My first reaction to *Hard Times* was uncertainty of its relevance to the topic of the course. We had already covered education and our beliefs on education last semester in CORE. Why are we reading more about education? Upon reading the first section of the book and participating in discussion yesterday, the connection between what Dickens is saying about work and education in Coketown hit home. In Coketown, Mr. Gradgrind's form of education mirrors the machinery found in the factories. The comparison that Dickens makes is striking in that it begins to show what the people of Coketown are missing in their lives.

Sissy Jupe, with her former life as a member of the circus, is a perfect foil to show how repressive and containing Mr. Gradgrind's prescribed way of life is. We are struck right at the beginning by the restraining nature of Mr. Gradgrind's form of education. The entire first chapter and parts of the second chapter refer to his "square finger, square forehead, square coat, square legs, and square shoulders." His own children are supposedly perfect examples of his view that only facts should be taught. Later in the novel, however, we learn that his children feel as though they have missed much of life due to only learning facts. Normal parts of life are ignored, such as noticing that both Louisa and Thomas are becoming a young woman and young man, respectively. In chapter 15, we see Louisa noticing what she is missing while talking to her father about marrying Mr. Bounderby. She never was able to dream or wonder; Mr. Gradgrind's form of education was falling apart.