

# Poverty, Class Structure and Family in the Select Works of Charles Dickens

Dr. Divyasree C

PhD in English from Kanchi Mamunivar Government Institute for Postgraduate Studies and Research

**Abstract:** Charles Dickens was an English journalist, novelist and short-story writer. He gained fame as a novelist during the Victorian Era. His works include the portrayal of social issues. He was born in Hampshire in England and is now buried in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, England. This paper studies some of his critically acclaimed works.

**Keywords:** Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol, Oliver Twist, Great Expectations.

## I. Introduction

Charles Dickens was an English journalist, novelist and short-story writer. He gained fame as a novelist during the Victorian Era. His works include the portrayal of social issues. He was born in Hampshire in England and is now buried in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, England.

## II. A Christmas Carol

A Christmas Carol, published 1843, is a novella by Charles Dickens. The protagonist is Ebenezer Scrooge, an old man and an immense miser. During the course of the novella, he is visited by Jacob Marley's ghost. Jacob Marley used to be his business partner. Scrooge slowly transforms into a kind of person. The treatment of poor people is a significant theme. The theme of redemption is also prominent.

## III. Oliver Twist

Oliver Twist is the second novel of Charles Dickens, published in 1838. The protagonist is an orphan who stays in a workhouse. A workhouse is a place for people who are not able to support themselves and hence are even employment and a place to stay. Oliver escapes to London where he joins a group of pickpockets and eventually finds his family. Poverty, good versus Evil and classes are the central themes.

## IV. Great Expectations

Great Expectations is a novel by Charles Dickens, published in 1861. This novel is a bildungsroman. Such novels chart the growth of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood. It is set in the middle of the nineteenth century. It is set in Kent and London. The novel displays Pip's three stages of development. It depicts the life of Pip, a blacksmith's apprentice, and his experiences with high society. Poverty, treatment of the poor and the presence of social classes are the main themes.

## V. David Copperfield

David Copperfield, published in 1850, as a novel by Charles Dickens is also a bildungsroman. David Copperfield contains autobiographical elements as well. It paints a picture of Victorian England in the 1800s. The plot revolves around the life of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood. He suffers due to the death of his mother and the struggles of his life become the focal point of the plot. Immigration, presence of social classes and the prison system are the main themes.

## VI. Hard Times

Hard Times is the tenth novel of Charles Dickens, first published in 1854. It portrays English society, along with the social and economic conditions of the Victorian era. The setting is Coketown, a fictitious town known for its industries. The author portrays trade unions in the novel. Life after the industrial revolution and the presence of capitalism are also depicted in the novels. Morality is one of the important themes.

## VIII. Bleak House

Bleak House was published as a novel in 1853. The novel is set in 1830s. Bleak House is a satire on the judicial system of Britain. The novel also portrays how destructive the bureaucracy can be. A civil court case titled Jarndyce and Jarndyce is at heart of the novel. The court case involves inheritance. Justice and kindness are important themes here.

## VIII. The Old Curiosity Shop

The Old Curiosity Shop was published in 1851. The protagonist is Nell Trent. Nell Trent's grandfather is addicted to gambling. Both are residents of London and live at The Old Curiosity Shop. They encounter an evil moneylender and struggle with poverty. The novel is set in 1825. Corruption as a result of class struggles, poverty and family are the predominant themes.

### **IX. Little Dorrit**

Little Dorrit, a novel by Charles Dickens, was published in 1857. The protagonist of the novel is Amy Dorrit, the youngest child in her family. She was born in Marshalsea debtor's prison, London, because her father is also in the same present due to his failure to repay his creditors, and the law allows his family to live with him. Her nickname is "Little Dorrit." Bureaucracy, poverty, wealth, economic classes and the prison system are the important themes.

### **X. The Pickwick Papers**

This novel was published in 1836, and was the first novel of Charles Dickens. The setting of the novel is 1827. Samuel Pipwick, the protagonist, is a rich and kind gentleman. He tells his friends that they must go to places that are remote from London, and must report the findings to one another. He also has a misunderstanding with Mrs Bardell, and they both end up in prison. Money and incarceration are the main themes.

### **XI. Nicholas Nickleby**

Nicholas Nickleby is the third novel of Charles Dickens, published in 1839. The protagonist of the novel is Amy Dorrit, the youngest child in the family. She is born in Marshalsea debtor's prison, London, because her father is also in the same prison due to failure to pay his creditors and the law allowed his family to live with him. Amy Dorrit's nickname is 'Little Dorrit.' Bureaucracy, poverty, wealth, economic classes and the prison system are the core themes.

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