

# A Social Study of Poverty in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*, *Bleak House* and *Oliver Twist*

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**ABSTRACT:** The theme of poverty remains one of the central problems that Charles Dickens focuses and attempts to draw attention of his readers to. The problem of poverty becomes a serious social and economic burden of English society of the late 19th century. This is why Dickens chooses this theme as one of the central themes of his novels. The present thesis is a social study of poverty in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854), *Bleak House* (1852) and *Oliver Twist* (1839). Underprivileged people including poor children in the society of the Victorian age are socially the disadvantaged members whom this research study will discuss. It is clear that Dickens noted the effect of industrialization on the Victorian society as it created a massive urban development, resulted in a higher class division. The influx of industrialization created a further division of these classes in which there emerged the capitalists or bourgeoisie, who were industrialists such as Mr. Bounderby in *Hard Times*, and working class, who were the industrial poor workers, of them many lived under squalid condition with poor sanitation leading to fatal diseases and even death. Dickens also portrays the brutal treatment of children at the workhouses. This investigation will indicate that Dickens was a critic of The Poor Law and its administration, as well as the subject of child labor because of his own childhood experience. Moreover, his repugnance is also noted in the way he creates child characters like Oliver Twist who are exploited as child workers. Findings of this critical analysis of Dickens's selected novels show that Charles Dickens can be considered as a realist and somehow naturalist writer; therefore the subject to be questioned in this thesis is the traces of realism, and naturalism in his social novels in relation to Marxism. This study also shows that although Dickens directly suggests no social reform but he was actively involved in changing the lives of underprivileged people just like a reformist.

**Keywords:** Charles Dickens, Realism, Naturalism, Marxism.

## INTRODUCTION

The problem of poverty became a serious social and economic burden of English society of the late 19th century. This is why it is quite natural that Charles Dickens chose this theme as one of the central themes of his selected novels namely *Hard Times* (1854), *Bleak House* (1852) and *Oliver Twist* (1839). All the same, it is worthy of mention that, to a great extent, these selected texts play the role of a mirror which reflects the life of England of that epoch and the personal experience of Dickens that is realized in these novels especially *Bleak House*. Obviously, these novels represent English society of Victorian age which is full of contrasts where the poverty is next to enormous wealth, and where spiritual richness is often overshadowed by the material desperate social position of the characters of the novels.

To underscore the poverty in Dickens's works, they are to be viewed in two dimensions including real or material and spiritual. It is to say that Charles Dickens attempts to realistically depict the severe life of all layers of English society of that epoch with a particular focus on the most deprived. As a matter of fact the novels rather represent a profound analysis of the great socio-economic problem of lower classes and, what is more, these works uncover the importance of the material well-being and wealth in the life of English society. On the other hand, it seems as if Dickens poses a question whether poverty is really a sin, or something really bad that makes people fall lower and

lower in the social ladder, or probably, it is just a poor material position of individuals' lack of certain skills, abilities, knowledge, or even simple luck that do not touch the personality of individuals who sink in English society.

The main purpose of this research is to study the poverty in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*, *Bleak House* and *Oliver Twist* in social lenses as well as to critically analyze Dickens's representation of characters who are the underprivileged people of an industrialized society, a phenomenon which led to emerge new class of the capitalists. This study also shows that Dickens is a realist writer whose characters have been created with devotion to the realist and naturalist mode of writing. A realist reading of Dickens's novels proves that he depicts the oppressive nature of the 19th century society and its subjection of the poor and poverty. Meanwhile examining these novels in relation to Karl Marx's social philosophy shows that the fictionalized world of Dickens parallels the main social theses in Marx's writings.

In addition to the poor, another group of underprivileged members of Victorian society in whom Dickens was interested were children. Dickens's childhood experience contributed to his sensitivity towards the oppression and neglecting the children by family and other members of society. He, himself as a victim of child labor, vehemently attacks the unpleasant experience, which shall be further explored through the course of this research study. He criticizes this phenomenon because of its debilitating effects to which he was subjected such as deprivation of education. Apart from the deprivation of education, other destructive effects include injuries sustained at the factories and exploitation through excessive working hours with little pay. His selected novels, especially *Oliver Twist*, attack the Poor Law Act and the workhouse system because of its harsh conditions which the children had to endure.

Dickens's concern for London slums, as well as his concern for the poor and his discussion surrounding the plight of children is why he has been chosen for this thesis. Dickens's novels and the issues are relevant to modern contemporary society due to the fact that these unprotected, exploited members are still the most vulnerable members in whole society. Furthermore, this research along with exploring the historical background of Dickens's works, is to criticize the industrialization and its destructive nature. This study shows also how industrial revolution effects on Dickens's through the writings and development of the Victorian novel, it shows also Dickens was a social moralist and a writer who exposed the harsh reality of industrialization using realistic and naturalistic mode of writing. Even though Dickens came from a middle class family, he sympathized with the plight of the poor, and through his writing as he sought to bring awareness to Victorian society of the injustice and harsh condition of living experienced by the poor. Consequently, this study ultimately seeks to prove that Charles Dickens's works had a social mission, to make the readers take note of the underprivileged people of the Victorian society so that they could take action to improve their plight.

The present thesis aims to socially study the poverty in Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*, *Bleak House* and *Hard Times*, the novels which portray the misery of lower class of England in late 19th century vividly. Dickens as a social commentator studies and criticizes the roots and reasons of poverty and using a realistic and naturalistic mode of writing awakens social conscience. Another point is that Marxism reading of Dickens's novels is possible but his works are not merely among Marxist novels. So the following hypotheses are posed for this research:

1. Dickens is a realist writer and his works are influenced by realism and naturalism.
2. Dickens's novels are not merely subjected on Marxist view, but they can be viewed from the lenses on Marxism.
3. Society and socio-economic conditions have impact on Dickens's writings and this new born impact of industrialization in Victorian Age led the author to create works somehow related to Marxist idea.
4. Dickens's selected novels reflect poverty and social deprivation of the lower classes in England and show his view of capitalism which is the result of industrialization and urbanization.
5. Dickens's novels provide his severe criticism on adverse of industrialization and its destructive nature such as formation of class divisions
6. Dickens's language and literature, as well as his mode of writings have had a direct impact on culture, awareness of Victorian society and social conscience.

### **Review of Literature** **Victorian Age**

It is a period in British history during the reign of Queen Victoria in the 19th century; her character and moral standards restored the prestige of the British monarchy but gave the era a prudish reputation this period extends to the death of Victoria in 1901. "This age is subdivided into three phases by historians: Early Victorian (1830-40), Mid-Victorian (1848-70), and Late Victorian (1870-1901)" (1).

### **The Social Novels**

It is “a kind of novel which emphasizes the influence of the social and economic conditions of an era on shaping characters and determining events; often it also embodies an implicit or explicit thesis recommending political and social reform” (1).

### **Realism**

It is applied by literary critics in two diverse ways: “(1) to identify a movement in the writing of novels during the nineteenth century” that included Honore´ de Balzac in France, George Eliot in England, and William Dean Howells in America, and “(2) to designate a recurrent mode, in various eras and literary forms, of presenting human life and experience in literature” (1).

### **Naturalism**

It is a movement, especially in art and literature, advocating detailed realistic and factual description, especially that in 19th-century France in the writings of the novelists Emil Zola (1840-1902), Gustav Flaubert (1821-80), etc. “Naturalism is sometimes claimed to give an even more accurate depiction of subject matter and a special way of rendering those materials” (1).

### **Marxism**

It is an Ideology and socioeconomic theory developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. “The fundamental ideology of Communism, it holds that all people are entitled to enjoy the fruits of their labour but are prevented from doing so in a capitalist economic system, which divides society into two classes: nonworking workers and nonworking owners” (10). Marx called the resulting situation ‘alienation’, and he said that when the workers repossessed the fruits of their labour, alienation would be overcome and class division would cease. “The Marxist theory of history posits class struggle as history’s driving force, and it sees Capitalism as the most recent and most critical historical stage—most critical because at this stage the Proletariat will at last arise united” (3).

### **The Poor Law Act**

“In 1834 a system of laws which was introduced in England and the rest of Britain to provide public relief under a system” which required that all those “who required assistance such as the widows, the sick and the unemployed people, had to be accommodated at the workhouses” (12).

Andrew Sanders (2004) in his book entitled *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* believes, Charles Dickens challenged the Victorian idea of charity for so called “deserving poor” (13). He showed persuasively that the workhouse was a failed attempt to solve the problem of poverty and unwanted children. He also believes Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* can be read as a textbook of Victorian child abuse and a social document about early Victorian slum life. Raymond Williams (1983) in *Culture and Society*, a book which studies Victorian social novels, described *Hard Times* as a thorough going and creative examination of the dominant philosophy of industrialism. Similarly, David Lodge (1999) in his study, “The Rhetoric of *Hard Times*” wrote that “every page of Dickens’s *Hard Times* manifests its identity as a polemical work, a critique of mid Victorian industrial society dominated by materialism, acquisitiveness, and ruthlessly competitive capitalist economics” (14). To Dickens, at the time of writing *Hard Times*, these things were represented most articulately, persuasively and therefore dangerously by the Utilitarian.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The present thesis, under the title of A Social Study of Poverty in Charles Dickens’s *Hard Times*, *Bleak House* and *Oliver Twist* is to examine the notion and concept of poverty in the selected novels. The first step is to clarify the concepts of Realism, Naturalism and Marxism in detail regarding the novels of Dickens and select those which are related to the social problem of poverty. Regarding to the issue mentioned, this is a social survey on poverty which obeys library research methodologies that are usual in humanities in general and literature specifically. There are many books and critics that are used in this thesis and the researcher used their literary and social ideas as a framework to develop his own idea. The critics are Marx, Abrams, Collins, Habib, and Miller whose books and ideas were considered as the fundamental pathway for the research to structure its method and interpret the researcher’s idea on the issue mentioned.

### **Poverty and the Poor in Dickens's Selected Works**

Charles Dickens is a novelist of Victorian age that is greatly admired because of his ability to realistically depict poverty and the poor during the Industrial Revolution. *Oliver Twist*, *Hard Times* and *Bleak House* are amongst his novels which well illustrate the situation and condition of the lower class juxtaposed against the lavish lives of the middle class and the aristocracy. He uses fiction as an outlet for his enduring fascination with the darker side of human nature. The treatment of crime by Charles Dickens was far more than an authorial device; it was a focal point for his deep concern with social problems and played a significant role in his attempts to understand these social ills. His works are not only about crime, but they also raise questions on the Poor Law system and the living conditions of the working class.

The plight of the poor and their treatment at the workhouses is a subject which is depicted by Dickens especially in *Oliver Twist*. Oliver is orphaned immediately when he was born birth and he immediately becomes a parish child. At the age of eight, he is removed from the church and taken to the poor house. The conditions at the workhouses were obviously unbearable as evidenced by Oliver's first experience: "[...] on a rough hard bed, he sobbed himself to sleep. What a noble illustration of the tender of his favored country! They let the paupers go to sleep" (7). The description of the bed is a confirmation of the rigorousness of the poor houses as attested by the poor house Board of Guardian: "The workhouse conditions should be as harsh and less tolerable as those of a prison" (8). The passage is also ironic because Dickens uses sarcasm by commending the "tender laws" of a "favored country," yet, he is criticizing the government for its exploitation and treatment of the poor as marginal members of society. Moreover, the passage evokes empathy in the reader as one visualizes an innocent child suffering at the hands of the cruel. In this way, Dickens fulfills his aim; to emotionally engage the readers, so that they would be aware of the intensity of the conditions at the workhouses. Additionally, workhouses inmates were also suffering from malnutrition:

[...] Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months; at last they got so voracious and wild with hunger, that one boy, who was tall for his age, and hadn't been used to that sort of thing, (for his father had kept a small cook's shop) hinted darkly to his companions that unless he had another basin of gruel per diem, he was afraid he should some night eat the boy who slept next to him, who happened to be weakly youth of tender age (7).

Oliver Twist is chosen by his companions to ask for more food which indicates starvation and lack of sufficient food to sustain the workhouse inmate. He is punished for this act and one of the authorities is so horrified at the impertinence that he keeps saying that he will be hung. Hunger was prevalent in the workhouses as well as at the parish houses: "Oliver Twist's eighth birth-day found him a pale, thin child, somewhat diminutive in stature, and decidedly small in circumference" (7). Oliver's stunted growth is obviously caused by under nourishment.

The powerful pathos and visual imagery which Dickens uses in describing Oliver is a masterful creation to intensify the gravity of the circumstances in which Oliver finds himself. This further substantiates the harsh reality that the workhouse inmates were starving. The starvation of the poor at the workhouse was also a reflection of the hunger encountered by the paupers outside the poor house because after passing of the Poor Law Act of 1834, they were no longer receiving any aid from the parishes unless they were inmates. Therefore, in 1842, there was an attack on the workhouse at Stockport. "A whopping crowd of about twenty thousand unemployed people attacked the workhouse at Stockport in search of food" (2). The activists blamed the current state of the deprived and the jobless on the state and the Church of England and its Bishops. Such an incident serves to reinforce that Dickens's reflection of social problems was not mere fiction, but an undeniable of real life events. Thus, *Oliver Twist* is a novel which depicts the misery and degradation of destitute children and adults. Oliver, a victim of child labor, is sold to an undertaker and later escapes the horrid experience and goes to London where he is exposed to the criminal activities of a gang led by Fagin. The foreshadowing misfortunes of Oliver's life hunt him at his birth:

But now he was enveloped in the old calico robes, that had grown yellow in the same service; he was badged and ticketed, and fell into his place at once- a parish child- the orphan of a workhouse- the humble, half-starved drudge to be cuffed and buffeted through the world, despised by all, and pitied by none (7).

The vivid description of Oliver's dressing sets the tone for the events in his life. The color yellow is symbol of dullness and, in the case of Oliver, sadness as confirmed by the harsh experiences at the workhouse, undertaker's house and in London. The terms "badged" and "ticketed" show the commodification of Oliver and all other babies born at the parish. Instead of treating the children as human beings, they are labeled as if they were products or objects. In the workhouse, the children lacked individual identity leading to their isolation and abuse in the world. Similarly, Oliver's life is characterized by loneliness and lack of parental care and protection because he is an orphan.

*Oliver Twist* consists of events in Oliver's life in different locations. The first place in which the reader encounters Oliver is at the workhouse where he is taken at the age of eight. Charles Dickens exposes the injustices of the workhouse officials and their practices through grotesque realism. The description of the workhouse board members is a satire on their incompetent administration of the system. When Oliver goes to the workhouse, he is introduced

to “ten fat gentlemen” and one who was “particularly fat” with “a very round, red face” (7). The fat gentlemen are juxtaposed against the children at the poor house who were starved as evidenced by the scene in which the older children forced Oliver to ask for more food. In the novel, it is stated that the inmates were fed on small quantities of oatmeal, three meals of thin gruel a day and half a roll on Sundays. As a result, the paupers’ clothing “waved insecurely on their missed, emaciated forms, after a week or two’s gruel.

Dickens also exposes child labor enforced on children at the workhouses. The “red-faced gentleman” informs Oliver that he is going to be trained in a new trade, which turns out to be picking oakum at six in the morning. He is later sold to Mr. Sowerberry the undertaker, where he takes the role of being a mute during funeral processions. The reader empathizes with Oliver because at a tender age, he is already being exposed to death. He later escapes from Mr. Sowerberry and goes to London where he is confronted by criminals. The three different locations in which Oliver finds himself, act as antagonistic forces against his innocence; however, his naivety remains untainted even after relations with corrupt gang.

According to David Daiches, *Oliver Twist* is “full of nightmare symbols of loss [...]” (4) as shown in the description of Mr. Sowerberry’s shop: “An unfinished coffin on black trestles, which stood in the middle of the shop, looked so gloomy and death-like [...]. The shop was close and hot, and the atmospheres seemed tainted with the smell of coffins” (7)

The image of the coffin represents death and reminds the reader of Oliver’s circumstance that he is an orphan. Death is symbol of loss of life, just like Oliver has lost his parents. Dickens also uses powerful imagery and language to highlight the poverty and starvation of the poor as evidenced in the scene when Oliver and Mr. Sowerberry go to collect a dead woman’s body and the husband says: “I say she starved to death [...] and then her bones were starting through the skin. There was neither fire nor candle; she died in the dark-in the dark” (7). poverty of the lower class is depicted through starvation and disease, which shows that the society did not do much to assist the poor. The novel also heightens emotions in the reader as one is forced to imagine someone dying from starvation and disease. This grim reality sets a sad tone in this novel, which parallels the misery of Oliver life.

In addition to harshness of the Poor Law Act, Charles Dickens also illustrates the working conditions at the factories. Other Dickens’s selected novel, *Hard Times*, is set in the manufacturing north of England and its seeming thesis is its antagonism to industrialization and capitalism (11). Dickens vividly describes the conditions at the Coketown factory.

Stokers emerged from low underground doorways into factory yards, and sat on steps, and posts and palings wiping their swarthy visages, and contemplating coals. The whole town seemed to be frying in oil. There was a stifling smell of hot oil everywhere. The steam- engines shone with it, the dresses of the Hands were soiled with it, the mills throughout their many stories oozed and trickled it. The atmosphere of those fairy places was like the breath of the simoon: and their inhabitants, wasting with heat, toiled languidly in the desert (6).

The description of the laborers, whose faces are black with the oil and the effect of heat on them, is an indication of the inadequate facilities needed to create a conducive working environment. This is a description of the factories in which the working class laboured each day where they were deafened by the noise of the steam engines and the clattering machinery and quiet in air that not only was laden with dust, but in the absence of ventilation was heated to as high as 85 degrees, which is revelatory of biological debilitation. This is further confirmed in *Hard Times*: “as killing airs and gases were bricked in” (6).

Apart from the unpleasant working conditions to which the poor were subjected, they also lived under squalid conditions. Thus, the living quarters were as bad as the factories they worked in, besides, they were both located in the same area to avoid long distances between the houses and the factories. However, such an arrangement was inhuman because the houses were too small and they were located within the industrial site such that the area was always cloudy with the smoke from the factories. The poor could not do anything to change their plight because they were desperate for accommodation as well as employment and they had to endure every sort of brutality to which they were subjected. In *Hard Times*, the standards of living of the poor were also very appalling:

[...] it was one of a cluster of wretched hovels in a brick- field with pigsties close to the broken windows, and miserable little gardens before the doors, growing nothing stagnant pools. Here and there, an old tub was put to catch the dropping of rain- water from a roof, or they were banked up with mud into a little pond like a large dirt-pie (6).

The intense description of brick maker’s house is an illustration of horrid lifestyle they led which was completely dissimilar and separate from that of the upper classes. The living quarters are surrounded by filth and carelessness. Humans and pigs share the same living quarters, which is an indication that the social status of the poor was no better than that of animals. The workers are powerless to protest against their condition because they are grateful and content that they are employed and also have accommodation, which is probably better than living in the streets and being unemployed. The working class embraces the inhumanity and exploitation, to which they are subjected

because they are aware of the fact that they may lose their jobs at the will of the employer. Although the workers are defenseless, Dickens portrays in *Hard Times*, employees who are conscious of their plight through the gathering by the Coketown:

OH my friends, the down-trodden operatives of Coketown! Oh my friends and fellow-countrymen, the slaves of an iron-handed and a grinding despotism! Oh my friends and fellow-sufferers, and fellow-workmen! I tell you that the hour is come, when we must rally round one another as one united power, and crumble into dust the oppressors that too long have battered upon the plunder of our families, upon the sweat of our brows, upon the labor of our hands, upon the strength of our sinews, upon the God-created glorious rights of Humanity, and upon the holy and eternal privileges of Brotherhood! (6).

The passage conforms to socialist writing as it involves the workers becoming conscious of the oppression to which they are subjected.

Juxtaposed against an environment, the poor are presented as good people. Stephen Blackpool in *Hard Times* was "as good power-loom weaver, and a man of perfect integrity" (6). He has no choice but to work within a "degrading system that has excluded him from his employer and fellow workmates" (9). Like St. Stephen in the Bible, Stephen becomes a sacrifice to all that is wicked in the public and his denial to be involved in Trade Unionism is a sign of his ability to choose in a society that limits personal choice. Although he is a fair man, he is also an object of industrialization, and the coal pit which had swallowed hundreds. Due to his failure to either join capitalism or fight industrialization, Stephen is defeated by the society in which he lives.

The members of Sleary's circus are also poor yet good natured and innocent. The description of Sleary's community is loaded with "overtones of art and entertainment which appeal directly to the heart" (9). Despite its physical griminess and unawareness, their world is acquitted and satisfying because it is outside the industrial and mechanical life of Coketown. Its world is synonymous to children's, in the sense that it is filled with naivety.

*Bleak House*, as one of Dickens's greatest works of social criticism, is a social comment on the administration of social justice and the law as depicted through the lawsuit of Jarndyce and Jarndyce. Moreover, Dickens also attacks the society for its failure to be involved in the assistance of the poor. Thus *Bleak House* is:

A social problem novel, a 'Condition of England' novel which is concerned both to represent and to anatomize the signs of the times [...] the inequities of the Court of Chancery, slum condition, sanitation reform, the education of the poor and orphaned, the Niger expedition, the home mission against the overseas mission and female emancipation (11).

*Bleak House* also sharply indicts the inequities in Victorian society, it exposes the abuses of the court of Chancery and administrative incompetence. For Charles Dickens the court of Chancery became synonymous with the faulty law system, expensive court fees, bureaucratic practices, delay and inconclusiveness of judgment. A part from the critique of the Chancery court, Dickens also criticizes slum housing, overcrowded urban graveyards, neglect of contagious diseases, electoral corruption, class divisions, and neglect of the educational needs of the poor. *Bleak House* also refers to the Condition of England, which is represented as a depressed network and whose judicial system must be reformed if England wants to continue as a modern nation. Dickens describes emphatically urban poverty by the example of the slum street, where poor Jo lives, in a manner similar to the Sanitary Reports. The moral corruption of Chancery is juxtaposed with the physical decay of the slum:

Jo lives- that is to say, Jo has not yet died- in a ruinous place known to the like of him by the name of Tom-all-Alone's. It is a black, dilapidated street, avoided by all decent people, where the crazy houses were seized upon, when their decay was far advanced, by some bold vagrants who after establishing their own possession took to letting them out in lodgings. Now, these tumbling tenements contain, by night, a swarm of misery. As on the ruined human wretch vermin parasites appear, so these ruined shelters have bred a crowd of foul existence that crawls in and out of gaps in walls and boards; and coils itself to sleep, in maggot numbers, where the rain drips in; and comes and goes, fetching and carrying fever and sowing more evil in its every footprint than Lord Doodle, and Sir Thomas Doodle, and the Duke of Foodle, and all the fine gentlemen in office, down to Zoodle, shall set right in five hundred years- though born expressly to do it. Twice lately there has been a crash and a cloud of dust, like the springing of a mine, in Tom-all-Alone's; and each time a house has fallen. These accidents have made a paragraph in the newspapers and have filled a bed or two in the nearest hospital. The gaps remain, and there are not unpopular lodgings among the rubbish. As several more houses are nearly ready to go, the next crash in Tom-all-Alone's may be expected to be a good one (5).

Dickens's description of Tom-all-Alone's, a rookery in St Giles, east of Charing Cross Road, can be read both as historical evidence and a powerful literary symbol of the Condition of England, where uncontrolled industrialization contributed in Dickens's opinion to misery, decay and disease. Likewise, Chancery stands as a bitter metaphor of moral corruption which pervades the upper classes.

## CONCLUSION

As it was discussed in this chapter, the Poor Law Act was after all, a harsh law which on the surface appeared as if it provided for the poor, yet it subjected them to dehumanization. Although it may have seemed as if the poor were sufficiently accommodated at the workhouses, they were actually oppressed while those who were not living in the workhouses were forced to work and they could no longer be provided with any aid. The authorities believed that the paupers were lazy and idle, yet they failed to understand that they were poor because of lack of employment and if they did find any work at all, it was always low paying petty work like sweeping or repairing roads. Even though the Poor Laws were enacted to assist the poor, they did nothing to change their plight or improve their situation. As evidenced by the testimonies, the poor were further exploited through physical and emotional abuse.

Charles Dickens is well known for his novels. He had been writing about the plight of the urban poor. His novels such as *Oliver Twist*, *Hard Times* and *Bleak House*, clearly portray English poverty in possibly a more realistic light than any other of his contemporaries, perhaps because he was part of it. One of his greatest achievements was to bring the problems of poverty and the poor to the attention of his readers through introducing varieties of poor persons into almost all of his novels, particularly the above mentioned ones. Dickens builds up sympathy for his heroes of the street while convincing the reader of the callousness of the aristocrats, the businessmen and any other Dickens's villain. Dickens's characters are all amazing, so vivid that the reader begins to know them on a personal level by the end of each novel. The juxtaposition of Dickens's characters from the lower class against a corrupt industrialized world is an assertion that the world still has people who are not influenced by the evil of industrialization. Some people have managed to maintain the pre-industrial virtues instilled in human nature. Dickens's use of pathos in presenting his characters evokes the reader to be sympathetic and seek social justice for the oppressed.

Child labor and deprivation of children from education are also issues which Dickens successfully portrays as the abuse of them in 19th century Britain. Child labor was in fact a brutal and gruesome system which robbed juveniles of their childhood, health and even their lives. Most of these children were orphans and also members of the lower class, therefore they were economically desperate and they were forced to endure any means of survival, even if it meant accepting maltreatment. However, with the numerous complaints about child labor and the wide leadership, particularly of novels by Charles Dickens, who vehemently denounced child labor, sympathetic members of the Victorian society implemented new forms against child labor and other forms of child exploitation. Education is important for psychological and even economic growth in every individual. Unfortunately, the poor are constantly caught in the web of poverty because of illiteracy which is caused by lack of proper and formal education. The poor child cannot live a better life than his or her parents if deprived of education, an opportunity to step out of the frontier zone that separates the poor and rich. Dickens seems to suggest that the only way that one can access education and escape poverty is through the generosity of the middle class members. On the other hand, Dickens also proves that one does not need to be a middle class member to possess a munificent heart, and this is shown by Magwitch who paves a way for Pip to become a gentleman.

As the last point it can be concluded that Dickens by use of his novels and characters give voice to those who had no voice, establishing a link between politics and literature with his social commentary. He attacks the defects of existing institutions and creates a fictive world that was a mirror in which the truths of the real world were reflected. Therefore, it can be noted that Charles Dickens's novels played tremendous role in the implementation of policies that changed the lives of the poor. Apart from his works, Dickens's active involvement in promoting social reforms raised public awareness in the fight against poverty, deprivation of education, child labor and prostitution.

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