



PROBLEMS OF CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION IN CHARLES DICKENS' WORKS

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Abstract: Charles Dickens took children as example of nineteenth century with poverty and uneducated lifestyle. Through his novels, he showed emotions of children when they faced trouble as an orphan. The main novels of him were “ Oliver Twist” and “David Copperfield” that emphasized the themes of child labor and social injustice. Drawing from personal experience, Dickens advocated for social reform and highlighted the transformative power of education in uplifting disadvantaged youth.

Key words: character, novel, Oliver Twist, children, poverty, issue, nineteenth century, orphan.

INTRODUCTION

Many consider Charles John Huffam Dickens, the greatest author of the Victorian era, to be an English novelist and social critic who lived from 7 February 1812 to 9 June 1870. Dickens is the creator of some of the most well-known fictional characters in the world. During his lifetime, his writings experienced unparalleled success, and by the 20th



century, scholars and critics had acknowledged him as a creative genius. Charles Dickens often depicted the social issues and injustices prevalent during his time, including those related to childhood and education. In many of his works, Dickens sheds light on the harsh realities faced by children and the flaws within the education system of his era. These days, many people still read his novels and short stories.

CHARLES DICKEN'S WORK ON NOVELS

Child labor and exploitation

Dickens vividly depicted the plight of child laborers in his novels, such as "Oliver Twist" and "David Copperfield". In both of them, young children play main role that are forced to work in harsh conditions in factories, mines and sweatshops. Both characters were full and half orphans and they are used to show nineteenth century reality which included poverty, tries to stay survival and personal growth in it. He described not only the physical but also emotional toll of labor, including long hours and dangerous machinery. With poverty, Dicken exposes the hunger, homelessness and lack of access to basic necessities like education and healthcare.

The educational system of Victorian England was criticized for its shortcomings, portraying schools as oppressive institutions where children were subjected to harsh discipline and rote memorization. In novels, he highlighted limited opportunities for intellectual growth and creativity within such rigid educational structures, emphasizing the need for reform and a more holistic approach to learning.

Disparities in Education

Charles Dickens depicted the evident gap in educational opportunities between the wealthy and the less privileged, showing how one's financial status and social standing dictated their access to quality schooling.

While affluent youngsters attended prestigious private schools with proficient educators and modern amenities, children from working-class backgrounds often received inadequate education or were unable to attend school altogether due to financial limitations.



Injustice and Discrimination

Across his writings, Dickens tackled issues of social unfairness and discrimination, particularly concerning children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Characters such as Jo in "Bleak House" and Smike in "Nicholas Nickleby" exemplify the challenges faced by orphaned and disabled children, who frequently encountered rejection and were deprived of educational and advancement opportunities.

Dickens brought to light the widespread neglect and mistreatment within families and institutions, highlighting the vulnerability of children in a society marred by ethical decline. Whether through indifferent guardians like Mr. Murdstone in "David Copperfield" or cruel schoolmasters like Mr. Creakle in "Nicholas Nickleby," Dickens condemned the abuse of children and advocated for greater empathy and safeguarding. Despite the bleak circumstances portrayed in his novels, Dickens infused his stories with themes of redemption and optimism, underscoring the resilience of the human spirit.

Characters like Oliver Twist and David Copperfield triumph over adversity through acts of benevolence, perseverance, and the transformative influence of education, providing a ray of hope amid the gloom.

REASON TO WRITE

Charles Dickens wrote from personal experience because Dickens himself experienced poverty and had to work at a young age due to his father's financial troubles. This firsthand experience likely fueled his empathy for those experiencing similar hardships, especially children. Dickens criticized the societal disparities and unequal treatment that existed in Victorian England through his books. He intended to push for social reform and bring attention to the terrible reality that the lower classes experience by portraying the challenges of ignorant and impoverished youngsters.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, Dickens aimed to humanize those who were disadvantaged and evoke empathy in his readers with his vivid characters and gripping stories. Through his portrayal



of children as the victims of society exploitation and neglect, he evoked empathy and recognition from readers for their common humanity. He was a strong advocate of education, viewing it as essential to both personal growth and the advancement of society. He sought to raise awareness of the critical need for educational reform and more possibilities for all children, regardless of their socioeconomic status, by highlighting the lack of access to education among disadvantaged children.

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