

**From Adolescence to Awakening: Portrayal of the ‘Urban
Child’ in Charles Dickens’ novels**



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Child’ in Charles Dickens’ novels**

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Content

Abstract	1
Chapter One: Introduction	2-8
Chapter Two: Victorian England and the Emergent issues: Family, Children, Law and the Society	9-15
Chapter Three: Portrayal of ‘Urban child’ in Victorian Literature	16-31
Chapter Four: Tracing Dickens through his novels	32-34
Chapter Five: Conclusion	35-37
Works Cited	38-42

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to show the representation of the themes of urban childhood in Victorian Literature and the intricate dynamics that lies between family, children and the society. 'Coming of Age' genres were immensely popular among the Victorian readers just as much they are with us moderns. *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, *David Copperfield*, and *Pendennis*- all archetypal Victorian social novels are also intensely *bildungsroman* in nature. Victorian literature shows remarkable interest and compassion for such issues. Almost each novel has an orphan or a child protagonist who has been abandoned by its parents and society and is forced to take care of itself. Harsh living conditions for children such as child labour were also often illustrated in these novels. Most of these and specially the urban novels which were written during the first half of this era show family as a very complicated and yet a powerful unit of the society. It is intriguing to think that a period which valued family most above all and savored the 'ideal family' image, would have so many novels written which demonize the families and the relations. So what I hope to do with this paper is to explore the contexts to which these writers responded through the fictional representations. Questions such as the role of the family in one's life, Victorian family values, and changes of those values, if any, will be researched through this dissertation. For this purpose I have chosen Charles Dickens's three widely read novels *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield* as my primary resources. Dickens' novels show tremendous empathy, understanding and insight into the Victorian families and the impoverished children. He had an interesting childhood too. Important social changes such as the Poor Act, work houses and child custody law were also addressed in his works. Other than an intense reading of these novels, I have also used various scholarly articles and books to shed further light on the issue.

Chapter One: Introduction

Childhood is the most vital part of our lives which is supposed to be marked with safety, education and the care of the family. In reality often the scenario was and is still quite the contrary. Across different times and periods of literature childhood, its transition, constraints and the immense possibility that it holds has been a topic of interest to the writers. Authors have taken profound interest in childhood hence 'Coming of Age' ¹genre has always been very popular. Similarly, the focus of my thesis is the depiction of childhood, especially urban childhood in Victorian Literature. In order to explain why I lay emphasis on this topic I will start by giving a bit of context of the Victorian era and shed light on the emergent issues of Victorian life, particularly parents and children and their place in the larger social world.

In the Victorian era one third of the English children received no education at all. England was moving bit by bit in the direction of becoming Europe's most stable and prosperous country during the reign of Queen Victoria. Especially the industrial revolution, the railway stage, steam engines were being used in mines, factories and shipping systems, everything was gradually changing towards prosperity. Even small towns were growing fast due to the industrial revolution and urbanization, it's by product. In the beginning of the Victorian era, the industrial revolution, however, was just the beginning for bringing the dirt and filth, ugliness and crime, into the lives of the poor whom circumstances forced to live and work in the mills and factories of the new towns. Labourers unfairly treated unequally, women workers also were ill-treated and

¹ "Heartaches and hard-won wisdom: Exploring Coming of Age Short Stories" explains **Coming of Age story** as a genre of literature that focuses on the growth of the protagonist from youth to adulthood. In other words it is a story that relates an adolescent's movement toward adulthood and the corresponding awakening to a new understanding of his or herself and the world around him or her. Coming-of-age stories tend to emphasize dialogue or internal monologue over action, and are often set in the past. The subjects of coming-of-age stories are typically teenagers.

underpaid, and the most shocking part was that children were often overworked in abominable conditions. Though children were supposed to attend school not mills or factories and education should be compulsory for children. Before 1870 of Victorian period, there was no compulsory education and the standard of education was influenced largely by the wealth of a person's background. During that period only those would get a much better education than ordinary citizens, who might be found wearing their dinner suits in luxurious Casino hotels. Roughly two-thirds of working class children attended Sunday school which provided a basic foundation in reading, writing and arithmetic, as well as teaching children religious education where other working class children were compelled to go for working in the industries. Queen Victoria's England was upper class dominated society. When she was in power, the population explosion that occurred in England was accompanied by a tremendous amount of industrialization and urbanization. When the century ended, a vast majority of children lived in towns rather than rural areas. During that time families tended to be large and the rapid growth of towns quickly exceeded affordable housing that led to overcrowd and shockingly poor sanitary conditions. In the 1830s and 1840s, poor children who survived infancy were often put into work at an early age and many children worked in textile mills and coalmines where the working conditions often proved deadly. The young girls of five years of age had to go into domestic service as nurses or house cleaners to wealthy families. Thousands of urban children worked as street hawkers or matches sellers. With the starting of industrialization, a growing divergence between high-minded romantic ideals of childhood and the reality of child exploitation in the workplace became increasingly apart. Although child labor was common in pre-industrial times, that labour was to help their parents in farming works or in cottage crafts. However, during late 18th century children, especially urban children were employed for working long hours in dangerous jobs by

low pay. Child labor was not a new thing but as industrialization continued the practice worsened and was severe. In the 18th century, England the work houses and their 'poor laws' were nightmares for the orphans and poor children as many of them were forcefully taken there on the name of work to their deaths. The condition was so severe that even in literature we find recurring depiction of this issue, Dickens being a major one on that front. Dickens's novel provide us with vivid portrayals and heart rendering tales of the condition of the children who were abandoned by their families as well as the state and had to be responsible for themselves from an early age which shows the term 'Coming of Age'. *Oliver Twist*, *Philip Pirrip* and *David Copperfield* are the names of his child protagonists and these protagonists have the reflections of the term of 'Coming of Age' because all of them have psychologically lost their innocence. Not only they had disagreement with the adult world, they also accepted the complexities and griminess of the world. They also used to be awake to their limitations and always kept awareness of the identity.

Dickens is one of them whose childhood was often difficult, related to 'Coming of Age' and later alluded in his work. He belonged to a lower middle class family and later, he depicted his needy father's improvident character through the character of Micawber in *David Copperfield*. Dickens had to work in a warehouse that handles shoe polish. For a period of months, his family's financial condition forced him to live apart from his family. That time his experience of lonely hardship was the most significant formative event of his life and this experience dyed his view about the World in thoughtful and varied ways and directly or indirectly portrayed in a number of his novels including *Pickwick Papers*, *Great Expectations*, *Oliver Twist*, and *David Copperfield*, as well as *Little Dorrit*. *Oliver Twists* shows actual condition as well as *Great Expectations*.

Dickens's novels are multifarious, digressive and generous. In an important way, they reflect the nature of Victorian urban society with all its conflicts disharmonies, its eccentricities and its constrictions, its energy and its extraordinary fertility, both physical and intellectual. (Sanders 243)

The novel *Oliver Twist* deals with the life of a boy called Oliver Twist from the time of the birth to the years of his early youths. Oliver Twist was an orphan as well as the protagonist in this novel. From his childhood, he faced many difficulties, first in the workhouse and later as an apprentice to an undertaker. Then he ran away to the city of London in search of better life and he fell into the hands of certain criminals but he rescued by a good hearted man called Mr. Brownlow. We get to know about the Poor Law and its Workhouses from this novel. Dickens wrote this novel to show how the system treated innocent child born and raised in the workhouse system, how neglected and ill treated was the boys and how badly they experienced hunger that one child threatens to eat others if he is not better fed. Oliver had the boldness to ask for more food only because the hungry boys had cast lots to decide who would do it and he had drawn the short straw. In the famous illustration by George Cruikshank, "the poor orphan Oliver stands utterly alone with the fearful threat of cannibalism right behind him, and facing him, the bully of a workhouse master preparing to unleash his powers of retribution" (Richardson 1). Also, Ruth Richardson has written in his article "Oliver Twist and the Workhouse" that "The suffering of the Victorian workhouse led to Oliver Twist utter the famous phrase 'Please Sir, I want some more' " (1). This line exactly shows that in Workhouses, hungry children even could not want more food because it is abandoned for them and if any child did this, he/she would get punishment according to Workhouse's rules.

The scene of Oliver Twist asking for more, so graphically caught by Dickens' illustrator, George Cruikshank, rapidly became, and has remained, the most familiar incident in any English novel. Oliver's adventures in London, and the opposition of the insecurities of criminal life to the comforts of bourgeois respectability, are again rendered through a series of sharp contrasts of scene, mood, and narrative style, an effect. (Sanders 243)

Dr Thomas Barnardo who was an Irish Philanthropist in Victorian period also talked about Workhouses and he was the founder and director of poor children's home. Basically, he rescued children and trained them as well to give them better life and he felt that "Workhouses were the wrong places for children and so from 1867 onwards, he led the way in setting up proper children's homes" (Barrow 1).

The novel *David Copperfield* made a link of Dickens childhood and his success. David Copperfield when grew up, showed the social background of English society at that time which was his most popular novel. It stands for a number of interesting themes such as poverty, suffering of social class, isolated and abandoned children, self-innovation and family life. It is a novel that narrates the development of a character David Copperfield from childhood to maturity. The main character of this novel David suffered from a loveless childhood, which came out by the physical and psychological violence of his stepfather's cruelty. Therefore, the primary character David searched for a means through which he can feel love. It might be a factor from which Dickens was motivated to express the idea and portray the reality of society.

The childhood of Charles Dickens was marked by an early experience of abuse and neglect, when his parents sent him, at age 12, to work in a blacking factory. Dickens later included a thinly disguised account of this experience in his autobiographical novel, *David Copperfield*. (LaFarge 1)

Thus the novel shows the representation of children's life during Victorian era. In addition, it was Dickens' own favorite among his novels. In the introduction to the novel in 1867, Dickens wrote:

Of all my books, I like this the best. It will be easily believed that I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy, and that no one can ever love that family as dearly as I love them...But, like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favorite child. And his name is David Copperfield. (Eliot 2)

Great Expectations is another novel by Dickens with similar aspects. Like most novels of Dickens's this two was greatly popular. The period of this novel was the time when England was increasing worldwide as well as becoming a wealthy power of the world but Children as young as five were forced to work for twelve or thirteen hours a day. Here Dickens also showed the childhood of a boy called Pip whose origin name is Phillip Pirrip and the most common thing between this two character Oliver Twist and Pip is that both of them are orphan. Pip, the main character and the narrator of this novel was a little boy at the beginning of the novel. Though he was orphan, his older sister and her husband brought him up and they wanted Pip to learn blacksmith's trade. Andrew Sanders wrote about Pip in his book *The Short Oxford History of*

English Literature that “Pip is manipulated and gentrified and left empty” (244). Throughout *Great Expectations*, Dickens also explores the class system of Victorian era and also gives us views that Pip’s realization about wealth and class that are less important than affection, loyalty, and inner worth. Basically, in *Great Expectation* Dickens portrays social fear and class disparity of the Victorians which was prevalent in the era. Social class played a big role in orchestrating peoples ‘lives and behavior’. Dickens’s novels not only show the phenomenon of class differences but it also reveals the darker aspects of urban life where congested urban areas often had a very substandard living condition. Not only the murky aspects of Victorian industrial life but Dickens also explores different kinds of law and amendments of his time such as the ²divorce law before 1857, Custody of infants Act of 1839, and the laws related to domestic violence and foster parenting. These laws came into being under dire necessity and changing socio-economic conditions which were subjects of contemplation for writers like Dickens.

Basically this paper aims to depict the urban child’s condition in Victorian epoch where childhood, family, society, law used to be very significant issues and I will examine the scenario of that murky era through Dickens’ novels where urban children used to live gloomy life but always wanted to come out from their sinister life.

² “Reframing the Victorians” clarifies about **Divorce system** of Victorian era that earlier to 1857, married women were not treated equally to men even freedom was abandon for them. That time divorce cases were handled by the Church of England and they made it terrible for women except wealthy women. Also explain about the **Custody law** that before 1839 the custody of child directly went to father but later The Custody of Infant Act of 1839 allowed a mother for appealing the custody of her children up to the age of seven.

Chapter Two:

Victorian England and the Emergent issues: Family, Children, Law and the Society

During the beginning of 19th century, People of Victorian era witnessed massive changes in different fields such as religion, economy, politics, socially and literature. These changes brought the birth of many novelists, poets, dramatist and other writers who were the outstanding figures of English literature. In this chapter, we will talk about historical background of the Victorian England, child custody, child labour, poor laws of that time, conditions of workhouses and the social factors that influenced the author to write about the social problem of that period and the status of children during that time and also the effects of industrial revolution on the living condition of urban children.

2.1. Socio-economic underpinning of the Victorian Age:

In order to understand literature during the Victorian era, we need to know about the conditions of England during that time. The Victorian era mainly refers to the period of Queen Victoria's time when she ruled the England from 1837 to until her death. This period was considered to be the longest period of England history while Queen Victoria ruled and the term Victorian is often used to cover the whole of the nineteenth century. Throughout the Victorian age British people witnessed greater changes in different pastures such as politics, economy, society and science. Also this period can be depicted as an age of transition because Britain faced changes not only in political, economical, society and science; these changes were reflected extraordinarily in literature. In the period of Queen Victoria, monarchy was not that much popular but at the time of her death in 1901 the population was increased so high that Britain

became the richest manufacturing country in the world. But, unfortunately there were several events that ended this success such as the Crimean war (1854-6), the Indian Mutiny of 1857 and the death of Queen Victoria's husband in 1861 which led the Queen to be widow for forty years and make several protests against the monarchy (Carter and McRae 125). This era was identified as the time of absurdity, hesitation and distrust though Victorian period was called the era of achievement and progress. But there were many problems in that time like poverty was the main issue as well as poor living conditions. That time the middle class people suddenly became rich and powerful and started to demonstrate their power over poor whereas working class people were becoming poor and were forced to work in bad conditions. Though Victorian era had lots of conflicts, contradictions, problems and threats of social collapse but it can be described as an age of development.

2.2. Issues of Family and Parenting in Victorian Novels:

During Victorian era, family was an important part for Victorians where they used to have five or six children and family was always controlled by father. Victorians believed in hard work, class difference and of course in holy traditional values. From the very childhood, children were taught to make difference between wrong and right in order to become a moral adult and for some wrong deeds they used to get punishment. But this scenario was not of every Victorian child, it was the picture of upper class urban children where maximum urban children had to live their life without real parents in the street or in some workhouses. Throughout the Victorian era, thousands of children were survived as orphans and their custody went to the workhouses where they were treated as slave instead of treating as innocent children like *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*. In, *Great Expectations*, after Pip's parent's death his custody went to his sister and

sister's husband where he always humiliated by his sister and his brother in law wanted him to become a blacksmith. Sometimes child custody went to the father and mother had no rights over their children if their marriage broke down. After getting the custody, father became careless to his children and got married again. In *David Copperfield*, his custody was given to his step father and he was sent to the workhouse forcefully where in *Oliver Twist*, poor Oliver had lost his mother after his birth and his custody directly went to the orphan house. In that era, Victorians used to have so many children that sent them in the workhouses not all Victorians, this happened only in working class families. Poor orphans were feared to work in the workhouse, where thousands of homeless and broke children were required to live according their custody law. They had to send to the workhouse by forcefully when their family broke by father's illness or divorce issue.

2.3. Child Custody, Schooling and Urban childhood:

During Victorian period, rapid changes in employment, housing and social welfare brought about huge change in people's lives as well as children's working on Workhouses was also increasing gradually. Social class variations were distinguished by inequalities in areas such as politics, authority, wealth, education, culture, and working as well as and living conditions. Due to the powerlessness of the lower class, they were subjugated to exploitation and treatment similar to that of animals (Kailash 40). The period of adjustment led to many workers living in extreme poverty and even dying on city streets of starvation that was why poor parents forced their children to work on Workhouses. Poor Victorians would put children to work at an early age, or even turn them out onto the streets to fend for themselves. In 1848 an estimated 30,000 homeless muddy children lived on the streets of Victorian time. Because of poverty, children

were forced into child labour and forced to work as chimney sweepers and they could crawl up the twelve by fourteen inch chimneys, some as small as seven inches square, so that they would clean out the annual average of forty gallons of soot that was deposited there (Kailash 40). Boys also worked the narrow shafts in coal mines or were employed beneath noisy weaving looms recovering cotton bobbins. Others would shine shoes or sell matches to earn a shell. Children formed an important component of the industrial labor force because employers could pay them lower wages and this was another reason for hiring child labor. From a YouTube video named “Dairy of a Victorian Child” we got to know about child labour’s daily routine where he had to get up to start work at 6 am still back from work at late night the day before. Then went downstairs to see what he could eat and found one slice of bread left from man. It was the same every day. Keeping remember that a caning was waiting if he was late; he left his house at 6.30 am to walk 5 miles for working in the rain. He was not late for work but one of his best friends Henry was not so lucky, he was caned 5 times for sleeping too long. He just out his head down and worked until lunch. His lunch looked like something his baby brother would eat or vomit. After having lunch he went back to work and then a labour was taken to hospital with a broken arm. Things like this happened to him every week.

There were limited educational opportunities for children; therefore it was better for them to work. Child labour was an integral part of the system as the children were far paid less than adults (Kailash, 41). From a very young age they worked the same hours as their parents in the same difficult conditions. Parliament first limited the hours children could work in textile factories in 1833, following a public objection over a parliamentary inquiry into working conditions for children. On the other hand after this decision, with social protest and reports of child abuse Parliament had to make strong laws of prohibiting child labour and the factory acts in

1864 fixed that no child under the age of twelve was to be employed as a factory worker. However, it is unfortunate that some of these reforms were implemented long after people like Charles Dickens had already been forced into the gruesome and traumatizing factory work at his age (Kailash 42).

Even when Queen Victoria came to the power in 1837 schooling was still mainly for the privileged. Wealthy children got governess for teaching them at home until they were mature enough. Boys were allowed to go to public schools but girls continued to be skilled at home. The majority poor children could not attend day school but Robert Raikes who was English Philanthropist had started a system of education basically based in churches which called the Sunday School, and later during Victorian era a few day schools had begun. In 1870 a law was issued which stressed that children aged between five to ten must attend weekday schools. Though their presence was strictly mandatory many children were not allowed to attend the school by parents and employers because they kept them for work. Victorian Schools were grim places where students had to be silent, symbolic of their plight and zero resistance to their oppression. The school windows were high so that children could not see out. Their sights were completely blocked. Boys and girls had to attend their classes separately. Even the playground was separate keeping with the rigid sexual morality of the period. Younger boys and girls were allowed to attend classes together but they had to sit separately. The teachers of Victorian public schools were very strict. Often they were not concerned with the mental well being of the student as much with adherence to regulations. Punishments were often severe and included corporal punishments. Punishment by cane was widely used. Victorian teachers used to give punishment through cane or by putting heads down into the corner. The teacher's behaviour was often very harsh to children when they used say after entering classrooms unruly behaviour will not be

tolerated in the class. They also used to make children remember that they should be thankful, lucky to attend schools where so many other children at their age must go to work.

Poor Victorian's children sometimes had to stay over on streets and in some cases; street's drain water was the only source of drinking water. Poor Victorian's extreme poorness made children into thieves because sometimes their only choice was to turn to crime which was another major problem of that era. Children are susceptible to exploitation as they are very defenseless beings and Dickens successfully portrays the abuse of children in nineteenth century Britain and evokes readers' sympathy to the deplorable and drab conditions of the children (Kailash 43). Moreover, one of the worst social effects of the Victorian era was child labour, a phenomenon that culminated during this time.

2.4. The '1834 Poor Act' and the Workhouses:

The Poor Law Act which was a system of laws in 1834 and was introduced in England and the rest of Britain to provide relief under a system. Who required assistance such as the widows, the sick and the unemployment people had to be accommodated at the Workhouses. Poor Law was welcomed by someone just because they believed it would: Reduce the cost of looking after the poor, to take beggars off the streets, to encourage poor people to work hard to support themselves.

Poor Law ensured that the poor were housed in the workhouses, clothed and fed. Children who entered the workhouse would receive some schooling and in return for this care, all workhouse paupers would have to work for several hours each day. However, not all Victorians shared this point of view because they were against the poor law's rules. Some people, such as Richard Oastler who was English labor reformer and he fought for the rights of working

children. He spoke out against the new Poor Law, calling the workhouses 'Prisons for the Poor'. For this law, the poor themselves hated and feared the threat of the workhouse so much that there were mutinies in northern towns. Andrew Sanders the author of "*The Short Oxford History of English Literature*" believes that Charles Dickens challenged the Victorian idea of charity for so called "deserving poor". He showed convincingly that the workhouse was a failed attempt to solve the problem of poverty and unwanted children and also believes that Dickens's *Oliver Twist* can be read as a textbook of Victorian child abuse and a social document about early Victorian slum life. Children even adult workers also hated the Workhouses because it was like prisons to them. Actually the reason behind hating those Workhouses not only laws, the buildings themselves were bleak, undecorated, prison-liked structure. There were no curve in the buildings, only had sharp corners. There was no architectural decoration and high walls surrounded the whole workhouse, cutting off the view of the outside world from the inmates. Even the windows were six feet from the floor, and a further improvement was to have the window sills leaning downwards, preventing them from being used as seats or shelves. No fireplaces broke the exposed lines of the walls and any heating provided usually was inadequate.

Overall, we can say Dickens is one of the major novelists who not only exposed the real condition of urban childhood also revealed the emergent issues of Victorian England and also gave us a real insight of Victorian era through the literary depiction.

Chapter Three: Portrayal of the ‘Urban child’ in Victorian literature

“Childhood” word took a central part in Dickens’s novel and he used this infancy part in most of his major novels because many children became the victims of Victorian England. There was another significant part of Dickens’s novel was “Orphans”. Inherently in our mind “Orphan” word gives an imagination of a child whose parents is not alive and gets traumatized by society. Orphans have dual identities: they’re completely free of genealogical handicaps but also completely vulnerable to social pressures (Jones, 1). Radhika Jones has written about Dickens that “Dickens was always sympathetic to children, and one of his big contributions to the English novel was the prominence he gave to child characters and the child’s experience. But the orphan in particular gives a novelist a heap of handy plot opportunities”. In this chapter, mainly we will focus on the figures of Dickens’s child characters and their suffering.

3.1. *David Copperfield*: Depiction of oppressed childhood

David Copperfield is a magical novel which is also a great model of a child suffering in a society. It has mellowness, even serenity, found nowhere else in Dickens. Even we can say this novel is not only about Dickens’s autobiography but it is autobiographical in inspiration. The novel starts with secret of childhood in English which is the most wonderful thing of this novel. It’s a tale of ups and downs, happiness and unhappiness but this novel is also a popular tone of optimism and confidence in the vital kindness of life. Dickens also like this novel that is why he wrote in his preface to the 1869 edition that:

Of all my books, I like this the best. It will be easily believed that I am a fond of parent to every child of my fancy, and no one can ever love that

family as dearly as I love them. But, like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is David Copperfield (Lall, 39).

The foremost tale of this novel is anxiety of David Copperfield from the birth period to the years of his maturity. Family is the place where person can live peacefully but some changes can snatch this peace if the head of the family dies and the mother gets married to someone like cruel person. David Copperfield was the victim of this kind of situations. David was posthumous child and his mother Clara Copperfield nurtured him because he lost his father before born. He was also adored by his family maid servant Peggoty till his mother's second marriage. That time he was only a few years old baby when his happiness ended because of his mother's second marriage and was treated very harshly by his step father, Mr. Murdstone. Mr. Murdstone's sister Miss Murdstone took the charge of household and who bullied not only over the little David, but also over David's mother and over the servant, Peggotty.

Indeed, the main suffering story of that little boy starts with the day and hours of his birth because his mother gave birth him on Friday at night which is considered in the village that he would be unlucky. Dickens wrote about this in very first chapter that "In consideration to the day and hours of my birth ... to be unlucky in life" (9). This quote gives the evidence of David's suffering which even started from the early beginning of his life when was told by old woman in the village. The old woman stated that this baby has brought bad luck as well as he would be unfortunate in his life since he was born on Friday. Consequently this little baby will face difficulties and obstructions which will flow out all of his joy and happiness also make him the sufferer of sadness. On the other hand, David experienced a huge loss as a small boy that is very

tough for him to loss his father before born. "My father's eyes had closed upon the light of this world six Months when mine opened on it ... stone in the church yard" (10).By this quote Dickens helps us to understand that David Copperfield is posthumous or orphan boy whose father was died six months before of David's birth but David keeps some shadows in his mind about a grave in the church yard. No one can take place of real father's position in individual's life. So Mr. Murdstone never could take the place of David's father because of his cruel behavior to little David. Even Mr. Murdstone was so harsh to David that he was bound to think that, "I could have done very well if I had been without the Murdstones; but the influence of the Murdstones upon me was like the fascination of two snakes on a wretched young bird" (53). Miss Murdstone always kept David in pressure by giving different kinds of works in indirect way by saying that, "'Clara, my dear, there is nothing like work-give your boy an exercise" (53). Murdstones this type of behaviour made David sullen, dull and dogged. So, David started to find his pleasure in reading books which only can help him to get away with this mental pressure. David only feels haven in books which helps him to reduce his pain and gives him a friendly zone. So in his isolation, he considered books as his best friend and made Murdstones as the bad characters in his imagination book world. There is valid explanation behind of this imagination. Mr. Murdstone always waited for chances to beat David even though he behaved very rude to him. When Clara was teaching him a lesson, Mr. Murdstone scared little David by showing a bamboo or cane and at that time David forgot what did his mother teach him. At that point David's step father started to beat him then David managed to bit on Mr. Mudstone's hand because he was beaten him like forcing him to die. Dickens wrote this situation very pathetically like:

He walked me up to my room slowly and gravely –I am certain he had a delight in that formal parade of executing justice –and when we got there, suddenly twisted my head under his arm. “Mr. Murdstone! Sir “I cried to him.”Don’t! Pray don’t beat me I have tried to learn, sir, but I can’t learn while you and Miss Murdstone are by I can’t indeed!” (55)

Because of doing misconduct to his stepfather, David had to live his life like imprisoned for five days. David said, “The length of those five days I can convey no idea of to anyone. They occupy the place of years in my remembrance” (57). Those five days were like five years to him and as a little boy; this punishment was too heavy for him. He went through mental suffering because he always heard the sounds what was happening in the house like ringing of bells, the opening and shutting the doors, the murmuring of voices, the footsteps and many other things. Even he did not catch when day goes and night comes. Deprived David was passing his days incredibly bad primarily that time when he saw from his window that boys were playing in the churchyard and he had to hide himself for being ashamed that he was imprisoned. He was too little to face this situations but he had to face because he was the victim of his fortune. This was not the ending part of his punishment actually it was the beginning part of his suffering when he came to know from Peggotty that he will be sent to a boarding school.

David did not have any idea before, that after finishing those five days punishment, he had to face suffering. David could not believe that his mistreatment to Mr. Murdstone would be the only reason to send him abroad. Then he started to feel heartbreaking and began to believe that, of course they hate me. From the very beginning, David noticed that Mr. Murdstone and Miss Murdstone were very harsh to him and they had desire to throw him away for getting rid of

him. Day by day David started to feel more isolated when he talked to himself that, “Day after day, week after week, month after month, I was coldly neglected (133).”

School is the best place for learning something or acquiring something and this is the place where children learn to encounter with each other but if this place makes u depressed by their cruel behavior then children will never get the success; they will just struggle to get their success and same thing happened in *David Copperfield*. The little child was sent to London for mistreating with his stepfather who always wanted to get rid from him. Mr. Maurdstone designed a plan to show David’s mother that he really cares for him but it was actually a punishment for that little boy. David was sent the Broading School in London which was leading by Mr. Creakle and who was very harsh to the boys. Not only David of that school, whole children of that school was frightened by Mr. Creakle. At the very first day of David’s school life he got scared by Mr. Creakle who addressed the boys and warned them to be careful because if he sees any negligence in learning their lessons; he would not hesitate to punish them. David threatened by Mr. Creakle that, “if I were famous for biting, he was famous for biting, too” (82). Then he showed David a cane and scared him. David was so frightened by him that he stated “I should think there never can ... I was chubby myself, and ought to know” (82). Through this quote David shows the cruelty of Mr.Creakle and his rough behavior with the boys in the Salem House School. David thinks no one can feel that much enjoy this profession like Mr. Creakle because he always enjoyed his time in cutting at the boys. David was so frightened that if he sat in the classroom or played on the playground, he felt a great fear of Mr.Creakle who always threatened to cane him. Even Mr. Creakle often laughed maliciously at him after threatening to beat him.

Moreover, Mr. Murdstone was the reason behind the typical behavior of Mr.Creakle to little David. Mr. Murdstone wanted to give David punishment that was why he sent David to the

Salem House during holiday's time when there was no one on the school. Even Mr.Murdstone done another worse thing, he wanted Mr.Creakle to treat little David maliciously. David came to understand about this by Mr.Creakle's conversation with him and Mr. Creakle also hurt him very hardly by pinching his ear. The little David was so hurt that he stated in, "Letting it go at last with a screw at parting that brought the water into my eyes" (77). In the Salem House, David not only physically tortured, he also tormented mentally when he had to wear a placard on his neck written—"Take care of him. He bites" (73). David spent three months in Salem House and had to always carry this placard on his neck. David understood this was Mr. Creakle's ordered to wear this as a punishment from Mr.Murdstone. And little David surprised when he got to know he was treating as a dog just for his little mistreatment with Mr.Murdstone. David said that, "What I suffered from the placard, nobody can imagine. Whether it was possible for people to see me or not, I always fancied that somebody was reading it" (74). This statement clears that he suffered psychologically more than physically because everyone was talking about this in a jocular tone.

In a nutshell we can say, David was the fun for others and they enjoyed it too much that, they started to act like wild individuals in front of David. But the most fearful for David was the man of the wooden leg who always kept little David in a fear that he will report about him to Mr.Creakle. During his bad period, he got two friends Tommy Traddles and Steerforth. Steerforth considered as a scholar and with whom Mr. Creakle never showed any kind of harshness. The only person who supports David during his bad time in Salem House was Steerforth though charged money for this protection but took good care of David. Like David there was another little boy who tortured in the Salem House by Mr. Creakle whose name is Tommy Traddles. Traddels was also David's good friend who always being caned every day and David felt miserable for him but he was also helpless about helping him. David Copperfield

suffered a lot in Salem House but he kept patient because at the very early age he suffered being posthumous and also treated badly by his step father. So, he got patience at his very early age and this patience helped him to stay strong at Salem House. He not only suffered, learned from his suffering and also benefitted from Salem House School with all the obstructions that he faced there.

After his mother's death David was losing his self confidence because instead of letting him continue his studies at school, he was sent to work at a very young age. Mr. Murdstone sent David to work in London at the age of ten and the little David became a laboring hand in the service of Murdstone and Grinby. For David, the most shocking part was thrown him away in a very little age. Little David never could think that Mr. Murdstone could be that much harsh to him. He was actually surprised by Mr. Murdstone's action to send him to work at the blacking factory in London at the age of ten. David's this shock helped him to become that child who had strong power of observation and had those capabilities to survive with the harsh society. But at the same time David was suffering in the blacking factory and could not stop missing his old happiest childhood. "Now words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship... never to be brought back anymore; cannot be written" (137-138). No one can overlook his or her happiest moment and here this quote shows that little David had a few good memories of his childhood. He used to remember his best days because those happiest moment were only memories for him, he could not go back there. He missed Steerforth and Traddles with whom he spent some happiest moment. David stated in the quotation which is given above that no word can express the suffering and misery that he faces during his working time at the factory. He was so distressed that he stated, "I mingled my tears with the water in which I was

washing the bottles; and sobbed as if there were a flaw in my own breast, and it were in danger of bursting” (138). This statement is great example of showing his depression.

David wanted to get rid of his step father because this suffering day by day made him sad and after Micawber’s leaving London, David became alone. That was why he decided to meet his relative aunt, Miss Betsy. He ran from the factory and walked along to the city Dover just for getting help from Miss Betsy. At first meet David had to say in:

I am David Copperfield, of Blunderstone, in Suffolk –where you came, on the night when I was born, and saw my dear mama .I have been very unhappy since she died. I have been slighted ,and taugt nothing, and thrown upon myself, and put to work not fit for more, it made me run away to you. (167)

Miss Betsy was amazed to hear that David was her great nephew and decided to adopt him after hearing his undergone of suffering, including brutal treatments of Murdstones. David’s this decision to meet Miss Betsy was the turning point of his life. This was the starting of his new life. Miss Betsy at first sent him to a school which was directed by Dr. Strong who was a very kind man. David graduated from Dr. Strong’s school and became a lawyer. Aunt Betsy played an important role from overcoming his childhood suffering.

3.2. *Oliver Twist*: a tale of Orphans, Crime and the Society:

Oliver Twist opens with the nineteenth century’s English Poor laws which give us a glimpse of nineteenth’s poor condition. Essentially Dickens wrote this novel to expose the ugliness of materials of the Victorian era and he emerged with this novel as a crusader against

the social deprived conditions. In this novel, Dickens has presented the suffering of an orphan and he highly disgraced this suffering of poor children. The story is about an orphan who struggled to live a happy life where will be no abuses of powers. That time in England people were leveled by their cloths and that was why Oliver was also ranked as a child of nobleman or a beggar because of his coverlet by which he was enfolded. Wrap at the first chapter of the novel, Dickens showed the powers of dress by saying that:

What an excellent example of the power of dress, young Oliver Twist was! Wrapped in the blanket which had hitherto formed his only covering, he might have been the child of a nobleman or a beggar; it would have been hard for the haughtiest stranger to have assigned him his proper station in society. (6)

Oliver who is the protagonist of this novel lost his mother just after his birth. Because of being orphan and poor cloths he was leveled as lower class child and also sent to the workhouse for living like a poor orphan. The workhouses were established as the surrogate “parents” for the poor children where homeless children worked and in return they were fed and housed. In the workhouse, children were supposed to be treated with kindness but in the workhouses of England the scenario was quite different. In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens showed the cruelty of the workhouses where children should be loved, consumed and properly dressed up. But the real portrait of the workhouses was very unpleasant where children were starved, physically abused and very poorly dressed. Even children were punished for wanting more food and when Oliver said, “Please, Sir, I want some more,” (18), then authorities locked him up and also offered five pounds as a reward to anyone who will take this little boy off from them. Wanting more food is

not a crime but during that century it was like a crime and poor children had to suffer for this crime.

Oliver's suffering was not finished here; from here he started to face the cruel evils of the society. He was taken by Mr. Sowerberry who used to like Oliver but his wife was not that much kinds like him. Mrs. Sowerberry agreed to keep Oliver at their house but her behavior was not kind to that little boy. She treated him as a deprived working boy and we can get very clear glimpse of that situation by Mrs. Sowerberry's conversation with Oliver that:

Taking up a dim and dirty lamp, and leading the way up stairs; 'your bed's under the counter. You don't mind sleeping among the coffins, I suppose? But it doesn't much matter whether you do or don't, for you can't sleep anywhere else. Come; don't keep me here all night! (38-39)

Little Oliver not only faced shelter problems he also had to hear disparaging comments because of being a child of an unwed mother. Noah said to Oliver that, "A regular right-down bad'un, Wor'us," replied Noah, coolly. 'And it's a great deal better, Work'us, that she died when she did, or else she'd have been hard labouring in Bridewell, or transported, or hung; which is more likely than either, isn't it?" (55). After hearing this Oliver got mad and nailed his face. Noah talked nonsense about Oliver's mother to make Oliver fuming. Because he knew this was the only way to throw Oliver from the house. Even Noah tortured Oliver physically by pulling his hair and little Oliver was thrown in the cellar by Charlotte and Mrs. Sowerberry. Little Oliver also blamed by Noah that he tried to kill everyone and Mr. Bumble came to beat him. Little deprived Oliver both physically and mentally tortured at his very early age. At that time little Oliver decided to run to London for finding a better life. He had no money, had no food for eat

and almost died on the way but still he was walking miles to miles. Oliver was so starving and exhausted that he Dickens wrote this very pitifully that, “‘I am very hungry and tired’ replied Oliver: the tears standing in his eyes as he spoke. ‘I have walked a long way. I have been walking these seven days’” (70). His innocent crying face was his proof of suffering that how much he suffered to reach in this place. But Oliver had no idea that this London was full of lower classes criminals which would be very unsafe for him. Dickens wrote about nineteenth’s London which was unwelcoming, poor and filled with wicked people. Though it was an urban area but children’s condition was worst. Adults seemed to be busy in drinking instead of taking care of the children. There were two types of class, one of them while congregate in the church the other poor class was seen to congregate in the pubs. After reaching in London Oliver’s bad fate met him with the lower classes people who were involved in pick pocketing crime. But later on Oliver’s bad fortune turned into good one when his fortune met him with a kind and honest person.

Oliver met a guy, Fagin who was ugly, miserly, greedy, and was practicing pick pocketing with other boys. Oliver also noticed that other little boys also endured suffering by Fagin if they returned home empty handed. Meeting with Fagin, besides he introduced with a superior person, Mr. Brownlow who treated Oliver very well. In *Oliver Twist*, Mr. Brownlow was the guardian angel of Oliver who saved little Oliver from wicked of the society and their traps. Mr. Brownlow tried to give Oliver a better urban life and the starting of this try was buying new cloths to Oliver. Later he adopted Oliver as his son and gave him his proper inheritance which was the ending of Oliver’s affliction.

3.3. *Great Expectations*: self criticism of an orphan who was brought up “by hand”

Great Expectations is about ambition and self improvement of an orphan boy and his affliction from childhood to the middle age. This is also a bildungsroman novel as was the case with most of Dickens’ novels. In this chapter I will discuss about the protagonist’s miserable childhood, his treatment at the hands of his family and others he considered as his pseudo family. Functions of class difference, class consciousness and societal pressure on an individual will also be analyzed. The novel also talks about the importance of affection of family, loyalty towards one’s family, as well as the difficulty of changing one’s position in a society which valued aristocratic bloodlines and extravagance more often than it valued industry and individuality.

Philip Pirrip is the foremost character in *Great Expectation* and at the starting point of the novel; he was just a little orphan boy with no friends and caring family and brought up by his elder sister. It was Pip who shortened his name to Pip from Philip Pirrip. In the beginning of the novel Pip says to his readers, “My infant tongue could make of both names nothing longer or more explicit than Pip. So, I called myself Pip, and came to be called Pip” (3). It is not only because of his infant idiom that he had to construct both of his family name and Christian name in short, it also shows how poorly he was educated. His infancy was very miserable because of social poor condition and moreover he was an orphan. During nineteenth century, orphans were the victims of suffering since they were undertaken surrogate parents or workhouses. According to Dickens, children need proper care because they are like new born plants which need to be nurtured for growing. Children are just like them for rising properly they need to be looked after correctly. Here, Pip passed of his half infancy under his elder sister, and brother-in-law, Mr. and

Mrs. Joe Gargery. His elder sister was very unkind and loveless to him but in where the little Pip always got appreciation was his brother-in-law, Mr. Joe Gargery.

Childhood is the core period of learning curve from where children start to gain knowledge of having fun, deciding wisely, along with behaving well-mannered. Punishment is not the right way to make children learn something. Children learn by making mistakes and it is not their responsibility to learn alone. It is the responsibility of adults to guide them affectionately for corrects their mistakes. But in the *Great Expectations*, at a very early age Pip started to face hard things like harsh, dominating and loveless behavior from others. He also had to face bullying from his elder sister just because she had brought up him “by hand” and she also believed she had every right to punish him. She had often been using a cane to punish Pip, which she called “Tickler”. There was totally no touch of maternal or sisterly love in her feelings towards little Pip. Pip was always reminded by others of the favour that his elder sister had done to him by bringing him up. Even he was criticized by Mrs. Gargery as well as by other guests in a Christmas party. The guests tried to make Pip feel guilty about being such a burden on her sister. Mr. Pumblechook who was one of those guests said, “ “ Especially”, “Be grateful, boy, to them which brought you up by hand” ” (29) and another of them gave a silly lecture on Pip that Pip should be glad that he was not born as pig. Pip was feeling that, “I was always treated as if I had insisted on being born in opposition to the dictates of reason, religion, and morality, and against the arguments of my best friends” (26). Pip’s elder sister was so fed about Pip that when she heard about Miss Havisham, she was very anxious to send Pip to that place in the hope that the boy’s destiny may be made by his going there. Pip was not only harmed physically, he was also mentally mistreated and felt so isolated since his sister did not want him to bear any more.

After all of these suffering, Pip entered upon a new stage in his life by being taken to Miss Havisham's house where he was again humiliated by an orphan girl whose name was Estella. Estella was also an orphan adopted by Miss Havisham. Estella treated Pip with contempt as well as called him a stupid, clumsy labouring boy. They played a game for making Miss Havisham pleased where she made him beggar even comment him, "And what coarse hands he has! And what thick boots!" (69). This comment hurt Pip so much that he stated in, "I had never thought of being ashamed of my hands before; but I began to consider them a very indifferent pair. Her contempt 'for me' was so strong, that it became infectious, and I caught it (69). Moreover, Estella brought foods for him but gave him with disrespect. Her behavior forced Pip to state in:

She came back, with some bread and meat and a little mug of beer. She put the mug down on the stones of the yard, and gave me the bread and meat without looking at me, as insolently as if I were a dog in disgrace.
(71)

He felt injured by mind, embarrassed, rejected, insulted, mad even sad for himself. All of this gave him a sense of low standard enforced him to cry and for all of these feelings he blamed his sister by saying that

My sister's bringing up had made me sensitive. In the little world in which children have their existence whosoever brings them up, there is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt as injustice. It may be only small injustice that the child can be exposed to; but the child is small, and its world is small... Within myself, I had sustained, from my babyhood, a

perpetual conflict with injustice...I had in great part refer the fact that I was morally timid and very sensitive. (72)

This showed Pip's anger to his elder sister by whom he had been reared. He was treated with hatred and also abused physically and verbally. Pip believed that all of these reasons made him sensitive because he was humiliated by his sister from childhood and now again he was being humiliated by Estella. *Great Expectations* talks about self-improvement and after being disgraced by Estella, Pip decided to improve himself. He regarded this situation as a crucial event of his life and that was why at the end of chapter IX we read Pip's statement that, "That was a memorable day to me, for it made great changes in me" (82). After meeting Estella, deprived Pip had developed a great hatred for the trade of a blacksmith and wanted to make himself equal to Estella where there would be no class division. But his bad fortune had bound him to that trade and he had no way to say no to Joe because Joe was the only person who loved him always. As well as, only for Joe Pip could stay with his harsh sister. Pip was also bound to his mind which did not want to lose his high aspirations of being identical to Estella. Besides, he knew that Estella was playing with his mind and someone made Estella do this. Both Pip and Estella were controlled by others, they had no free will. They were just victims of adult ruling society where social class played a major role and a person's social class determined the amount of education they had.

Furthermore, we can say childhood should be that point in time where children can enjoy their freedom and can learn about life instead of living with burdens. In the novel, like the protagonist, another character was indirectly suffering and she was Estella. Estella was cruelly controlled by Miss Havisham like Pip who was brutally controlled by his elder sister. Neither Pip

nor Estella had chance to live their life freely. Both of them were always being controlled by others. Especially Pip's childhood was surrounded by suffering; guilt and humiliation that always ran in his childish mind that what was wrong and what was right. For example, at the beginning, what he had done with the soldiers and Magwitch. Where childhood would be free from crime and children should be learn about the right and wrong, here Pip indirectly involved in misdeed by helping Magwitch. At a very early age Pip had to take responsibilities of adults just like Dickens who had to engage with adult's world at his early age.

We can get a very obvious flashback of Dickens' childhood and nineteenth's social condition through *David Copperfield*, *Dombey and Son*, *Oliver twist*, *Great Expectations*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *Little Dorrit*, *The Pickwick Papers*, *A tale of two cities*, *Hard Times*, *Bleak House* along with *A Old Curiosity Shop*. All of these novels were published during nineteenth plus deals with social realities.

Chapter Four: Tracing Dickens through his novels

Charles John Huffam Dickens was a censor of his age who desired to be recognized as a gentleman³. His novels exposed many of the evils and abuses those were rampant in Victorian society. The view of Dickens about Victorian society were embodied in his novels must had been highly unflattering to his contemporaries. He had shown a lot of ingenuity and subtlety in portraying the actual condition of Victorian society as well as defects of his childhood through the characters and themes of his novels. Most of the critics had accepted the opinion of availability of autobiographical elements in his novels.

It is quiet impossible to overlook the early circumstances of Dickens's life that haunted him to the ending part of his suffering.

Dickens's lifelong preoccupation with childhood and its unresolved relation to the adult world is due quite as much to the complicated cultural status of childhood in nineteenth-century England as to the private experiences of Dickens's early life. (Andrew 1)

The fact that both his paternal grandparents were domestic servants of nobleman's house and another circumstance that may have counted heavily with him was the fact that his maternal grandfather had been an embezzler. Then his father's shiftlessness and their moving during Dickens's childhood besides not getting accommodation brought misery in his life. After that they finally moved into the Debtor's prison. Later Dickens's entire grudge started to build against his father and also for his mother for neglecting his education also for sending him to the

³ "The Victorian Web" explain that in the 19th century, 'Gentleman' was like a social title for upper class people and they used to think that they get this title by their origins later this concept tuned into another perception that any person can be recognized as a Gentleman upon the essential dignity of his occupation.

humiliating work of Warren's Blacking factory just like other little characters Pip, Oliver Twist and David Copperfield. Dickens brought his own unhappy childhood into his novels because it was the pivotal part of his life where he suffered a lot. Dickens shared all about himself only with his friend John Forster, who incorporated it into his *Life of Charles Dickens* where Forster tried to show a little child's painful fall from promising schoolboy to a poor little laborer for earning his own living. Dickens also described himself to Forster that later he turned into a shabby child like ragged slum children and homeless orphans who wandered the streets of London. The bitter and humiliating experience of Dickens's childhood haunted him throughout his life. Not even twelve in age he had to work in the dirty rat infested old house, sticking labels on blacking bottles which later flashed out in through David's character who also worked in blacking factory. The sensitive nerves of that little boy Dickens became very adversely affected by this humiliating work. The vision of a very grim world with unkind images permanently influenced Dickens' soul. All of Dickens' visions and dreams of beauty and happiness became emerged with dirt, meanness, shame and humiliation. Afterward all of his painful experiences of childhood were portrayed in his novels.

Realism is a significant factor to draw the picture of life and narrate the scenario of a particular society and Dickens is the real master of realism as he portrayed the true and real picture of his life along with Victorian society lively. Different critics hold divergent views on Dickens' realism. Some of them appreciated him and on the other hand some of them criticized Dickens' character as being unreal. As a real master of realism, Dickens knew that realism could be used in two different senses where the more common sense depicts thing as they are real and the other sense is the art of making anything that may be imagined look real even it may make the impossible seems probable. Dickens had most of his second kind of realism. The typical

characters in Dickens's novels were represented by Joe Gargery of *Great Expectations*, Mr. Mantalini of *Nicholas Nickleby*, Sam Weller of *The pickwick Papers*, Daniel Quilp and Dick Swiveller from *The Old Curiosity Shop* or Micawber and Murdstones from *Oliver Twist*. Some of these characters had been drawn from actual life without much modification. Dickens made these characters through his experiences because he wanted to show the real stories to the world.

So, on account of theme, source of plot, relation to personal experience and style and technique of writing; it is very easy to say that the shadow of the life of Charles Dickens and biographical elements are present in his novels.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Dickens had done his best when he wrote from a child's point of view. He had an extraordinary understanding of children and writings were the combinations of his childhood experience, views on Victorian society and realism. Besides Dickens portrayal of childhood was unsurpassable. The merits of his studies of sensitive nervous childhood were universally recognized. The tragedies of sensitive and ill used children were Dickens' passion for writing his novels because his childhood was deeply related to all of these. He could draw these situations in his novels with enormous force, tenderness and imaginative insight since he explored these circumstances very closely. Dickens's excellence part of his novels is that most of his works are full of characters. His characters create a strong bridge with the readers warmly although they are thieves, murderers and hungry children. Apart that Dickens was the first novelist to place children at the centre of novels. Within this context Martin Stephen, in his book the English literature asserted that "the lost, neglected or ill-treated child is a central figure in a vast number of Dickens's novels and perhaps derived from his own childhood" (236). Shortly if we say, the Victorian novel mainly helped people to use the moral consideration by making human solidarity. Basically Dickens's interest to write about the social problem and children problem encouraged other novelists who learned from him and also started to write about social concern in their writings. Elizabeth Gaskell was one of them who got support by Dickens and her famous novels were *Mary Barton* (1848), *North and South* (1855). These two novels of Gaskell primarily show the cruelty of the industrial system and its impact. Gaskell's novel *The North and South* exposes the different lives of English people where the poor belongs from the north and the rich belongs from south; and the plot is centered on a girl who is very gentle and she belongs from south and goes to the north where she meets poor work people. Another famous

woman novelist was Charlotte Bronte who is counted as one of the best writer for her famous novel *Jane Eyre* (1847) which shows many circumstances of women. The plot of this novel is concentrated on a poor orphan girl's life who lived with her cruel aunt and she was sent to a miserable school. So nineteenth century's other writers also showed their consciousness about gloomy childhood of that epoch. Like dickens they were also worried and that epoch's circumstances enforced them to think about it and write about it on their writings.

From the analysis of Charles Dickens' novels, I can say *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield* are highly autobiographical and these three are 'Coming of Age' novels because from childhood to adolescence are present here. *David Copperfield* is the first of this kind which portrays young Dickens's childhood. In *Oliver Twist* where we find Oliver passed some time in a place which was totally corrupted by criminals, but crime could not touch his mind and he was pure and honest like Dickens. Another novel which shows the suffering and high ambitions of a little boy is *Great Expectations*. By analyzing these three novels, have ascertained commonness between David and Dickens, Oliver and Dickens as well as among Pip and Dickens. These three character's story of life reflects Dickens' own complexities in facing reality. Charles dickens was not at all interested in revealing mental states of characters of his novels. He was deeply concerned with the outer actions and views and expressed and emphasized those in his writings.

Dickens was not only famous as an urban novelist in England but he was one of the major social critics of his time to use creative writings to criticize the evils of society. The representation of the themes of childhood and victimization of children by their family and their surroundings in Dickens opens up the issue of revaluation of such things in our lives as much as it did with the Victorian readers. His novels provoked serious questions as to facts that these

issues were very prevalent in Victorian era and also drew attention to the necessity of taking measures. Even in our times we need to reassess the conditions of our progeny and the role of the family and the society in our lives. Thus Dickens' works remain enduring and significant. At last, I can say Dickens has successfully portrayed the sufferings of little children in his novels and enabled the readers to understand what was going on at that time in nineteenth century's England and have got a very clear scenario about the Victorian urban child and the gloomy aspect of that epoch.

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