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The Reflexion of Social Differences in the Works of Charles Dickens

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**The Reflexion of Social Differences in the Works of
Charles Dickens**

**Odras společenské diferenciacie viktoriánské
společnosti v díle Charlese Dickense**

Bakalářská práce

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Abstract

This bachelor paper focuses on social differences in three works of Charles Dickens, a representative of the lower middle class, who lived in Victorian England, which was influenced by cruel consequences of the Industrial Revolution. The bachelor paper is divided into two major parts. One part includes the historical background of Charles Dickens' life, concentrating on the terrible living and working conditions, child-labour and maltreatment of children, family life and development of social classes as well as of social reforms. The other compares social conditions of the upper, middle and especially of the working class in his works. It reveals the situation in workhouses, which were built to help people with no social support, but the conditions in them were so terrible that they broke the spirit of many people forced to live there. The author compares the miserable living conditions of the working class, their diligence, modesty and frankness to hypocrisy and overindulgence of the middle and upper class. This paper seeks answer to the following question: did Charles Dickens' works influence the social conditions of the working class and the position of the middle and upper class to the misery of the working class?

Shrnutí

Cílem této bakalářské práce je najít sociální rozdíly uvedené ve třech dílech Charlese Dickense, představitele nižší střední třídy, který žil ve Viktoriánské Anglii ovlivněné také negativními následky průmyslové revoluce. Práce je rozdělena na dvě hlavní části. Jedna část zahrnuje historické pozadí života Charlese Dickense a soustřeďuje se na kruté životní a pracovní podmínky, dětskou pracovní sílu a týraní dětí, rodinný život a rozvoj sociálních tříd spolu se sociálními reformami. Druhá porovnává v jeho dílech sociální podmínky vyšší, střední a hlavně pracující třídy. Je zde odhalena situace v chudobincích, které byly postaveny na pomoc lidem bez jakékoli sociálního zázemí, ale jejichž podmínky byly tak kruté, že zničily víru mnoha lidí, kteří tam byli donuceni žít. Charles Dickens porovnává bídné životní podmínky pracující třídy, pracovitost, čestnost a upřímnost dělníků s pokrytectvím a nestřídmostí střední a vyšší třídy. Tato práce hledá odpověď na následující otázku: ovlivnila díla Charlese Dickense sociální podmínky pracující třídy a postoj střední a vyšší třídy k bídě pracující třídy?

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1. Introduction

This bachelor paper deals with social differences described in three works of Charles Dickens: *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield* and *Hard Times*. He is a representative of the lower middle class having lived in Victorian England which was influenced also by negative, even cruel consequences of the Industrial Revolution. The bachelor paper is divided into two major parts. As it is important to know the historical background of Charles Dickens' life to be able to understand his works, the first part focuses on history. The author of this paper describes social development after the Industrial Revolution, which brought many positive as well as negative changes. These changes are pictured in the part dealing with social classes in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The sources agree on that in this period, a new class, called the middle class, emerged. During the Industrial Revolution, members of the middle class began to appear as an increasingly wealthy part of society. With these social changes, inequality of social classes increased. Child labour, family life and working conditions of labours are included in this part of the bachelor paper as well.

In the works of Charles Dickens is apparent mention of more topics related to Victorian Britain, for example, the appearance of trade unions for working class. The author does not include this topic into this bachelor paper because it is a broad issue. Actually, Charles Dickens shows his disapproval with this movement. On one hand, he encourages labours in their forces to reach better conditions, on the other hand, he is afraid of any revolution; therefore, he is against trade unions. An example of such a conviction is given in *Hard Times*, when Stephen Blackpool refuses to enter trade union even though he knows about his expatriation from society (*Dickens, 1992, 136-7*). Another topic, which is not described in this work, is connected with the political situation and franchise. These are wide subjects as well. Just a few words are mentioned about utilitarianism in the introduction to *Hard Times*.

This paper contains the description of Charles Dickens' life as well as it influenced his writings. The sources agree on that *David Copperfield* is actually considered as his autobiography. It is certainly his most autobiographical novel. Charles, as a small boy, experienced the cruelty of social mechanism in England. His father was imprisoned for debt. David, only twelve years old, had to leave school and

work at a blacking factory in London. The trauma of this life experience never left him. It is very possible that it became one of the reasons which made him revolt against inhuman conditions as a writer. Moreover, he became the victim of inequality of social rank after he had fallen in love with a girl from a rich family. However, his relationship was soon over. He was considered an inconvenient suitor due to his social status. This cruel reality became another impulse for writing books focused on social inequality. Journalism created device of Dickens' revolt against social injustice. All his pieces contain revolt against English society in Victorian period.

The above mentioned topics are closely connected with the other part of this paper comparing social conditions of the upper, middle and especially of the working class in the three works of Charles Dickens. The studies conducted in the area of Dickens' works reveal the situation in workhouses, which were built to help people with no support, but the conditions in them were so terrible that they broke the spirit of many people forced to live there. The author compares miserable living conditions of the working class, their diligence, modesty and frankness to hypocrisy and overindulgence of the middle and upper class. These social inequalities, which the author of this paper tries to reveal, are expressed in all three pieces of Charles Dickens: *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield* and *Hard Times*. Dickens was concentrated in all of them on satire and social problems. *Oliver Twist*, for example, is in large measure an attack on contemporary attitudes toward poverty (*Int.* 13). In comparison with the other works of Dickens, *Oliver Twist* is not of great literary value, but it is of great importance. Its subject is social oppression (*Int.* 11). Dickens depicts inequality of the social classes in his other work, *David Copperfield*. *David Copperfield* is based on life experience of the author himself. It seems to invoke understanding between different classes and kinds of people to many 19th century readers of Dickens' novels. Dickens continues with his criticism of social inequalities in another of his pieces, called *Hard Times*. During the 1850s, when the book was written, England was experiencing an economic boom driven by manufacturing. The phrase "hard times" refers to the difficult conditions of the working class who made this boom possible (*Int.* 13). Dickens' *Hard Times* remains the most vivid and familiar of the novels which deal with the social and industrial problems of mid-Victorian England (*Sanders, 2004, 409*). In *Hard Times*, Dickens protests

against the commercial oppression and Utilitarianism (*Int.* 8). *Hard Times* reveals Dickens' increased interest in class issues and social commentary (*Int.* 13).

The author of this paper uses *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield* and *Hard Times* as the main sources for seeking an answer to the following question: did Charles Dickens' works influence the social conditions of the working class and position of the middle and upper class to misery of the working class?

2. The historical background of Charles Dickens

2.1. The Industrial Revolution

2.1.1. The beginning of the Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution in Britain began in the early years of the 18th century. Increasing urbanisation, technical advance and agricultural specialisation became one of the factors which gave rise to the Industrial Revolution (*More, 1993, 83*). The definition of the Industrial Revolution is quite difficult. Sometimes it is taken to be the very rapid growth of certain sectors of manufacturing industry, in particular cotton and iron, from the later eighteenth to the early nineteenth century. It is connected with the growth of factories and the use of steam power. A more complex meaning of Industrial Revolution is expressed in the following sentence. The Revolution can be seen as one in which the entire economy broke out from a state, in which total national income grew only occasionally, into a state in which there was continuous advance in national income. The centres of the Industrial Revolution were localised in the Midlands and the North of England and in parts of Wales and Scotland because the North rose while the South declined (*More, 1993, 72-3, 87*).

Britain changed from a largely rural, agrarian population to a country of industrialized towns, factories, mines and workshops. Britain was, in fact, already beginning to develop a manufacturing industry during the early 18th century, but it was from the 1730's that its growth accelerated. Moreover, this period involved changes and improvements in agricultural practice. During the Industrial Revolution, canals, roads, railways, steamships, iron and steel manufacture, the textile industry, working, social and urban conditions developed (*Int. 18*).

2.1.2. Social development after the Industrial Revolution

On one hand, the progress of industry changed many things for the better. The new factories made many people better fed, clothed, and housed than they had ever been before. On the other hand, children six and eight years old worked ten to twelve hours a

day in the mills and the mines, women worked sixteen-hours a day in factories, water and sanitary systems were so primitive that cholera broke out in London in the 19th century. With the factory came the slums. This word entered the language in the Victorian Period (*Bennett, 1981, 492, 496*). As the period progressed, more and more people became victims of oppression.

In some ways, the Industrial Revolution helped the working classes. As the Industrial Revolution progressed, there was an increasing need for educated workers, who would be able to read instructions, take measurements and interpret drawings and plans. Nevertheless, access to higher education to people from the middle and working classes was prevented, because they would be aware of two facts; first, they were being terribly exploited and second, although they were creating the wealth of the country, they were gaining little benefit for themselves and they had no political power. Higher education was provided only for the upper class. During the Industrial Revolution, members of the middle class became an increasingly wealthy part of society. However, the upper class still dominated the newly rich Bourgeoisie, and kept the political power (*Int. 18*).

Between 1750 and 1914, Britain was transformed from an agricultural to an industrial country. The landscape was changed, large sums of capital were invested into mines, mills and railways, the bulk of the population became urban instead of rural (*More, 1993, 163*). The consequences of the Industrial Revolution reflected in the Victorian Britain.

2.2. The Victorian period

2.2.1. The explanation of the term “Victorian period”

“Victorian” is a term that often includes Queen Victoria’s reign (1837-1901) as well as William IV’s reign from 1830. Historians distinguish Early Victorian (1830-48), Mid-Victorian (1848-70), and Late Victorian (1870-1901) period, corresponding to periods of growing pains and confidence in the 1850s, and of loss of consensus after

1880. Under Queen Victoria, Britain transformed by the Industrial Revolution became the world's leading empire (*Alexander, 2000, 249*).

2.2.2. The growing power of Britain

In the early eighteenth century, Britain was a remarkably under-populated country, with a population one third that of France. The accelerating increase in population, which began in the mid-eighteenth century, is one of the most striking and important changes of this period. Over the whole nineteenth century, the population of Britain grew “from eleven million to thirty-seven million” (*More, 1993, 11-12, 99*).

In the eighteenth century, people started to migrate to London because of its plentiful employment opportunities and high wages (*More, 1993, 16*). After the Industrial Revolution, the nineteenth century Britain was the “workshop” of the world. Until the last quarter of the century, British factories were producing more than any other country in the world. By the end of the century, Britain's empire was political rather than commercial. Britain used this empire to control large areas of the world (*Dowall, 1997, 131*).

As England was the first country to become industrialized, its transformation was an especially painful one. It experienced a host of social and economic problems consequent to rapid and unregulated industrialization. England also experienced an enormous increase in wealth. An early start enabled her to capture markets all over the globe. The profits gained from trade also led to extensive capital investments in all continents. “England gained particular profit from the development of its own colonies, which, by 1890, included more than a quarter of all the territory on the surface of the earth” After England had become the world's workshop, London became, from 1870 on, the world's banker. By the end of the century, England was the world's foremost imperial power (*Abrams et al., 1993, 891-2*).

Britain wanted two main things in Europe: a “balance of power” which would prevent any single nation from becoming too strong, and a free market, in which its own industrial and trade superiority would give Britain a clear advantage. Outside Europe, Britain wished its trading position to be the strongest. It defended its interests by keeping ships of its navy in almost every ocean of the world. This was possible because

Britain had occupied a number of places during the war against Napoleon. After 1815, British government did not only try to develop its trading stations, moreover, its policy then was to control world traffic and world markets to Britain's advantage (*Dowall, 1997, 131*).

2.2.3. The division of the Victorian period

2.2.3.1. The Early Period (1830-48): a time of troubles

In autumn of 1830, the Liverpool and the Manchester Railway opened, the Reform Parliament appeared, which two years later was to transform England's class structure. The Reform Bill of 1832, connected with the extension of franchise on the lower and middle bourgeoisie, was passed.

These changes broke up the monopoly of power, which the conservative landowners had so long enjoyed. The Reform Bill represents the beginning of a new age. The changeover was in fact a painful one, connected with conflict. This early period came to be called the Time of Troubles. In the early 1840s, a severe depression, with widespread unemployment led to rioting. Moreover, the conditions in the new industrial and coal-mining areas were terrible enough to create fears of revolution. Workers and their families in the slums lived in horribly crowded, unsanitary housing, and the conditions under which women and children worked in mines and factories were unimaginably brutal.

For ten years, Chartists, a large organization of working men, engaged in agitation, to have their program adopted by Parliament. They wanted to abolish the high tariffs on imported grains, the tariffs known as the Corn Laws. In 1845, serious crop failures in England and the outbreak of potato blight in Ireland caused the change of the Corn Laws. A system of Free Trade, whereby goods could be imported with the payment of only minimal tariff duties was introduced. It worked well for many years and helped to relieve the major crisis of the Victorian economy. In 1848, when armed revolutions were exploding violently in every country in Europe, England was relatively unaffected (*Abrams et al., 1993, 893-5*).

2.2.3.2. The Mid-Victorian Period (1848-70): economic prosperity and religious controversy

The second phase of the Victorian period had many problems, but it was a time of prosperity. Queen and her husband, Prince Albert, were models of the middle class domesticity and devotion to duty. Agriculture flourished together with trade and industry. Factory Acts in Parliament which restricted child labour and limited hours of employment were successful. The condition of the working classes was also being gradually improved. The Mid-Victorian phase is usually called “The Age of Improvement.” In 1851, Prince Albert opened the Great Exhibition of modern industry and science in Hyde Park, in a gigantic glass greenhouse, the Crystal Palace. It symbolized the triumphant feats of Victorian technology. Pride in technological progress, however, is only one element of the mid-Victorian period. Equally significant is the conflict between religion and science (*Abrams et al., 1993, 895-6*).

In the mid-Victorian period, Darwin’s great work, *The Origin of Species* (1859), evoked confusion in Britain. Most readers recognized that Darwin’s theory of natural selection conflicted not only with the concept of creation derived from the Bible but also with the long-established assumptions of the values attached to humanity’s special role in the world (*Abrams et al., 1993, 897-8*). The Darwin’s theory caused that less people amongst the educated classes attended churches because of deep and growing doubts about the very doctrinal and historical bases of Christianity. However, religion remained a powerful force in the Victorian life and literature. Disputes about evolutionary science remind serious conflicts and anxieties of the Mid-Victorian age. (*Sanders, 2004, 398-9, Abrams et al., 1993, 897-8*).

2.2.3.3. The Late Period (1870-1901): decay of Victorian values

The third phase of the Victorian age is more difficult to categorize. For many Victorians, this final phase of the century was a time of security and satisfaction. However, in the seemingly smooth-working institutions of the mid-Victorian England after 1870, some problems became evident.

Outside England there were other developments that challenged the Victorian stability and security. Germany wanted to confront England with its exclusive position in trade and industry. The recovery of the United States after the Civil War caused serious competition not only in industry but also in agriculture. The westward expansion of railroads in the United States and Canada opened up the vast, grain-rich prairies. As a consequence, the English farmer had to confront lower grain prices and a dramatically different scale of productivity that England could not match. In 1873 and 1874, such severe economic depressions occurred that the rate of emigration rose to an alarming degree.

Another threat to the domestic balance of power was the growth of labour as a political and economic force. In 1867, a second Reform Bill that extended the right to vote to sections of the working classes was passed, and this, together with the subsequent development of trade unions, made labour a powerful political force (*Abrams et al., 1993, 898*).

2.2.4. The living condition in the Victorian Britain in the nineteenth century

2.2.4.1. The danger at home – workers

Until about 1850, Britain was in greater danger at home than abroad. Britain sold clothes, guns, and other necessary war supplies to its allies' armies as well as its own army. At the same time, corn was imported to keep the nation and its army fed. All this changed when peace came in 1815. Suddenly, there was no longer such a need for factory-made goods. Many people lost their jobs. "Unemployment was made worse by 300,000 men from Britain's army and navy who were now looking for work" (*Dowall, 1997, 132*). The farmers' income suffered because of cheaper imported corn. These farmers wanted new laws to protect locally grown corn and the price at which it was sold. While the prices doubled, wages remained the same. New methods of farming also reduced the number of workers on the land. It caused general misery and troubles. People were stealing and catching birds and animals and even this was prohibited.

The new Poor Law in 1834 was intended to improve the help given to the poor. However, government did not provide the money necessary. Many people received even less help than before. Only those who lived in the workhouses were given some help. However, the workhouses were crowded and dirty with hardly enough food to keep people alive. The inhabitants had to work from early morning till late at night. The families were divided as sexes were separated. The picture of the workhouses, the descriptions of the life of crime and misery, into which poor people were forced, can be easily found in the novels by Charles Dickens. These descriptions of life conditions shocked the richer classes and the conditions slowly improved.

To avoid living in the workhouse, many inhabitants looked for a better life in towns. Between 1815 and 1835, Britain changed from a nation of country-people to a nation of mainly towns-people. In the first thirty years of the nineteenth century, some cities doubled in size and some of them more than doubled (*Dowall, 1997, 32, 134*). As being the major English port, London became the centre for the provision of international insurance and banking services, still small in the eighteenth century but growing (*More, 1993, 23*). The poor in the fast-growing towns started to fear the rich. They became hard to control. Several riots took place. Rioters were attacked by soldiers, some were killed and many wounded. The struggle between the government and people who wanted change became greater.

Since 1824, workers were allowed to join together in trade unions. One of their aims was to make sure that employers paid reasonable wages. They also wanted to prevent other people from working in their particular trade. As a result, the working classes found it difficult to act together. Employers could easily defeat strikers, who refused to work until their pay was improved. They used soldiers to force people back to work or break up meetings. The introduction of a cheap postage system in 1840 helped the workers to organize themselves across the country better than before. Riots and political meetings continued. The government's severe actions showed how much it feared that the poor might take power and establish a republic. Men in the riots were killed by soldiers, others were sent to Britain's colonies as prisoners (*Dowall, 1997, 134-5*). The negative mark of poverty was hunger and crime. It became the reason for establishing a regular police force in London in 1829. It was a successful tool and it showed that certainty of punishment was far more effective than cruelty of punishment.

2.2.4.2. The family life in Victorian Britain

Except for the very rich, people no longer married for economic reasons, but for personal happiness. However, wives were certainly not equal. Strict parental behaviour, the regular beating of children, and the cruel conditions for boys at boarding schools were the signs of unhappy family life. Family life often ended when children grew up. A wife was legally a man's property until nearly the end of the century (*Dowall, 1997, 137*).

2.2.4.3. Child labour

The families of the working classes, from the seventeenth century on, would not have been able to support themselves if the children had not been employed. In some parts of Britain, rarely anybody above the age of four was not working. The children of the poor were forced by economic conditions to work. An example is Dickens, who worked at the age of 12 in the Blacking Factory, because his family was in debtor's prison. In 1840, perhaps only twenty percent of the children in London had any schooling. Perhaps half of the children between 5 and 15 were in some sort of school by 1860, even if only a day school or a Sunday school, the others were working. Many of the more fortunate ones found employment as apprentices in respectable trades or as general servants.

There were over 120,000 domestic servants in London alone at mid-century, who worked 80 hour weeks for one halfpence per hour. Nevertheless, many more were not so lucky. Most prostitutes (and there were thousands in London alone) were between 15 and 22 years of age (*Int. 20*).

Many children worked 16 hours per day under cruel conditions. Ineffective parliamentary acts to regulate work of workhouse children in factories and cotton mills to 12 hours per day were passed in 1802 and 1819.

In 1833 children aged 11-18 were permitted to work a maximum of twelve hours per day; children 9-11 were allowed to work 8 hours per day; and children under 9 were no longer permitted to work at all (children as young as three had been put to work previously) (*Int. 20*).

This act applied only to the textile industry, where children were given to work at the age of five, and not to other industries and occupations, where the exploitation of child was more extensive. In iron and coalmines, children, both boys and girls, began work at the age of 5, and generally died before they were 25. After further radical agitation, another act in 1847 limited both adults and children to ten hours of work daily (*Int. 20*).

2.2.5. Economic decline in the late nineteenth century

Between the mid-eighteenth and the early nineteenth century, British economy became the largest all over the world. From the 1870s, economy of Britain declined relatively to other industrial countries, especially the USA and Germany. The national income grew more slowly, as did the real income per person. The investment since the 1850s went more abroad and less to home. When, in the 1880s, the contemporaries first became aware of economic problems, they attributed them to what was known at that time as the “Great Depression”. This was not only a British but a world-wide phenomenon. It was marked by price falls, particularly of food and other raw materials and by a declining rate of profit. A possible reason for the price fall was the increased supply of, and increased efficiency in the production and distribution of food and raw materials. Depression is a potentially misleading term. There was no long-term depression in the output. The world output continued to grow at the same rate as before over the whole period, which is 1873-1896. This indicates that the British growth slowdown cannot be attributed to the Great Depression as a world phenomenon. Furthermore, when in the 1890s prices began to raise again, Britain’s growth rate stagnated. The problems in the 1880s were those of structural change in sections of the economy. Some areas could offer cheaper products (*More, 1993, 150-1*).

The large gap between Britain’s and other countries’ investment ration caused problems in British economy as well. From the mid-nineteenth century on, the domestic investment ratio in Germany and the USA was around 20 per cent, compared with 9 per cent in Britain. In the long period, it had a serious effect on labour productivity. The lack of adequate technical and managerial training and the unwillingness of entrepreneurs to invest became the source for collapse of British economy as well (*More, 1993, 153, 158-9*).

3. Social Classes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

3.1. Explanation of Social Classes

“Class” is a complex term, in use since the late eighteenth century, understood in many different ways. Classes are more or less distinct social groupings which at any given historical period, taken as a whole, formed British society. Different social classes can be distinguished by inequalities in such areas as power, authority, wealth, working and living conditions, life-styles, education, religion, and culture (*Int. 19*). The growth of a class and class feeling is often seen as the most important social change generated by industrialisation. Placing someone in a class can be merely a neutral description of their occupation. Most people in the nineteenth-century Britain saw landowners as the upper class, the middle class as the section of society ranging from big businesspersons and professional people down to clerks and shopkeepers, and the working class as comprised of manual workers (*More, 1993, 191*).

3.2. Division of Classes according to Karl Marx

In the mid-nineteenth century, Karl Marx, a philosopher born in Germany, writing in the 1860s and 1870s, believed that all societies were split into two groups, according to the organisation and ownership of the means of production. These two groups were the capitalists (who owned the tools of production), and the proletariat (an old German word meaning “worker”). He believed that people were shaped by society in which they lived. Marx finds the private ownership of economic resources as the key factor (*Int. 3*).

3.3. Division of Classes according to Max Weber

A later theorist, Max Weber, a German sociologist writing in the early 1900s, was influenced by Marx’s work, but he found his theory too simple (*Int. 5*). Max Weber suggested that at the top of society in Western industrialised nations were those privileged through the possession of property or education. In other words, Weber

classed wealthier businessmen and professionals as a part of the elite. This identification of a large privileged class makes quite a good sense for the late nineteenth-century Britain, as by that time there was little conflict between landed interests and business interests. The important thing about Weber's categorisation, however, is that it suggests that the educational qualifications were equated with property, such as houses or stocks and shares.

Later on, it was suggested that the existence of meaningful class boundaries can be measured by the degree of social mobility in society. It gives sense, because it was easy to change class, for example, by marriage or some accident. According to Weber, people's status may vary according to the observer (*More, 1993, 191-2*).

Weber believed that the key factors are status or social prestige. He also disagreed with Marx's theory of stratification. Marx based his view of class structure on ownership of the means of production whilst Weber believed that it was dependent on "life chances" and "life style". Class could be determined by economic situation, market situation, status and political party. Whilst Marx split society into two distinct classes; Weber thought that social structure was more complex. The four main strata he identified were the upper class, the middle class, the working class and the poor (*Int. 4*).

3.4. Emergence of the middle classes

Before the middle of the eighteenth century, the word "class" was hardly used. The language of class came into increasing use in the mid-eighteenth century. The position in society was denoted by reference to a person's rank, which was an indicator of status as of economic position. Its origins seem to have roots in growing urbanization, which was producing larger and more visible groups of business and professional people, who could not be easily fitted into the old categories and whom it was convenient to call the "middle class" (*More, 1993, 193*).

Early in the nineteenth century, the labels "working classes" and "middle classes" were already coming into common usage. The old hereditary aristocracy supported by the new gentry, who owed their success to commerce, industry, and the professions, were evolved into the "upper class". They maintained the control over the political system and they were denying not only the working classes but also the middle classes

any voice in the political process (*Int. 19*). During the Industrial Revolution, members of the middle class began to appear as an increasingly wealthy part of society. Their wealth, newly founded on industrial investment, was often considerably more than that of the old upper or ruling class (*Int. 18*). They became soon increasingly powerful and could interfere in the political process. The working classes, however, remained out from the political process, and became increasingly against not only the aristocracy but also the middle classes (*Int. 19*). New urban prosperity, and industrial enterprise, gave the middle and working classes a variety of small domestic comforts, which used to be determined only to the very rich (*Sanders, 2004, 400*).

The rapid growth of the middle class was part of the enormous rise in the population. “In 1815, the population was 13 million, but this had doubled by 1871, and was over 40 million by 1914” (*Dowall, 1997, 131*). This growth and the movement of people from the countryside to towns forced a change in the political balance, and by the end of the century, most men had the right to vote. Politics and government during the nineteenth century became the property of the middle class. By 1914, the aristocracy and the Crown had little power left. However, the working class, a large number of people which had left their villages to become factory workers, had not yet found a proper voice (*Dowall, 1997, 131*).

However, people could change their social position by marriage or some accident. This was called social mobility (*Int. 4*).

3.5. Social mobility

The Victorian age was a time of great social movement. Social movement was dependent on skills and education (*Dowall, 1997, 140, More, 1993, 196-7*).

Those of the middle class who could afford to send their sons to fee-paying “public” schools expected from school to give boys a good education, as well as to train them in leadership by taking them away from home and making their living conditions hard. These public schools provided many of the officers for the armed forces, the colonial administration and the civil service (*Dowall, 1997, 136*). Skilled workers could afford to keep their children at school longer than unskilled ones, giving them the additional chance of getting jobs in the growing middle class occupations of clerical

work and, for girls, teaching. They were also able to save money and purchase property, which helped them to change a social class. Many children, born into working class families in the 1900s, could eventually become the middle class. However, it was less true of earlier periods; as the number of manual workers was not decreasing, even they were able to purchase property. The main reason for social mobility in the nineteenth century was the shift from rural to urban work (*More, 1993, 196*).

Social hierarchy can be based on the possession of different qualities in different communities, and some societies are more equal than others, but none can ever be completely unstratified as there will always be inequalities in certain areas, due to individual differences (*Int. 4*).

4. Charles Dickens

4.1 The life of Charles Dickens (1812 – 70)

Charles Dickens, (Charles John Huffham) the most popular English novelist, is generally considered the greatest of the Victorian period. He became one of the greatest humorists that England has produced. He was born at Mile End Terrace, Landport, on the outskirts of Portsmouth, on 7th February 1812, to John and Elizabeth Dickens.

His father, John Dickens, a lower middle class clerk in the Navy Pay Office, was at this time stationed in the Portsmouth dockyard (*Int. 13*). He married Elizabeth Barrow. She gave birth to eight children, of whom two died. Charles was the second one. He entered the baptismal register of Portsea as Charles John Huffham, although on the very rare occasions, when he subscribed that name, he wrote Huffham (*Int. 12*). His father's job forced him and his family to move frequently. For a few years, they lived in Chatham, Kent (*Int. 13*). Charles received some education in Chatham. The schoolmaster William Giles gave special attention to Dickens, who made rapid progress (*Int. 7*). Charles spent the happiest period of his boyhood in Chatham (*Drabble, 1998, 269*). Here, the most durable of his early impressions were received; and the associations that were around him, when he died, were those, which at the outset of his life had affected him most strongly (*Int. 12*).

This happy time in Chatham was followed by a period of an intense misery that deeply affected Dickens. In 1822, the family moved again to London. Their financial affairs ended by imprisoning the father for debt in the Marshalsea (*Int. 13*). David (aged 12) had to leave school and worked for three months at a blacking factory in London. This trauma never left him. John Dickens paid his debt with the money he inherited from his mother, who died when he was in prison. The memories of this painful period inspired much of his fiction, notably the early chapters of *David Copperfield* (*Drabble, 1998, 269*).

In 1824-27, Dickens studied at Wellington House Academy, London, and in 1827, at Mr. Dawson's school. From 1827 to 1828, he worked as a law office clerk, and then as a shorthand reporter at Doctor's Commons (*Int. 7*). His earliest passion for reading was awakened by his mother, from whom he learnt the bases not only of English, but also, a little later, of Latin (*Int. 12*). At one point, he thought seriously of becoming

an actor, but he abandoned that idea when he started a career as a reporter (*Bennett, 1981, 593*).

At the age of nineteen, he fell in love with a girl from a rich family. Dickens' relationship with Maria Beadnell, a daughter of a banker, ended in 1833. She was sent to France to forget about this socially unsuitable suitor. Three years later, Dickens married Catherine Hogarth, the daughter of his friend George Hogarth, who edited the newly established Evening Chronicle. With her, he had 10 children. Charles loved his home and family. While they were young, he was a devoted and delightful father to his children, in 1858, after twenty years of their marriage they separated. Some biographers have suspected that Dickens was fond more of Catherine's sister, Mary, who moved into their house and died in 1837 at the age of 17 in Dickens' arms. Eventually, she became the model for Dora Copperfield (*Int. 7*).

From 1858 to the year of his death, Dickens travelled throughout England and the United States, lecturing and reading from his works (*Bennett, 1981, 594*). Dickens held his place in the world wonderfully. He played a great part in the national life of England for nearly a century and when he died in 1870, something had gone out of English life that was irreplaceable, a bright light that had shone upon the drab commercialism of the century (*Piša, 1991, 236-7*).

4.2. Charles Dickens, the journalist

Journalism came of age in the Victorian Period. Charles Dickens was appalled by the cruelty of his time coming from the consequences of the Industrial Revolution and felt that he must convey a message of humanity through fiction to his hardhearted generation (*Bennett, 1981, 492-3, Piša, 1991, 231-2*).

He wrote about the terrible living and working conditions, social reformers, showed by practical experiment that long hours of child-labour and maltreatment were available. In their own way, each of the writers highlighted the horrific conditions that prevailed and suggested ways of righting them (*Int. 18*). Nevertheless, his own nature was involved in a high degree of optimism. He enjoyed life, but, at the same time, hated the social system into which he had been born (*Piša, 1991, 231-2*).

Dickens' works are characterized by attacks on social evils, injustice, and hypocrisy. In his youth, he had also experienced oppression, when he was forced to end school in early teens and work in a factory. Dickens' good, bad, and comic characters have fascinated generations of readers. Charles Dickens was not attracted only by writing but also by acting. He devoted most of his evening to the theatre. At the age of 19, Dickens decided about a theatrical career; whether as dramatist or actor he did not mind much. In 1832, he did, if not strictly an actor, at all events a public entertainer, whose strongest effects were produced by the exercise of melodramatic talent; as an amateur, he acted frequently whole his life.

He wrote for *True Sun* (1830-32), *Mirror of Parliament* (1832-34), and the *Morning Chronicle* (1834-36). In the 1830s, Dickens contributed to *Monthly Magazine* and *The Evening Chronicle* edited by Bentley's *Miscellany*. These years, Dickens resigns from his newspaper job. His career as a writer of fiction started in 1833, when his short stories and essays started to appear in periodicals. *Sketches by Boz*, illustrated by George Cruikshank, was published in a book form in 1836-37. *The Posthumous papers of the Pickwick club* was published in monthly parts from April 1836 to November 1837 (*Int.* 7). After a slow start, the series achieved immense popularity, and Dickens, with his young wife Catherine Hogarth, embarked on a promising future, courted by the publisher, admired by the public, and befriended by celebrities. In 1837, *Oliver Twist* began to appear in monthly numbers in *Bentley's Miscellany*, a new periodical of which Dickens was the first editor. Charles Dickens was influenced by his travelling abroad. The year 1842 was a turning-point in his career. He and his wife visited America, where his first impressions were favourable, but disillusion followed. However, he came back with his ideas enlarged on many subjects. Publishing *American Notes* (1842) caused much offence in America as did his portrayal of American stereotypes in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. In 1844, he paid a long visit to Italy, which produced *Pictures from Italy* contributed to the *Daily News*, a new Radical paper founded by Dickens in 1846 and briefly edited by him. He began *Dombey and Son* (1848) during a visit to Switzerland in 1846. In 1850, *David Copperfield* was written. Dickens held this to be his best book, and the world agreed with him. *Hard Times* appeared in 1854 and *Great Expectations* in 1860-1. Dickens died suddenly in 1870, having left his last novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, unfinished.

Dickens captured the popular imagination as no other novelist had done, and, despite some murmurs against his sensationalism and sentimentality and his inability to portray other women than innocent or grotesque, he was also held in high critical esteem, admired by contemporaries as varied as Queen Victoria and Dostojevsky (*Drabble, 1998, 270*). Dickens' success as a novelist and as a literary figure can be attributed to the vitality and the resourcefulness of his characterizations, to the rapid (but sometimes lengthy) movement of his narrative, and to the unfailing humour with which he viewed the human experience. Equally importantly, Dickens saw the novel as a powerful means of effecting social reform, of exposing the evils of child labour, of dishonest business practices, and of legal trick (*Bennett, 1981, 594*). One of the specific features, which Dickens associated with his work, was promoting the idea that the novel had its aesthetic foundations in a special mixture of fantasy and realism.

Dickens helped to develop a new professional consciousness among writers, delineated in the career of *David Copperfield*, uniting in the figure of the writer the qualities of both the genius and the entrepreneur. His importance to English fiction is captured in an eloquent understatement by an obituary in the Daily News, which called him, quite simply, "the one writer everybody read and everybody liked" (*int. 13*).

5. Reflexion of social differences in the works of Charles Dickens

Much of Dickens' popularity was based on his reputation as a social critic. Some of the conditions he criticized had already been improved by the time he wrote about them. Charles Dickens removes the prejudices of class and caste. In representing the thoughts and feelings of characters from a variety of classes and situations, Dickens probably tried to encourage sympathetic connections among his readers. This skill was considered particularly important in the middle of the 19th century when social, political, and economic changes were leading many commentators to fear that the rich and the poor were becoming hopelessly estranged from each other. That is why Dickens' novels played an important social role. He tried to extend the understanding of any person of any class to any person of a different class (*Int. 13*). Dickens recognized that there was much collective work to be done in the project of achieving social and economic justice, however he also saw the psychic damage caused by economic and educational systems that pretend to find solutions to the problem of human unhappiness. He was right to worry that rigid utilitarian formulas were gaining predominance in the liberal project of creating a just society (*Int. 14*). The moral atmosphere in Dickens' works is focused on one extreme on the hopeless despair of the working class, and on the other extreme on the hard-hearted satisfaction ruling throughout the middle class. A great deal has been written and said about Dickens as a writer for "the people" (*Int. 21*). Dickens was focused on satire and social problems (*Sanders, 2004, 407*). His chief public was among the middle and lower-middle classes, rather than among the proletarian mass (*Int. 21*).

5.1. Oliver Twist

Dickens was the first great "social novelist," in the sense that his novels attacked actual issues and established the novelist as a voice of social authority. In particular, Dickens tended to present himself as a spokesperson for the "common man" and focused his works on the harm that the public institutions did to the poor. *Oliver Twist*,

for example, is in large measure an attack on contemporary attitudes toward poverty (including workhouse legislation) (*Int. 13*). *Oliver Twist* is the story of a boy born to an unwed mother, who dies immediately after his birth. He remains pure and good among thieves and burglars (*Piša, 1991, 233*). Oliver fumbles between workhouse, where he was born, on the one hand, and kind protection on the other, with a third dishonourable alternative of forcible adoption into one of the criminal gangs of London. It should illustrate the different kinds of environment into which innocence may fall (*Daiches, 1960, 1053*). It is a series of pictures from the lower life, from the dying mother and the starved wretches, in the first volume, through the scenes and gradations of crime, which have a frightful consummation, in the last volume. The self-assertions of humanity can be seen even in scenes among characters that are demoralized (*Int. 9*).

5.1.1. The purposes of writing Oliver Twist

Oliver Twist has two moral purposes. One is to exhibit the wrong working of the Poor Law Act, and the other is to give a trusty picture of the life of thieves in London. In Dickens' view, the new system is responsible for a great deal of crime. The new Act, of 1834, relieves only those who enter a workhouse (*Int. 10*). However, the system had serious defects. People with no means of support were sent to workhouses. The system was designed with the idea that the workhouses would be unpleasant. It was thought that this would provide added incentive for people to be self-sufficient (*Int. 17*). Among other things, husbands and wives are separated, parents and children as well. He regards such legislation as an outcome of wealthy persons of the privileged caste, who neither perceive nor care about the result of their system in individual suffering (*Int. 10*). Rather than finding this treatment motivational, it breaks the spirit of many people forced to live there. The adventures of young Oliver Twist make this point. Dickens also touches on this topic in other works. He used his novel to point out the truths about the Victorian England that polite society tried to ignore (*Int. 17*).

5.1.2. Reflexion of social differences in the text of Oliver Twist

Dickens' disapproval to the Poor Law of 1834, one of the most controversial issues of the time, can be seen throughout his work. One example occurs when he describes the workhouse Oliver is sent to:

....where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing under the parental superintendence of an elderly female who received the culprits at and for the consideration of seven pence-halfpenny per small head per week (*Dickens, 1992, 1992, 4*).

With this attitude, he made an "immediate, powerful impression" on his Victorian audience (*Int. 13*). On one hand, Dickens points out the misery of poor people, on the other the abundance of the middle class. This redundancy in Mrs. Corney's household is expressed in the following paragraph: "Mr. Bumble counted the tea-spoons, weighed the sugar-tongs, and closely inspected a silver milk-pot to ascertain that it was of the genuine metal..." This is the equipment of Mrs. Corney's household. As a result of Mr. Bumble's satisfaction with Mrs. Corney's property, he asks her to marry him. Nevertheless, in many passages of the whole piece, the social differences are clear. The imperfectness of workhouses is shown in the scene in which Oliver Twist asks for more food. It rapidly became, and has remained, the most familiar incident in any English novel. The scene of Oliver Twist asking for more:

Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery. He rose from the table; and advancing to the master, basin and spoon in hand, said: somewhat alarmed at his own temerity: "Please, sir, I want some more (*Dickens, 1992, 12*).

This request makes the authorities of workhouses very angry and next morning a bill is pasted on the outside of the gate, offering a reward of five pounds to anybody who would take Oliver Twist as an apprentice to a trade business or calling (*Dickens, 1992, 13*). He then starts as an apprentice to Mr. Sowerberry, a man who makes coffins. Oliver is taken to the room where he will sleep, the room where the coffins are stored: "your bed's under the counter. You won't mind sleeping among the coffins, I suppose?...but it doesn't much matter whether you will or not, for you won't sleep

anywhere else” (*Dickens, 1992, 28*). Through sarcasm, Dickens condemns the practice of starving the poor: “... since the new system of feeding has come in, the coffins are something narrower and more shallow than they used to be” (*Dickens, 1992, 23*). However, Oliver is grateful even to Mrs. Sowerberry, who tells Charlotte, their servant, to give Oliver the scraps of meat left for the dog:

I wish some well-fed philosopher, whose meat and drink turn to gall within him, whose blood is ice, and whose heart is iron, could have seen Oliver Twist clutching at the dainty viands that the dog had neglected, and witnessed the horrible avidity with which he tore the bits asunder with all the ferocity of famine: ---there is only one thing I should like better, and that would be to see him making the same sort of meal himself, with the same relish (*Dickens, 1992, 28*).

By “philosopher,” Dickens means a political-economist. He is the uncompromising advocate of the poor (*Int. 10*). Dickens compares Oliver with the master at the workhouse. He is described as fat, showing hypocrisy and overindulgence; which is the opposite extreme to Oliver’s starved condition (*Dickens, 1992, 12*).

One day, Oliver and Jack Dawkins are on the way to Fagin’s den, passing through Saffron Hill. The social conditions of poor people are described in the following paragraph:

The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odours. There were a good many small shops; but the only stock in trade appeared to be heaps of children, who, even at that time of night, were crawling in and out at the doors, or screaming from the inside. The sole places that seemed to prosper amid the general blight of the place were the public-houses; and in them, the lowest orders of Irish were wrangling with might and main. Covered ways and yards, which here and there diverged from the main street, disclosed little knots of houses, where drunken men and women were positively wallowing in filth; and from several of the door-ways great ill-looking fellows were cautiously emerging... (*Dickens, 1992, 55*).

Another example of the unbearable social conditions is the description of the cold weather bringing death for the homeless starving wretches, who lie down and die. “Many hunger-worn outcasts close their eyes in our bare streets at such times” (*Dickens, 1992, 165*). As contrasted to these miserable conditions, Dickens also records the social condition of Mrs. Corney, the matron of the workhouse:

...she glanced with no small degree of complacency at a small round table, on which stood a tray of corresponding size furnished with all necessary materials for the most grateful meal that matrons enjoy (*Dickens, 1992, 165*).

As mentioned above, Mr. Bumble marries Mrs. Corney and by the irony of fate, the Bumbles end up as paupers:

Mr. and Mrs. Bumble, deprived of their situations, were gradually reduced to great indigence and misery, and finally became paupers in that very same workhouse in which they had once lorded it over others (*Dickens, 1992, 414*).

It illustrates Dickens' view of social justice and his condemnation of hypocrisy and mistreatment of the poor (*Int. 13*).

5.1.3. Conclusion

Relatively to the other works of Dickens, *Oliver Twist* is not of great literary value, but it is of great importance as social criticism. Its subject is social oppression. Looking back on the whole public career, Dickens was, from the beginning, bitter and inquisitive about the problem of our civilisation (*Int. 11*). Dickens pictures in detail the life of the working class and he tries to provoke sentiment of the middle and upper class with the description of the suffering of the working class and orphans condemned to live in the terrible conditions of workhouses. He is especially focused on orphans and illegitimate children whose life was unbearable. Dickens depicts the inequality of the social classes in his other work, *David Copperfield*. However, this piece is considered to be partly his autobiography.

5.2. David Copperfield

In 1850 *David Copperfield* was published. In the preface to *David Copperfield*, Dickens writes:

It will be easily believed that I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy, and that no one can ever love that family as dearly as I love them. But, like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is David Copperfield (*Dickens, 1991, xlii*).

5.2.1. The purposes of writing David Copperfield

Dickens shows his responsibility of a writer to readers; he is convinced that art has to be deeply truthful (*Dickens, my translation of the appendix in the Czech version, 1956, 512*). *David Copperfield* seems to invoke understanding between different classes and kinds of people to many 19th century readers of Dickens' novel. He uses heroes of each class - Ham, the Micawbers, and Emily as members of the working class, David as a member of the middle class and Steerforth, Steerforth's mother as a representative of the upper class (*Int. 13*).

5.2.2. Social differences in the text of David Copperfield

Dickens points out emphasis given on social status in Victorian England. He uses a great deal of samples through the whole *David Copperfield*. The representatives of the upper and middle classes are well served, handled and respected. The changes in the behaviour of people from lower rank can be seen while Steerforth is asking about the accommodation of his friend David. The waiter immediately changes David's room for a better one:

The waiter immediately withdrew to make the exchange. ...I found my new room a great improvement on my old one, it not being at all musty, and having an immense four-post bedstead in it, which was quite a little landed estate (*Dickens, 1991, 288*).

Although Steerforth became David's friend, he disdains with David's friends from the working class. He marks them as "that sort of people". Dickens shows that even Rosa Dartle, Mrs. Steerforth's companion, condemns with the working people and their feelings. She represents the morale of footmen and servitors of aristocracy in the Victorian Britain. Rosa uses expressions connected with the working class: "Are they really animals and clods, and beings of another order?" Steerforth answers:

They are not to be expected to be as sensitive as we are. Their delicacy is not to be shocked, or hurt very easily. They are wonderfully virtuous, I dare say---some people contend for that, at least; and I am sure I don't want to contradict them---but they have not very fine natures, and they may be thankful that, like their coarse rough skins, they are not easily wounded (*Dickens, 1991, 294*).

Dickens refers to the characters of the upper class as heartless who are just playing with emotions of other people. Steerforth is used as a perfect example of impassibility. Moreover, the reader can notice that different rules stand for different classes. Although Steerforth seduces Emily, he is not seen as a wretched person. The only guilty person is Emily from the working class. This unequal treatment can be seen in the behaviour of his mother. She refuses to let Steerforth marry Emily, because she is from the working class, uneducated, far below him, although Emily's family promises to disappear from her life not to make her shame:

It is impossible. He would disgrace himself. You cannot fail to know that she is far below him. ...She is uneducated and ignorant.Such a marriage would irretrievably blight my son's career, and ruin his prospects. Nothing is more certain than that it never can take place, and never will. If there is any other compensation... (*Dickens, 1991, 468-9*).

Social rank is even more important in Victorian England than love and maternity. Steerforth's mother is willing to abandon her own son in case he marries Emily:

Let him put away his whim now, and he is welcome back. Let him not put her away now, and he never shall come near me, living or dying, while I can raise my hand to make a sign against it, unless, being rid of her for ever, he comes humbly to me and begs for my forgiveness (*Dickens, 1991, 469-470*).

Even when David wants to marry Dora Spenlow, social status plays the role of a great importance. Her father does not want them to marry because David does not have the same social rank as Dora, although David truly loves her. Mr. Spenlow contemplates different projects for his daughter advancement (*Dickens, 1991, 551*).

Dickens shows inequality also in the way of obtaining some kinds of job. The Victorian clerk typically gains employment through informal networks based on the notion of the middle class. David, for example, enters his clerk apprenticeships through money support. As a junior partner in professional life, the clerk has earned a hint of the middle class dignity and status that manual workers could not probably achieve. Much of his pay comes in the form of a promise of future class mobility, signified in *David Copperfield* by Tommy Traddles' motto: "Wait and hope" (*Int. 15*). Moreover, a good

job can be even bought like Patent place by Doctor Strong to Jack Maldon. It is a place where there is not much to do, and which is pretty well paid (*Dickens, 1991, 522*). Another example of gaining a good job among the middle and the upper class can be seen in Mr. Creakle, the schoolmaster, who became a Middlesex Magistrate. David wonders how he could obtain such a good job. His friend Traddles tries to find the answer:

It would be very difficult to answer that question. Perhaps he voted for somebody, or lent money to somebody, or bought something of somebody, or otherwise obliged somebody, or jobbed for somebody, who knew somebody who got the lieutenant of the county to nominate him for the commission (*Dickens, 1991, 848*).

Not only obtaining a job is much easier for the middle and upper classes, but also the inequality among wages and working demands of the upper class and middle class became highly common. Dickens uses Prerogative Office to show these differences:

That, perhaps, it was a little unjust that all the great offices in this great office, should be magnificent sinecures, while the unfortunate working-clerks in the cold dark room up-stairs were the worst rewarded, and the least considered men, doing important services, in London (*Dickens, 1991, 480*).

Life of the upper and middle classes appears much easier; nevertheless, they do not care about the suffering of the working classes. Dickens shows carelessness for starving and discontented people on the Maldon's statement: "There's an account about the people being hungry and discontented down in the North, but they are always being hungry and discontented somewhere" (*Dickens, 1991, 524*). They rather prefer to invest money into useless business like prison building. Dickens opinion about such wasting of money is obvious in the following paragraph:

It was an immense and solid building, erected at a vast expense. I could not help thinking, as we approached the gate, what an uproar would have been made in the country, if any deluded man had proposed to spend one half the money it had cost, on the erection of an industrial school for the young, or a house of refuge for the deserving old (*Dickens, 1991, 849*).

He considers prison methods false and insincere. He finds the behaviour of men taking care of prisoners absurd. They take care more for prisoners, their food, satisfaction and

comfort than for the working class people, who are honest, hardworking and modest (*Dickens, 1991, 852*).

5.2.3. Conclusion

David Copperfield is based on the life experience of the author himself. It persuaded him to write a book about it as a kind of a protest against the social conditions for the working class. Many middle class Victorians liked to think of themselves as concerned citizens, whose rational, human efforts were creating the perfect society. Dickens had no interest in tearing apart the framework of society - only in improving it to come closer to his ideals of justice and Christian charity. Dickens continues with his criticism of the social inequalities in another piece, *Hard Times* (*Int. 13*).

5.3. Hard Times

5.3.1. The purposes of writing *Hard Times*

During the 1850s, when the book was written, England was experiencing an economic boom driven by manufacturing. The phrase “hard times” refers to the difficult conditions of the working class, who made this boom possible (*Int. 13*). Dickens’ *Hard Times* remains the most vivid and popular of the novels which deal with the social and industrial problems of the mid-Victorian England (*Sanders, 2004, 409*). It became a subject of high national importance. In *Hard Times*, Dickens protests against the commercial oppression and Utilitarianism (*Int. 8*). This philosophy is also called Philosophical Radicalism or Benthamism and is influential in the mid-Victorian period. The principle of Utilitarianism is “the belief that the right course of action is the one that will produce the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people” (*Hornby, 2000, 1491*). This movement relied heavily on statistics, rules and regulations. Individualism and imagination are not highly valued in this philosophy. Thomas

Gradgrind represents Utilitarianism within the novel. As he raises his children, he stresses facts over imagination and function over feelings (*Int. 16*).

5.3.2. Social differences in the text of *Hard Times*

Hard Times is Dickens' most politically and socially aware novel attacking the consequences of the Industrial Revolution. Before settling down to write the book, he visited Preston, an industrial town in northern England to see strike.

The gloomy descriptions of the polluted Coketown reflect his deep sympathy for the average working person and woman, forced to work in horrific conditions (*Dickens, 1992, 28*). Coketown is a dirty industrial town, full of factories and mills. Dickens vividly portrays the quiet desolation of a northern industrial town, where the canal runs black and the river is purple with an ill-smelling dye. Coketown is the heart of the novel. The working people, with their monotonous jobs, blend in with the monotony of the streets. Nature is worked and used; raw materials are transformed by the looms into goods to be bought and sold, just as the working people are used for the mill owners' profits. The chapels resemble warehouses. Dickens is satirizing the well-meaning middle classes, who set up missions and teetotaler societies in the northern industrial towns of England. Dickens was critical of the teetotalers, and critical of Puritanism, because of how they denied the working classes much-needed entertainment (*Int. 13*). There is an organization in Coketown composed to deal with the irreligious nature of the labouring classes and they often petition Parliament for acts that would "make these people religious by main force" (*Dickens, 1992, 21-2*). Not only the description of Coketown predicates social condition, but also Dickens' characterization of the indolent representatives of the upper and middle class reveals his awareness of class and social hierarchy (*Int. 13*).

Three characters in *Hard Times*; James Harthouse, Josiah Bounderby and Stephen Blackpool, are representatives of the upper, middle and working class. James Harthouse, a characteristic member of the upper class, comes to Coketown to search for "something else". As an aristocratic member of society, he becomes bored with life when hours of daily labour are not a part of his regime. Here is an example of his weariness:

Now, this gentleman had a younger brother of still better appearance than himself, who had tried life as a Coronet of Dragoons, and found it a bore; and had afterwards tried it in the train of an English minister abroad, and found it a bore; and had then strolled to Jerusalem, and got bored there; and had then gone yachting about the world, and got bored everywhere (*Dickens, 1992, 119*).

It shows the upper class attitude toward life and how easy it is for someone in this position to become bored when eight or ten hours of work are not necessary to feed oneself (*Int. 13*). On the contrary, the working class people are working very hard to earn living. “Coketown can offer, all the year round, from the dawn of Monday to the night of Saturday, the whirr of shafts and wheels” (*Dickens, 1992, 106*). Nevertheless, the earnings of the working class and the middle or the upper class are incomparable:

Any capitalist there, who had made sixty thousand pounds out of sixpence, always professed to wonder why the sixty thousand nearest Hands didn't each make sixty thousand pounds out of sixpence (*Dickens, 1992, 112*).

However, Bounderby considers working in the mills as the pleasantest, the lightest and the best-paid work (*Dickens, 1992, 120*). Harthouse plays with people's emotions and disregards for their feelings in favour of his own fancy. Mr. Gradgrind leads a political group in Parliament. Harthouse is a phlegmatic selfish aristocrat, aimlessly seeking distraction. Louisa asks Harthouse if he hopes to serve his country. He laughs at this comment, claiming that most politicians only pretend to have beliefs (*Int. 13*).

Josiah Bounderby exhibits many qualities which make him believable. As a member of the middle class, he leads everyone to believe that he has worked very hard to achieve his position as a wealthy factory owner. He often speaks about his bitter childhood (*Dickens, 1992, 13-14*). Bounderby claims that anyone of the middle class has worked hard to get where he/she is and works hard to stay there. Everyone takes Bounderby's story as the exemplary until his Mother, Mrs. Pegler, uncovers the reality. She did not abandon him (*Dickens, 1992, 246-8*). Thus, Bounderby represents the possibility of social mobility, embodying the belief that to reach success any individual should be able to overcome all obstacles, including poverty and lack of education, through hard work. By exposing Bounderby's real origin, Dickens deals with the question of social mobility. In other words, he suggests that the labourers perhaps cannot overcome the poverty through sheer determination alone, but rather through the

charity and compassion of wealthier individuals. However, social mobility via marriage is almost impossible. The Victorian society takes care of getting married an equal partner as it can be seen on Gradgrind's advice to Louisa: "There is some disparity in your respective years, but in your means and positions there is none; on the contrary, there is a great suitability" (*Dickens, 1992, 92*).

Stephen Blackpool is a representative of the working class who is also a victim of his own social class. He holds the most admirable human qualities. As a worker in Bounderby's factory, Stephen must work very hard to maintain himself. He can see that despite the poor conditions in the factories, trade union is not a very viable option because the negotiator, Slackbridge, as his name suggests, is a very poor "bridge" between the workers and the owners (*Int. 1*). As he does not support trade union, his co-workers ostracize him. He does not protest, and his only wish is to be allowed to continue to work, as he has no other means of making a living:

I ha nobbut work to live by; and whereever can I go, I who ha worked sin I were no heighth at aw, in Coketown heer? I mak' no complaints o' bein turned to the wa', o' being outcasten and overlooken fro this time forrard, but I hope I shall be let to work (*Dickens, 1992, 13-14*).

Bounderby receives Stephen in his drawing room and asks what the workers have to complain about (*Dickens, 1992, 142*). Stephen speaks about the harshness of the workers' lives, concluding that it is all a "muddle":

Look round town---so rich as 'tis---and see the numbers o' people as has been broughten into bein heer, fur to weave, an to card, an to piece out a livin', aw the same one way, somehows, twixt their cradles and their graves. Look how we live, an wheer we live, an in what numbers, an by what chances, and wi' what sameness; and look how the mills is awlus a goin, and how they never works us no nigher to ony dis'ant object---ceptin awlus, Death. Look how you considers of us, an writes of us, an talks of us, and goes up wi'yor deputations to Secretaries o' State 'bout us, and how yo are awlus right, and how we are awlus wrong, and never had'n no reason in us sin ever we were born. 'Tis not a muddle? (*Dickens, 1992, 142-3*)

Bounderby asks what he would do to sort out the muddle, Stephen replies that it is up to those over him to sort it out. He gives advices:

The strong hand will never do't. Vict'ry and triumph will never do't. Agreeing fur to mak one side unnat'rally awlus and for ever right, and toother side unnat'rally

awful and for ever wrong, will never, never do't. Nor yet lettin alone will never do't (*Dickens, 1992, 144*).

Blackpool is in love with Rachel but he cannot be with her because he is married to a woman who left him years ago. He also cannot divorce her because it is impossible to afford it. Stephen explains that he has come to ask for Bounderby's advice about the possibility of a divorce:

I ha' read I' t' papers that great fok (fair faw 'em a'! I wishes 'em no hurt!) are not bonded together for better for worse so fast, but that they can be set free fro' *their* misfortnet marriages, an marry ower agen (*Dickens, 1992, 69*).

Bounderby states that it is possible to get a divorce, but the process costs money, more than Stephen can afford: "Now, I tell you what!" said Mr. Bounderby, putting his hands in his pockets. "There *is* such a law."... "But it's not for you at all. It costs money. It costs a mint of money" (*Dickens, 1992, 70*). Stephen replies that the whole process is a "muddle". The fact that divorce is only possible for the wealthy once again highlights the class distinctions between Bounderby and Blackpool. The difference in social class is obvious from the food Bounderby and Stephen each consume - Stephen eats a loaf of bread, which is sometimes crusty with fresh butter. It is considered by the Coketown magnates as living like a princess (*Dickens, 1992, 148*). Bounderby is "at lunch with a chop and sherry" (*Dickens, 1992, 66*). The socially superior Mrs. Sparsit considers mutton as "simple" (*Dickens, 1992, 178*). Another example of social differences is pointed out by Dickens, when he describes the working class people who are not able to read:

Not the least eager of the eyes assembled, were the eyes of those who could not read. These people, as they listened to the friendly voice that read aloud---there was always some such ready to help them ---stared at the characters which meant so much with a vague awe and respect that would have been half ludicrous if any aspect of public ignorance could ever be otherwise than threatening and full of evil (*Dickens, 1992, 233*).

The education is the main problem among the working class. Most of the working people did not have money to study; even their children had to work to earn living. Thereagainst, the education of the middle class and the upper class is described as a part of their lives. The representatives of the upper class and middle class as Louisa, Tom,

Bounderby, Gradgrind and Harthouse are all educated. Not only education and food express the social difference, but also the living conditions are of great contrast. Bounderby offers to Mrs. Sparsit a new apartment after his wedding with Louisa. He ensures Mrs. Sparsit that she will not descend lower in the social scale and describes her new accommodation:

You'll have your own private apartments, and you'll have your coals and your candles and all the rest of it, and you'll have your maid to attend upon you, and you'll have your light porter to protect you, and you'll be what I take the liberty of considering precious comfortable," said Bounderby (*Dickens, 1992, 100*).

On the contrary, living standards of the working class are very low. Dickens describes social conditions of the working class as inhuman:

In the hardest working part of Coketown;...., where Nature was as strongly bricked out as killing airs and gases were bricked in; at the heart of the labyrinth of narrow courts upon courts, and close streets upon streets. ...Every piece of the street had been built in a violent hurry for some one man's purpose. The whole an unnatural family, shouldering, and trampling, and pressing one another to death; in the last close nook of this great exhausted receiver, where the chimneys, for want of air to make a draught, were built in an immense variety of stunted and crooked shapes as though every house put out a sign of the kind of people who might be expected to be born in it (*Dickens, 1992, 59*).

In the back streets of Coketown, the workers live in cramped conditions. The visit to Stephen's lodging is the first time that Louisa, a representative of the middle class, has entered a worker's dwelling:

For the first time in her life Louisa had come into one of the dwellings of the Coketown Hands; for the first time in her life she was face to face with anything like individuality in connexion with them (*Dickens, 1992, 150*).

Dickens stresses the class division in Coketown and Louisa's goodness in seeking to cross it. He also demonstrates that she has been trained to see the workers as machines:

Something to be worked so much and paid so much, and there ended; something to be infallibly settled by laws of supply and demand; something that blundered against those laws, and floundered into difficulty; something that was a little pinched when wheat was dear, and over-ate itself when wheat was cheap (*Dickens, 1992, 150*).

Inequality can be even seen in escape, which really underscores the difference between the lives of the wealthy and the lives of the poor. In Stephen Blackpool, we find a decent man who seeks to escape from his failed marriage but he cannot even escape into his dreams for peace. On the other hand, we find Tom Gradgrind who indulges in gambling, alcohol and smoking as “escapes” from his humdrum existence. In addition, after he commits a crime, his father helps him to escape through Liverpool. Finally, James Harthouse rounds out the options available to the nobility (*Int. 2*).

In one of the last chapters, the book contains Stephen’s dying prayer that everyone should come together and be united:

In my pain an trouble, lookin up yonder,---wi’ it shinin’ on me---I ha’seen more clear, and ha’ made it my dyin prayer that aw th’ world may on’y coom together more, an get a better unnerstan ‘in o’one another, than when I were in’t my own weak seln (*Dickens, 1992, 259*).

In a sense, this is the central political message of the book. Dickens wants to appeal to common humanity, and is mistrustful of the motives of either “side” in the class debate (*Int. 13*).

5.3.3. Conclusion

Hard Times reveals Dickens’ increased interest in class issues and social commentary (*Int. 13*). Dickens turns his attention to the morality of the utilitarian industrialist and its affect on the possibilities of human happiness. (*Daiches, 1960, 1056*) Dickens tries to remind people that England removed two words of the revolutionary motto, left only Liberty and destroyed Equality and Fraternity. In *Hard Times*, he specially fights for equality. In all his books, he champions fraternity. The atmosphere of this book shows how the book struck those people who were mad on political liberty and dead about everything else (*Int. 9*).

6. Conclusion

A great deal has been written and said about Dickens as a writer for “the people.” His chief public was among the middle and lower-middle classes, rather than among the proletarian mass (*Int. 21*). His mood and idioms were those of the class from which he came. Harriet Martineau in her *History of the Thirty Years’ Peace* wrote:

‘It is scarcely conceivable that anyone should, in our age of the world, exert a stronger social influence than Mr. Dickens has in his power. His sympathies are on the side of the suffering and the frail; and this makes him the idol of those who suffer, from whatever cause. We may wish that he had a sounder social philosophy, and that he could suggest a loftier moral to sufferers....[43/44]’ (*Int. 22*).

He lived to take his place in a society of wealth, culture and education; but his heart was always with the humble people and those of low estate. Among these, he had found the material for him to write, and most important of all, among these he learnt to make himself the perfect voice of English simplicity (*Int. 9*).

According to Matsuoka, the horrible condition of the poor, which irritated him so much, resulted from the old Poor Law, which, by its system of granting support in aid of insufficient wages, had gone far towards impoverishment the whole of the agricultural England. In good time, the new Act justified itself. It helped to bring about increase of wages and to awaken self-respect in the labourers who were living from hand to mouth. However, Dickens’ quarrel with the “guardians of the poor” that the changes are too small for labours to be affected. His demand was for justice, mercy and in the largest sense, for a new spirit in social life. A later generation applauds him for contempt to mechanical “philosophy.” It is a step in social and political history; it declares the democratic tendency of the new age. That is the significance of Dickens’ early success, and readers do not understand his place in English literature at all if they lose sight of the historic point of view (*Int. 10*). The truth of the past, of the character and very history of the moral abuses of his time will thus remain always in his writings (*Int. 9*).

Dickens’ social revolt was simply the eternal revolt. It was the revolt of the weak against the strong, as he disliked a certain look on the face of a man when he looked down on another man. He saw that under many forms there was one fact, the tyranny of

man over man; and he afflicted at it when he saw it, whether it was old or new. He entered the workhouse just as Oliver Twist entered it, as a little child (*Int. 11*). Nevertheless, whatever hesitations Dickens had about poverty and the poor, one of his greatest achievements was to bring the problem of poverty to the attention of his readers through introducing varieties of poor people into almost all of his novels, and showing the “deserving” majority of the poor, bravely struggling against the forces rising against them (*Int. 6*).

Dickens managed to picture the real life of the working class with all its misery to the upper and middle classes, to provoke them from their insensitiveness. He became one of the initiators who achieved to stimulate the upper class and middle class to improve the social conditions of the working class. The upper and middle class did not even know about such harsh circumstances connected with the working class. His writings became the ones of the most important and the strongest voices of the working rank. Charles Dickens contributed to the change of certain social conditions already during the Victorian period, and other changes improved over time. He removed the prejudices of class and caste. In representing the thoughts and feelings of characters from a variety of classes and situations, Dickens probably tried to encourage sympathetic connections among his readers. This skill was considered particularly important in the middle of the 19th century when social, political, and economic changes were leading to fear that the rich and the poor were becoming hopelessly estranged from each other. That is why Dickens’ novels played an important role in society. He tried to extend the understanding of any person of any class to any person of a different class. He managed to positively influence the social conditions of labours as well as the position of the middle and upper class towards the working class.

Resumé

Tato práce se zabývá sociálními rozdíly popsanými v dílech Charlese Dickense, který byl představitelem nižší střední třídy žijící ve Viktoriánské Anglii ovlivněné krutými následky průmyslové revoluce. Vzhledem k tomu, že jeho otec se dostal do finanční tísně a byl poslán do vězení pro dlužníky, tehdy dvanáctiletý Charles Dickens musel nastoupit do továrny na výrobu leštidel. Těžce nesl nucené opuštění školy a velmi tvrdé podmínky v továrně. Toto trauma ho provázelo po celý život. Pravděpodobně tento zážitek z dětství byl jedním z příčin, které ho přiměly v dospělosti se postavit proti nelidským podmínkám pracujícího lidu. I on se stal obětí nerovnosti společenských tříd, která těžce zasáhla jeho mladistvé srdce. Ve věku devatenácti let se zamiloval do dívky z bohaté rodiny. Jeho vztah s Marií Beadnell, dcerou bankéře, byl násilně ukončen. Postavení Charlese a jeho rodiny nebylo na dosti vysoké úrovni a proto byl považován za společensky nevhodného nápadníka. Marie byla poslána do Francie, aby na něho zapoměla. I tato krutá skutečnost se stala podnětem pro napsání knih řešících nerovnosti společenských tříd.

Autorův život se odrazil ve všech třech dílech, která jsou rozebrána v této práci. Téměř autobiografií je nazýván *David Copperfield*. Dickens zde řeší sociální postavení pracující třídy. Lidé z této třídy museli velmi tvrdě pracovat, aby se užívali, neměli mnoho času na odpočinek a přesto si svého života velice vážili, jsou poctiví, přátelští, ohleduplní, citliví a dokáží snášet utrpení i ponižování od představitelů tříd vyšších. Reprezentanti vyšší třídy jsou vyobrazeni jako tvorové sobečtí, nespokojení, pokrytečtí, lehkomyšní a povýšení. Společnost odsuzuje dívku z pracující třídy, která byla svedena mužem z vyšší třídy, který si byl vědom svého postavení a nízkým původem Emilky. Přestože ona byla naivní a důvěřivá, kdežto Steerforth si s ní jen vědomě zahrával, společnost odsoudila Emilku jako viníka. Pouze jí byla přičítána veškerá vina. Toto je jedním z důkazů odsouzení člověka jen za to, že je ze třídy žijící se prací svých rukou.

I následující dvě díla, *Oliver Twist* a *Hard Times (Zlé časy)* se zabývají nerovností mezi třídami. V díle *Oliver Twist* se autor spíše řeší postavení dětí žijících v chudobincích a na krutost lidí tam pracujících. I nevinná dětská duše může být vlivem společnosti dohnána až na úplné dno společnosti, které donutí dítě ke krádežím, jen aby

bylo schopno přežít. V tomto díle však Dickens ukazuje představitele vyšších tříd nejen jako sobce a pokrytce, ale i jako lidi citlivé, laskavé, ochotné pomoci malému sirotkovi.

Asi nejtvrdějším dílem z těchto tří je *Hard Times (Zlé časy)*, jak už sám název naznačuje. Toto dílo bylo psáno v době takzvaného utilitarismu, který hlásal, že správný postup je ten, který má za následek co nejvíce štěstí, co největšímu počtu lidí. Tato směr byl postaven pouze na faktech. Dickens tento názor odmítal. V tomto díle je velmi jasně ukázán společenský rozdíl mezi pracující třídou a střední a vyšší třídou na postavě dělníka Stephana Blackpoola, bankéře Josiáše Bounderbyho a politika Jamese Harthouse. Stephan odmítl vstoupit do odborů a tím se stal vyhnancem mezi dělníky. Přestože jeho práce byla velmi těžká, žádal, aby mu ji nebrali. Byla jediným způsobem obživy a naplněním života. Na rozdíl od něj, James Harthouse, který byl představitelem vyšší třídy s dostatečným finančním zabezpečením, si své práce nevážil. Vystřídal již mnoho pracovních pozic i cestoval „a všude se nudil“ (*Dickens, překlad Steinová, 1968, 127*). Josiáš Bounderby byl bezohledný továrník, který považoval dělníky pouze za stroje odvádějící svoji práci, která je nejpříjemnější, nejlehčí a nejlépe placená (*Dickens, překlad Steinová, 1968, 128*).

Dickens se pravděpodobně snažil na základě prezentování myšlenek a pocitů hrdinů pracovní třídy vyvolat mezi svými čtenáři soucitné postoje k dělníkům. Tato dovednost se cenila především uprostřed devatenáctého století, kdy sociální, politické a ekonomické změny vedly k obavám, že bohatí a chudí se od sebe beznadějně odcizili. To je příčinou, proč Dickensova díla hrála tak důležitou roli. Snažil se vyvolat pochopení člověka z jakékoli třídy pro člověka jiné třídy.

Hlavním cílem této práce bylo odpovědět na otázku, zda ovlivnila díla Charlese Dickense sociální podmínky pracující třídy a postoj střední a vyšší třídy k bídě dělníků. Vzhledem k tomu, že hlavním smyslem Dickensových děl bylo oslovit společnost a upozornit na nerovnosti mezi třídami a na křivdy spáchané na pracujících třídách, tak detailně vykreslil především kruté podmínky dělníků včetně dětí pracujících v továrnách. Jeho díla šokovala představitele vyšších a středních tříd britské veřejnosti, kteří neměli o těchto nelidských podmínkách mnohdy ani ponětí. Tímto způsobem napomohl Dickens rozšířit povědomí britské veřejnosti o krutostech, bídě a sociálních poměrech dělníků. Jeho díla se stala alarmující a na začátku devatenáctého století se začaly projevovat snahy společnosti vzniklou situaci řešit. Zavádí se povinná školní

docházka do třinácti let, snižuje se počet pracovních hodin, zvyšují se platy dělníků, práce je omezena věkem a na konci devatenáctého století se začíná situace chudých zlepšovat. Postupem času vymizí myšlenka manchesterské školy, že by stát neměl zasahovat do záležitostí hospodářského rázu, ale naopak, zásahy státu začaly být vítané a výsledkem jsou zákony na zlepšení práce a podmínek dělníků. Autorka tímto odpovídá na otázku řešenou v této práci, kladně. Nejen, že se Dickensovi podařilo pozitivně ovlivnit sociální podmínky dělníků, ale i postoj vyšší a střední třídy vůči pracovní třídě se zlepšil.

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ÚDAJE PRO KNIHOVNICKOU DATABÁZI

Název práce	Odraz společenské diferenciaci viktoriánské společnosti v díle Charlese Dickense
Autor práce	Helena Mikanová
Obor	Anglický jazyk pro hospodářskou praxi
Rok obhajoby	2005
Vedoucí práce	Doc. PhDr. Bohuslav Mánek, CSc.
Anotace	Práce se zabývá viktoriánskou společností, sociálními nerovnostmi mezi třídami. Autorka poukazuje na nerovné postavení představitelů vyšší, střední a pracující třídy a sleduje je ve třech dílech Charlese Dickense – Zlé časy, Oliver Twist, David Copperfield.
Klíčová slova	Dickens, viktoriánský, Zlé časy, Oliver Twist, David Copperfield, vyšší třída, střední třída, pracující třída, společenské rozdíly