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CHARLES DICKENS IN FICTION AND  
AUTOBIOGRAPHY: A CRITICAL  
ANALYSIS OF *OLIVER TWIST* AND  
*GREAT EXPECTATIONS*.

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# Dedication

I dedicate the result of this work to:

- My mother, Juliette ELEGBE and my father, Louis Atchadé DJANGBO who gave me birth, have supported me and always pray for me. May God grant you long life.
- My beloved wife, Nathalie O. BOKO who encouraged me and accepted to take care of the family, whenever I am away from home while conducting my research work, and my children, God's Will I Yèba Olamidé and God's Will II Yaï Olawolé.

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# Introduction:

Soyemi Olusegun defines literature as being an imaginative interpretation of happening in life (*DJ Revision Keys on English Literature* 05). Literature, being a field of intellectual endeavor, we have different genres of literary works: prose, poetry and drama (S. Olusegun 08). My research work is focused on prose writing. This has to do with continuous writing of some type. It is usually a narrative of definite length depending on what the writer has to say. Certain factors can be identified as being common to the novel and novella. Those factors are called elements of prose. They are so called because they are forever useful in the discussion and critical analysis of prose works.

Prose works can be fictional and sometimes, non-fictional. Prose manifests in form of novels such as *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens. Fictional prose works are usually the figment of a writer's imagination; they are invented or created in the writer's mind. S. Olusegun says that the story may involve a man in relation to his environment: his wife, colleagues or even himself. Although the story is fabricated, the truth which it conveys still strikes us acceptable in realistic terms (08). Fiction is however not synonymous with falsehood or lying because it is a story written and arranged based on the laws of probability... Sometimes, it is difficult to draw a line of demarcation between fiction and reality for the fact that fiction goes with reality and it is thus dependent on it to a very large extent (S. Olusegun 09). A prose work can be about the writer's own true life. In this case, we talk about an autobiographical work. An autobiographical novel is a form of novel using auto fiction techniques, or the merging of autobiographical and fiction elements. The literary technique is distinguished from an autobiography or memoir by the stipulation of being fiction. Because an autobiographical novel is partially

fiction, the author does not ask the reader to expect the text to fulfill the "autobiographical pact."<sup>(1)</sup> Names and locations are often changed and events are recreated to make them more dramatic but the story still bears a close resemblance to that of the author's life. While the events of the author's life are recounted, there is no pretense of exact truth. Events may be exaggerated or altered for artistic or thematic purposes.

Within the framework of my research in order to obtain the D.E.A (Master degree in Arts) I propose to carry out a research work on the theme: *Charles Dickens in fiction and autobiography: a critical analysis of Oliver Twist and Great Expectations*. I have been very interested in the different novels written by Charles Dickens that I read during my first four years study at the university. Having not understood why such interest in his novels, I decided to work on these two novels of his.

The available literature in critical analysis of *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* neglects to clearly point out the autobiographical and satirical aspects of the novels. Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study is to draw Dickens's readers' attention on his social commentary and literary techniques.

Through this topic I hope to contribute to a better understanding of Dickens's novels. The work covers three different parts, six main chapters and an annex section. Part one deals with the research background and context; in the first chapter I identify the problem and give the research framework, then I state the problem and give the purpose which has urged me to choose this current topic before dealing with the scope and limitation of the study.

(1)Philippe Lejeune, "Autobiographical Pact," pg. 19

In the same chapter I talk about the significance of the study, the research theory and the methodology. In chapter two I deal with the related literature going through the literatures available, the criticism of these literary views on the background of *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*. Part two talks about Charles Dickens as a novelist and a biographer. In chapter three, I talk of Dickens's lifetime, I do an analytical study of both *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist*. Chapter four is about a comment on Charles's mere fictional and autobiographical views; going through the weaknesses of these views and their impacts on the readers. Part three deals with an approach to solutions. Chapter five embraces Charles's new view on British penal system going through its content, its principle and literary dimensions. In the last chapter, which is chapter six I deal with our suggestions, advice and recommendations, a conclusion, as well as the references used in all the chapters of this dissertation. There is also an annex section that includes images related to Charles Dickens's life.

PART ONE:

Research background and  
context

**CHAPTER ONE:**  
**Identification of the problem and  
research framework**

### 1.1. The problem statement and the purpose of the study:

Each novelist has his/her manner of narrating the story in the novel which is an extended piece of fiction and there is in it, very often, a larger world of incidents and perhaps, characters than in the novella (short stories) those characteristics are found in what is called “Elements of prose” which include: the plots, the characters, the settings, the point of view and others.

During my four years’ studies at the University of Abomey-Calavi in Benin, I have been very interested in the different novels written by Charles Dickens that I read. I always wonder why this interest in his novels. But till now I have not got the appropriate answer to my questions. Therefore, I think that a literary study of some of his novels through a critical analysis of two of his novels will help me get a clear view of his style and his choice of the setting, characters so and so on.

The available literature in critical analysis of *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* neglects to clearly point out the autobiographical and satirical aspects of the novels. Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study is to draw Dickens’s readers’ attention on his social commentary and literary techniques through those novels.

The research we intend to carry out will consist in studying the author’s style and specificity in both “*Great Expectations*” and “*Oliver Twist*” to discover the real reason of such an interest in his novels by his readers. Simple readers like students and critics alike are very interested in “*Great Expectations*” and “*Oliver Twist*” while reading them. The two novels have been and are still used as part of educational curriculum in many West African countries like Benin. I think that my study may help me understand the reason of Charles Dickens’s readers’ interests in his novels. I decide to work on the topic: *Charles Dickens in fiction and autobiography: a critical analysis of Oliver Twist and Great Expectations*.

Here I try to point out the various objectives to be reached at the end of this work. My global objective in choosing this topic is to help Charles Dickens's readers get a clear view of his style, his life as a novelist and a biographer; mainly through *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*. Besides this global objective I am also aiming at other specific objectives. First, I would like to point out some characteristics of an autobiographical novel. The second specific objective is to find out if the problems of Dickens's fiction are derived from his autobiography. Another specific objective is to point out some evidence of autobiographical and satirical elements in the novels.

### Research Questions

The central research question that this study aims to answer is what the autobiographical and satirical elements in the novels are. This study will also address the following research sub-questions:

1. What are the qualities and/or the characteristics of an autobiographical novel?
2. Which problems of Dickens's fiction are derived from his autobiography?
3. What are the evidence of autobiographical and satirical elements in the novels?

I wish the potential dissertation would be conducive to the advancement of British studies.

#### 1.2. Scope and limitation of the study

This study enables us to go through some of the different literatures available on Charles Dickens's fictional and autobiographical style in *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*. I am then going to criticise these literatures going back to the background of the novels. An analytical study of the novels will lead me to comment on them. I am going to point out the weaknesses of these views and

their impacts on the readers. This analysis will surely lead me to an approach of solution through a new view to Charles's description and satires on the one hand and make some suggestions and recommendations on the other hand.

This study would easily be carried out if I had the opportunity to travel to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland which is the native country of the writer I am talking about. This trip, if it were done could help me have vivid exchange and discussions with famous native writers and critics who have written on Charles Dickens's novels. Let say that this theme has obliged me to read many of Dickens's novels apart from the two target novels. I will cite some of these books in my research work.

### 1.3. Significance of the study

The topic *Charles Dickens in fiction and autobiography: a critical analysis of Oliver Twist and Great Expectations* is significant in the sense that, it will enable Charles Dickens's readers to better understand his style and ways of narrating stories in his novels.

The topic under consideration is significant in the sense that it will lead me to the reading of some of the literature reviews available on both *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*. Reading these literary reviews and criticizing them will help me to go through the background of *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*. The study will also enlighten the readers and make it clearer to them so as to have a better understanding of Charles Dickens's works.

The study will be of great importance to the readers since it will expose the personality of Dickens in some ways. My research work is still significant in the sense that it is an appeal to literary works readers so that they can do their best to understand the style of writers. They should try to know a little about a

writer's biography when they are about to read his work(s). This may help them to easily understand the literary elements in the novel.

Finally, this study is significant as it can lead the potential literary works writers to provide themselves with the necessary means, strategies and styles they need to write interesting and worldwide acceptable novels.

#### 1.4. Research theory and methodology:

In order to reach my goal efficiently, I have conducted my research according to qualitative methodology that I would like to display in this chapter.

##### ➤ Qualitative research

Qualitative research is the approach usually associated with the social constructivist paradigm which emphasises the socially constructed nature of reality. It is about recording, analysing and attempting to uncover the deeper meaning and significance of human behaviour and experience, including contradictory beliefs, behaviours and emotions. Researchers are interested in gaining a rich and complex understanding of people's experience and not in obtaining information which can be generalized to other larger groups. (Alzheimer Europe Office. *Qualitative research*. 145, route de Thionville; L-2611 Luxembourg, 2012)

##### ➤ The process

The approach adopted by qualitative researchers tends to be inductive which means that they develop a theory or look for a pattern of meaning on the basis of the data that they have collected. This involves a move from the specific to the general and is sometimes called a bottom-up approach. However,

most research projects also involve a certain degree of deductive reasoning.

Qualitative researchers do not base their research on pre-determined hypotheses. Nevertheless, they clearly identify a problem or topic that they want to explore and may be guided by a theoretical lens - a kind of overarching theory which provides a framework for their investigation.

The approach to data collection and analysis is methodical but allows for greater flexibility than in quantitative research. Data are collected in textual form on the basis of observation and interaction with the participants e.g. through participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups. It is not converted into numerical form and is not statistically analysed.

Data collection may be carried out in several stages rather than once and for all. The researchers may even adapt the process mid-way, deciding to address additional issues or dropping questions which are not appropriate on the basis of what they learn during the process. In some cases, the researchers will interview or observe a set number of people. In other cases, the process of data collection and analysis may continue until the researchers find that no new issues are emerging. (Alzheimer Europe Office. *Qualitative research*. 145, route de Thionville; L-2611 Luxembourg, 2012).

#### ➤ Principles

Researchers will tend to use methods which give participants a certain degree of freedom and permit spontaneity rather than forcing them to select from a set of pre-determined responses (of which none might be appropriate or accurately describe the participant's thoughts, feelings, attitudes or behaviour) and to try to create the right atmosphere to enable people to express themselves. This may mean adopting a less formal and less rigid approach than that used in

quantitative research.

It is believed that people are constantly trying to attribute meaning to their experience. Therefore, it would make no sense to limit the study to the researcher's view or understanding of the situation and expect to learn something new about the experience of the participants. Consequently, the methods used may be more open-ended, less narrow and more exploratory (particularly when very little is known about a particular subject). The researchers are free to go beyond the initial response that the participant gives and to ask why, how, in what way etc. In this way, subsequent questions can be tailored to the responses just given.

Qualitative research often involves a smaller number of participants. This may be because the methods used such as in-depth interviews are time and labour intensive but also because a large number of people are not needed for the purposes of statistical analysis or to make generalizations from the results. (Alzheimer Europe Office. *Qualitative research*. 145, route de Thionville; L-2611 Luxembourg, 2012)

➤ Rationale for Qualitative Methods:

The purpose of qualitative research is to understand and explain participant meaning (Morrow & Smith, 2000). More specifically, Creswell (1998) defines qualitative research as, an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (p.15).

First, I have chosen two of Charles Dickens's most popular novels to have an appraisal of them. The given novels are *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*.

The research is based on a critical analysis of *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*. My research concerns Charles Dickens's autobiographical and satirical style in general and particularly in the above listed novels.

The novel *Oliver Twist* is a criticism of the cruelty that children and poor people suffered at the hands of 19th century society. It was Dickens first novel written under his own name when he was 24 years old and in it he already reveals his sharp, but comic comments and criticism. Whereas *Great Expectations* was written later. The main influence of Charles Dickens, as a writer would have been fiction written in the gothic genre. Gothic novels have a theme of mystery and suspense, usually suspense, and are usually set in lonely places using decrepit buildings, which were isolated from the neighbourhood.

The main strategies that we have used to collect the required data for the current study are the target novels reading, the reading of lectures got from our training, browsing some web sites, reading some critics on the novels and reading other novels from the same author.

The reading of the critical essays has allowed me to have vivid token of what British and American critics think of Dickens's style. After collecting all the data from these different stages I have made their analysis and have kept the final results in this work.

CHAPTER TWO:  
**Literature review**

## Literature review

This dissertation is the product of my attending the lectures delivered during the D.E.A (Master degree) 2011-2012 courses, especially by Professor Augustin AINAMON, Professor Taofiki KOUMAKPAI, Dr (MC) Léonard KOUSSOUHON, Dr Ambroise MEDEGAN, Dr Prosper ATCHADE and Dr Innocent DATONDJI. Thanks to their cognitive and know-how skills, more incentives have boosted my love for literary criticism. Ten years earlier, Mister François AGBOIGBA made me discover Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and then *Great Expectations*.

I am interested in both *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* because they deal with the horrible living conditions of poor people in Dickens's society. These novels tell us about how Dickens suffered in his childhood. Katherine Lesch (2) freely confirmed this. She admitted that Dickens's "longing to express...recollections of his own childhood" is both typically Victorian and deeply personal (qtd. in Carr 453). On a cultural level, "the single most pervasive set of autobiographical myths available to the Victorians concerns childhood" (qtd. in Landow, Introduction, xxvi). On an individual level, Dickens's childhood experiences rended his consciousness into separate halves of fantasy and nightmare that would later manifest themselves in *Great Expectations*. So, I would like one day to write novels of this nature.

*Oliver Twist* is the second novel by the English author Charles Dickens, published by Richard Bentley in 1838. The story is about an orphan Oliver Twist, who escaped from a workhouse and travels to London where he meets the Artful Dodger, leader of a gang of juvenile pickpockets.

(2) Katherine Lesch '97 (English 168, Brown University, 1996)

Oliver is led to the lair of their elderly criminal trainer Fagin, naively unaware of their unlawful activities. *Oliver Twist* is notable for Dickens's unromantic portrayal of criminals and their sordid lives. The book exposed the cruel treatment of many a waif-child in London, which increased international concern in what is sometimes, known as "The Great London waif crisis": the large number of orphans in London in the Dickens's era.

The book's subtitle, "*The parish Boy's progress*" alludes to Bunyan's "*The pilgrim's progress*" and also to pair of popular 18<sup>th</sup> century caricature series by William Hogarth, "*A Rake's Progress*" and "*A Harlot Progress*". An early example of the social novel, the book calls the public's attention to various contemporary evils, including the poor law, child labour and the recruitment of children as criminals. Dickens mocks the hypocrisies of his time by surrounding the novel's serious themes with sarcasm and dark humour.

The novel may have been inspired by the story of Robert Bincoe, an orphan whose account of hardships as a child labourer in a cotton mill was widely read in the 1830s. It is likely that Dickens's own early youth as a child labourer contributed to the story's development. *Oliver Twist* has been the subject of numerous film and television adaptation, and is the basis for a highly successful musical play, and the multiple Academy Award winning 1968 motion picture *Oliver!*

The book was originally published in Bentley's *Miscellany* as a serial, in monthly installment that began appearing in the month of February 1837 and continued through April 1839. It was originally intended to form part of Dickens's serial *The Mudfog Papers*. It did not appear as its own monthly serial until 1846.

George Cruikshank provided one steel etching per month to illustrate each installment. The first novelization appeared six months before the serialization was completed. It was published in three volumes by Richard Bentley, the

owner of Bentley's Miscellany, under the author's pseudonym "BOZ" and included 24 steel-engraved plates by Cruikshank.

*Great Expectation*, Dickens's thirteenth novel was published in Dickens's weekly journal "All the Year Round" without illustration. An American edition was also published, curiously a week in advance of the English version in Harper's weekly.

According to George Cruikshank, the novel contains a strong autobiographical element, though not as openly as in *David Copperfield*. It is said that Dickens reread *Copperfield* before writing *Great Expectations* to avoid an intentional repetition. Called Dickens's darkest work by some, it was very well received by Victorian readers and remains one of Dickens's most popular works today. Many consider Dickens's greatest use of plot, characterization and style, and *Great Expectations* the masterpiece of Dickens's works.

In fact, I myself have read and reread many times *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* to limit confusion if I cannot avoid confusing the different characters in both novels. *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* have been well appreciated by my fellow students when we have been submitted to their reading. Plot, characterization and style used in both *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* are almost the same.

MARK NORWALK OH in his *Reviews* said, talking about *Oliver Twist*, that he has in his 37 years of life avoided reading Charles Dickens. He said: "My reason: after having suffered through trying to read the so-called English literature of his era - Thomas Harding, Emile Bronte and Mary Shelly- I figured Dickens would be no better. For some reason I can't now recollect, I decided to give Dickens a try. I chose *Oliver Twist* and was immediately hooked. Far from the boring narrative one finds in the works of the other English writers I've already mentioned, Dickens has a very personable, simple, attractive writing style.

As its title suggests, the book itself is about Oliver Twist. He's an orphan who, constantly abused, finally runs away and goes to London for there he figures he'll never be found. During his trip to that city, he meets a youth of perhaps thirteen years who calls himself the Artful Dodger. He's a pick pocket, and he brings poor Oliver into a den of thieves, one headed by a fence named Fagin. Here is a character of very bad reputation. Alas, he also demonstrates Dickens's obvious anti-Semitism. Fagin represents a caricature of all "bad" Jews. Despite this flaw, Dickens nonetheless makes him a compelling villain. His other primary rogue, Bill Sikes the housebreaker, is even more dangerous and more terrifying.

Poor Oliver is soon used as a decoy while the Artful Dodger and his fellow pickpocket, Charley Bates, steal from a gentleman looking at books at a bookstand. Oliver is caught, taken to the magistrate, then befriended by the very man who thought Oliver had picked his pocket: Mr. Brownlow. From here Oliver's adventures for the most part recall the terrible things that happen to the poor boy: he is kidnapped, compelled to be a house breaker, and has a variety of other problems. Along the way he learns that not all the adults in the world are as compassionless as those who ran the Parish orphanage from whence he came.

This book is more than a compelling tale: it is biting social commentary, attacking the terrible conditions that the English masses had to endure in the first half of the 19th century; it is especially critical of the unfair Poor Law. England at that time was in essence what the free market advocates want in America to be today: they want no government interference in business nor the government to manage anyone's lives' let the market to take care of it! Thus an orphanage isn't a place where you keep children until they can be adopted or come of age; it's a place where you work them to turn a profit. Oddly, this tale rings very true to our society today, but even if you have no interest whatsoever in society in general and politics and economics in particular, it's nonetheless a wonderful

tale well worth reading. People consider life as a business centre where there is no pity. Only personal interest matters. The workhouse in *Oliver Twist* depicts very well this in British society and is also true somehow in African cities daily life.

Likewise, it was said in *The Atlantic Monthly*: "Altogether we take great joy in recording our conviction that *Great Expectations* is a masterpiece....In my opinion, *Great Expectations* is a work which proves that we may expect from Dickens a series of romances far exceeding in power and artistic skill the productions which have already given him such a preeminence among the novelists of the age."

*Great Expectations* tells the story of Pip, a poor orphaned boy who wishes to transcend his humble upbringing. He finds himself unexpectedly given the opportunity to live a life of wealth and respectability but learns as his life advances that his money is tainted and the girl he loves cannot return his affections. He is forced by circumstance to learn to seek happiness in the very things he gave up in the pursuit of a place in city life. With its famous cast including Miss Havisham, Mrs. Joe Gargery and Jaggers, this is one of Dickens's most renowned and pleasurable novels.

In the same review, *George Gissing* wrote: "Observe how finely the narrative is kept in one key. It begins with a mournful impression - the foggy marshes spreading drearily by the seaward Thames- and throughout recurs this effect of cold and damp and dreariness; in that kind Dickens never did anything so good.... No story in the first person was ever better told." We also felt dreary and afraid when we have read the descriptive narration. Through this style, Charles Dickens captures his readers' mind. He makes them dwell the characters and they feel the same emotion as his characters. He thinks at his readers' place.

Likewise *John Irving* declared: " *Great Expectations* is the first novel I read that made me wish I had written it; it is the novel that made me want to be a novelist - specifically, to move a reader as I was moved then. I believe that

*Great Expectations* has the most wonderful and most perfectly worked out plot for a novel in the English language; at the same time, it never deviates from its intention to move you to laughter and tears." This is our case when we have read this novel and we therefore have a project of writing novels like to depict social realities in our country and continent. This also inspires me, when I match the plots in the novel to Dickens's own life, to write autobiographical novels.

Similarly Henry V. said: "Any adaptation of *Great Expectations* is a tall order: it's such a well loved novel and it's hard to better David Lean's superb black and white version – somehow the black and white captures perfectly the atmosphere of an almost gothic novel.

Yet the image during the opening credits of the butterfly emerging from a chrysalis was an interesting take on Dickens's coming of age novel, and in a way summarised beautifully some of the ideas underpinning it and perhaps that's the way it is best to look upon this television version of *Great Expectations*: a take on, an adaptation, a version.

Of course, there was no need for the addition of such an image, nor the mentions of Miss Havisham's brother's collection of tropical butterflies. Dickens does it perfectly well in the novel simply through calling the boy at the centre of this story Pip.

Nonetheless, one or two of the alterations brought out some ideas from the text beautifully and powerfully. Early on, rather than the soldiers appearing at Pip's house during Christmas dinner, Joe was found searching for Pip on the marshes, then embracing him lovingly – a nice touch of the prodigal son parable which underpins the novel, and a tender suggestion of the outcome to the novel."

Taking into account all these points of view and analysis, I intend to study the autobiographical and satirical aspects of the novels.

**PART TWO:**  
**Charles Dickens as a novelist and a  
biographer**

## CHAPTER THREE:

Charles Dickens's lifetime and an analytical study of  
*Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*

### 3.1. Charles Dickens's lifetime:

Charles Dickens is an English novelist, generally considered as the greatest of the Victorian era. Dickens enjoyed a wider popularity than had any previous author during his lifetime. Much in his work could appeal to simple and sophisticated, to the poor and to the queen, and technological developments as well as the qualities of his work enabled his fame to spread worldwide very quickly. His long career saw fluctuations in the reception and sales of individual novels, but none of them was negligible or uncharacteristic or disregarded, and, though he is now admired for aspects and phases of his work that were given less weight by his contemporaries, his popularity has never ceased and his present critical standing is higher than ever before. The most abundantly comic of English authors, he was much more than a great entertainer. The range, compassion, and intelligence of his apprehension of his society and its shortcomings enriched his novels and made him both one of the great forces in 19th-century literature and an influential spokesman of the conscience of his age.

#### 3.1.1. Dickens's early years:

(3) Charles Dickens, in full Charles John Huffam Dickens (born February 7, 1812, Portsmouth, Hampshire, England. He died on June 9, 1870, Gad's Hill, near Chatham, Kent). Dickens left Portsmouth in infancy. His happiest childhood years were spent in Chatham (1817–22), an area to which he often reverted in his fiction. From 1822 he lived in London, until, in 1860, he moved permanently to a country house, Gad's Hill, near Chatham. His origins were middle class, if of a newfound and precarious respectability; one grandfather had been a domestic servant, and the other an embezzler. His father, a clerk in the navy pay office, was well paid, but his extravagance and ineptitude often brought the family to financial embarrassment or disaster. (Some of his

failings and his ebullience are dramatized in Mr. Micawber in the partly autobiographical *David Copperfield*.) In 1824 the family reached bottom. Charles, the eldest son, had been withdrawn from school and was now set to manual work in a factory, and his father went to prison for debt. These shocks deeply affected Charles. Though abhorring this brief descent into the working class, he began to gain that sympathetic knowledge of its life and privations that informed his writings. Also, the images of the prison and of the lost, oppressed, or bewildered child recur in many novels. Much else in his character and art stemmed from this period, including, as the 20th-century novelist Angus Wilson has argued, his later difficulty, as man and author, in understanding women: this may be traced to his bitter resentment against his mother, who had, he felt, failed disastrously at this time to appreciate his sufferings. She had wanted him to stay at work when his father's release from prison and an improvement in the family's fortunes made the boy's return to school possible. Happily, the father's view prevailed.

His schooling, interrupted and unimpressive, ended at 15. He became a clerk in a solicitor's office, then a shorthand reporter in the law courts (thus gaining a knowledge of the legal world often used in the novels), and finally, like other members of his family, a parliamentary and newspaper reporter. These years left him with a lasting affection for journalism and contempt both for the law and for Parliament. His coming to manhood in the reformist 1830s, and particularly his working on the Liberal Benthamite *Morning Chronicle* (1834–36), greatly affected his political outlook.

(3) Charles Dickens's lifetime, "Dickens's early years", Internet, 13 August, 2012. Available: <http://www.britannica.com>

Another influential event now was his rejection as suitor to Maria Beadnell because his family and prospects were unsatisfactory; his hopes of gaining and chagrin at losing her sharpened his determination to succeed. His feelings about Maria then and at her later brief and disillusioning reentry into his life are reflected in David Copperfield's adoration of Dora Spenlow and in the middle-aged Arthur Clennam's discovery (in *Little Dorrit*) that Flora Finching, who had seemed enchanting years ago, was "diffuse and silly," that Flora, "whom he had left a lily, had become a peony."

### 3.1.2. Dickens's beginning of literary career:

(4) Much drawn to the theatre, Dickens nearly became a professional actor in 1832. In 1833 he began contributing stories and descriptive essays to magazines and newspapers; these attracted attention and were reprinted as *Sketches by "Boz"* (February 1836). The same month, he was invited to provide a comic serial narrative to accompany engravings by a well-known artist; seven weeks later the first installment of *Pickwick Papers* appeared. Within a few months *Pickwick* was the rage and Dickens the most popular author of the day. During 1836 he also wrote two plays and a pamphlet on a topical issue (how the poor should be allowed to enjoy the Sabbath) and, resigning from his newspaper job, undertook to edit a monthly magazine, *Bentley's Miscellany*, in which he serialized *Oliver Twist* (1837–39). Thus, he had two serial installments to write every month. Already the first of his nine surviving children had been born; he had married (in April 1836) Catherine, eldest daughter of a respected Scottish journalist and man of letters, George Hogarth.

(4) Charles Dickens's lifetime, "Dickens's beginning of literary career", Internet, 13 August, 2012. Available: <http://www.britannica.com>

For several years his life continued at this intensity. Finding serialization congenial and profitable, he repeated the *Pickwick* pattern of 20 monthly parts in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838–39); then he experimented with shorter weekly installments for *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840–41) and *Barnaby Rudge* (1841). Exhausted at last, he then took a five-month vacation in America, touring strenuously and receiving quasi-royal honours as a literary celebrity but offending national sensibilities by protesting against the absence of copyright protection. A radical critic of British institutions, he had expected more from “the republic of my imagination,” but he found more vulgarity and sharp practice to detest than social arrangements to admire.

### 3.1.3. Dickens’s middle years:

(5) During his middle years, Charles Dickens has been fond of journalism. Dickens’s journalistic ambitions at last found a permanent form in *Household Words* (1850–59) and its successor, *All the Year Round* (1859–88). Popular weekly miscellanies of fiction, poetry, and essays on a wide range of topics, these had substantial and increasing circulations, reaching 300,000 for some of the Christmas numbers. Dickens contributed some serials - the lamentable *Child’s History of England* (1851–53), *Hard Times* (1854), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), and *Great Expectations* (1860–61) - and essays, some of which were collected in *Reprinted Pieces* (1858) and *The Uncommercial Traveller* (1861, later amplified). Particularly in 1850–52 and during the Crimean War, he contributed many items on current political and social affairs; in later years he wrote less (much less on politics) and the magazine was less political, too. Other distinguished novelists contributed serials, including Mrs. Gaskell, Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade, and Bulwer Lytton.

(5)Charles Dickens’s lifetime, “Dickens’s middle years”, Internet, 13 August, 2012. Available: <http://www.britannica.com>

The poetry was uniformly feeble; Dickens was imperceptive here. The reportage, often solidly based, was bright (sometimes painfully so) in manner. His conduct of these weeklies showed his many skills as editor and journalist but also some limitations in his tastes and intellectual ambitions. The contents are revealing in relation to his novels: he took responsibility for all the opinions expressed (for articles were anonymous) and selected and amended contributions accordingly; thus, comments on topical events and so on may generally be taken as representing his opinions, whether or not he wrote them. No English author of comparable status has devoted 20 years of his maturity to such unremitting editorial work, and the weeklies' success was due not only to his illustrious name but also to his practical sagacity and sustained industry. Even in his creative work, as his eldest son said, "No city clerk was ever more methodical or orderly than he"; no humdrum, monotonous, conventional task could ever have been discharged with more punctuality, or with more businesslike regularity.

#### 3.1.4. Dickens's first novels

(6) His writing during these prolific years was remarkably various and, except for his plays, resourceful. *Pickwick* began as high-spirited farce and contained many conventional comic butts and traditional jokes; like other early works, it was manifestly indebted to the contemporary theatre, the 18th-century English novelists, and a few foreign classics. But, besides giving new life to old stereotypes, *Pickwick* displayed, if sometimes in embryo, many of the features that were to be blended in varying proportions throughout his fiction: attacks, satirical or denunciatory, on social evils and inadequate institutions; topical references;

(6) Charles Dickens's lifetime, "Dickens's first novels", Internet, 13 August, 2012. Available: <http://www.britannica.com>

an encyclopaedic knowledge of London (always his predominant fictional locale); pathos; a vein of the macabre; a delight in the demotic joys of Christmas; a pervasive spirit of benevolence and geniality; inexhaustible powers of character creation; a wonderful ear for characteristic speech, often imaginatively heightened; a strong narrative impulse; and a prose style that, if here over dependent on a few comic mannerisms, was highly individual and inventive. Rapidly improvised and written only weeks or days ahead of its serial publication, *Pickwick* contains weak and jejune passages and is an unsatisfactory whole; partly because Dickens was rapidly developing his craft as a novelist while writing and publishing it. What is remarkable is that a first novel, written in such circumstances, not only established him overnight and created a new tradition of popular literature but also survived, despite its crudities, as one of the best-known novels in the world.

### 3.1.5. Dickens's personal unhappiness:

(7) Dickens's spirits and confidence in the future had indeed declined: 1855 was "a year of much unsettled discontent for him," his friend Forster recalled, partly for political reasons (or, as Forster hints, his political indignation was exacerbated by a "discontent" that had personal origins). The Crimean War, besides exposing governmental inefficiency, was distracting attention from the "poverty, hunger, and ignorant desperation" at home. In *Little Dorrit*, "I have been blowing off a little of indignant steam which would otherwise blow me up..." he wrote, "but I have no present political faith or hope; not a grain." Not only were the present government and Parliament contemptible, but "representative government has become altogether a failure with us...the whole thing has broken down...and has no hope in it." Nor had he a coherent alternative to suggest. This desperation coincided with an acute state of personal unhappiness. The brief tragicomedy of Maria Beadnell's reentry into his life, in 1855, finally destroyed one nostalgic illusion and also betrayed a perilous

emotional immaturity and hunger. He now openly identified himself with some of the sorrows dramatized in the adult David Copperfield: Why is it, that as with poor David, a sense comes always crushing on me, now, when I fall into low spirits, as of one happiness I have missed in life, and one friend and companion I have never made? This comes from the correspondence with Forster in 1854–55, which contains the first admissions of his marital unhappiness; by 1856 he was writing, “I find the skeleton in my domestic closet is becoming a pretty big one”; by 1857–58, as Forster remarked, an “unsettled feeling” had become almost habitual with him, “and the satisfactions which home should have supplied, and which indeed were essential requirements of his nature, he had failed to find in his home.” In 1836, he married Catherine Hogarth, but after twenty years of marriage and ten children, Dickens fell in love with Ellen Ternan, an actress. Soon after, Dickens and his wife separated, ending a long stream of marital difficulties. From May 1858, Catherine Dickens lived apart from him. A painful scandal arose, and Dickens did not act at this time with tact, patience, or consideration. The affair disrupted some of his friendships and narrowed his social circle, but surprisingly it seems not to have damaged his popularity with the public.

Catherine Dickens maintained a dignified silence, and most of Dickens’s family and friends, including his official biographer, Forster, were discreetly reticent about the separation. Not until 1939 did one of his children (Katey), speaking posthumously through conversations recorded by a friend, offer a candid inside account. It was discreditable to him, and his self-justifying letters must be viewed with caution. He there dated the unhappiness of his marriage back to 1838, attributed to his wife various “peculiarities” of temperament (including her sometimes labouring under “a mental disorder”), emphatically agreed with her (alleged) statement that “she felt herself unfit for the life she had to lead as my wife,” and maintained that she never cared for the children nor

they for her. In more temperate letters, where he acknowledged her “amiable and complying” qualities, he simply and more acceptably asserted that their temperaments were utterly incompatible. She was, apparently, pleasant but rather limited; such faults as she had were rather negative than positive, though family tradition from a household that knew the Dickenses well speaks of her as “a whiney woman” and as having little understanding of, or patience with, the artistic temperament.

Dickens’s self-justifying letters lack candour in omitting to mention Ellen Ternan, an actress 27 years his junior, his passion for whom had precipitated the separation. Two months earlier he had written more frankly to an intimate friend:

*The domestic unhappiness remains so strong upon me that I can’t write, and (waking) can’t rest, one minute. I have never known a moment’s peace or content, since the last night of The Frozen Deep.*

*The Frozen Deep* was a play in which he and Nelly (as Ellen was called) had performed together in August 1857. She was an intelligent girl, of an old theatrical family; reports speak of her as having “a pretty face and well-developed figure”—or “passably pretty and not much of an actress.” She left the stage in 1860; after Dickens’s death she married a clergyman and helped him run a school. The affair was hushed up until the 1930s, and evidence about it remains scanty, but every addition confirms that Dickens was deeply attached to her and that their relationship lasted until his death. It seems likely that she became his mistress, though probably not until the 1860s; assertions that a child, or children, resulted remain unproved. Similarly, suggestions that the anguish experienced by some of the lovers in the later novels may reflect Dickens’s own feelings remain speculative. It is tempting, indeed, to associate Nelly with some of their heroines (who are more spirited and complex, less of the “legless angel,”

than most of their predecessors), especially as her given names, Ellen Lawless, seem to be echoed by those of heroines in the three final novels—Estella, Bella, and Helena Landless—but nothing definite is known about how she responded to Dickens, what she felt for him at the time, or how close any of these later love stories were to aspects or phases of their relationship.

“There is nothing very remarkable in the story,” commented one early transmitter of it, and this seems just. Many middle-aged men feel an itch to renew their emotional lives with a pretty young girl, even if, unlike Dickens, they cannot plead indulgence for “the wayward and unsettled feeling which is part (we suppose) of the tenure on which one holds an imaginative life.” But the eventual disclosure of this episode caused surprise, shock, or piquant satisfaction, being related of a man whose rebelliousness against his society had seemed to take only impeccably reformist shapes. A critic in 1851, listing the reasons for his unique popularity, had cited “above all, his deep reverence for the household sanctities, his enthusiastic worship of the household gods.” After these disclosures he was, disconcertingly or intriguingly, a more complex man; and, partly as a consequence, Dickens the novelist also began to be seen as more complex, less conventional, than had been realized. The stimulus was important, though Nelly’s significance, biographically and critically, has proved far from inexhaustible.

(7)Charles Dickens’s lifetime, “Dickens’s personal unhappiness”, Internet, 13 August, 2012. Available: <http://www.britannica.com>

### 3.1.6. Dickens's public readings:

(8) In the longer term, Kathleen Tillotson's remark is more suggestive: "His lifelong love-affair with his reading public, when all is said, is by far the most interesting love-affair of his life." This took a new form, about the time of Dickens's separation from his wife, in his giving public readings from his works, and it is significant that, when trying to justify this enterprise as certain to succeed, he referred to "that particular relation (personally affectionate and like no other man's) which subsists between me and the public." The remark suggests how much Dickens valued his public's affection, not only as a stimulus to his creativity and a condition for his commercial success but also as a substitute for the love he could not find at home. He had been toying with the idea of turning paid reader since 1853, when he began giving occasional readings in aid of charity. The paid series began in April 1858, the immediate impulse being to find some energetic distraction from his marital unhappiness. But the readings drew on more permanent elements in him and his art: his remarkable histrionic talents, his love of theatricals and of seeing and delighting an audience, and the eminently performable nature of his fiction. Moreover, he could earn more by reading than by writing, and more certainly; it was easier to force himself to repeat a performance than create.

His initial repertoire consisted entirely of Christmas books but was soon amplified by episodes from the novels and magazine Christmas stories. A performance usually consisted of two items; of the 16 eventually performed, the most popular were "The Trial from *Pickwick*" and the *Carol*. Comedy predominated, though pathos was important in the repertoire, and horrors were startlingly introduced in the last reading he devised, "Sikes and Nancy," with which he petrified his audiences and half killed himself. Intermittently, until shortly before his death, he gave seasons of readings in London and embarked upon hardworking tours through the provinces and (in 1867–68) the United

States. Altogether he performed about 471 times. He was a magnificent performer, and important elements in his art—the oral and dramatic qualities—were demonstrated in these renderings. His insight and skill revealed nuances in the narration and characterization that few readers had noticed. Necessarily, such extracts or short stories, suitable for a two-hour entertainment, excluded some of his larger and deeper effects—notably, his social criticism and analysis—and his later novels were underrepresented. Dickens never mentioned these inadequacies. He manifestly enjoyed the experience until, near the end, he was becoming ill and exhausted. He was writing much less in the 1860s. It is debatable how far this was because the readings exhausted his energies while providing the income, creative satisfaction, and continuous contact with an audience that he had formerly obtained through the novels. He gloried in his audiences' admiration and love. Some friends thought this too crude a gratification, too easy a triumph, and a sad declension into a lesser and ephemeral art. In whatever way the episode is judged, it was characteristic of him—of his relationship with his public, his business sense, his stamina, his ostentatious display of supplementary skills, and also of his originality. No important author (at least, according to reviewers, since Homer) and no English author since who has had anything like his stature has devoted so much time and energy to this activity. The only comparable figure is his contemporary, Mark Twain, who acknowledged Dickens as the pioneer.

(8) Charles Dickens's lifetime, "Dickens' public readings", Internet, 13 August, 2012. Available: <http://www.britannica.com>

### 3.1.7. Charles Dickens's last years:

(9) Tired and ailing though he was, he remained inventive and adventurous in his final novels. *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) was an experiment, relying less than before on characterization, dialogue, and humour. An exciting and compact narrative, it lacks too many of his strengths to count among his major works. Sydney Carton's self-sacrifice was found deeply moving by Dickens and by many readers; Dr. Manette now seems a more impressive achievement in serious characterization. The French Revolution scenes are vivid, if superficial in historical understanding. *Great Expectations* (1860–61) resembles *Copperfield* in being a first-person narration and in drawing on parts of Dickens's personality and experience. Compact like its predecessor, it lacks the panoramic inclusiveness of *Bleak House*, *Little Dorrit*, and *Our Mutual Friend*, but, though not his most ambitious, it is his most finely achieved novel. The hero Pip's mind is explored with great subtlety, and his development through a childhood and youth beset with hard tests of character is traced critically but sympathetically. Various "great expectations" in the book prove ill founded—a comment as much on the values of the age as on the characters' weaknesses and misfortunes. *Our Mutual Friend* (1864–65), a large, inclusive novel, continues this critique of monetary and class values. London is now grimmer than ever before, and the corruption, complacency, and superficiality of "respectable" society are fiercely attacked. Many new elements are introduced into Dickens's fictional world, but his handling of the old comic-eccentrics (such as Boffin, Wegg, and Venus) is sometimes tiresomely mechanical. How the unfinished *Edwin Drood* (1870) would have developed is uncertain. Here again Dickens left panoramic fiction to concentrate on a limited private action. The central figure was evidently to be John Jasper, whose eminent respectability as a cathedral organist was in extreme contrast to his haunting low opium dens and, out of violent sexual jealousy, murdering his nephew. It would have been

his most elaborate treatment of the themes of crime, evil, and psychological abnormality that recur throughout his novels; a great celebrator of life, he was also obsessed with death.

How greatly Dickens personally had changed appears in remarks by friends who met him again, after many years, during the American reading tour in 1867–68. “I sometimes think...,” wrote one, “I must have known two individuals bearing the same name, at various periods of my own life.” But just as the fiction, despite many developments, still contained many stylistic and narrative features continuous with the earlier work, so, too, the man remained a “human hurricane,” though he had aged considerably, his health had deteriorated, and his nerves had been jangled by travelling ever since his being in a railway accident in 1865. Other Americans noted that, though grizzled, he was “as quick and elastic in his movements as ever.” His photographs, wrote a journalist after one of the readings, “give no idea of his genial expression. To us he appears like a hearty, companionable man, with a deal of fun in him.” But that very day Dickens was writing, “I am nearly used up,” and listing the afflictions now “telling heavily upon me.” His pride and the old-trouper tradition made him conceal his sufferings. And, if sometimes by an effort of will, his old high spirits were often on display. “The cheerfullest man of his age,” he was called by his American publisher, J.T. Fields; Fields’s wife more perceptively noted, “Wonderful, the flow of spirits C.D. has for a sad man.” His fame remained undiminished, though critical opinion was increasingly hostile to him. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, noting the immense enthusiasm for him during the American tour, remarked: “One can hardly take in the whole truth about it, and feel the universality of his fame.”

(9)Charles Dickens’s lifetime, “Dickens’ public readings”, Internet, 13 August, 2012. Available: <http://www.britannica.com>

But in many respects he was “a sad man” in these later years. He never was tranquil or relaxed. Various old friends were now estranged or dead or for other reasons less available; he was now leading a less social life and spending more time with young friends of a calibre inferior to his former circle. His sons were causing much worry and disappointment; “all his fame goes for nothing,” said a friend, “since he has not the one thing. He is very unhappy in his children.” His life was not all dreary, however. He loved his country house, Gad’s Hill, and he could still “warm the social atmosphere wherever he appeared with that summer glow which seemed to attend him.” T.A. Trollope (contributor to Dickens’s *All the Year Round* and brother of the novelist Anthony Trollope), who wrote that, despaired of giving people who had not met him any idea of the general charm of his manner....His laugh was brimful of enjoyment....His enthusiasm was boundless....He was a *heartly* man, a large-hearted man,...a strikingly manly man.

### 3.1.8. Charles Dickens’s farewell readings:

(10) His health remained precarious after the punishing American tour and was further impaired by his addiction to giving the strenuous “Sikes and Nancy” reading. His farewell reading tour was abandoned when, in April 1869, he collapsed. He began writing another novel and gave a short farewell season of readings in London, ending with the famous speech, “From these garish lights I vanish now for evermore...”—words repeated, less than three months later, on his funeral card. He died suddenly in June 1870 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

(10)Charles Dickens’s lifetime, “Charles Dickens’ farewell readings”, Internet, 13 August, 2012. Available: <http://www.britannica.com>

### 3.2. Analytical study of *Oliver Twist*:

*Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens is one of the most widely recognized and beloved stories of all time. Dickens's self-assurance and artistic ambitiousness appeared in *Oliver Twist*, where he rejected the temptation to repeat the successful *Pickwick* formula. *Oliver Twist* is the story of a young orphan boy who reflects the life of poverty in England in the 1830's. The story illustrates the evils of the Poor House's of the time and the corruption of the people who work there. It also shows the depths of London's crime with an emphasis on petty robbery and pick pocketing.

Imagine abruptly woken to the harsh sounds of demanding yelling and screaming only to find yourself still shivering from the lack of hole-filled sheets that they call blankets. Feeling fatigued from another sleepless night and faintly from the malnutrition, you eagerly await your habitual serving of gruel for breakfast. Extremely weak from the meager portion, the never-ending day begins as you are led to do various different chores throughout the day. This is the life in a workhouse.

Workhouses “were places where poor homeless people worked and in return they were fed and housed. In 1834 The Poor Law Amendment Act was introduced which wanted to make the workhouse more of a deterrent to idleness as it was believed that people were poor because they were idle and needed to be punished. So people in workhouses were deliberately treated harshly and the workhouses were more like prisons”. The popularity of the novel and its author has made the book a frequent subject of literary criticism. Although the work has received mainly praise, it is also worth being criticised. Since its publication, Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* has evolved from being criticised as a social commentary and a work of art, to a literary and artistic composition. It was while Charles was twelve years old, that his father, mother, and siblings were sent to debtor's prison. Although Dickens escaped the same fate as his family, he

was forced to support himself by working in a shoe-polish factory. The horrific conditions in the factory haunted Dickens for the rest of his life. Dickens's childhood experiences with the English legal system and in the factories made him a life-long champion of the poor. His novels are filled with downtrodden figures such as abused, impoverished orphans. He had a profound sympathy for childhood suffering and a strong desire for social reform that touches his work at almost every level. These themes heavily influence *Oliver Twist*, a character whose life reflects Charles Dickens's. Dickens left the factory, educated himself, and in 1827 took a job as a legal clerk. After learning shorthand, he began working as a reporter in the courts and Parliament. The great detail and precise description that characterise Dickens's style in his novels are accredited to his experience as a reporter. With his second novel, *Oliver Twist*, Dickens retained some of the humour and the title character of an orphan, but he wrote a book with a more complex plot and a grittier look at the horrors of London. Published in monthly installments in Bentley's Magazine before being released in its entirety, *Oliver Twist*, or *The Parrish Boy's Progress* as it was also called, is the story of an orphan named Oliver Twist. The story begins with Oliver's birth as an illegitimate child. His mother dies in childbirth and Bumble, a beadle for a local church, names the boy and takes him under his custody at the parish "baby farm" or orphanage. After defiantly asking for more food, Oliver is apprenticed to Mr. Sowerberry the undertaker. Clashes with other boys who ridicule him for not having a mother and being illegitimate get Oliver in more trouble. After running away, Oliver meets up with Jack Dawkins, the Artful Dodger. Oliver is brought to the hideout of Fagin, a master criminal and fencer of stolen goods, who decides to corrupt Oliver and use him in crimes. During a failed attempt to pick the pockets of a well-to-do businessman named Mr. Brownlow, Oliver is arrested. However, Mr. Brownlow chooses not to press charges against the boy and instead brings Oliver home. After Oliver is nursed back to health, he is sent out on an errand for Mr. Brownlow. While out on this errand, Oliver is

kidnapped and brought back to Fagin by Nancy and Sikes, two other members of the gang. Fagin once again sends Oliver out to assist at a robbery, where he is shot and left by the other thieves. The occupants of the house, Rose Maylie and her aunt, take to Oliver and believe his pleas of innocence. A new villain named Monks is introduced and he and Fagin plot to kill Oliver. In the complex plot, it is revealed that Oliver is Monk's half-brother and the son of Mr. Brownlow's old friend Mr. Leeford. Mr. Leeford left a will that Oliver would inherit his estate, but only if he grew up and avoided being a criminal, otherwise it would go to Monk. Monk and Fagin tried to corrupt Oliver so they could split the inheritance. Nancy, who helped Rose and Mr. Brownlow uncover the secrets of Oliver's past, is confronted by Sikes for revealing the gangs secrets. She is brutally murdered because of her involvement in helping Oliver. In the end, the good prevail and the evil are punished as Sikes is hanged while trying to escape the police, Fagin is apprehended and condemned to be hanged, and Bumble loses his job. Oliver, his friends, and family enjoy a happy life in the English countryside.

The Adventures of Oliver Twist was serialised by Bentley's Miscellany from February 1837 to April 1839, with three breaks in June and October 1837 and September 1838. Dickens revised the work extensively in 1838 for its release as a single work on November 9, 1838. A second edition published December 17, 1838 was actually an exact copy of the original with second edition printed on the title page. Chapman and Hall issued a third edition with a new title page and a preface in 1840. Dickens continued to revise the novel extensively, repunctuating, "curbing the melodramatic style", and altering chapter divisions. The final product is the edition most commonly found. *Oliver Twist* was published in Philadelphia in 1838 by Lea and Blanchard, in Paris in 1838 by Baudry, and in Leipzig in 1843 by Tauchnitz. In addition, all editions were released with original artwork by George Cruikshank. These pictures were harsh, but Dickens "made no effort to get them softened". The heart-warming

story has maintained such a strong love throughout generations that more dramatizations of *Oliver Twist* been produced than any other Dickens work. Plays, movies, and public readings of *Oliver Twist* are still very prominent and popular.

Charles Dickens was already established as a favorite writer of many people even before the release of *Oliver Twist*. This reputation ensured that his newest novel would be widely reviewed, for the most part with admiration. Dickens can be labeled as the first Victorian author because it was during the writing of *Oliver Twist* that the young Queen Victoria ascended the throne. She even read Dickens's novel, calling it "excessively interesting". Attaining Dickens' goal, the novel was read as much as a social document as a work of art. Dickens continued to work long hours in his later years. He died of a stroke in 1870, following an impassioned public reading of Nancy's death scene from *Oliver Twist* (Charles Dickens).

*Oliver Twist* has been critically analyzed in two major ways, as a work of art and as a social commentary. Since the novel was critical of social matters, and many of these problems have long been reformed, it is of no surprise that the only criticisms of *Oliver Twist* as a social piece are from a period very close to the novel's publication. With *Oliver Twist*, Dickens the master of grand social vision, and Dickens the journalist, come to the front of the stage. Alfred Rimmer praised Dickens for his detailed recreation of the London underworld. The dens and stews of London are painted from life, and the picture is not inviting. The characters of Fagin or Bill Sikes ... are simply bad, as bad as they can be, without one silver thread lining the edge of the cloud. "The vile streets, accurately described and named; the bare, filthy rooms inhabited by Fagin and Sikes and the rest of them; the hideous public-houses to which thieves resort are before us with a haunting reality (Palmer). G.K. Chesterton also praises Dickens for "attacking things because they are bad." "Oliver's nearly becoming an apprentice chimney sweep also alluded to a scandalously dangerous juvenile

job" (Collins 1747). The apprentice system was something Dickens was adamantly opposed to, and it would appear again in some of his later works, such as *David Copperfield*. George Orwell gives the best summary of Dickens' abilities to criticize social problems by explaining that "In *Oliver Twist* ... Dickens attacked English institutions with a ferocity that has never been approached. Yet he managed to do it without making himself hated, and, more than this, the very people he attacked swallowed completely, (with Dickens) becoming a national institution himself." The novel is indisputable "most alive in its presentation of social evils" (Collins 1748). But Dickens received some criticism for his gritty portrayal of criminal life. Since the idea of a social novel was unheard of, some objected to hearing about the facets of life they wanted to ignore. By forcing people to hear about life on the streets, Dickens attained part of his goal for the novel.

Also questioning of Dickens's work, David Philipson brings up an interesting point in his criticism of "The Jew in English Fiction". "Strange it is that Charles Dickens, who, contributed the most toward reforming social abuses, should have joined the vulgar cry, and marked his worst character as a Jew." Philipson's biting remarks hold true, making Dickens appear hypocritical. In Dickens' defense, he did edit out almost all references to Fagin as a Jew in later editions. After the working conditions, child labor laws, and standard of living in England were improved, the incentive to criticize *Oliver Twist* for its social commentary faded. However, the criticisms of *Oliver Twist* as a literary work have continued from its publication through today.

The critics of Dickens's plot and structure are not as kind as his social critics were, regardless of era. In 1849, James Oliphant cites "plots we find little to admire and much to condemn" as "the most serious problem" in *Oliver Twist*. Oliphant's biggest objections are to the "lack of probability" the events in the plot would occur. Going on to say that the "remarkable coincidences are perfectly absurd", the book is "too childish", and that the freedom a novelist has

to "arrange incidents to suit his purposes" must be managed "in a more convincing fashion, ...or the whole illusion is gone."

Phillip Collins praises Dickens for originality in story, saying *Oliver Twist* was the first English novel centered on a child. But he too has a problem with the "multiple coincidences" of the plot that repeatedly deliver Oliver to all the right people, as well as the confusion caused by involved heritages and relations between characters. "Flagrantly non-realistic" were the words of Angus Wilson. "There is no coherency in the structure of the thing; the plot is utterly without ingenuity, the mysteries are so artificial as to be altogether uninteresting (Palmer<sup>4</sup>). Some explanation for the incoherency in structure can and have been attributed to the format in which Dickens was writing *Oliver Twist*, stopping every month and trying to do so at a point that would keep readers interested and in suspense.

Graham Greene provides another interesting twist in the importance of *Oliver Twist*. Greene opens by criticizing *Oliver Twist's* lack of realism in plot and characters, saying that Dickens would not perfect this skill until later. The real genius of *Oliver Twist*, Greene argues, is the conflict between good and evil. It has Fagin and Sikes being the more interesting characters and a world without God. Consequently, the real interest in the novel is Oliver's "struggles between good and bad", and not his convenient ascension to the upper class.

G.K. Chesterton has a more involved interpretation of *Oliver Twist* as a literary work. He states "*Oliver Twist* is not of great value but of great importance. Some parts are so crude that one is tempted to say that Dickens would have been greater without it." Chesterton continues to assert that the importance of *Oliver Twist* lies less in its value as great literature than as an insight to the "moral, personal, political" and social character of Dickens, important for analyzing Dickens later, better crafted works.

Although not as highly acclaimed as some of Dickens's other works, *Oliver Twist* is a fascinating and touching story. The novel drew attention for

being more than a great story, as it also helped to reform English law. Although Dickens' objective of social reform has long been accomplished, the stories literary qualities keep it at the forefront of classic novels and criticism.

### 3.3. Analytical study of *Great Expectations*:

The target book here is called *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens written in 1839. I have decided to explain how Charles Dickens creates effective character portraits and landscape descriptions (in chapters 1-4) in the book. The title of the book (*Great expectations*) is one that I think the author meant us to think of it sarcastically. I think this because in the book the story is based in the misty marshes and Pip, his older sister and her husband live in quite a small house and were also working class. For this family, life seems pretty bleak with no escape to a better life seeming possible. That's why I think the title is also ironic because Charles Dickens's life was also pretty bleak.

Charles Dickens didn't have a nice upbringing. He was familiar with poverty through his life - as he was from a poor background- so he could familiarise himself with Pip in the book. In 1814 the family moved to London, and then, to Chatham in Kent. Charles Dickens's father who was a government clerk had gone to a debtor's prison for wasting his money in life, which also happens to Charles Dickens in the book, so Charles Dickens was probably writing about what happened to his dad in the book. Therefore Charles Dickens had to get a job at a young age at a blacking factory to help his family. While working in the blacking factory Charles Dickens had come up with the idea of the now well known book "*Oliver Twist*". As he grew older he started to write novels about experiences that he had in life under the name of "Boz" which became popular. From these novels he gained enough money to buy a house in Rochester, from where he later moved to Kent. When in Kent he became familiar with the Marshes in all its isolation and dullness. This is mirrored into

the book as exactly that, the dull, isolated marshes- not a very nice place to be. When he was in Kent he became apprenticed to a lawyer and then gained money as a reporter/author. This is also mirrored in the book as Pip becoming Jaggers' apprentice.

Victorian society was one of extremes; there were mainly two classes of people- the rich and the poor. Many of the rich were factory owners who became wealthy as a result of the industrial revolution, and the poor working class families who lived in extreme poverty as illustrated in the book as Joe Gargery, and the wealthy as Miss Havisham. Charles Dickens himself was from a poor background. Pip's only chance of rising out of poverty was having his education and apprenticeship paid for by a wealthy benefactor. In Victorian times there were no social benefits to support the poor. So the workhouse, an institution where disease was common and work was exchanged for a roof and poor food was the only solution to debt. In Victorian times there were many values, some of these include; Children must be seen and not heard and cleanliness is next to godliness. This is portrayed in the book as Mrs Joe always keeping her house clean and immaculate and Pip not saying a word at the dinner table.

The main influence of Charles Dickens, as a writer would have been fiction written in the gothic genre. Gothic novels have a theme of mystery and suspense, usually suspense, and are usually set in lonely places using decrepit buildings, which were isolated from the neighbourhood. There was usually a dark menacing stranger and a vulnerable hero or heroin, which would feel threatened. The book has some Gothic elements to it. In the first chapter it describes the graveyard as being a dark, lonely and run down place, which is often typical of gothic style. Another gothic element that the book *Great Expectation* has is that there is a villain (Magwitch), and a vulnerable hero (Pip). There are also other novels at the time of when Charles Dickens was writing *Great Expectations* that he as a person might have read. These may have

included 'Dracula' by Bram Stoker or 'Jane Eyre' by Charlotte Bronte. He would have used these ideas in the other books of the period and would have definitely influenced him in the writing of *Great Expectations*, of creating a picture of a lonely, isolated graveyard on the marshes, which was the scene for the vulnerable Pip's meeting with the mysterious menacing figure of Magwitch- the terrifying convict. Also the dilapidated, 'Satis house' was a typical picture of a gothic mansion.

Charles Dickens uses many figures of speech, adjectives and adverbs. He does this very well and his choice of language and writing skills including onomatopoeia, personification and alliteration, gives us a very clear and good image of what the marshes were like and the atmosphere.

In chapter 1 he uses alliteration, "low leaden line" to show how dense and gloomy the area was, from this you get the idea that the marshes were an inhospitable place. Charles Dickens also mentions in paragraph three that Phillip Pirrip, Georgiana (Phillips wife), and all the children- Alexander, Bartholomew, Abraham, Tobias and Roger- were dead and buried. From this we get the idea that life wasn't good at the marshes and gives the impression that death was constantly upon them and that life was about just waiting until you die. Also in chapter one paragraph three it says that the marshes were "...intersected with dykes..." this is a geographical term, dykes are levees that are man built to protect the low land from flooding which suggests that the marshes getting flooded was a problem and that they were close to a big river. Dickens also uses a good metaphor in chapter one verse three, '...distant savage lair from which the wind was rushing was the sea...' Also in chapter one he gives us a good description of where the village is actually situated, "I pointed to where the village lay, on the flat in-shore among the alder-trees and pollards, a mile or more from the church". He mentions the sky as having "...long angry red lines..." Anger is a human emotion that can only be felt by a human; Dickens has used this device- personification- on purpose because he wants us to feel as

if the sky is a person like us and that we feel the sky's anger as well. Dickens is describing a winter sunset at the end of chapter one. Dickens also uses a lot of adjectives; in one particular paragraph he mentions all these describing words-fearful, old, soaked, smothered, lamed, cut and stung. He also uses a lot of repetition in that same paragraph; he uses the word 'and' eleven times to enforce the ideas upon the reader of Magwitch's suffering. At the end of chapter one Dickens mentions a gibbet with chains hanging off it, which had once held a pirate. A gibbet is the gallows on which criminals were left suspended after execution. In our opinion a gibbet looks rather sinister, menacing and scary, which just adds to the effect of the marshes being a bad place to be. At the end of Chapter two Dickens states that the marshes were 'misty', giving us a clearer image of the marshes. Dickens also uses an effective simile in chapter three "...as if some goblin had been crying there all night, and using the window as a pocket-handkerchief." This is referring to how damp the marshes were and gives yet another image in our minds to what the marshes were like. He also uses personification, to personalise the marsh mist, he says, "...everything seemed to run at me." As if the mist was an actual person. This is a clever device to use and Dickens uses it effectively here.

Dickens uses many clever devices such as adjectives and adverbs to describe the characters in his book very well. Especially for characters Such as for Pip, Magwitch and Mrs. Joe. Magwitch is an escaped convict and has escaped a prison ship. He is currently on the run and is hiding out on the marshes. In chapter one Dickens shows us exactly how much Magwitch is actually suffering by using several phrases of adjectives in one sentence, "A man who had been soaked in water, and smothered in mud, and lamed by stones, and cut by flints, and stung by nettles, and torn by briars; who limped and shivered, and glared and growled; and whose teeth chattered in his head ...". Limped, shivered and glared are words that suggest to us that Magwitch isn't only a menacing character but that he is also vulnerable person now that he is on

the run in the marshes. Charles Dickens also exaggerates the characteristics of his characters especially of the people that are not very likeable. Such as Magwitch. Charles Dickens also gives us the Impression that Magwitch is quite a powerful figure as he says that, "...his eyes looked powerfully down into mine, and mine looked most helplessly up into his". We can also tell that Magwitch is not very well educated, we can tell this because in chapter one Magwitch says "And you know what whittles is?" This is not correct grammar even for Victorian times. Gradually Dickens starts to make us feel sympathy for Magwitch for example the exaggerating of his suffering.

Pip is a little boy who lives with his older sister (Mrs Joe) and his older sister's husband (Mr Joe Gargery). Mr Joe Gargery is a Blacksmith and lives in quite a peasant house although it is clean. He lives with his sister and sister's husband because all his other family has passed away. Pip is quite humorous at times, for example when Magwitch mentions how wet and cold the Marshes were, Pip says that, "I wish I was a frog, or a eel!". This to us is quite a funny statement to make. Also Pip is quite caring as he starts to feel sorry for Magwitch. You can tell that Pip isn't scared of Magwitch any more as in chapter three he writes that Pip was "pitying his desolation" referring to Magwitch. Also in chapter three Pip refers to Magwitch as his friend. This tells us that Pip is caring and even loving towards other people.

Analysing the person of Mrs Joe, wife of Mr Joe Gargery and sister (step-mother) of Pip we can say that she is not a very nice person as she believes in the common belief that children should be seen and not heard. Also she believes that cleanliness is next to Godliness, she keeps a very clean house, too clean that it felt uncomfortable to be in the house as Pip mentions. Also Mrs Joe feels resentment for having to raise Pip since their parents died.

In chapter 5 the reader is presented with the question of why the two convicts are fighting each other. Pip's convict goes so far as to say that he deliberately got himself caught, just so he could make sure the man with the hat

would go back to prison. What hatred did this man have that would make him go back to prison just to see another suffer as well?

The relationship between the convict and Pip continues to grow as well, even though they do not speak and the convict hardly looks at him. The convict obviously wants to protect the boy and, suspecting Pip may be threatened, takes the blame for stealing the pork pie. The two are, once again, united in secrecy. Pip's fear that Joe would "think worse of me than I was" if Pip told him about the file and pork pie is a fear that Pip will revisit throughout his young life. Joe is the only friend in the world for Pip, he is his entire society. Pip fears to lose this companionship by telling the truth. In the future, Pip will struggle with telling the truth because of the fear that society will think less of him (chapter 6).

Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight mark a key turning point in the novel, separating Pip's young childhood in the humble company of Joe from the beginnings of greater expectations in the company of higher society. The chapter presents a relationship between Joe and Pip which is growing in love and respect. Joe is at the bottom of the social hierarchy, and, particularly, at the bottom of his household's hierarchy but Pip finds new respect for his position. "I had a new sensation of feeling conscious that I was looking up to Joe in my heart." The image is almost ideal: the young Pip and Joe sitting next to the fire, Pip admiring him and teaching him the alphabet.

Dickens contrasts this humble setting with the opportunity presented at the end of the chapter by the noisy entrance and rather insolent announcement by Mrs. Joe. She introduces the first of Pip's "great expectations" in the form of the job given to Pip "to play" for Miss Havisham: "...this boy's fortune may be made by his going to Miss Havisham's." Although little is known about the wealthy woman, and less is known exactly how Pip is supposed to "play," the opportunity is one where Pip will be in the company of a higher social and economic class of people.

Dickens uses strong imagery to describe Miss Havisham's house ("The Manor House" or the "Satis House") as barren of feelings or even life, even before we meet the bitter Miss Havisham and the rude Estella: "The cold wind seemed to blow colder there, than outside the gate..." Again we have a strange mystery: Why is this woman always in the dark, and dressed in a wedding gown? Who is the young and pretty Estella and what is she doing in such a morbid place?

Pip's first taste of "higher society" is a bitter one, and it leaves him ashamed and embarrassed rather than justifiably angry. Pip is, in fact, just a toy for both Miss Havisham, who wants him to "play," and Estella, who treats him roughly while at the same time flirts. Pip, torn between being insulted and his attraction to Estella, opts to feel ashamed of his upbringing -- so much so that he "wished Joe had been rather more genteelly brought up." His new found respect and love for Joe was being spoiled by his embarrassment of being brought up in a lower class family.

Joe's analysis, though phrased in what Pip would call "common" language, is accurate: Pip is trying to become "uncommon" by lying about his experiences. Pip made up lies about the Satis House with the intention of glorifying it in front of the eager Mr. Pumblechook and Mrs. Joe, both of whom eat it up. While Pip is naively honest in admitting to Joe that he wants to become uncommon, he is intelligent enough to know that he can become uncommon by being dishonest, or, as Joe would have it, "crooked."

One of the main themes of the book is spelled out in this chapter, specifically, the desire to rise above one's social station. Dickens, writing this book toward the end of his life, is speaking directly of his own youthful desires and those of his father as well. As the story of Pip unfolds and we witness the different ways in which Pip tries to climb the social ladder -- by making up fantastical stories in this case -- it will be interesting to listen to the running commentary made by the narrator, the older Pip, who, like Dickens himself, is

looking back on this theme and reflecting on how it affected his happiness later on in life.

Pip, excited at the beginning of the chapter by the prospect of educating himself to become uncommon, is reminded of his common, and somewhat illegitimate, past by the stranger in the pub. As he goes to sleep, he is bothered by the fact that it is uncommon to be "on secret terms of conspiracy with convicts."

The man clearly knew something about Pip assisting the convict and wanted Pip to know that he did. How he knows remains a mystery, but Pip's immediate fear is how his past will "haunt" him as he tries to climb out of his common background.

Our conclusion from reading and studying of *Great Expectations* is that Charles Dickens is an amazingly good writer and gives us a very clear picture of the characters in the book and the landscape in the surrounding area. He uses many good describing words such as ravenously referring to Magwitch as he was eating the bread. In our view we believe that the title is rather humorous because there doesn't seem much hope for Pip and his family to gain a better life for themselves or getting away from the marshes. It is as if they are entrapped in the marshes until they die, and there is no way out.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

Comment on Charles Dickens's mere fictional and autobiographical views.

Readers of Charles Dickens's journalism will recognize many of the author's themes as common to his novels. Certainly, Dickens addresses his fascination with the criminal underground, his sympathy for the poor, especially children, and his interest in the penal system in both his novels and his essays. The two genres allow the author to address these matters with different approaches, though with similar ends in mind.

Two key differences exist, however, between the author's novels and his journalism. First, humor, which is an essential element of many of Dickens's novels, is largely absent from his essays. Second, his essays recommend specific medicine. However, as this paper will suggest, the author's reluctance to directly call for parliamentary action in his earlier works of fiction has been shed by the time he writes his last complete novel. The indirect approach of his early works is apparently a victim of Dickens's dissatisfaction with the pace of reform.

#### 4.1. Characteristics of autobiographical novels:

Derived from three Greek words meaning “self,” “life,” and “write,” autobiography is a style of writing that has been around nearly as long as history has been recorded. Yet autobiography was not classified as a genre within itself until the late eighteenth century. Robert Southey coined the term in 1809 to describe the work of a Portuguese poet (Anderson 1, 7; Berryman 71). In his book, *Inside Out*, E. Stuart Bates offers a functional definition of autobiography as “a narrative of the past of a person by the person concerned” (Bates 2).

That definition, however, is too broad for some literary critics. Many, such as Lejeune, a scholar on autobiography, wish to define the genre more narrowly. Linda Anderson cites Lejeune’s definition of autobiography as “[a] retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his

personality” (Anderson 2). He also thinks that the work must implicitly state itself to be an autobiography to be included within the genre (Anderson 3).

Other scholars, Bates, for example, do not think that there are any limitations or minimums on how much of a life must be revealed for it to be classified as autobiography. Many factual accounts, though not intended to be an autobiography per se, can be categorized as such because they contain “a self-revealed personality, after thorough reconsideration” (Bates 5). Cataloging autobiographies are further complicated because there are some that are translations and some that are edited. Maupassant even wrote an autobiography of his future (Bates 2-6).

Despite disagreements concerning how inclusive the category of autobiography should be, there are characteristics that are common to the majority of autobiographical works (Berryman 71). These features are the grammatical perspective of the work, the identity of the self, and self-reflection and introspection. Most autobiographies are written from the first person singular perspective. This is fitting because autobiography is usually a story one tells about oneself. It would not naturally follow then that the writer would recount his or her past from a second or third person perspective. Jean Quigley confirms this point in her book *The Grammar of Autobiography* by saying that “As soon as we are asked about ourselves, to tell our autobiography, we start to tell stories. We tell what happened, what we said, what we did” (Quigley 144).

The author, the narrator, and the protagonist must share a common identity for the work to be considered an autobiography (Anderson 3). This common identity could be similar, but is not identical. The self that the author constructs becomes a character within the story that may not be a completely factual representation of the author’s actual past self (Anderson 3; Porter and Wolf 4-5; Quigley 106-7). Here are some elements of autobiography:

## Elements of Autobiography:

- *Autobiography* is the type of writing in which authors tell about events in their own lives.
- *Characters* are well developed in detail and are true-to-life. They are revealed by what people in a story do, think, and say; what other say about them; and how others interact with them. Characterization is the author's development of characters. It is the way in which a writer reveals a character's personality. The writer may do this by telling us what the character says, thinks, or feels; by telling us what other characters think or feel about the character; or by telling us directly what the character is like.
- *Setting* is described vividly.
- *Details* are interesting. Writers of autobiographies use objective and subjective details and anecdotes to tell their life stories.
  - *Objective details* can be proved.
  - *Subjective details* are based on personal feelings and opinions and cannot be proved.
- *Anecdotes* are short, often humorous, stories that enliven writing and illustrate a point.
- *Chronological order* is the order in which real-life events occur and the order in which most writers of autobiographies tell their stories. Often events are arranged from childhood to adulthood.
- *Point of View* is the perspective from which an autobiography is written. Since autobiographies are written by their subjects, they are told from the first-person point of view and use the pronouns I, me, and mine. Readers experience events through the writer's eye-- knowing only what they think and feel about any given experience.

- An autobiography is told from the writer’s perspective, or point of view. The first-person point of view reflects only the writer’s thoughts, feelings, opinions, and biases.
  - The third-person point of view can be used to reflect the opinions, feelings, thoughts, and biases of multiple characters.
  - Third-person limited point of view is limited to the experience and consciousness of single character.
  - Third-person omniscient point of view is told by an all-knowing narrator who understands and can reveal the thoughts and feeling of all characters.
- *Author's Purpose* is the author's reason for writing. Authors of autobiographies often want to make sense of events in their lives and to communicate an important personal statement about life. They may also want to give credit to people who influence them. Controversial individuals often write autobiographies to explain or justify their actions.
- *Humor* – Autobiographies often use short, humorous anecdotes (stories) to enliven the story and illustrate a point. Some humor is verbal (jokes or play on words), some physical (slapstick humor), and some require readers to use their imagination. There are some standard criteria for creating humor:
- One criterion is to use material that is outrageous.
  - Another is to focus on the unexpected. Some authors take advantage of the fact that their readers enjoy situations in which the authors make fun of things that the readers themselves find annoying, such as homework.
- *Irony* is an expression of the opposite of what is expected or the opposite of what is meant. Example: “Shut up and listen to me,” he roared. ... (pg.84, last paragraph in the 1st column). This particular kind of irony is humorous because it casts light on a person’s foibles (minor flaws; weaknesses) in a gently teasing way. There are three types of Irony:

- Verbal Irony: is when someone says the opposite of what they mean.
  - Situation Irony: is when what happens is very different from what is expected.
  - Dramatic Irony: is when the reader knows something that one or more characters don't know.
- *Descriptive details* create a picture with words that appeal to one or more of the five senses – sight, sound, touch, taste, or smell.
- Sight: the writer gives a clear picture of what he looks like and how he moved.
  - Touch: the simile comparing Alec to the sunrise suggests tremendous emotional warmth.
  - Sound: there is a sound of respect in his voice.

*Prefix* is a word part added at the beginning of a word. It changes the meaning of the word to which it is added. Example: unwound and impatient. “Un” and “im” are both prefixes meaning “not.” Unwound means “to reverse the process of winding up” and impatient means “not patient.” Other prefixes that mean “not” are in-, non-, and mis-.

- *Drawing Conclusion* – Strategic readers draw conclusions when they take small pieces of information about the characters or events and use them to make a broad statement.

#### 4.2. Evidences of autobiographical and satirical elements in the novels:

Here, we are going to point out some autobiographical and satirical elements from *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*.

In *Oliver Twist*, characters are well developed in detail and are true-to-life. They are revealed by what people in the plots do, think, and say; what other say about them; and how others interact with them. The way in which Dickens reveals the characters personality by telling us what the character says,

thinks, or feels; by telling us what other characters think or feel about the character; or by telling us directly what the character is like are characteristics of autobiography. Here are some evidences:

The boy, Oliver, is brought up in a dirty home with little to eat and under poor conditions. Likewise, while Charles was twelve years old, his father, mother, and siblings were sent to debtor's prison. Although Dickens escaped the same fate as his family, he was forced to support himself by working in a shoe-polish factory. The horrific conditions in the factory haunted Dickens for the rest of his life. Oliver goes to London to escape his mean guardians and to try to make a better life for himself. It was the case of Charles Dickens who in his young ages travelled to London and America to make a better life for himself. Most of the story takes place in warehouses and in broken down buildings or other hideouts. Other scenes take place in the home of wealthy people in London. One of the main concepts of the story is that although these people are living in an urban society, it is broken up into rich and poor. Those living in shabby abandoned buildings have dreams of someday living in beautiful buildings and homes in the city of London.

In the novel, the main character Oliver is able to see what a day is like for two classes of people. A typical day for a rich man living in London in a nice home with lots of money is much different than a day for a poor beggar. As a poor boy, Oliver was forced to work extremely hard and got very little in return. He would wake from an uncomfortable bed in a cold room with many other people and have scraps of clothing to put on. He would work all day in a factory with few breaks and be rewarded with little food and money. None of his peers or his guardians liked him and therefore treated him without respect. Many times people of this class would have to resort to stealing just to have enough food to survive. It was not an enjoyable living style for the lower class of people. Oliver was also a member of the rich class at various occasions during the story. Dickens, too, experienced these types of life. Oliver received his

inheritance and lived a happy life from then on. Dickens as far as he is concerned did not receive an inheritance but he finally lived a happy life somehow.

*Great Expectations* is a first-person narration and in drawing on parts of Dickens's personality and experience. A six-year-old boy named Pip lives on the English marshes with his sister and his sister's husband, Joe. Soon after, Pip gets asked to play at Miss Havisham's. Miss Havisham is a rich old lady who lives in a castle-mansion that is covered in vines, moss, and overgrown green things. Pip meets Estella, Miss Havisham's adopted child. Estella is cold, snobby, and regal, but man is she pretty. She doesn't really talk to Pip, but Pip soon realizes that he's been asked to serve as Estella's playmate. The personality of Estella in Oliver's life is similar to that of Ellen Teran in Dickens's life. One day, Pip comes into fortune by means of a mysterious and undisclosed benefactor, says goodbye to his family, and says goodbye to Miss Havisham; he leaves for London to become a gentleman. This part of the novel also reminds us Dickens's story when he decided to move to London to become a gentleman. This is an evidence of autobiography. On his 21st birthday, Jaggers gives Pip a 500-pound annual allowance (which would be a lot of money back then) and tells Pip that his benefactor will soon reveal himself. Pip decides to use this new money to help Herbert (Miss Havisham's cousin's son) secure a job. This behaviour of Pip reflects Dickens's philanthropy. Abel Magwitch, Pip's benefactor alias Provis, is thrown in jail. Likewise Dickens's father has been sent to debtors prison.

#### 4.2. The weaknesses of Dickens's views and their impact on the readers:

A novel of the size of *Oliver Twist* can be daunting for the reader. When we were given this book at the first time to read, I thought I was going to have to spend months finishing it. That's what many of us (students) thought anyway. I then asked for the shorter edition. But in *Oliver Twist* I sailed through the pages. It's rare that a classic, and I have read many of them, becomes a page-turner but this one did. May be I was lucky in not having seen the film versions prior to the reading of the book because I desperately wanted to find out what happened to Oliver and the multitude of other brilliantly written characters who inhabit the pages of Dickens's classic.

The plot is simple. A boy escapes his orphan home to live in London with a group of thieves and pickpockets. He has saved from this depraved life by a kindly, lonely old gentleman. But the villains, Bill Sykes and especially Fagin, fear that the boy may rat them out and so they kidnap him back. Can Oliver make it back to the life he deserves?

Oliver's story is not a very originally one, but it is enlivened by some of the greatest characters I have ever seen written. My personal favourites and there are many, Noah Claypole who becomes a principle player and a very funny one at that, near the book's conclusion; and Mr. Brownlow, whose catchphrase "I'll eat my own head" had me bursting into laughter.

The book is diminished by its excessive sentimentality at the conclusion. Its female characters, apart from the courageous Nancy, are written in a golden light so as to become fantasies rather than the gloriously dirty reality of their male counterparts. A sub-plot between Mary and her boyfriend is ridiculously excessive.

Against these weaknesses, the book is a triumph of character. Often memorably played on screen, the two villains have become more famous than

the title character, who is slightly simpering. Fagin is deliciously smarmy and Sykes is evil incarnate. They get their comeuppance in justifiably brutal fashion. Dickens like most of us was a sucker for a happy ending.

The most famous character is of course Fagin, and Dickens's casual anti-Semitism in his treatment of him is another thing that might discomfit the modern reader. He references him as The Jew, always in a derogatory manner. That this is a reflection of contemporary attitudes can be seen from Scott's *Ivanhoe*, in which Jewish characters are treated with similar hostility and contempt. But it is not the main characters that are most successful - and especially not the title character himself, who is innocent and bland beyond belief - but the supporting cast; Mr. Bumble and his lady, the servants in the house that get burgled, the old bachelor who keeps threatening to eat his own head, and many others. They make the book a delight. As always, Dickens is the master of descriptive narrative and he conjures a grim and compelling view of Victorian London's underside.

If you have not yet read any Dickens, this is not a bad book with which to start, although for younger readers (teens) I would recommend *Hard Times* as their first. Either book will probably leave you, like *Oliver*, wanting more. Dickens's weakness is particularly obvious in his proneness to sentimentalise and idealise women. Women are reduced to types: the child bride, the saintly figure, the object of romantic desire, or the "fallen woman". They operate in the context of the domestic ideal that the hero yearns for - as, for example, in *David Copperfield* (1850), where David's intellectually-challenged child bride conveniently dies to make way for the "perfect" wife that complements his attainment as a writer.

Occasionally there are women characters that suggest Dickens was dimly aware of the real complexity in women's lives. This is the case in his late novels

- particularly *Great Expectations* (1861), in which Dickens came closest to tackling the problematic nature of the bourgeois hero. Both *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield* centre on the question of how to become a true "gentleman" - not because of birth but because of attainment.

David's youthful protector and mentor, Steerforth, may have aristocratic grace and charm but he behaves in a selfish and destructive way, particularly towards women. The true gentility David learns depends on bourgeois qualities of self-reliance and dedication to the domestic ideal.

But there is a nasty side to bourgeois advancement, represented by the "humble" Uriah Heep, who uses cunning, deceit and hypocrisy to advance in the world. Uriah's and David's social status may not be so different but the disgust, verging on the physical, David feels for Uriah (quite unlike the regret David feels for the aristocratic Steerforth's fate) points to something else. The contrast in emotional response suggests that we are meant to believe that David's true nature, beneath the accidents of early deprivation or poverty is genteel: he could never behave like Uriah.

In *Great Expectations*, arguably Dickens's greatest novel, gentility is explored more critically through a searching exploration of shame and the consequences of a person denying their origins. *Great expectations* by Charles Dickens are an auto biographical novel that deals with themes of guilt and punishment. Auto biographical novel is a significant genre of literature. It is a kind of novel in which the author or narrator records or narrates his own experiences of life by adding fictional elements. In this novel character, themes and incidents are taking from author's real life; but they are presented in exaggerated manner. Thus presentation of real life experiences in a modified or exaggerated form is called auto biographical novel. It is the story of an orphan child, Pip, the protagonist of the novel who is leading a miserable life with his

sister and her husband. In order to come out of this impoverish state of life he has “great expectation” he wants to become a gentle man having all the facilities of life. In the end he becomes a Victorian gentleman; but these materialistic benefits do not provide him peace of mind and satisfaction of heart. This novel is a clear reflection or mirror of Dickens’s own life. Throughout the novel, several events like wandering of Pip outside the house at different place, domineering position of her sister; Pip’s apprenticeship and his love affair with Estella; his sister’s death and the marriage of Joe and Biddy; Pip’s inability to marry Estella and breakup of Estella with her husband; and Pip’s reunion with Estella at the end of the novel, all contribute to look in to the life of Dickens’s own life. The themes of imprisonment, expectations and fragmented state of life are also taken from Dickens’s own life. Moreover this novel also presents a true picture of Victorian society. All the social issues like class differences and impact of urbanization have left a great impact on author’s life. By living under all these circumstances his novel also throws light on all these social conditions which make this piece of writing, a true example of autobiographical novel. The novel opens with loitering of Pip as a poor and helpless child, in church yard. He recalls the memories of his dead parents. Later on he also passes most of his time outside the house in wandering here and there; sometime on Marshes and sometime at any other place. All loitering at different places like an unprotected child is autobiographical in the sense that during his infancy Dickens himself spent most of his time outside the house in wandering here and there.

In the novel Pip’s sister Mrs. Joe occupies a domineering position in the house. At one occasion she scolds Pip for going outside; but the very next moment she becomes authoritarian for her husband, Mr. Joe. As a result Pip, the narrator of the novel develops a feeling of fear and hatred for his sister. It is the influence of this feeling that he has not used any proper name for his sister. Time and again in the novel he has used the phrase “brought up by hand”, it is

the impact of Mrs. Joe's overpowering position that Mr. Joe becomes weak and helpless before his wife and wins the sympathy of Pip. The authoritarian nature of Mrs. Joe and Joe as a henpecked husband are autobiographical in the sense that Dickens's own mother was a woman of authoritative nature. She had a full control over her husband and children. None had power to go against her opinion. Dickens's father John Dickens was like Joe. In the novel Pip, during his childhood worked as an apprentice in Joe's forge, where he learned different rules of laboring to make himself able to earn money in future. This position of working as a laborer is also autobiographical in this context that Dickens himself worked as laborer in Warren's Blacking factory during his early years of life. This feeling of working as a laborer in an immature age created depression and dissatisfaction in Dickens's personality. In the novel Pip falls in love with Estella a proud, arrogant and rich girl but she marries Drummble, man of high status in spite of marrying Pip. Afterwards this relationship breaks off and at the end of the novel she again meets Pip. All this affair of love, breaking up and reunion of Pip with Estella have an autobiographical significance as Dickens himself had a love affair with Maria but she did not marry Dickens on the account of her being a women of upper class. But later on in 1857 Dickens again met with Maria. In the middle of novel the death of Mrs. Joe, the sister of Pip is significant for one of Dickens's own sister's death. She died of severe illness and this incident left a great impact on Dickens's life as Pip's life in the novel after the death of her sister.

At the end of the novel Joe marries Bidy. This idea of second marriage with a woman quite younger than himself depicts autobiographical idea; as dickens himself remarried with a lady Ellen Ternan, 18 years younger than him. The break up with Estella and Mr. Drummble is also autobiographical in a way that Dickens himself left his first wife Catherine Thomson. In the novel the name Georgiana has been used for Pip's dead mother. It depicts autobiography

of Dickens in the sense that it is the name of one of his relatives. Thus all the incidents of the novel are taken from different life experiences of Dickens's life that signify or give the picture of his life. All the major themes of great expectations like entrapment or imprisonment, broken and confused condition of life and theme of expectations, wishes, dreams and desires; all are drawn from Dickens's own life experiences. Imprisonment is an important theme of the novel, Magwitch the real benefactor of Pip and Compeyson are criminals. They are caught by police, on account of their misdeeds. Compeyson, on account of being a member of high class is escaped punishment after sometime but Magwitch being a poor man becomes a target of long lasting punishment; even he dies in jail. This theme is autobiographical in a way that Dickens's own father John Dickens passed some period of life in prison. He was imprisoned in Marshalsea on account of not paying loan or dept of some people. Pip's great expectation is also the most significant theme of the novel. Pip had a dream to become a Gentleman. He has a desire to marry Estella. He has a wish to help his friend Herbert. He wants to remain faithful with Joe and Biddy. He has a desire to support his real benefactor Magwitch. This theme of expectation has been taken from author's own life. Dickens himself had many dreams, desires and wishes. He had desire to become an actor and a journalist. He wanted to marry Maria, his first sweetheart. He had a dream to live in Gad hill place. Some of the expectations of both Pip and Dickens were full filled while other remained unfulfilled. Pip's dream of becoming a Gentleman is fulfilled. Similarly, Dickens's dream of leading his life in Gad hill place was also fulfilled. On the other hand Pip's expectation of marriage with Estella remains unfulfilled.

Similarly, Dickens's expectations of marrying with Maria and dream of becoming an actor and journalist remained unfulfilled. Disillusioned and dissatisfied state of life is another central theme of novel. Throughout the novel Pip remains fragmented, broken, confused, worried and distresses. Although he

moves towards London in order to find a satisfactory way of life but in spite of getting luxuries of life his tensions and worries are increased. He never gets inner peace of mind. This dissatisfied and unhappy situation of life is autobiographical in the sense that Dickens himself also led a distressed and depressed life. Thus all the main themes of the novel play a vital role in providing a picture of Dickens own life. This novel also gives a glimpse of Victorian society. All the main features of Victorian age are discussed. All these circumstances contribute to understand author's life and by presenting his own life experiences the author makes this novel autobiographical. In the novel there is a conflict or struggle going on between upper and lower classes; that is the main feature of Victorian age. For example Estella, Miss Havisham and Mr. Jaggers all are members of upper class. In contrast Pip, Bidly, Mr. and Mrs. Joe and Magwitch all belong to laboring class. Then in the novel after effects of urbanization are also highlighted. In Victorian era as a result of Industrial Revolution people started to migrate towards cities to find a suitable earning. As a result social problems like poverty, unemployment, exploitation and selfishness came on the surface. All these issues are depicted in the novel. All the features of Victorian period influenced Dickens greatly. Living in a society of such problems and issues; his novel also throws light on these circumstances and all these play a significant part in making this novel autobiographical. On the whole all the major incidents like Pip's apprenticeship during his childhood, his sister's death, the marriage of Joe and Bidly and Estella and Mr. Drumble all are drawn from author's own life. Then all the major themes enumerated in the novel like imprisonment, confused, alienated condition of life and "great expectations" provide a picture of author's life. Moreover presenting the glimpse of Victorian society author depicts his own life story. Thus through the help of Dickens's imagination, he has made this piece of writing autobiographical novel by depicting his story through the character of Pip. This

element makes his novel a unique piece of writing which have left an everlasting impact on the minds of his readers or viewers belonging to any age or period.

Charles Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist*, to show the reader things as they really are. He felt that the novel should be a message of social reform. One of its purposes was to promote reform of the abuses in workhouses. In no way does Dickens create a dream world. His imagination puts together a bad place during a bad time; an English workhouse just after the Poor Law Act of 1834 (Scott-Kilvert, 48).

In the first chapter of *Oliver Twist*, Dickens moves from comedy to pathos and from pathos to satire. He takes us from the drunken old woman to the dying mother to the hardened doctor. Such rapid switches help in all the later novels to hold together disparate effects, to provide variety and unity, and to give that double opportunity for comedy and pathos that Dickens admired in stage melodrama (Scott-Kilvert, 47). In this first chapter, Dickens also captures life and death in a single sentence, "Let me see the child, and die.". This sums up the mother's will to see the newborn baby, and takes a short stride from birth to death.

Dickens seems to create his characters to open the reader's eyes to the true characteristics of their nature. One of his subjects is to condition human nature and the relationship of the individual to his environment (Scott-Kilvert, 47-48). In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens attempts to free his characters of any influence of their environment.

This book was clearly made to show the reality of the world. Dickens does not create a dream world that captures the optimism of readers. He is truly showing things as they really are; how the world really is. He carefully planned his setting and his description of places so that he could capture every detail of the hard life. As Martin Price put it in Dickens, "*Oliver Twist* is not a satisfying

novel; it does not liberate us" (Price, 84-385). Dickens's purpose was to spark a sense of rage through people's hearts towards the English workhouses. He was promoting reform by getting the people "involved" in the melodramatic novel of *Oliver Twist*.

PART THREE:

# An approach of solutions

CHAPTER FIVE:  
Charles Dickens's description and  
satires

### 5.1. Dickens's view and its content on British penal system:

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 was a favorite target for Charles Dickens; he never missed a chance to call attention to the law's brutality or to deride its National Commissioners, its Boards of Guardians, and its petty officials (Brown 154). Few, of his major works fail to fire at least some satiric shots at it, and a significant proportion of his journalistic writings, especially in the *Examiner* and *Household Words*, deal with the subject. Dickens's most direct, sustained, and savage satire on the New Poor Law, however, is to be found in the pages of *Oliver Twist*. This novel has a "polemical air" (Ackroyd 218) and attacks its subject with a bitter irony that would have made Juvenal wince. As Stephen Leacock puts it, *Oliver Twist* "is a story for tears, for anger, for hands clenched in righteous indignation" (44). Despite the fact that its devastating satire was extremely effective in stirring up popular hatred for the law (Brown 155), the work has not been without its critics. Much of the criticism has focused on the narrative flaws of the story, such as it is far-fetched, melodramatic plot with highly contrived explanations; Dickens's tendency to lapse into mawkish sentimentality, as evidenced by the irrelevant episode of Rose Maylie's illness; and a certain weakness of characterization, notably Oliver's and Nancy's improbable goodness and Mr. Brownlow's improbable benevolence. Though the novel admittedly has its literary shortcomings, critics have tended to be overly harsh in their assessment of the Inimitable's first, true novel - *The Pickwick Papers* was far too episodic to be considered a novel in the modern sense. In spite of its supposed flaws, the story of the "*Parish Boy's Progress*" is imbued with an emotional power that renders these faults irrelevant and makes *Oliver Twist* one of the most trenchant social satires in English Literature, and well worthy of inclusion in the Western literary canon. Its greatness lies in its virtuosic use of dark irony, its intense - and even hideous - realism, its grotesque and wonderfully drawn villains, and its ability to create an

atmosphere every bit as dark and oppressive as the social ills against which Dickens is fighting.

If one is to examine and appreciate the greatness of *Oliver Twist* as a work of social satire, it is well to review, briefly, the subject of Dickens's animosity - the Poor Law reforms of 1834. In essence, the new law abolished a system of poor relief that had been in place for well over 200 years, ever since the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (Pool 244). Under the prior system, relief was administered at the local parish level and the funding came partly through alms, but mostly through taxes (called "rates") paid by parish members. There were workhouses, mainly for the aged and infirm, but most of the assistance took the form of so-called "outdoor relief," wherein the working poor whose wages fell below subsistence level received a supplement tied to the price of a loaf of bread and the size of their family ("Poor Relief"). This system worked well enough, in its day, but it was designed to handle only isolated cases of local poverty - it was entirely unequal to the task of coping with the large-scale displacement of sizeable populations of workers and the drastic variations in prices and wages that were a result of the Industrial Revolution ("Poor Relief").

The radical Malthusian and Benthamite reformers sought to impose efficiency and uniformity on the old system, which they saw as encouraging pauperism as a way of life and as doing nothing to check unwanted population growth (House xii). They believed that relief should only be given in the most unattractive form possible in order to discourage idle paupers or the "undeserving poor," under conditions which prevented the poor from breeding and, thus, exacerbating the problem. Outdoor relief was eliminated; the dreaded workhouse now became the only option, and a grim option it was. Husbands were separated from wives, parents from children; the diet was deliberately sparse; inmates were depersonalized through drab uniforms, extreme regimentation and disenfranchisement; and labor was backbreaking, mindless

and unlikely to prepare one for gainful employment on the outside. If this sounds more like prison than social welfare, that was precisely the intent. The goal of the new, Utilitarian system was deterrence, not relief, of pauperism (House xii). In theory, a distinction was to be drawn between the aged, infirm, and children, on the one hand, and the able-bodied idlers, on the other; in practice, however, everyone was sucked into the quagmire of the workhouse and suffered - children most of all.

The New Poor law was fresh in the public mind when Dickens began serializing *Oliver Twist* in February of 1837 ("Poor Relief"). During its serial run and its release as a three-volume novel, a severe winter, a trade depression, and a year of scarce food and high prices all served to inflame popular sentiment against the law and increase the novel's intense topicality. There were also very real fears of imminent armed revolution, especially in light of the abortive Chartist uprising in Newport in 1839, during which several thousand armed miners belonging to this radical movement marched on the city in a failed attempt to free what they believed to be political prisoners, a move that was supposed to be the signal for nationwide revolt. Combine this with the fact that Dickens was enjoying enormous popularity as a result of his previous book, *The Pickwick Papers*, and it is clear that the time was ripe for Dickens to strike his first major blow in the war against social ills. He had an established audience, and they were primed and ready to hear his message. Unlike other social critics of his day, however, his message did not get bogged down in the minutiae of government policy. Dickens was interested in the deplorable plight of the underprivileged, not in debating the relative merits of any particular political theory. He did not dislike this or that argument for oppression; he disliked oppression. Other activists of his time attacked something on the grounds that it was bad economics or bad politics; Dickens attacked things simply because they were bad. His fight was that of the weak against the strong, of freedom and

humanity over tyranny and callousness. His goal in *Oliver Twist* was to expose to a complacent Victorian society "the cruelty of both criminals and middle-class legislators alike" (Dyson 18).

One of the chief weapons Dickens uses in his attack is irony, and he wields that weapon with extraordinary dexterity to set and sustain the story's tragicomic tone. Nobody who has read the novel can ever forget the wickedly hilarious darts he launches against his target, especially in the early chapters - the workhouse chapters. A complete cataloging of the satiric comments would necessitate the reprinting of most of the novel, but a few examples will suffice to illustrate the general tone. For instance, he describes the baby farm to which Oliver is sent after his birth as a dismal place "where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws rolled about on the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing" (Dickens 4). From the very outset, Dickens heaps sarcasm upon the workhouse system and the Malthusian theories which make it possible. The latter are lampooned in the form of the Board of Guardians:

The members of this board were very sage, deep, philosophical men; and when they came to turn their attention to the workhouse, they found out at once, what ordinary folks would never have discovered - the poor people liked it! ... 'Oho!' said the Board, looking very knowing; 'we are the fellows to set this to rights' ... So they established the rule, that all the poor people should have the alternative ... of being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it. (Dickens 11)

The starvation regimen of the workhouse was a particularly hated measure for Dickens, who had known hunger and privation when his father was imprisoned for debt in the Marshalsea. He stabs at it again in chapter III when Mr. Bumble, in a rare moment of relative kindness, tells Oliver, "don't cry into

your gruel; that's a very foolish action, Oliver." "It certainly was," Dickens sardonically comments, "for there was quite enough water in it already" (18). Dickens repeatedly mocks the cold, heartless efficiency of the system and its officials. For example, there is the scene in chapter IV in which the board "took counsel together on the expediency of shipping off Oliver Twist, in some small trading vessel bound to a good unhealthy port ... the probability being that the skipper would flog him to death, in a playful mood, some day after dinner" (22). Sending workhouse children to sea, or to the coal mines, or to some odious apprenticeship in another parish, was a common way of disposing of them and shortening their life expectancy.

Yes, the satire of *Oliver Twist* is funny, but there is a righteous indignation to it which stands in sharp contrast to the genial humor of its predecessor, *The Pickwick Papers*, making it all the more effective. Readers expecting more Well prisms must have gotten quite a jolt when they read the opening pages of *Oliver Twist*; like a bucket of cold water thrown upon a drowsy person's face, the ferocious satire of the new book commanded their instant attention. Throughout the novel, Dickens skillfully contrasts the comic tone with the horror and tragedy of the subject matter, producing a jarring effect upon the reader that keeps him focused on the things that Dickens wants him to see and feel.

Another important factor which adds to the story's emotional impact is its unflinching, often profoundly disturbing, realism. In fact, Dickens's brutally honest portrayal of the workhouse, as well as the world of thieves, murderers, and prostitutes to which Oliver falls victim, had a lasting effect on future writers and the subject matter they were willing to tackle (House vii). Dickens was able to achieve this effect because he was personally familiar with the places and institutions about which he wrote. In his capacity as journalist, he had visited many workhouses and prisons, including the infamous Newgate prison, which

figures prominently in *Oliver Twist*. He recounts this latter experience in the sobering sketch, "A Visit to Newgate", in his *Sketches by Boz*. Dickens was also intimately familiar with the foulest slums of London, places like St. Giles, Saffron Hill, Whitechapel (later of Jack the Ripper notoriety), Rotherhite, Bethnal Green, and the infamous Seven Dials (Johnson 277). He was famous for his long perambulations - sometimes twenty or thirty miles a day - and his peripatetic wanderings often took him through the very heart of some of the worst, most degraded neighborhoods. The area he describes as Jacob's Island in the novel, where Fagin and his gang dwell, was patterned after a neighborhood not far from Dickens's home at the time (Smiley 14). Fagin, himself, was patterned after Ikey Solomon, a real-life fence and trainer of child pickpockets. Throughout these chapters, Dickens refuses to romanticize poverty and crime into the picaresque (Johnson 278). His aim was to shine the harsh light of reality on the London underclass in order to "educate" respectable, middle-class, sheltered Victorians who would otherwise ignore or remain blissfully unaware of such things. In the "Preface" to the novel, Dickens writes:

But as the stern truth ... was a part of the purpose of this book, I did not, for these readers, abate one hole in the Dodger's coat, or one scrap of curl-paper in Nancy's disheveled hair. I had no faith in the delicacy which could not bear to look upon them. (Dickens xvi-xvii)

This is not to say that Dickens pulled no punches. After all, he wanted to keep his audience and he wanted them to hear his message. As Edgar Johnson puts it, Dickens wanted "to move the heart, not turn the stomach" (280). Thus, he does not record the profane oaths of the criminals, and does not dwell upon the details of prostitution, even though it is tacitly understood that Nancy is a part of that world.

That being said, there are, nevertheless, scenes in the novel which are truly horrifying and repulsive. The most famous of these is, of course, Sikes's murder of Nancy in chapter XLVII. Scarcely less gruesome is Sikes's own ironic death in chapter L. The relentless fury of the mob that pursues him and the sickening jolt of his death as he accidentally hangs himself while trying to escape across the rooftops, are images not soon forgotten by the reader. These are only the most extreme examples of the gritty realism which pervades the entire narrative.

It is interesting to note that it is chiefly the workhouse and the criminal slums which are portrayed in such grim detail. The "good" characters in the book (Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies) seem to live in almost impossibly idyllic worlds, which are often cited, not without justification, as one of the flaws in the story. One can, nevertheless, discern Dickens's intent. First, this was part of the general technique of jarring contrasts, mentioned earlier, which was calculated to grab the reader's attention. Second, it was Dickens's belief that the ill-treatment and starvation whereby paupers were treated as criminals inevitably led to vice and criminality (Johnson 274). The world of the workhouse and the world of crime were, thus, inextricably linked in his social philosophy: the one was a cause of the other. The New Poor Law does not decrease pauperism; it increases crime. This is really the core lesson of the novel, so it makes sense that these two worlds would be portrayed with the greatest vividness - Dickens wanted them to be linked in the reader's mind.

Then, there are the villains - the wonderfully drawn, simultaneously horrifying and fascinating villains who steal the show and are a principal source of *Oliver Twist's* brilliance. Few writers have ever been able to match Dickens's ability to create colorful and riveting bad guys, and few novels have a more colorful cast of scoundrels than *Oliver Twist*. Fagin, Sikes, The Artful Dodger, Charley Bates and Noah Claypole all deserve a high place in the pantheon of

literary malefactors. Angus Wilson rightly notes that each character is superb as an individual, and, together, they are superb as a gang (129). What makes these characters so great, especially at conveying Dickens' social message about poverty and the Poor Law? More than anything else, it is the sympathy with which they are treated. Dickens's childhood experiences (e.g., his father ending up in debtor's prison, Dickens being sent to work in Warren's blacking factory at age 12, etc.) instilled in him an ability to identify and empathize with social outcasts. As he writes about Fagin and the others, one gets the feeling that, in the back of his mind, he is thinking, "There, but for the grace of God, go I." The thieves are never despised as human beings, even though the things they do are despicable. Dickens clearly views them as victims, just as much as they are criminals: they are just such creatures as might be created by the cold and inhumane Poor Law.

Who cannot sympathize with Fagin at his trial, when he anxiously scans the faces of the crowd, desperate for a kind look or shred of hope, but "in no one face - not even among the women, of whom there were many there - could he read the faintest sympathy for himself, or any feeling but one of all-absorbing interest that he should be condemned" (Dickens 404)? Who can remain unmoved by the pitiable spectacle of the half-mad Fagin in the condemned cell (chapter LII)? Even the brutal Sikes has his tender moments toward Nancy. The Dodger and Charley Bates are perfect examples of what children like Oliver, cast away by society and the Poor Law, are in danger of becoming. They are merely trying to survive in a world that has branded them, stubbornly refusing to die to satisfy the Malthusian desire for population reduction.

It has been said by many critics of *Oliver Twist*, that one of the great weaknesses of the novel is Dickens's lackluster delineation of the respectable, "good" characters. Rose Maylie and Mr. Brownlow are good, kind, and forgiving, even beyond the bounds of reason or common sense. Moreover, as an

individual, Oliver - the title character - is perhaps the least interesting and most improbable figure in the book. Humphrey House points out that if Dickens's "purpose were to show that the starvation and cruel ill-treatment of children in baby farms and workhouses produced ghastly effects on their characters and in society, then Oliver should have turned out a monster" (viii-ix), which, of course, does not happen. From beginning to end, Oliver is a very paragon of innocence and virtue, with a personality so passive and bland that the reader invariably enjoys reading the passages about the thieves much more than those about Oliver. There are several possible reasons for this. The first, and most obvious, is that, since Dickens's main focus was on calling attention to a great social evil, he took much greater pains to portray the evil than he did the good. Happy places and good characters serve merely as foils to the oppressive places and wicked people. It is the same principle of contrast that runs throughout the entire novel.

Second, Oliver remains something of a blank slate in order that the reader might project those feelings onto him which Dickens was trying to elicit. Dickens wants people to be able to see themselves in Oliver and realize that only the chance circumstances of birth separate their comfortable lives from Oliver's horrible predicament. To the extent that the boy's character becomes more rounded and individualized, one becomes less and less able to make this sort of emotional projection onto him.

Finally, there is a great deal of truth in the suggestion that Dickens was working through some of his own painful childhood issues in this novel. The events of his childhood led him to identify with sensitive children beset by a hostile and indifferent world (Kaplan 95). Thus, Mr. Brownlow becomes the ideal father and Mrs. Maylie the ideal mother figure that Dickens never had. Rose is clearly an idealized image of his beloved sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, who had died in Dickens's arms - a trauma from which he never fully recovered.

This inner psychological struggle gives Dickens's writing an emotional immediacy that might have been lacking had he been a more dispassionate observer. Far from marring the impact of the story, therefore, the handling of the "good" characters only serves to enhance it.

Finally, mention must be made of Charles Dickens's extraordinary skill in creating an atmosphere that pervades an entire novel and gives it its dominant mood. The dark, oppressive, lurid atmosphere of *Oliver Twist* is the very epitome of the eponymous adjective, "Dickensian." Three important, overarching metaphors and motifs are used to impart a sense of unity to the novel and to create its nightmarish effect: incarceration, darkness, and suffocation (Miller 31-33). Throughout most of the novel, Oliver finds himself confined or incarcerated in one way or another - from the baby farm and the workhouse, to Fagin's lair, Oliver's life is little better than that of a convict. Even at kindly Mr. Brownlow's, he spends most of his time confined to bed with an illness, and when he is finally free from that confinement, he promptly falls back into Fagin's inescapable clutches. The Maylies keep him under close guard for fear of some harm coming to him. All of this is, of course, Dickens's commentary on how society, under the New Poor Law, treats paupers like criminals.

Darkness also permeates the world of *Oliver Twist*. Almost none of the important actions of the plot take place in the light of day; they occur at night, in the dark and dingy workhouse, in Fagin's sunless den, or in the dismal Three Cripples. The overall effect is one of blackness constantly threatening to engulf Oliver, which symbolizes the thieves' efforts to blacken Oliver's soul by turning him into a criminal. This can be seen as a parallel to Dickens's view that the discarded and outcast of society are in very real danger of being caught up in the darkness of crime and vice.

The suffocation motif is established right at the outset, when the parish surgeon has "considerable difficulty in inducing Oliver to take upon himself the office of respiration" (Dickens 1). It continues in the close, stifling atmosphere of the thieves' den and, perhaps most importantly, in the ever-present danger of ignominious death by hanging. The latter might well have been Oliver's fate had Fagin succeeded in making him a criminal (Miller 31). The implication here is that if society does not take care of its poor, it condemns them to a life that will end on the gallows. These three motifs give the novel a strong feeling of claustrophobia, of a nightmarish world closing in on Oliver, who has few means of escape. This symbolizes the plight of the poor under the 1834 law.

Is *Oliver Twist* the perfect novel? One could hardly make such a claim. Is it flawed? There can be no doubt of that; it was, after all, Dickens's first attempt at a novel proper. *Pickwick Papers* was too picaresque and episodic and the narrative did not form a unified whole. Coming out, as it did, in the same year Queen Victoria ascended to the throne, one could even make the case that *Oliver Twist* was the first Victorian novel, but that is an argument for another time. Do its flaws impair its greatness and its effectiveness as social satire? The answer here must be a resounding no. The brilliant use of irony, the intense and dark realism, the vivid and absolutely unforgettable villains, and the inimitably Dickensian atmosphere - any one of these factors alone would be enough to secure a place for the novel in the canon. The whole, however, is much greater than the sum of its parts. Taken as a whole, *Oliver Twist* is one of the most emotionally potent and devastating social satires in the English language. Even modern readers who have never heard of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 hear Dickens's message loudly and clearly. After almost 170 years, the story of the neglected parish orphan who plaintively asked for more has lost none of its power to move. Those critics who complain about the highly contrived plot, wherein all the loose ends are neatly tied up by a preposterous series of deus-ex-

machina coincidences (all the principal, surviving characters turn out to be related either by birth or by marriage) are missing the point entirely. This is not a plot-driven novel. It is more like a parable in the sense that its driving force is its moral (the lesson Dickens wants society to learn). Jane Smiley expresses it well when she describes Dickens as having an "ecological understanding" of poverty and other social ills (14), meaning that Dickens views everything and everyone in society as connected: rich and poor, educated and ignorant, high and low, are artificial social boundaries. Dickens understood that the evils that afflict one group ultimately have an impact upon the entire community. Like the characters in the novel, we are all connected. Neglect and mistreatment of the poor will produce a bitter harvest of crime and disease, which are no respecters of social distinctions. Dickens saw the New Poor Law as sowing the seeds of that bitter harvest and depicted both sowing and reaping, in all their horror, in *Oliver Twist*. He summed up his attitude toward a legal system that would allow this to happen in the immortal words of Mr. Bumble: "The law is - an idiot ... and the worst I wish the law is that his eye may be opened by experience" (399). Sadly, Dickens was not to see the demise of the asinine law within his lifetime.

Talking about *Great Expectations* Dickens has been praised for having created in Pip a decidedly unheroic hero, a figure who, while basically good, must learn to recognize and conquer serious weaknesses within himself. As the young Pip grows from a powerless dreamer into a useful worker and then a moderately educated young man, he reaches an important realization: grand schemes and dreams are never what they first seem to be. Pip himself is not always honest, and careful readers can catch him in several contradictions between his truth and fantasies. In chronicling the maturation of its likeable young hero, whose great expectations prove illusory, the novel promotes generosity, friendship, and love rather than the shallow virtues of wealth and social status.

It is generally acknowledged that Dickens based Estella, who has been called his most sexually viable female character, on the Irish actress Ellen Ternan, who eventually became his mistress. Pip's helpless attraction to Estella and the mingled hopelessness and intensity of his love for her mirror the emotions reportedly experienced by the author when he fell in love with Ternan.

Charles Dickens never lost an awareness of his own experiences working as a boy, bottling boot-black, but he spoke of these days and his emotional horror, only once to his trusted friend and executor John Foster. With that knowledge, it is easier for the reader to understand the origins of the characters Pip, David Copperfield, and Oliver Twist—created by Dickens to give voice to young children like he had been.

Dickens was always acutely aware of the suffering endured by the poor, and made every endeavor as an adult not to be poor. His novels were the first modern codification of the concept that children ought not to be put to tedious, repetitive work at an early age, but should be helped to grow and learn and play. Dickens was not a political activist, nor did he campaign for child welfare laws. He brought these issues to the hearts and minds of his readers through his popular fiction, rather than writing overt autobiography or political tracts. His novels were part of the process by which it became common in much of the world to believe that all children, not only those of the wealthy, should be given education and leisure to play; that children who do labor should be given work less onerous and shorter in duration than adults; and ultimately that it is as abominable to deprive children of care, comfort, and education as it is to deny them adequate food and shelter.

## 5.2. Dickens's principle and literary dimensions:

The very title of the book "*Great Expectations*" indicates the confidence of conscious genius, we believe. "The most famous novelist of the day, watched by jealous rivals and critics, could hardly have selected it, had he not inwardly felt the capacity to meet all the expectations he raised." We have read this novel and many of Dickens's previous works, in installments, and have been impressed by "the felicity with which expectation was excited and prolonged, and to the series of surprises which accompanied the unfolding of the plot of the story."

Dickens succeeded perfectly in stimulating and baffling the curiosity of his readers. In *Great Expectations*, he seemed to attain the mastery of powers which formerly more or less mastered him. He could not, like Thackeray, narrate a story as if he were merely looking on, a mere "knowing" observer of what he describes and represents; he therefore took observation simply as the basis of his plot and ran with his own particular talent for characterization. In this novel, Dickens was in the prime, and not in the decline of his great powers.

Dickens always had one weakness, and this novel is strongly marked with it. He would exaggerate one particular set of facts, a comic side in a character, or a comic turn of expression, until all reality faded away, and the person became a mere frame for an elaborate, fluttering construction. Miss Havisham is an example of Dickens's exaggeration.

But what was the peg on which the entire novel, this elaborate fluttering construction, was hung? It may have been the January, 1850, issue of *Household Narrative of Current Events*.

In the January, 1850, issue of *Household Narrative of Current Events*, there appeared an account of Martha Joachin, who always wore white after her

suitor committed suicide in front of her. Also in that issue was a description of the transportation of convicts to Australia, and the story of a woman whose gown is set on fire. Peter Ackroyd suggests in his biography Dickens that the germ of the novel may have been planted by Dickens's casual reading of some journalism 11 years before he began writing the serial. "It is possible to understand how heterogeneous themes and ideas seem to attach themselves one to another, acquiring fresh power and resonance as they do so; it is in this very act of combining, perhaps, that the story itself begins to emerge," says Ackroyd "As if story telling itself were part of the process of consciousness rather than some neatly defined and independent activity."

It may be that story telling, for Dickens and others, is a way of creating a pattern from random data fortuitously lodged in one's consciousness. Whether Dickens overtly intended to combine these particular elements into an epic-length novel (incorporating elements of his own experience as a frustrated boy) cannot be determined; he left no notes outlining his plan. But it is fascinating to look from the viewpoint of a reader over a hundred and fifty years later, at a popular novel still in print, written by a man very nearly as self-centered as Pip, and to have some understanding of where he got his ideas.

This work, Dickens's second-to-last complete novel, was first published as a weekly series in 1860 and in book form in 1861. Early critics had mixed reviews, disliking Dickens's tendency to exaggerate both plot and characters, but readers were so enthusiastic that the 1861 edition required five printings. Victorian-era audiences appreciated the melodramatic scenes and the revised, more hopeful ending.

Modern critics have little but praise for Dickens's brilliant development of timeless themes: fear and fun, loneliness and luck, classism and social justice, humiliation and honor. Some still puzzle over Dickens's revision that ends the

novel with sudden optimism, and they suggest that the sales of Dickens's magazine *All the Year Round*, in which the series first appeared, was assured by gluing on a happy ending that hints Pip and Estella will unite at last. For some, the original ending is more realistic since Pip must earn the self-knowledge that can only come from giving up his obsession with Estella. However, Victorian audiences eagerly followed the story, episode by episode, assuming that the protagonist's love and patience would win out in the end. Modern editions contain both denouements allowing the reader a choice.

In this novel, Dickens surpasses his previous works in one point. This is "a more profound study of the general nature of human character than Mr. Dickens usually [portrays]," decently distinct from *David Copperfield*, according to G.K. Chesterton. "Pip thinks himself better than everyone else, and yet anybody can snub him; that is the everlasting male, and perhaps the everlasting gentleman. Dickens has described perfectly this quivering and defenceless dignity . . . how ill-armed it is against the coarse humor of real humanity . . . the humanity of Trabb's boy," Chesterton insists. A critic said: "in describing Pip's weakness, Dickens is as true and as delicate as Thackeray, but Thackeray and others also possessed a quick and quiet eye for the tremors of mankind." and continued saying that "George Eliot or Thackeray could have described the weakness of Pip. Exactly what George Eliot and Thackeray could not have described was the vigour of Trabb's boy."

**CHAPTER SIX:**  
**Suggestions, Advice and Recommendations**

This chapter includes the suggestions, the advice and the recommendations.

### 6.1. Suggestions:

In this part, we address English literature students in general and Charles Dickens's readers in particular to share with them what I have found out in my investigations that can be taken into account in their reading of Dickens's novels so that they could have a clear understanding of them.

- To students and Dickens's readers, before reading his novels they
  - should try to know more about the author's biography;
  - should pay great attention to the plot, characterization and setting in the novel and relate them to the author's own life;
  - they may read some literary reviews on the novel.
- To English literature lecturers, they
  - should make available to their learners the author's biography before asking them to read or to do researches on it;
  - they should help students relate the author's life to the content of the novel;
  - they should make available to their students literary reviews on the writer's works;
  - they should write satirical novels like Dickens's to denounce children's illtreatment their economic exploitation and injustice to the poor in our society.

### 6.2. Advice:

Here, I would advise English literature students in English Department

- to try to read some of Charles Dickens's novels;

- to choose the short edition of Dickens's novels if they are at their first reading of his novels;
- to pay attention to the plot, characterization and setting in the novel while reading it and relate them to the author's own life.

### 6.3. Recommendations:

To avoid being subject of the same critics as Charles Dickens, nowadays novelists should make every effort to take into account the remarks on Dickens's works.

In effect, writing a literary work is not an easy task. This cannot be effective without mastering some notions in the domain. Even if one is willing to write novels, it is necessary that he/she masters the notion of elements of prose and reads many literary works (novels and critics) in the domain. I would like to appeal to all novelists potential ones so that they should take into account some aspects. Here are some:

- they should moderate their set of facts, a comic side in a character, or a comic turn of expression, in order to avoid the reality the event faded away, and the person became a mere frame for an elaborate, fluttering construction of the work. Miss Havisham is an example of Dickens's exaggeration.
- they should avoid writing very voluminous novels that can be daunting for the reader. When we were given *Oliver Twist* at the first time to read, we thought we were going to have to spend months finishing it. That's what many of us (students) thought anyway. So, writers should take into consideration this aspect.

English Departments of our Universities in collaboration with our Government should try their best to establish partnership with British Universities in order to make available scholarships that will enable literary researchers to travel to Britain for researches.

This is very important because we cannot learn a foreign language and pretend to write literary works in the language without knowing and experiencing the target people's civilisation.

# Conclusion:

The present study on *Charles Dickens in fiction and autobiography: a critical analysis of Oliver Twist and Great Expectations* has revealed that these novels are tightly related to his own life. *Great Expectations* and *Oliver Twist* are representatives of the many kinds of differences and similarities found within his work. Both reflect painful experiences which occurred in Dickens's past.

During his childhood, Charles Dickens suffered much abuse from his parents. This abuse is often expressed in his novels. Pip, in *Great Expectations*, talked often about the abuse he received at the hands of his sister, Mrs. Joe Gargery. On one occasion he remarked, "*I soon found myself getting heavily bumped from behind in the nape of the neck and the small of the back, and having my face ignominiously shoved against the wall, because I did not answer those questions at sufficient length.*"

While at the orphanage, Oliver from *Oliver Twist* also experienced a great amount of abuse. For example, while suffering from starvation and malnutrition for a long period of time, Oliver was chosen by the other boys at the orphanage to request more gruel at dinner one night. After making this simple request, "*the master (at the orphanage) aimed a blow at Oliver's head with the ladle; pinioned him in his arms; and shrieked aloud for the beadle.*" The whole beginning of *Oliver Twist's* story was created from memories which related to Charles Dickens's childhood in a blacking factory (which was overshadowed by the Marshalsea Prison). While working in the blacking factory, Dickens suffered tremendous humiliation. This humiliation is greatly expressed through Oliver's adventures at the orphanage before he is sent away. Throughout his lifetime, Dickens appeared to have acquired a fondness for "the bleak, the sordid, and the austere." Most of *Oliver Twist*, for example, takes place in London's lowest

slums. The city is described as a maze which involves a "mystery of darkness, anonymity, and peril." Many of the settings, such as the pickpocket's hideout, the surrounding streets, and the bars, are also described as dark, gloomy, and bland. Meanwhile, in *Great Expectations*, Miss Havisham's house is often made to sound depressing, old, and lonely. Many of the objects within the house had not been touched or moved in many years. Cobwebs were clearly visible as well as an abundance of dust, and even the wedding dress which Miss Havisham constantly wore had turned yellow with age. Both books have a lot to offer society in terms of pointing out many problems which still exist today, such as child abuse and injustice to the poor. In order to conquer these evils, they must first be understood, and explaining the severity of these experiences seems to be a job which Charles Dickens is very good at.

Talking about characterization, Oliver might be the main character of the novel *Oliver Twist*, but the way he is interpreted and shuffled around by all the other characters sure gets messy. Perhaps most important, is the central question of the novel: how does Oliver escape corruption? If the novel is suggesting that the source of criminality comes from outside influence – most commonly, from a combination of poverty, desperation, and bad company – what kinds of alternatives does it offer for folks who find themselves in that pickle? Does the example of Oliver offer any kind of solution? Or is his innocence totally unrealistic? Considering how "not complicated" Oliver's character is, there sure are a lot of unresolved questions about him.

The protagonist and narrator of *Great Expectations*, Pip begins the story as a young orphan boy being raised by his sister and brother-in-law in the marsh country of Kent, in the southeast of England. Pip is passionate, romantic, and somewhat unrealistic at heart, and he tends to expect more for himself than is reasonable. Pip also has a powerful conscience, and he deeply wants to improve himself, both morally and socially. *Great Expectations* presents the growth and development of a single character, Philip Pirrip, better known to

himself and to the world as Pip. Pip is by far the most important character in *Great Expectations*: he is both the protagonist, whose actions make up the main plot of the novel, and the narrator, whose thoughts and attitudes shape the reader's perception of the story. As a result, developing an understanding of Pip's character is perhaps the most important step in understanding *Great Expectations*.

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# Annex pages

## Early years



1. Ordnance Terrace, Chatham, Dickens's home 1817–1822



2. Illustration by Fred Bernard of Dickens at work in a shoe-blackening factory after his father had been sent to the Marshalsea, published in the 1892 edition of Forster's *Life of Dickens*.



3. The Marshalsea around 1897, after it had closed



4. Catherine Hogarth Dickens by Samuel Lawrence (1838)



5. An 1839 portrait of a young Charles Dickens by Daniel Maclise



6. Sketch of Dickens in 1842 during American Tour. Sketch of Dickens's sister Fanny, bottom left



7. Ellen Ternan, 1858. An actress with whom Dickens fell deeply in love.



8. Dickens at his desk in 1858



9. Samuel Luke Fildes - *The Empty Chair*. Fildes was illustrating "Edwin Drood" at the time of Charles Dickens' death.



10. *Dickens' Dream* by Robert William Buss, portraying Dickens at his desk at Gads Hill Place surrounded by many of his characters



11. "Charles Dickens as he appears when reading." Wood engraving from *Harper's Weekly*, 7 December 1867

## Influence and legacy



12. Bleak House in Broadstairs, Kent, where Dickens wrote some of his novels



13. Dickens in New York, 1868