.

Elizabeth-Jane Newson enjoyed a similar fate. She lived a life free of duplicity, did not avenge Lucette Templeman's theft of Donald Farfrae's love, and honored her estranged step-father's will even after learning he had lied to her about being her real father. She was repaid with a happy marriage to Donald Farfrae and the return of her birth father.

Richard Newson, a man of average moral character, experienced both good and bad events during his life. Because of his moral weakness in participating in the sale of Michael Henchard's wife, he lost both her and his daughter. After learning that his daughter was alive in Casterbridge, he showed renewed moral obligation and returned to reclaim her. As a result, he lived the rest of his life in happiness.

Throughout The Mayor of Casterbridge, Thomas Hardy shows contempt for those of weak moral character by describing incidents of pain and suffering caused by such weakness. Those characters that live by faulty moral codes, like Michael Henchard, live short unhappy lives. But those who have strong morals, like Elizabeth-Jane Newson, live long fruitful ones.