

Sketch the character of Michel Henchard

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Michel Henchard is the most influential character of the novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge* around whom the entire story moves. He is very courageous, hard-working and industrious fellow who fights throughout his life till he is finished. Unfortunately he is fallen prey to circumstances which prevail upon him forcing him to succumb to its wishes. Like the hero of Sophocles' drama *Oedipus Terence* he is made victim to the circumstances which dictate terms with him and the poor fellow has no option but to submit himself to its feet and act accordingly. He begins his career as a hay-trusser as is finally elevated to the status of the Mayor of the city of Casterbridge by virtue of his extra-ordinary quality of head and heart. But the circumstances come in his way forcing him to bite the dust gradually eroding the warmth and vitality in his life leaving him a pauper. In the meanwhile the poor fellow commits a severe moral crime auctioning away his wife and daughter to a businessman under the spell of liquor and promises not to take wine for next 20 years kneeling down before the altar of God. He made tireless effort to find out the whereabouts of his lost wife but fails miserably and finally settles to the nearby city of Casterbridge. Fortune favours him and he wins the election for the post of mayor and joins the company of his lost wife. But his joys were short-lived. His wife Susan died following prolonged illness leaving a

letter to him which revealed the real identity of his daughter Elizabeth. In the letter it was disclosed that Elizabeth was not his own daughter but that of the businessman whom he had sold out his wife. It was a major setback to Henchard who experienced the stroke of a hammer. His hopes and desires dashed to the ground. Elizabeth too noticed the change in the behaviour of her father and finally settled to the house of her aunt leaving him alone. Fortune acted adversely and he lost the election of mayor to Donald Farfrae, A young business man whose suggestions about increasing the productivity of land satisfied all and sundry. In a state of utter dejection and remorse Henchard died leaving his will that nobody should shed tears on his tomb.