

**J.M.S. COLLEGE, MUNGER**  
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**B.A. Part-II, English (Hons.), Paper-IV**

**CHARACTER ANALYSIS OF ELIZABETH-JANE IN  
*THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE***

Elizabeth-Jane undergoes a drastic transformation over the course of the novel, even though the narrative does not focus on her as much as it does on other characters. As she follows her mother across the English countryside in search of a relative she does not know, Elizabeth-Jane proves a kind, simple, and uneducated girl. Once in Casterbridge, however, she undertakes intellectual and social improvement: she begins to dress like a lady, reads voraciously, and does her best to expunge rustic country dialect from her speech. This self-education comes at a painful time, for not long after she arrives in Casterbridge, her mother dies, leaving her in the custody of a man who has learned that she is not his biological daughter and therefore wants little to do with her.

In terms of misery, one could easily argue that Elizabeth-Jane has a share equal to that of Henchard or Lucetta. Unlike these characters, however, Elizabeth-Jane suffers in the same way she lives—with a quiet kind of self-possession and resolve. She lacks Lucetta's sense of drama and lacks her stepfather's desire to bend the will of others to her own. Thus, when Henchard cruelly dismisses her or Lucetta supplants her place in Farfrae's heart, Elizabeth-Jane accepts these circumstances and moves on with life. This approach to living stands as a bold counterpoint to Henchard's, for Henchard cannot bring himself to let go of the past and relinquish his failures and unfulfilled desires. If Henchard's determination to cling to the past is partly responsible for his ruin, then Elizabeth-Jane's talent for "making limited opportunities endurable" accounts for her triumphal realization—unspectacular as it might be—that "happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain."

**Courtesy: Web Source, DDCE, Utkal University**