

### Child's Orphanhood as Reflected in Charles Dickens' works

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#### ABSTRACT:

This research is an attempt to investigate the use of child orphanhood in most of Charles Dickens' works. The study aims at knowing to what extent the writer could influence his readers by creating such characters, although they seem weak, but they are the protagonist of his works, and they overcome all the difficulties. The descriptive analytic method is followed to analyze three of Dickens' novels: Great Expectations, David Copperfield and Oliver Twist. The research findings have shown that there is a great influence in the author's voice to all his readers since then to our modern time, For his calling to children issues and many social values, most prominent of them are; cooperation, collaboration, charity, kindness, support of the needy and justice. Also the study has revealed that literary works are believed to be an effective means that makes people feel and sympathize with each other. Like the case of poor orphan children who the writer appeals all societies worldwide to care for them.

**Key words:** novel, orphanhood, influence, sympathize

#### المستخلص:

هذه الدراسة هي محاولة للبحث في تناول يتم الاطفال في اعمال الكاتب تشارلس دكنز. تهدف الدراسة لمعرفة الي اي مدي استطاع الكاتب التأثير علي قراءه بخلق مثل هذه الشخصيات التي في صورة يتامي ضعفاء وبالرغم من ذلك يتغلبون علي كل الصعاب بل وانهم ابطال اعماله الادبيه. اتبعت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي لتحليل ثلاثه روايات للكاتب تشارلس دكنز وهي: الامال الكبرى و ديفيد كوبر فيلد و اوليفر تويست. ولقد كشفت نتائج الدراسة ان هناك تأثير عظيم في صوت الكاتب من ذلك الحين الي الوقت الحاضر لمناداته بقضايا الاطفال و بالكثير من القيم الاجتماعيه والتي اهمها التعاون, الاحسان و اللطف علي الضعفاء و مساعدة المحتاجين والعداله. ايضا كشفت الدراسة بأن الاعمال الادبيه تعتبر وسيله فعاله لجعل الناس يشاركون ويشعرون ببعضهم البعض, كما هو الحال في تناول قضية اليتامي التي يناشد فيها الكاتب كل المجتمعات ان تعتني و تهتم بهم.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** رواية، يتيم، تأثير، يتعاطف

#### INTRODUCTION

Britain was undergoing rapid changes during Charles Dickens life time therefore; this led to many social ills such as poverty, crimes, orphan children and social classes. These issues and the like, resulted in the emergence of many writers to contribute in the reform. Among them was Charles Dickens who is considered to be one of the greatest English novelists to devote his literary career to the assistance of poor and orphan children. He sees the novel as an

important tool of social reform. Thus, he is the representative novelist of the Victorian period. The oppressed childhood and orphanhood are the major themes in his works, particularly because the social affected on the children during the Victorian era. His novels recount the development of the individual characters such as "David Copperfield" from childhood to maturity. To show how his characters suffer the loveless childhood.



The author tends to create orphan characters who are subjected to oppression that appears in many ways in physical or psychological violence of the children. Thus, his characters always look for a means through which they can feel loved. From this point it may be deduced that this might be a factor from which the writer is motivated to express the idea and to depict the reality of society.

#### **Objectives of the study**

The study attempts to underline the use of orphan characters by Charles Dickens and how this is effective in moving people's feeling more than the normal characters. Also the study attempts to highlight the abusive treatment that orphan are subjected to. Lastly to prove that literary works play a vital role in reforming societies.

#### **Questions of the study**

1-Why the writer creates orphan children in most of his works?

2-Does he succeed in conveying his message to the people to care for orphans?

#### **Significance of the study**

This study is intended to draw the attention of all the people worldwide to bear in mind the orphan children who have become large in number and contribute in their issues. Also the study is believed to be valuable and important to all students who are interested in reading or analyzing literature.

#### **Method of the study**

To achieve the set objectives of the study, the descriptive, analytic method is adopted. The three novels; (Great Expectation, David Copperfield and Oliver Twist) are analyzed and discussed. The main focus is on the issue of orphan children. The sample of the study is the three novels themselves. First a brief synopsis of each novel is provided, and then followed by discussion and analysis of the novels. Later findings are given.

#### **Literature Review:**

##### **The concept of Child Orphhood:**

The orphan is a child less than 18 years of age who has lost one or both parents to any cause of death. By this definition, there were nearly 140 million orphans globally. This large figure represents not only children who have lost both parents, but also those who have lost a father but have a surviving mother or have lost their mother but have a surviving father.

This definition contrasts with concepts of orphan in many industrialized countries, where a child must have lost both parents to qualify as an orphan. UNICEF and numerous international organizations adopted the broader definition of orphan in the mid-1990s as the AIDS pandemic began leading to the death of millions of parents worldwide, leaving an ever increasing number of children growing up without one or more parents.

So the terminology of a 'single orphan' – the loss of one parent – and a 'double orphan' the loss of both parents was born to convey this growing crisis. However, this difference in terminology can have concrete implications for policies and programming for children. For example, UNICEF's 'orphan' statistic might be interpreted to mean that globally there are 140 million children in need of a new family, shelter, or care. This misunderstanding may then lead to responses that focus on providing care for individual children rather than supporting the families and communities that care for orphans and are in need of support.

In keeping with this and the agency's commitment to adapt to the evolving realities of the AIDS crisis, UNICEF commissioned an analysis of population household surveys across 36 countries. Designed to compare current conditions of orphans and non-orphans, the global



analysis suggests we should further expand our scope, focusing less on the concept of orphanhood and more on a range of factors that render children vulnerable. These factors include the family's ownership of property, the poverty level of the household, the child's relationship to the head of the household, and the education level of the child's parents, if they are living. In UNICEF's experience, these are the elements that can help identify both children and their families – whether this term includes living parents, grandparents or other relatives – who have the greatest need for our support. UNICEF report (2017).

When we hear the word “orphan” directly we bear in mind or imagine a child whose parents have both died or only one of them died. Charles Dickens is well known by the use of the orphan figure in his novels. Thus, one of the characteristic of his hero and heroine that he uses orphan who moves from position of deprivation and oppression to a position of care and kindness Childhood was a significant subject in the major novels of Dickens. He was at his most moving when he writes about children because many children suffered in Victorian England. Peck and Coyle (2002).

As mentioned in Dickens was always sympathetic to children, and one of his big contributions to the English novel was the prominence he gave to child characters and the child's experience Within this context Allan grant in the preface to Dickens stated that: “The child and the importance of childhood experience to later life are at the centre Dickens' concerns as an imaginative writer From Oliver Twist to David Copperfield, Dickens illustrates the child's struggle to exist on terms other than those imposed by an adult or society. Jone (2012). David Copperfield childhood, like other Dickens heroes has experienced solitude and deprivation, the lack of satisfactory place within a family or society (Chine 2012: 206).

Chien (2012) added that, by experiencing a feeling of total abandonment, Dickens' children are usually mistreated, both physically and emotionally (Chien 195). Oliver Twist (1838) was the first Dickens' novel to confront the reading public with the abused child. It was the story of an orphan boy who suffers a cruel treatment and miserable adventure. Dickens writes Oliver Twist to highlight the problems of poor children who after the poor law act of 1833 ended up in the work house.

Dickens stands as the first English novelist to give children a central role in his stories, with the portrayal of Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, Pip Pirrip and many other orphans, Dickens reveals his Crusade against the abuses inflicted on Victorian children. Orphans were common characters in Dickens 'novels that reflected partly the author's own early suffering. Under the pen of Dickens, the child grows from a passive observer of human drama into an active and creative character.

#### **Background of the novels:**

##### **David Copperfield.**

David Copperfield is the story of the narrator's life from early childhood to maturity. In it Copperfield describes the obstacles he overcame and the unhappy events he lived through before becoming a successful novelist in later years.

The book is an expert blend of fiction and autobiography. While Dickens was not an orphan, he felt abandoned by his parents during the harsh experiences of his early years. David Copperfield's father died before his birth and his mother died when he is twelve years old. David had led a happy life with his mother and the housekeeper Peggotty until his mother's second marriage to Murdstone, who beats David severely and whose treatment breaks his mother's spirit and finally causes her death.



Murdstone sends David to Salem House, a school presided over by a master as cruel as Murdstone himself. It is here, however, that David meets two lifelong friends, James Steerforth and Tommy Traddles. With his wife dead, Murdstone, who hates David, sends him to his business in London. He lodges with the amiable Micawber family. David runs away from the hated warehouse and becomes the ward of his great-aunt Betsy Trotwood, who sends him to school in Canterbury, a vast improvement over Salem House. Here he lodges with the Wickfields and is attracted to Agnes Wickfield, but dislikes Uriah Heep, her father's obsequious clerk. He studies law under Mr. Spenlow and falls in love and marries his daughter Dora. Micawber and Traddles ultimately expose Uriah Heep as a thief, and the Micawber family immigrates to Australia. David himself eventually becomes a skilled journalist, but shortly after he finds success, his wife Dora dies. After a period of wandering, David begins his career as a popular novelist and marries Agnes. Shmoop (2018).

### **Great Expectations**

As a young child, the orphan Pip lives with his sister and brother-in-law, the village blacksmith. On Christmas Eve, Pip is walking through the marshes when he meets an escaped convict who threatens him into bringing back food and a file to break the leg-irons. On Christmas Day, the convict is captured and returned to the prison ships known as The Hulks. He never reveals Pip's assistance when he is caught and asked how he escaped his irons.

Much later, young Pip is sent to entertain Miss Havisham, a wealthy old lady who lives in a mansion known as Satis House. Miss Havisham is a bitter woman who was jilted on her wedding day long ago. She still wears her wedding gown, and the now-rotten wedding cake sits atop her dining

room table. Her adopted daughter, Estella, is beautiful, and Pip instantly falls in love with her. But Estella is cold and distant. Over time, she softens somewhat toward Pip, but her affection is erratic. She tells him she can never love anyone.

Pip is dismissed from Miss Havisham's service and becomes an apprentice to Joe. But Estella has instilled in him a shame in his commonness. He longs to be a gentleman, not a blacksmith. His discontent grows. One day he learns that an anonymous benefactor has left him an enormous sum of money. He is to move to London, where he will be trained to act as a gentleman. A lawyer, Jaggers, will oversee his inheritance. Pip is certain his benefactor is Miss Havisham, and believes he is being trained as Estella's future husband. Pip's happiness is unfathomable as he moves to London, away from the only family and friends he has ever known. He is educated by Mr. Mathew Pocket and strikes a great friendship with his son, Herbert.

His wealth and position changes him, and soon Pip leads a dissipated life full of idleness. He is ashamed of Joe and Biddy, and wants little to do with them. He thinks association with them will lower him in Estella's eyes. Estella continues to be a powerful factor in his life. She has been trained by Miss Havisham to break men's hearts, and is constantly put in Pip's life to toy with him. Even though she warns him she cannot love him, Pip persists in loving her.

On his twenty-fourth birthday, Pip learns that his benefactor is not Miss Havisham, but the convict from long ago. He realizes he is not meant for Estella, and also that Miss Havisham deliberately let him assume incorrectly. As well, he realizes with shame that he has mistreated his good friend Joe, who was always faithful to him.



Though Pip is ashamed of the convict, Magwitch, he is grateful and loyal, so he commits himself to protecting Magwitch from the police, who are looking for him. His friend, Herbert Pocket, helps him. Pip's moral education begins. He decides he can no longer accept the convict's money. He becomes compassionate towards Magwitch, realizing the depth of the convict's love for him. He tries to help Magwitch escape, but in the chaos, Magwitch is injured and caught. Magwitch dies, but not before Pip discovers that adopted Estella is Magwitch's daughter and tells Magwitch how lovely she is. Estella marries Pip's enemy, Drummle. Miss Havisham dies, but not before repenting of the bitterness that has ruined her life. She leaves a good deal of money to Herbert Pocket, at Pip's request, in the hope that it will earn her forgiveness. Pip goes to Joe and Bidley, who have married one another since the death of Pip's sister. He atones for his sins against them then sets off on his own, determined to make things right in his life. The novel ends when he meets Estella after many years. She has left Drummle, who has since died. She is remarried. She and Pip part as friends and Pip realizes she will always be a part of his life, as surely as all the other memories of his once-great expectations. The Best Notes. (2018)

#### **Oliver Twist**

Oliver is born in a workhouse in a small town about seventy miles from London, England in the early part of the 19th Century. His mother dies almost immediately after his birth. Nobody knows who she was. Oliver is tackled in the street, but by then the nice old man (his name is Mr. Brownlow) has taken a better look at him. He realized that Oliver looks too sweet and innocent (and terrified) to be a

pickpocket. In fact, Oliver isn't so much a pick-pocket as he is a very sick little boy. So Mr. Brownlow takes Oliver home and cares for him until he's well.

Unfortunately. Fagin, the Dodger, Nancy (a prostitute), and Bill Sikes (another criminal) are worried that Oliver will rat them out to the police, so they keep a watch on Brownlow's house. One day, when Brownlow entrusts Oliver with some money and an errand to run in the city, Fagin and the criminals nab the poor kid once again. Nancy feels guilty and steps in to defend Oliver when Fagin tries to smack him around. Fagin and his gang are still trying to track Oliver down. Monks has managed to get hold of—and destroy—one of the few surviving tokens of Oliver's parentage. Nancy finds out about it and gets in touch with Rose Maylie to warn her about Monks' plot with Fagin. Unfortunately for Nancy, Bill Sikes (her lover) finds out about it and brutally murders her. Sikes tries to escape, but he's haunted by what he's done. Eventually, he dies while trying to escape from the police: he falls off a rooftop while he's trying to lower himself down, and inadvertently hangs himself. Meanwhile, Mr. Brownlow has managed to find Monks. Mr. Brownlow was an old friend of Monks' father and knows all about him. As it turns out, Monks is actually the older half-brother of Oliver, and was trying to corrupt Oliver so that he'd secure the entire family inheritance for himself. Monks chooses to admit to everything rather than face the police. Oliver ends up with what's left of his inheritance, is legally adopted by Mr. Brownlow, and lives down the road from the Maylies. Everybody lives happily ever after. except, Fagin who is arrested and hanged, and Monks, who dies in prison. Shmoop (2018).



### Orphanhood in Dickens' novels:

In his novel 'Great Expectations', Dickens portrayed a severe picture of childhood. Through which one can see the world with the eyes of a child. Dickens explored that Pip is an orphan with no friends and no caring family. When Pip tells us his name and how he cannot pronounce the word "Pirrip" it is clear that how poorly educated he is. Although his parents died, Pip does not treat this as a main disaster but instead this encourages him and makes him use his imagination even more. Dickens believes that the stage of childhood is the most important in the age of any person to learn, behave, and acquire skills. In which children must start to learn how to have fun, how to play and how to act sensibly. It is also a time when we develop a sense of responsibility and take account of our own actions.

Dickens suggests that childhood is never only a certain point in our lives and that fundamentally, we are all children. He also believes in the fact that we all act like children twice in our lives. The writer describes the orphan's childhood as a miserable time; he does this through Pip's family and personal life. Most of Pip's relatives are dead, and he has to put up with the evil Mrs Gargery as his substitute mother, she is heartless and wicked and only shows remorse on her final deathbed. This is clearly a confusing and miserable time for Pip and the way childhood is portrayed is extremely negative.

Dickens believes that something must be done to make people aware of children at a time of change to progress, But the question lies itself why Dickens tends to create such characters like Pip in great expectations whose nicknamed Pip, an

orphan and the [protagonist](#) who narrated his childhood, from his birth “As I never saw my father or my mother, and never saw any likeness of either of them (for their days were long before the days of photographs), my first fancies regarding what they were like were unreasonably derived from their tombstones” (G E 1). This signifies that both Pip's parents died before he could even see them. When reading this novel from the very beginning the reader feels pity to the child who suffers from being an orphan. And the reader bears in mind that the child will be over sensitive, insecure, dissatisfied, and disparate.

Pip dreamed of becoming a blacksmith like his kind brother-in-law, Joe Gargery. At Satis House, about age 8, he meets and falls in love with Estella, and tells Bidly that he wants to become a gentleman. As a result of [Magwitch's](#) anonymous patronage, Pip lives in London and becomes a gentleman. Pip assumes his benefactor is Miss Havisham; the discovery that his true benefactor is a convict shocks him, But before we trace all his life. We go to David Copperfield to see how the three children under study began their life. David is depicted in an image seems more pessimistic than Pip David narrated that “I was born (as I have been informed and believe) on a Friday, at twelve o'clock at night.”(D C 5)

“My father's eyes had closed upon the light of this world six months, when mine opened on it. There is something strange to me, even now, in the reflection that he never saw me; and something stranger yet in the shadowy remembrance that I have of my first childish associations with his white grave-stone in the churchyard,”(D C 5)



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The reader may feel sorry to David Indeed; He's doing his best to grow up in tough circumstances: his father dies before he is even born, and his stepfather is a cold, abusive jerk. And then it gets worse: the boy's mother dies, leaving the kid completely alone in the world. Once his mother is gone, his stepfather doesn't even pretend to care about the kid's fate: he sends the boy to the Big City to get a job and care for himself.

David Copperfield feels. Sadly, the challenges of abusive parents and terrible poverty seem to transcend all ages. Dickens's description of the beating David suffers at the hands of his stepfather reaches across the ages to make us shocked, even now. After all, even though we are separated from Dickens by a big gap of time, we share the same human emotions – love, jealousy, resentment, anger, fear, and hope. David's early struggles with a broken home, and his later troubles falling out of love with his wife, seem just as familiar to us now as they would to Dickens's back days. It's a novel about an individual doing his best in bad circumstances. And it doesn't matter if it's in nineteenth century or today. This kind of story never gets old.

Dickens acquires fame by writing enduring characters that everybody remembers and the researcher hopes that, after exploring David Copperfield we'll see why no one can forget Uriah Heep, even if you might want to. Dickens is great at depicting social justice. That social conscience mostly deals with larger issues of right and wrong: how can we recognize and fight evil without becoming brave thinkers? For Dickens, he depicts more specific injustices: cruelty to children, the mistreatment of women, and urban poverty and debt.

Despite huge differences in setting, David Copperfield shares in common a light touch with all of these heavy issues, which keeps us entertained even while provoking us to think. Critics believed that Dickens starts up his autobiography, which soon feeds into the plot of his most personal novel, David Copperfield. Interestingly, though, David Copperfield differs from Charles Dickens's own life in some way. Dickens had a really painful early life. His father was thrown into debtor's prison in 1822 in London, and young Dickens was sent to work at a blacking factory when he was ten years old. However, Dickens' actually loved life, and marriage but David Copperfield's experiences was quite different. So people call David Copperfield an autobiographical novel, but we have to be careful about assuming too much "truth" in this book.

Dickens depicts his characters miraculously when he depicts Oliver the young orphan, who also lost both his parents. Dickens does not mention Oliver's father, He just mention his mother who died when she was wandering at night in a very terrible weather, looking for a place to deliver the child, knowing nothing about her fate, she arrived at the work house where poor people are put in she gave a birth as depicted by Dickens "a young woman was raised feebly from the pillow; and a faint voice imperfectly articulated the words, 'Let me see the child, and die.(O T 3)

"The patient shook her head, and stretched out her hand towards the child. The surgeon deposited it in her arms. She imprinted her cold white lips passionately on its forehead; passed her hands over her face; gazed wildly round; shuddered; fell back--and died.



”(O T 4)The writer tells us that Oliver mother after giving birth she ordered her last hope in the world, that kissing the new born child and died. Oliver was left to the unknown world where no one care there for Dickens highlights his vulnerability and dependency on the owners of the work house, these are important features of orphan narratives. Since Oliver has been deprived of both parents, he is forced to move between the hands of different authorities. The presence of adult power that Dickens shows throughout the novel points to the fact that orphans in the 19th century, Like Oliver are exposed to the harsh world of adults in which they are entirely dependent on their individual actions in order to survive. This dependency is also emphasized, where Oliver often is portrayed as anxious and helpless, surrounded by the people who are in charge of his destiny. An example of Oliver’s vulnerability and dependency is the illustration of Nancy and Sikes reclaiming him after he has been taken in by Mr. Brownlow. The existence of orphans in 19<sup>th</sup> century fiction can be explained by mixing the public sentiment, social context and literary benefits. Dickens was deeply affected by the situation of orphans, and he therefore dedicated Oliver Twist to the social reform of his society .Not only did he use orphan children in order to comment on the faults of society, but they also proved to have an important literary function by appealing to the Victorian reader. Concerning the readers’ perception of the novel, it seems reasonable to assume that their reading was influenced by the social context, since it was so closely related with the reality portrayed in the novel and thus functioned as a complement to the text

itself. Charles Dickens and his readers were influenced by the social situation, while discussing the social situation depicted in the novel, reviews the contemporary comments that are presented in order to demonstrate how Victorian readers received it. Dickens portrayal of the orphan characters and their vulnerability and goodness, played the vital role in affecting the Victorians.

The orphan depiction was certainly useful to the writer when he wants to appeal to the curiosity of the readers, as its fate was naturally uncertain; throughout the novel, it remains indefinite whether Oliver will discover his identity or not or even survive. Moreover, Dickens seems to have made use of his readers’ curiosity by recurrently changing the focus of the action between chapters. One example of this is when Oliver gets severely hurt during the burglary at Mrs. Maylie’s house, and the final sentence of the chapter reads “a cold deadly feeling crept over the boy’s heart, and he saw or heard no more” (O T 209). However, it is not until several chapters later that the reader is told what has happened to Oliver and that he indeed has survived. Thus, Dickens relies on his readers’ interest in Oliver and by the suspense derived from the information; he elicits further devotion and compassion for the orphan boy.

Despite all the difficulties finally Dickens makes his characters overcome and find their identity and place in society, the novel provides a portrait of society’s ill-Treatment of orphan children. The depiction of Oliver became the standard image of a child which lasted for the entire century, and thus to a great extent influenced society’s perception of orphans.





Although the main focus of the novel is on the orphaned child, also the writer introduces to the reader the other marginalized groups in society, such as unmarried mothers, criminals and prostitutes. These issues will be discussed in the following. The focus of this issue is on the child orphanhood, those children who are parentless remain the main protagonist of Dickens' three novels.

#### Conclusion:

Based on the analysis, a number of findings have been obtained. They can be summarized as follows:

- (1) There is a great influence in the author's voice to all his readers since then to our modern time. This is because many researches are conducted on his works.
- (2) The writer urges the society to look after orphan and draws their attention to several values, most prominent of them are; cooperation, collaboration, charity, kindness, support of the needy and justice.
- (3) Literary works are believed to be an effective means to make people feel and sympathize with each other.
- (4) The life of the writer was influenced by the social conditions of his time, such as the impact of industrial revolution on children, poverty and social classes.
- (5) One of important conclusion of this study is that English literature can be employed to contribute in all social issues and the spread of all valuable principles religious or cultural.

#### Recommendations

The researcher recommends all those who are interested in literature whether teachers or students to use literature as a means of teaching to spread all human, social and cultural principles. Also the researcher

recommends more researches on similar areas, including poverty, abuse, oppression or any undesirable treatment that poor people like orphan children are subjected to.

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