

Example of charles dickens literature review

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



“ When we read Dickens we are reading all sorts of other things at the same time—plot, character, moral dilemma, historical predicament, and so forth—but we can see all these in their full complexity only if we attend to the illuminating play of style” (Alter 1996). Indeed, Charles Dickens is a master of style and a versatile genius. He weaves magic with his words that takes the readers into a rapturous world of imagination. The power of his words and imagination manifested in his depiction of simple stories and building of characters make him one of the most popular English novelists of all time. The satires and rhythms, vividness in details, use of figurative languages and his prolific linguistic creativity are some of the hallmark features of his writing which combined with his experience of harsh reality in the very early phase of his life has created a genre of its own famed as Dickensian style. Born as the second child to his parents on 7th February 1812, Dickens read voraciously all the collection of books his father had in library - Shakespeare, Smollett, Defoe, Goldsmith and Fielding. Needless to say, each of these authors left an indelible mark on the minds of young Dickens and the influence is vivid in his literary ingenuity throughout his writings. It was his first novel *Pickwick Papers* that sprang Dickens to fame. The style of writing used in *Pickwick Papers* is witty, imaginative, playful, supple and fresh. The youthfulness that comes out of the narrative is infectious but the artistic maturity shown in the style of execution astonishes the readers. Originally titled 'The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club' this novel was first published in 1837 as a 20 part serial. The book delineates the misadventures of a group of comical characters during their visit to Southern England. A variety of humorous anecdotes are interspersed throughout the novel,

adding to the pleasure of the readers. The most popular character of *Pickwick Papers* is Samuel Weller, the archetypal Cockney hero whose Cockney accent and quirky nature made him very popular.

The time when the Dickens family went through tremendous financial difficulty with Dickens' father thrown into jail for having failed to pay debts has been crucial for the development of the major themes of his popular novels. Considered to be one of the most popular novels of Dickens, *David Copperfield* is claimed to be the most autobiographical in form. It was in this novel that Dickens described a character of a young man growing up in a similar situation like that of Dickens. Further the fact that this novel was the first novel to have been written in first person and the startling similarities shared between the protagonist David and Charles Dickens led many to believe that the character of David was Charles Dickens himself in disguise. Both David and Dickens were novelists. David was a poor orphan boy while Dickens had parents who were irresponsible in nature and who due to their spend-thrifty ways fell into a financial pit. Due to his parents' callousness, Dickens had to experience rough water as early in his life as 12 years when he had to work in boot blacking factory (Ellopos Communities 2002). Owing to the grievances he had for his parents, he easily identified himself with the orphans of his novels and gave glorious descriptions of the perfect family he never had. While studying in Wellington House, Dickens saw the headmaster beating boys quite similarly like Mr. Creakle at Salem House in which David studied. Dickens was in love with Maria Beadnell who was as charming and flirtatious as Dora, David's sweetheart. Maria's father who was a rich banker in order to separate the lovers sent Maria abroad and upon her return Maria

refused to show any interest in Dickens. Same way Dora's father too threatened to separate Dora and David but in the novel, Dickens tried to live his own dream by uniting David with Dora.

At the time when books were the main form of entertainment, Dickens wrote books for all levels of society. While intellectuals were regaled with the social commentary and political satire, middle class people basked in the sentimental outpourings and moral messages and the poorer section of people by gathering in groups would enjoy the lightheartedness of the comedy and the gripping suspense. Dickens was popular as a social critic and he liked to highlight upon the problems plaguing the society in his novels in a satirical way. For example, in *Oliver Twist* he revealed the despicable quality of life lived by the poor people dwelling in the slums of England. In *Nicholas Nickleby* he made an onslaught on the ruthless and negligent boarding schools of Yorkshire. In *David Copperfield*, he raised a protesting voice against the contemporary sexual mores that belittled poor unmarried women for having affairs and giving birth to illegitimate children and vigorously touches upon other important social issues of his time such as the problem of prostitution, dearth of opportunities for women, the injustice of the prison for debtors and the requirement for humane treatment to the insane.

Dickens was a master manipulator of languages. He had the ability to use words so powerfully that any situation however unreal would come into life with the vividness of his description. He frequently relied on metaphors, similes, personification, alliteration and imagery to grab the essence of the traits and personality of his characters. With the élan he describes the office

of Mr. Jagger in his novel *Great Expectations* brings out the gloomy and dark personality of the character of Mr. Jagger, " Mr. Jaggers' own high-backed chair was of deadly black horse hair, with rows of brass nails round it, like a coffin The room was but small, and the clients seemed to have had a habit of backing up against the wall; the wall, especially opposite to Mr. Jaggers' chair, being greasy with shoulders" (Dickens, p 289). The description of a dark depressing office of Mr. Jagger gives a reflection of his character, a mysterious man full of secrets. Dickens' use of symbol and imagery are apparent in his novel *A Tale of Two Cities*. He beautifully created a knitting imagery through the character Madame Defarge whose act of knitting comprises a complex labyrinth of symbols. Through her needlework she stitches the names of people condemned to die for a new republic. The knitting imagery reinforces the stealth and resentment of the revolutionaries. The quiet posture of Madame Defarge hardly gives any forbidding sign but still she sends her victims to death. In a similar way, though the French peasants apparently seem to be simple and harmless, they eventually rebel against their oppressors by condemning them to death.

In conclusion, Charles Dickens is a prolific writer whose linguistic ingenuity shows in his creation of astounding characters, his use of imagery and symbol, his vividness of description, his satires and his playfulness in his novels. If he celebrates freedom in *Pickwick Papers*, he gives his readers reasons to mull over in *David Copperfield*. His manipulation of language and figurative usage of words emphasizes his messages creating subtle imageries. His novels appeal to people of all walks of society from high

intellectuals to the downtrodden. His reflection on the contemporary problems of society with the use of satire in his novels only emphasizes his creative genius. He is a legendary figure who continues to influence succeeding generation for over a century. He is truly an iconic figure of a new genre of style- Dickensian style.

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