



THE REPRESENTATION OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN CHARLES DICKENS'S NOVELS: CLASS DIVISION, SOCIAL INJUSTICE, AND NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES

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Relevance of the Study. This study is relevant because social inequality remains a major problem in modern societies, influencing people's life chances, education, health, and social mobility. Literature is an important source for understanding how inequality is experienced, justified, and criticized, and Charles Dickens's novels provide one of the clearest artistic portrayals of these issues.

The research is also relevant for literary studies because it connects social content with narrative form: it shows how Dickens's techniques (characterization, narrative voice, contrasts of setting, irony) make social criticism persuasive and emotionally powerful. The results can be used in teaching English literature, developing critical reading skills, and discussing the historical roots of inequality and its continuing relevance today.

Purpose of the Study. The purpose of this study is to examine how Charles Dickens portrays social inequality in Victorian England and to explain how his narrative techniques shape this representation. The research aims to identify the key forms of inequality shown in the novels (poverty, class barriers, institutional injustice), analyse the main character types and social settings used to highlight these problems, and demonstrate how narrative voice, irony, contrast, and emotionally intense scenes strengthen Dickens's social critique and influence the reader's response.



Materials and Methods. Selected novels by Charles Dickens that highlight social inequality (e.g., *Oliver Twist*, *Great Expectations*, *Hard Times*, *Bleak House*), along with relevant academic criticism and historical sources on Victorian social life and institutions.

Methods:

Close reading and textual analysis; socio-historical (contextual) interpretation; and narratological analysis focusing on characterization, narrative voice/authorial commentary, setting contrasts, and key symbolic and ironic elements.

MAIN FINDINGS.

1. Dickens presents social inequality as a systemic issue supported by Victorian institutions (workhouses, law, education, and charity), not only as personal misfortune.
2. Class division is shown through restricted social mobility, where poverty limits opportunities and shapes identity, behaviour, and life outcomes.
3. Marginalized characters—especially poor children, workers, and the urban poor—are central to Dickens's criticism and are portrayed with strong emotional and moral focus.
4. Dickens intensifies social critique through narrative techniques: contrasts between social spaces, authorial commentary, irony, and dramatic scenes that expose injustice.
5. The combination of realistic detail and persuasive storytelling encourages empathy and pushes the reader toward ethical reflection on inequality and responsibility.

Conclusion. The study concludes that Charles Dickens represents social inequality as a deep, institutional problem rooted in the class structure of Victorian England. Through realistic depiction of poverty and injustice and



through effective narrative techniques—especially characterization, contrasts of social spaces, authorial commentary, and irony—Dickens turns the novel into a strong form of social criticism. Overall, his works not only describe the consequences of inequality but also shape the reader's moral response by encouraging empathy for marginalized people and questioning the social systems that maintain injustice.

