

Charles dickens: a biography

[People](#), [Charles Dickens](#)



Charles Dickens one of the greatest authors of all time. Dickens wrote on the people of the Industrial Revolution and on truth and realism. Dickens wrote about every aspect of life and included all classes of society. Dickens used experiences from his own life and turned them into creativity for his novels and other writings. Charles Dickens was one of the greatest authors of English Literature because he wrote on the issues and problems that concerned the lives of the people around him. Charles Dickens was born in February 1812 in Portsmouth, England to a middle social class that influenced much of his work later in life (Smiley¹). Charles Dickens used his imagination and his creations to make up things and put them in stories. Dickens envisioned people and the world in the city as a physical place. He saw human activity as a focus of interest and setting for a story (Nelson 28-29). Dickens literary career began by writing for Monthly Magazine and London Evening Chronicles when he wrote the Sketches of Boz (Gissing 7). Dickens also wrote Parliamentary debates and feature articles based on his experience and observations in the Parliament (Smiley 1). In his work Dickens largely reflected the political economic and social aspects of the society comprising of the poor, peasants, workers, landlords, the rich, and the state. Dickens wrote in the 19th century England that was characterized by oppressed poor masses with few rights. The society at this time had an oppressive bureaucracy whose machinations made the life for the poor almost unbearably, and Dickens provided information reflecting injustices of the system and the resulting exploitation of the poor. Through Dickens' series of stories like Sketches of Boz and Pickwick Papers published on the Morning of Chronicles he made known the suffering of the poor using a quick

wit and significant intuitiveness about their lives (Smiley 4). Dickens wrote fourteen novels in three years with eight of them having 875 pages (Nelson 25-29). Dickens concentrated on performing one of the most profound 19th century social commentaries denouncing poverty and social stratification using works such as *Oliver Twist* and *Hard Times*. Through his social commentaries Dickens brought up strong cases of poverty, crime, misfortunes of being poor, class stratifications, bleak economic systems, treatments of the poor, and condemnation of inconsiderable public institutions. In bringing out the snobbery of the aristocracy and the oppressive of the poor, Dickens used satire that served well to bring out indignities. Dickens used fancy and realism with a satirical overriding style that formed his style. Dickens used irony, which formed a significant part of bringing to light his arguments and showing his anger at oppression (Smiley 8). Dickens' works were presented in weekly and monthly installments. They were affordable, accessible, and regular for all making his commentary more profound. Dickens in the 19th century was a writer who used novels, essays, and short stories to bring to light social injustices against the poor. Through his writings, he also reflected on the extent and impact of poverty on the society in the time period. Through his reflections Dickens presented powerful social and political views criticizing the rich and the state and arguing out the cause of the poor. Dickens political message was on the pressure, liberty, improvement and equality expressed as part of social reform and criticism. Dickens pointed out the flaws of greed for money and criticized the neglect of the poor such as through the book *Oliver Twist* that show the life of a poor boy, who from his birth suffers misfortunes and

misery at the hands of the people only willing to use the poor as a means to end riches. In his political expression, Dickens shows his outrage at the leadership for allowing degradation and criticizes the Poor Laws that dedicated public charity (Smiley 14). In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens offers a biting social commentary focusing on victimization and abandonment (Smiley 14). In his illustrations he uses the concept of the workhouses found in all cities, where the poor are left to half starve (Dickens 6a). The focuses of the book *Oliver Twist* were showing the oppression of the poor and abuse of the poor children as perpetrated by the state. Dickens highly disapproved of how the state treats the poor and orphaned children, which he brings to light through institutional abuse. In *Oliver Twist* Dickens shows institutional failure and abuse by referring to the Parish running the warehouse in which Oliver was born and that approves he will be taken to an orphanage with very poor conditions with little food or hygiene and where children were taken for offending against the poor laws (Dickens 7a). Dickens disapproved of the work house policy such as Oliver was taken to when he turned 12, where the poor underwent emotional and physical abuse, and where children were liable to punishment even without enough reason (Brennan and Norton pg. 504). Nevertheless, Dickens' most profound political commentary was his disapproval of the new Poor Law of 1834 that came into effect to relieve the society of the burden of taking care of the poor and made poverty almost a crime (Fletcher 1). The law established the workhouse to house the poor seeking public assistance, although in there people suffered humiliation, stigma, emotional branding, and deprivation of both psychological and physical needs (Brennan and Norton pg. 504). The state imposed a

deliberate inadequacy in the workhouses that made many opt out to suffer on the streets to face public aid (Fletcher 3). In addition to institutional criticism, Dickens denounces that the goodness of the workhouses in instilling the value of working and denounces the Christian virtue of the middle class bureaucrats that subjected the poor to cruelty in the name of charity (Dickens 18 a). Dickens shows that the system has made the poor commodities for providing labor for the rich, the powerful and the state, and shows how the system has led to crime and prostitution as the poor try to escape the oppression (Fletcher 1). Unfortunately, the class of people that suffered most from the enactment of the Poor Laws and Workhouses were the children, the old, and the sick that were unable to fend for themselves on the streets (Fletcher 4). In addition to political sentiments, Dickens offers socialist ideologies by providing insight into social reforms, such as in the story "A Christmas Carol" that tells the story of Ebenezer Scrooge a misery old man who sees Christmas as an excuse for the poor to expect handouts and for the people to miss work. Through the character Scrooge, Dickens brings home the opinion that the rich in the Victorian 19th century society concentrated more on attaining and retaining wealth, characteristics of capitalism instead of helping the poor (Pike). In qualifying this opinion, Scrooge considers it sufficient to pay taxes and considered the poor as idle and lazy therefore should not be given charity. Dickens shows that society should recognize the plight of the poor and contribute towards treating them more humanely. Scrooge embodies the prosperous English classes that see the poor as nothing and who think their responsibility towards helping others end with paying taxes (Book Rag Book Notes). Using

the story of Scrooge, Dickens calls welfare from the poor showing that being uncharitable may lead to misfortune such as befell Marley a dead partner of Scrooge and as will happen to Scrooge if he does not change. Dickens' socialist view such as in the book are however not through collectivism of resources, but through the rich coming in to help the poor, thus his socialist ideals are that of charity and social responsibility of the rich towards the poor. . Charles Dickens was one of the greatest authors of English Literature because he wrote on the issues and problems that concerned the lives of the people around him. Dickens achieved worldwide popularity for his novels, rich storytelling and memorable characters. He created scenes and descriptions of places that have longed delighted readers. Dickens was a keen observer of life and had a great understanding of humanity, especially of young people. Works Cited Book Rags Book Notes. A Christmas Carol Book Notes Summary by Charles Dickens Book Rags, Inc 2006. Retrieved on December 20, 2009 from <http://www.bookrags.com/notes/xmas/TOP1.htm> Brenan, P. O., and Norton, Ken. " Oliver Twist, Textbook of Child Abuse: Commentary. " Archives of Disease in childhood, Vol. 85, Iss. 6, 2001, pg. 504 Brown, Ivor. Dickens in his Time. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons LTD, 1963. Brown, Ivor. Dickens and his World. New York: Henry Z. Walck, Inc, 1970. Dickens, Charles. A Christmas Carol in Prose, Being a Ghost Story of Christmas. Bradbury and Evans, 1858 (B). Dickens, Charles. Oliver Twist. Plain Label Books, 1957 (A). Fletcher, Blayze. The New Poor Law and Oliver Twist Associated Content Inc, 2008. Gissing, George R. Charles Dickens: A critical study. Adamant Media Corporation, 2001. Hardy, Barbara. " Charles Dickens. " British Writers. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1982. Nelson,

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