

CHARLES DICKENS AND HARD TIMES

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ABSTRACT

Dickens is an English novelist. Today his fictional works are considered to be one among the most important in the history of the English fiction , in the sense that they reflect many of the conditions, struggles and the style of the Victorian age.

Dickens was a social former. He attacked the social faults that were existed in his own society at his age and on the other hand he expressed his desire of reforming these demerits .

Dickens faced many difficulties in his life and this gave him a huge experience in writing his novel *Hard Times* in which he gives moral lessons through describing the manner of the people of his society .

Dickens is criticizing the society of his age through exploring certain themes such as class distinction, childhood, industrialism and its negative impact upon people. The opposition between fact and fancy of education is important aspect that is going to be illustrated in this research

THE LIFE OF CHARLES DICKENS

Charles dickens is one of the greatest English novelists in Victorian age, a great deal of change take place during this age in both Great Britain and United State. This age brought a great change in the world in all areas of everyday living. There was a great political change which produced more democratic societies, a great economic change to some political reforms and all the invention that came during this time. These invention changed England farm country into industrialized country and this change created change in literature. Writers wrote realistic novel about life of every day such as Charles Dickens wrote the novel *Hard Times* .

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Charles Dickens was born in England from a family of middle class in (1812) and moved from place to place in his childhood because of his father's work. He was given his regular education in school .His family suffered from money troubles and decided to sent him to work in factory to help them . He completed his education when his family could solve their problems .

In his young, he worked in journalism and this job opened the chance's gate in front of him . He wrote many novels such as Hard Times in which he dealt with social problems of his society at that times. He attacked the industrial revolution and its bad effects on the society. Charles Dickens sympathized with the poor and weak who are mocked by the selfish, greedy and cruel who subjugated the poor .He had a good understanding of humanity especially of young people and their feelings because of his childhood experiences as well as his later experiences as a news paper reporter.

Charles Dickens was influenced by many important English writers such as William Shakespeare. His style is marked by the full description of events, places and characters, the repetition of words and phrases which was to add musicality to the events. His mixes comic with sentimentality in presenting his points of view .

In (1836) he married Catherine Hogerth and had ten children but in (1858) he was separated from his wife and started a new relationship with an actors who called Eallen Lawless. He could put himself in a series of high dramatic reading of his novels, he was reporter, an actor, a poet and an editor.

In (1870) he died and buried in the poet's corner of Westminster Abbey to leave his interesting works shine in the sky of the literary world

DICKENS `LITERARY WORKS

Dickens was the most important writer in England. His literary career began between the years (1832_ 1836), when he began to publish Sketches in various periodicals entitled "Sketches byBoz". Dickens published works included "The pickwich paper" in 1836_7 .In 1837, the began to write "Oliver Twist", "Nicholas

Nichleby" which were published in 1838_9."The Od Cariosity shop" in 1840_41 and "Barnaby Rudge" which he published in 1841.

Dickens wrote "America Notes" in 1842, When he returned from America to England. In 1843, Dickens wrote "Martin Chuzzlewit" and "A Christmas Carol" which associated his name with Christmas. Dickens published "Dombey and Son" in 1846 and "David Copperfield" in 1849_50. Then he published "Black House" in 1852_3, "Hard Times" in 1854 and "Little Dorrit" in 1855- 7. Dickens began to work in a new weekly journal and published his novel "A Tale of Two Cities" and followed by "Great Expectation" in the same weekly journal.

Dickens published "Our Mutual Friend" and his last novel "The Mystery of Edwin Drood" which was left unpublished because of his death in 1870.

THE PLOT OF *HARD TIMES*

Thomas Gradgrind runs a school of hard fact in the industrial city of Coketown. He happens to see his children, Louisa and Tom, peering into a circus in direct opposition to his views on things of fancy. The cause for the offense, suggested by Gradgrind's friend Josiah Bounderby, a "self-made man" banker and mill owner in Coketown, is that Sissy Jupe, the daughter of one of the circus folk from Sleary's traveling circus, has been enrolled in Gradgrind's school and is a bad influence. Gradgrind and Bounderby proceed to visit the girl's father in order to have her removed from school. They find that he has abandoned the girl and Gradgrind agrees to take her in in the hope of reforming her on the condition that she never mention her former life.

Stephen Blackpool, a power loom weaver in Bounderby's mill, is married to a drunk and asked Bounderby how he can get out of the marriage to marry Rachael, another worker at the Mill. Bounderby loftily tells him that he married "for better or worse" and without money cannot be released from the marriage. After his visit to Bounderby he meets an old woman (Mrs. Pegler) in the street who tells him she comes to Coketown every year with the hope of a chance sighting of Bounderby.

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Tom, Louisa, and Sissy finish school, Sissy unsatisfactorily. Tom is apprenticed to Bounderby. Bounderby asked Gradgrind for Louisa's hand and she reluctantly agrees to marry him in the hope of helping Tom. Sissy remains with Mrs. Gradgrind to help raise three younger children. James Harthouse, with a letter of introduction from Gradgrind, now a Member of Parliament, meets Bounderby and becomes a frequent visitor in the household. Harthouse has hopes of going to Parliament.

Stephen Blackpool refuses to unionize with workers of the mill and is ostracized and later fired from his job. Tom has taken to gambling and has fallen heavily into debt. Louisa and Tom visit Stephen and Louisa sympathetically offers money to help him relocate. Tom takes Stephen aside and asks him to loiter around the bank in the evenings before he leaves town on the pretense of offering work.

The bank is robbed and Blackpool, seen loitering about the bank in the days before the robbery, is suspect. Harthouse falls in love with Louisa and tries to lure her away from her unhappy marriage to Bounderby. She flees to her father and reveals the unhappiness she has felt since childhood, he softens as he realizes the mistakes he made in her education. Louisa stays with him, cared for by Sissy. Bounderby abandons her. Mrs. Sparsit, Bounderby's housekeeper, captures Mrs. Pegler and brings her to Bounderby's house where she is revealed to be Bounderby's loving mother, disproving Bounderby's story of being a self-made man, abandoned as a child.

Rachael sends word to Blackpool, who has gotten work in another town, telling of the suspicion in the robbery and expects him to come back to clear his name, but he doesn't show. Rachael and Sissy, walking in the country, come across Stephen's hat near a deserted mine and realize he has fallen in. They summon help, Stephen is brought out alive but dies on the way back to town. Before dying he tells Mr. Gradgrind to question his son, Tom, concerning the robbery. Tom, knowing that capture is close at hand escapes, with the help of Sissy, to a town where Sleary's Circus is performing. Thomas, Sissy, and Louisa meet him there and, after a

last minute attempt by Bitzer to capture him, escapes abroad, with the help of the circus folk, where he later dies in misery. Thomas Gradgrind abandons his inflexible demands for facts in favor of "Faith, Hope, and Charity".

MAJOR THEMES OF THE NOVEL

1.THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AS IT IS REFLECTED IN HARD TIMES.

The most important problems that Dickens dealt with in Hard Times was the philosophy of education system in the school .The novel was written in early Victorian times in which the industrial revolution had transformed the society. Dickens attacked the failing of education and the wrong headedness of the prevailing educational philosophy . He believed that many schools taught the students according to what was factual and ordered avoiding anything imaginative.

Gradgrind, the governor of the school saw the children as (an empty vessels) that need to be filled with facts and statistics. This school discouraged the development of imagination in the mind of children ,and emphasized on that cramming the children full of facts and figures .Dickens believed the artificial elements such as poetry , songs and fiction were the feeding of the soul and heart as well as . The children must be taught according to certain educational philosophy that mixed arts with facts . I n other words , the educational system must not be one _ sided. The educational system should mix education with imagination.

In the novel of Hard Times every thing in Gradgrind`s world and his life based on facts. Gradgrind did not allow his children like Tom and Louisa to read poetry or learn nursery rhymes.Once Louisa began a conversation by saying (I wonder, father had replied that Louisa must never wonder. For him all questions in this life could be solved by calculation or by arithmetic . Gradgrind discourage Louisas feelings towards marriage because he believed that marriage would be failed so he choose another man for his daughter. On the other hand , Sissy jupe the other female character in this novel, believed that the children must be taught facts with

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imagination in their education in school. Sissy faced many problems in her class because of this point of view .The school master who is called Mchoakumchild, tried to convince Sissy with statistics about how prosperous of a town was if , out of a million inhabitants only twenty-five starved to death in the streets each year. Sissy replied that it must be just as hard on the twenty-five however many people there were who were not starving .

Sissy was common sense answers that shows she is in touch with the feeling level of life . She converted statistics into real people with real lives, which wasn't the way to flourish in Gradgrinds model school .Sissy couldn't complete her education in this school and decided to go to another school.Every thing in Gradgrinds school pointed to the hard facts. Dickens gave us two pictures in this novel , the first picture was represented by the character of Gradgrind and his teaching in the school ,this picture explained wrong effects in teaching the children because it was based on teaching only facts no imaginations. Louisa s marriage failed and Tom was revealed as thief were the fruits of Gradgrind (hard facts).

The second picture represented Sissy jupe. She was interested in imagination, love and teaching the facts. She transferred to school of art and could free herself from hard facts .She succeeded in her education and life . This novel reflected the difference between two educational systems .Dickens wrote this novel to explain the good way of teaching the children and to refuse the negative effects of industrial revolution in his society

2. THE INDUSTRIALISM

Dickens dealt with another problem that was the negative effect of industrialism. In this novel, Dickens presented a harsh warning about the threats of industrial revolution. Coketown was an unnatural place, everything in it was designed to maximize industrial output as loss of emotion , unllification of imagination , the town itself was disfigures by all the smoke that belches from the factory chimney and the river had been polluted by bad –smelling dye .The place was not fit for humans to live in and the live of

workers in the factory was very bad day after day, year after year who worked long hours with little relief because the relationship between the workers and their managers in this town was weak. Coketown expanded in an unregulated way and were filled with over worked and underpaid workers . The unemployed poor roamed the streets for jobs, the homeless were forced to seek shelter in workhouses

Dickens presented two leaders of industrialization in this novel who were Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Boundery .The two leaders emphasized on facts and nothing else but the Gradgrind family suffered because of the danger of industrialization as Tom and his sister failed in their life, the poor class was also suffered as Sissy's father abandoning her and Stephen Blackpool suffered in his job and suffered also from the bad relationship with his wife. The character of Stephen Blackpool in the novel expressed the situation between the two groups in a nutshell when he said the bosses consider themselves "awl us right" while the workers were "awl us wrong ". Stephen Blackpool regarded the economic system in this town as muddle and wanted to treat the workers as human being with feeling and hope because the gap between classes in society was wide. Dickens had succeeded in warning society about the negative effects of industrialization in Hard Times

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