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Characterization in Charles Dickens’ Novel

Oliver Twist

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Dedication

This paper is proudly dedicated:

To my mother
whom I owe a lifetime of the mother’s most self-sacrificing devotion
to my sweet sister Sabah
To Noor, Hoyam and Sabaa
To my family in Ghardaia and Ouargla
To all my friends and colleagues without exception
To whom my pen forget and not my heart
I dedicate this modest work with respect and love.
Acknowledgements

In the name of Allah, God who teaches us with pen and teaches human beings what they do not know.

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To all those who helped me in doing this dissertation

To member of the jury.
# Table of Contents

Dedication.................................................................................................................I

Acknowledgements...................................................................................................II

Table of Contents......................................................................................................III

General Introduction.................................................................................................02

## Theoretical Part

### Chapter One: Extrinsic Review

Introduction..................................................................................................................07

1.1 The Victorian Period.............................................................................................07

1.2 Victorian Literature .............................................................................................09

1.2.1 The Victorian Novel.........................................................................................11

1.3 Character and Characterization..........................................................................13

1.3.1 Character in Fiction.........................................................................................14

1.3.2 Characterization...............................................................................................14

1.4 Techniques of Characterization..........................................................................15

1.4.1 Explicit and Implicit Characterization.........................................................16

1.4.2 Characterization by Narrator or Character..................................................17

Conclusion....................................................................................................................17

### Chapter Two: Oliver Twist’s Critical Review

Introduction..................................................................................................................19

2.1 Charles Dickens’ Biography...............................................................................19

2.2 Social and Historical Context.............................................................................21

2.3 Plot Summary.......................................................................................................22

2.4 Setting...................................................................................................................23

2.5 Characters.............................................................................................................23

2.6 Major Themes.......................................................................................................26

2.7 Style......................................................................................................................28

Conclusion....................................................................................................................28
Practical Part

Chapter Three: Investigating the Main Characters in

Oliver Twist

Introduction .................................................................................................................32
3.1 Character Development ......................................................................................32
3.2 The Main Protagonist and the other Characters .............................................33
3.3 Characterization in Oliver Twist .........................................................................35
3.4 Tools of Characterization in Oliver Twist .........................................................37
  3.4.1 Names ..............................................................................................................38
  3.4.2 Habits ..............................................................................................................39
  3.4.3 Physical appearance .......................................................................................40
  3.4.4 Social Status ..................................................................................................41
  3.4.5 Actions ............................................................................................................42
3.5 Good and Evil Characters in Oliver Twist .........................................................42
  3.5.1 Good Characters ............................................................................................42
    3.5.1.1 Oliver Twist ...............................................................................................43
    3.5.1.2 Nancy .........................................................................................................43
    3.5.1.3 Rose Maylie ...............................................................................................44
    3.5.1.4 Mr. Brownlow ............................................................................................44
  3.5.2 Evil Characters ..............................................................................................45
    3.5.2.1 The Artful Dodger ....................................................................................45
    3.5.2.2 Fagin .........................................................................................................45
    3.5.2.3 Sikes .........................................................................................................46
    3.5.2.4 Monks .......................................................................................................48
3.6 Oliver Twist’s Narrator .......................................................................................49
3.7 Character’s Function in Oliver Twist .................................................................50
3.8 Relating Characters to the Theme of the Novel ...............................................51
Conclusion ...............................................................................................................52
General Conclusion ................................................................................................53
Glossary
Works Cited
Abstract
General Introduction
General Introduction

Victorian period refers to the literature produced from 1837 to 1901; it took the name of Queen Victoria (Alexandrina Victoria), who ruled Great Britain over six decades. She was the longest reigning monarch in British History, her time was a prosperous period for Great Britain and its Empire, during which this island nation emerged as the most powerful country in the world (Al Ghazali 64).

The Victorian Era was a great time of architecture and arts especially literature, the novel became the leading literary genre in English. Victorian novels tend to be idealized portraits of difficult lives in which hard work, perseverance, love and luck win out at the end; virtue would be rewarded and wrongdoers are suitably punished. They tended to improve nature with a central moral lesson at heart, mixed with a heavy dose of sentiment.

The Victorian period knew many writers such as the Brontë sisters; Anne (1820-49), Charlotte (1816-55) and Emily Jane (1818-48), Anthony Trollope's (1815–82), George Eliot(1819-80), Lord Tennyson (1809-92), and Charles Dickens who was extraordinarily popular in his day, with his characters taking on a life of their own beyond the page, and he remains one of the most popular authors of this Era. Dickens worked diligently and prolifically to produce entertaining writing, which the public really wanted, but also to offer commentary on social challenges of that period.

*Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens' second novel (1839), subtitled 'The Parish Boy's Progress', probably the best-known of all Dickens' works, was originally published in monthly parts February 1837 - April 1839 in Bentley's Miscellany, and sought to bring the public attention to various contemporary social problems, including the workhouse, child labour and the recruitment of children as criminals is a story of an orphan named Oliver set against the seamy underside of the London criminal world. in this literary work Dickens critic the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 which renewed the importance of the workhouse as a means of relief for the poor (Muntamah 49).

Dickens was severely criticized for introducing criminals and prostitutes in *Oliver Twist*, to which Dickens replied, industrial the preface to the Library Edition of *OT* in 1858, "I saw no reason, when I wrote this book, why the very dregs of life, so long as their speech did not offend the ear, should not serve the purpose of a moral, at least as well as its froth and
cream" (Ayuningtiyas 37). The novel was well received but not with the adulation of Pickwick.

Characterization have been chosen because it is an exciting narrative element, through it the author can make us react to a bunch of words as if they were a real person. These assemblages of language can make us laugh or cry, get us angry or indignant, and even occasionally treat them as more important to us than people we know; and this novel precisely because we were impressed by the way Charles Dickens represents his characters, he uses exceptional characterization throughout the novel. John Forster, Charles Dickens’s biographer, wrote that Dickens made his “characters real existences, not by describing them but by letting them describe themselves” (Allingham). Indeed, his characters are extremely rich, and even the most cartoonish of them, shine with a certain kind of truth.

Characterization is very important because it is the character who make events happen so the way of introducing them to the reader surely make a difference, characters can be introduced by a direct statement and this is what we call direct characterization or by what they do, say or think, how the other characters think about them, by their names, their appearance and also through dialogues and this is what we call indirect characterization¹.

This study aims at exploring how Dickens draws the image of his characters and to spot a light on the importance of characterization in achieving the real meaning of any literary text and particularly the novel. Moreover, it tends to help students appreciate the literary text through its literary analysis. Henry James affirms, "What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?" in other words without characters we have no action, and with no action we have no characters.

Charles Dickens is known for his memorable characters, So throughout this study we try to highlight the following questions:

- What type of characterization does Charles Dickens use in his novel Oliver Twist?
- To what extent do the characters of the novel affect its themes?

Attempting to answer the questions stated above, we hypothesis that; Charles Dickens used several techniques of characterization, two major types are explicit and explicit characterization, that help him to achieve a solid characterization. In order to motivate readers, characters need to seem real, Dickens achieves this by providing details that make

¹ - Literary devices characterisation.web
characters individual and particular, good characterization gives readers a strong sense of characters' personalities and complexities; it makes characters vivid, alive and believable.

This analytical study is divided into two parts a theoretical part which consists of two chapters and a practical one with one chapter. In the first chapter, we deal with the historical and literary background of the work; it treats the Victorian era in general and precisely literature focusing more on the novel as the leading literary genre at that time,. The second chapter is more focusable on the literary work and its author, it introduces Charles Dickens the novelist, his life, his major works, and what have the other critics said about him, the chapter is also an analytic study of the novel, through it we try to analyze the novel, its summary, its plot, its setting, its themes, and its characters.

The third chapter is the practical part; it starts first with the character development, introducing the protagonist, his interaction with the other characters, and characterization in Oliver Twist, then tools of characterization including; names, habits, physical appearance, social status, and action. In addition to this, we tried to classify the characters of the novel into good and bad ones, also the chapter presents the novel’s narrator. Moreover, the chapter deals with the characters’ function in *Oliver Twist* novel; by the end we will try to relate the characters to the themes of the novel.
Theoretical Part
Chapter One

Extrinsic Review
Introduction

The Victorian era in British history was the period of Queen Victoria's reign from 1837 till 1901; it is known as a period of prosperity and development for the British Empire. The period was marked by industrial development, rise of a larger stronger, as well as more educated middle class.

The Victorian era was a long period of peace, prosperity, refined awareness and national self-confidence for Britain. The British Empire had extended its borders to the far reaching corners of the globe and Victoria was the most powerful sovereign of her time. It was also a prosperous period for Arts.

1.1 Victorian Period

Victorian period is a name used to express the epoch of Alexandrina Victoria monarchy who ruled Great Britain from 1837 until 1901; the Victorian period was characterized by many aspects such as colonization, industrialization, social reforming, and scientific inquiry, moreover, it was a time of increasing wealth.

McDowall stated that Queen Victoria was born in 1819; she ascended the throne in 20th of June 1837 at the age of eighteen (18) shortly after her uncle‘s William IV death. Three years later (1840), she married her cousin Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha a German prince- who later became not king, but Prince consort- and together they raised nine children. In 1861, her husband died at the age of 42 from a typhoid fever, after that she wore black for the reminder of her life in mourning for him (144).

The Victorian era knew few colonial wars that did not seriously disturb the national life. There was one Continental war that directly affected Britain--The Crimean War--and one that affected her indirectly though strongly –The Franco-German struggle; yet neither one of these caused any profound changes. In America, the great civil struggle left scars that were soon to be obliterated or eliminated by the wise statesmanship of her rulers. (Edward Albert 366)Politically, Great Britain enjoyed a remarkable stability, from the moment of her accession, Queen Victoria showed the qualities that were to remain with her throughout her reign, such as a strong sense of duty, a conviction of justice, and a deep feeling for her country, “since it has pleased Providence to place me in this station,” she wrote in her diary,
Chapter One

Extrinsic Review

I shall do my utmost to fulfill my duty towards my country; I am Very young and perhaps in many, though not in all things, inexperienced, but I am sure, that very few have more good will and more real desire to do what is fit and right than I have. (Cody)

Cody states that Queen Victoria’s marriage to the earnest young German prince, helped her to establish the modern role of the British monarchy, they quickly grasped the significance of the monarchy's new functions, which combined a small amount of political manipulation with an unlimited responsibility as the emotional and ceremonial focus of people in social turmoil. It was prince Albert whose domination over his wife forced Victoria to take an interest in matters that had previously bored her, such as science and literature and even industrial progress.

The industrial Revolution at the Victorian era was at its altitude; a period of social, economic and technological change, for instance in 1830, the Liverpool and Manchester Railway opened the first public railway line in the world, and by 1850, railway lines connected England’s major cities, also by 1900 England had 15,195 lines of railroad and an underground rail system beneath London. The train transformed England’s landscape, supported the growth of commerce, and shrunk the distance between cities (ibid).

As a consequence to this revolution the British political system provided a means for gradual reform to avoid any sort of political upheaval, a well known political act was The Reform Bill 1832 which transformed English class structure by extending the right to vote to all males owning property, the Act increased the number of individuals entitled to vote, increasing the size of the electorate by 50–80%, and allowing a total of one out of six adult males to vote. Another act was The Reform Bill 1867 that extended right to vote to working class (McDowall 145).

The Victorian era was a time of development; London becomes the most important city in Europe its population expands from two to six million, another figure of change during the Victorian time was the transformation from ownership of land to modern urban economy, Britain was the world’s foremost imperial power with richness in wealth it was in its golden time.

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Many children in early Victorian times never went to school at all, and more than half of them grew up unable to read or write. Moreover, the poorest ended up in a Warehouse: which was a public institution in which people who were unable to support themselves are housed and fed people. If these people were otherwise fit, they were put to work (Charles Dickens painted the best-known picture of that in his Oliver Twist).

1.2 Victorian Literature

The Victorian literature refers to the literature produced during Queen Victoria monarchy (1831-1901), that forms a link and transition between the writers of the romantic period and the very different literature of the 20th century (Al-Ghazali 64). The period knew many significant changes; an obvious one was that the novel became the leading literary genre in English, another important fact was the number of women novelists who were successful in the 19th century, even though they often had to use a masculine pseudonym, the majority of readers were of course women.

The Victorian period was a witness to the growth of the novel as the leading form of literature, as far as the English language was concerned. Pieces by pre-Victorian writers like Walter Scott and Jane Austen, had mastered both closely-observed social satire, as well as adventure stories. Popular works were able to set up a market for novels among the reading public. The 19th century is considered to be the highest point in British literature, along with other countries like the United States of America, France as well as Russia. Books, along with novels in particular, became omnipresent, and the Victorian novelists were able to churn out masterpieces, with continuous appeal (Al-Ghazali 64).

Speaking of poetry, the Victorian verse was developed in the context of the novel. Poets sought new ways of telling stories in verse, they show the strong influence of the Romantics, but they cannot sustain the confidence the Romantics felt in the power of the imagination. Moreover Victorian poetry is pictorial; poets use detail to construct visual images that represent the emotion or situation the poem concerns. It confirmed what the Victorians valued or pointed out problems in their society, their poetry was often related to society’s problems. There are many poets who deserve to be mentioned in this occasion such as Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892) who was one of the most popular Victorian poets, he wrote narrative poems, and another figure is Robert Browning (1812-1889) who raised the dramatic monologue to new heights by making it a vehicle for deep psychological probing.
and character study Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861): with Robert, one of literature’s greatest love affairs. They wrote love sonnets valued for their lyric beauty (Boris 79).

Drama was a flourishing and popular institution during the Victorian period, its popularity influenced other genres. Prominent names have enriched the Era such as Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde; they transformed British theater with their comic masterpieces (Giovanna 10).

Among the Victorian masters of nonfiction were the great Whig historian Thomas Macaulay and Thomas Carlyle, the historian, social critic, and prophet whose rhetoric thundered through the age. Influential thinkers included John Stuart Mill, the great liberal scholar and philosopher; Thomas Henry Huxley, a scientist and popularizer of Darwinian theory; and John Henry, Cardinal Newman, who wrote earnestly of religion, philosophy, and education. The founders of Communism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, researched and wrote their books in the free environment of England. The great art historian and critic John Ruskin also concerned himself with social and economic problems. Matthew Arnold’s theories of literature and culture laid the foundations for modern literary criticism, and his poetry is also notable.\(^3\)

The development of the novel in 19th century was an extraordinary episode in literary history. Novelists referred to 19th century are Austen, Dickens, Elliot, and Hardy. Peck and Coyle said that all these writers look at conflicts between individuals and society. Whereas, Austen and Eliot felt that the society, for all its faults, was in reasonable health and that individuals had to be conformed, Dickens and Hardy were more furious critics of the existing social structure, and so fully aware why characters used to feel at odds with the world (Ayuningtiyas 17).

The Victorian literature draw the image of an age which witnessed incomparably greater changes than any that had gone before in all the conditions of life-material comforts, scientific knowledge, and absolutely speaking in intellectual and spiritual enlightenment (Fletcher 137). Moreover, to twentieth century students the Victorian literature makes a specially strong appeal because it is in part the literature of our own time and its ideas and point of view are in large measure ours. We must begin by glancing briefly at some of the general determining changes and conditions to which reference has just been made, and we may naturally begin with the merely material ones.

\(^3\) English literature: The Victorian Age. Retrieved on 20-02-2014. Web
The Victorian age is considered as a major chapter in the long and illustrious history of the English literature. Consequently the works of the period are often very relevant in contemporary times.

1.2.1 The Victorian Novel

In the Victorian age, the novel held a much greater position of cultural authority than in any other time. Novelists did not just comment on society but were expected to illuminate social problems and influence its development. The novel’s scope was wider; it might take society itself as its subject, and deal with all classes, with differences of experience in different regions, and with the large-scale problems of industrialization.

The Victorian novel was a thing entirely Victorian; quite unique and suited to a sort of cosiness in that country and that age. But the novel itself is mainly modern. No clear-headed person wastes his time over definitions, except where he thinks his own definition would probably be in dispute, that when I say "novel," I mean a fictitious narrative (almost invariably, but not necessarily, in prose) of which the essential is that the story is not told for the sake of its naked pointedness as an anecdote, or for the sake of the irrelevant landscapes and visions that can be caught up in it, but for the sake of some study of the difference between human beings (Chesterton 18).

The development of the novel in 19th century was an extraordinary episode in literary history. Peck, Kelsall and Coyle said that the main concern of the Victorian authors is to look at conflicts between individuals and society, for instance Austen and Elliot felt that the society, for all its faults, was in reasonable health and that individuals had to be conformed, Dickens and Hardy were fiercer critics of the existing social structure, and so fully aware why characters used to feel at odds with the world (512).

The novel was characterized by being realistic, thickly plotted, full of characters, and long. It was the ideal form to describe contemporary life and to entertain the middle class. For instance the novels of Charles Dickens, full to overflowing with drama, humor, and an endless variety of vivid characters and plot complications, nonetheless spare nothing in their portrayal of what urban life was like for all classes, also William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) is best known for Vanity Fair (1848), which wickedly satirizes hypocrisy and greed (Ayuningtiyas 26).
Chapter One

Extrinsic Review

The novel was the dominant form in Victorian literature, it seeks to represent a large and comprehensive social world, with a variety of classes; they are realistic. The major theme presented in almost all the novels of that Era is the place of the individual in society, the aspiration of the hero or heroine for love or social position. The protagonist’s search for fulfillment is symbolic of the human condition. For the first time, women were major writers: the Brontes, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot. The Victorian novel was a principal form of entertainment.

Bromtlinger and Fhesing affirms that the 19th century knew a large number of novelists some of the most illustrated and talented Victorian novelists include Robert Browning, Christina Rossetti, Emily Bronte, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Lewis Carroll, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Benjamin Disraeli, George Eliot, George Meredith, H. G. Wells, Bram Stoker, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Gissing, Thomas Hardy, A. E. Housman, Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, Philip Meadows Taylor, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Anthony Trollope, George MacDonald, G.M. Hopkins, Oscar Wilde and William Thackeray (372).

The 1830s and 1840s witnesses the rise of social novel, also known as social problem novel, that arose out of the social and political upheavals which followed the Reform Act of 1832. This was in many ways a reaction to rapid industrialization, and the social, political and economic issues associated with it, and it was a means of commenting on abuses of government and industry and the suffering of the poor, who were not profiting from England's economic prosperity. Stories of the working class were directed toward middle class to help create sympathy and promote change, an early examples are Charles Dickens’ novels The Pickwick Papers (1836-7) and Oliver Twist (1837-8). Charles Dickens emerged on the literary scene in the 1830s with the two novels already mentioned, he wrote vividly about London life and struggles of the poor, but in a good-humoured fashion, accessible to readers of all classes (Al-Ghazali 64).

Makati states that the Victorian novel was a vehicle which writers used to deliver social criticism (36). It was a source that gave the reading public a clear picture of what was happening during the nineteenth century. Thus it can be said that the Victorian novel was a realistic depiction of England and the rest of Britain in the industrial era. The novel was a new form that was developed from drama, and Dickens’ novels have some theatrical elements
such as dialogue which enables the reader to identify the personalities of the characters in the texts and to understand the symbolic role of each character. Therefore, the Victorian novel, through its realistic depiction of characters and the Victorian society in general, enabled the readers to understand what was going on in England at that time. By the end of the period, the novel was considered not only the premier form of entertainment but also a primary means of analyzing and offering solutions to social and political problems.

The Victorian novel’s insistence on the importance of the ordinary life is an extension of the domestic concerns of the eighteenth-century feminine novel. The novel, in taking on a wider authority, was not removed from the feminine sphere, for that too was being widened. The Victorian ideology of femininity depended on a separation between men’s public and women’s private sphere, and women were supposed to be amply compensated for their lack of political and economic power by their feminine influence, which was supposed to soften men’s behaviour and indirectly improve public life (Chesterton 19).

The literary structure of many Victorian novels, for example, was partly dictated by two forms in which much nineteenth-century English fiction was published, the serial and the three-decker (ibid 22). It follows, therefore, that the printed book itself is a matter which literary scholars cannot ignore; this is not merely true of textual critics or editors, although it is indeed of special concern to them, but of all students of literature which is extant only in its printed form, or of which the printed form is the only authoritative version.

By the end of the period, the novel was considered not only the premier form of entertainment but also a primary means of analyzing and offering solutions to social and political problems. It was a vehicle which writers used to deliver social criticism; it was a source that gave the reading public a clear picture of what was happening during the nineteenth century. Thus it can be concluded that the Victorian novel was a realistic depiction of England and the rest of Britain in the industrial era. Also it was a new form that was developed from drama.

1.2 Character and Characterization

Characterization is a literary device that is used step by step in literature to highlight and explain the details about a character in a story. It is in the initial stage where the writer introduces the character with noticeable emergence and then following the introduction of the
Chapter One

Extrinsic Review

character, the writer often talks about his behavior; then as the story progresses, the thought-process of the character. The next stage involves the character expressing his opinions and ideas and getting into conversations with the rest of the characters. The final part shows how others in the story respond to the character’s personality. In the 19th century, the dominance of character over plot became clear through petty bourgeois novels.

1.3 Character in Fiction

In fiction, character refers to a textual representation of human being or occasionally another creature (Ayuningtiyas 19). In other words characters are the forms represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it-the dialogue- and from what they do-the action. The grounds in the characters' temperament, desires, and moral nature for their speech and actions are called their motivation. A character may remain essentially "stable," or unchanged in outlook and disposition, from beginning to end of a work, or may undergo a radical change, either through a gradual process of development (the title character in Jane Austen's Emma, 1816) or as the result of a crisis (Shakespeare's King Lear, Pip in Dickens' Great Expectations).

1.3.2 Characterization

Characterization is a literary device that is used step by step in literature to highlight and explain the details about a character in a story. It is in the initial stage where the writer introduces the character with noticeable emergence and then following the introduction of the character, the writer often talks about his behavior; then as the story progresses, the thought-process of the character. The next stage involves the character expressing his opinions and ideas and getting into conversations with the rest of the characters. The final part shows how others in the story respond to the character’s personality.

Characterization as a literary tool was coined in the mid 15th century. Aristotle in his Poetics argued that “tragedy is a representation, not of men, but of action and life” (ibid).

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4 - Literary devices characterisation.web
5 - Home of Literary Devices, Definition and Examples of Literary Terms. Web.
Thus the assertion of the dominance of plot over characters, termed as plot-driven narrative, is unmistakable; this point of view was later on abandoned by many because, in the 19th century, the dominance of character over plot became clear through petty bourgeois novels.

The use of characters enables the author of story to interact with his audience. The first involvement between the audiences with a named story often develops when they read of different characters that are able to take hold of their interest, empathy and even sympathy as the story unfolds. Given the critical role that characterization taken in stories, authors have been able to exploit it for their advantage by coming up with characters who are able to be used to make the story happen as intended. To do so, different character types are used to carry the story. In any given story, the author may use character of different types. These character types may include flat, dynamic, round and dynamic each having a definite behavior necessary in the story.\(^6\)

The people in a narrative are called characters rather than persons to emphasize the fact that they are only representations of people, constructed by an author to fulfill a certain function in a certain context. We form a mental construct of characters from the information we are given but also add some characterization ideas from our own experience and imagination. Thus, even though we by the judge characters in literature according to our experience of ‘real’ people, characterization unlike ‘real’ people they do not exist independently of their narrative context and little or no benefit is to be gained from speculating on the psychological make-up of a character for which we are not given any indication in the text figural characterization.\(^7\)

The main questions for an analysis of character are: first how does the text inform us about characters expressing the techniques of characterization; and second, what function do characters have in the narrative referring to character functions. (Lethbridge and Mildorf)

### 1.3 Techniques of Characterization

Techniques of characterization are used in texts to enable readers to form a mental construct of a character. There are six main aspects to be considered: How is the character described, by whom is the character described, how is the characterization distributed

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\(^6\) Home of Literary Devices, Definition and Examples of Literary Terms.

\(^7\) Sanchez, Mariely (2011). Character Development and Analysis. web.
throughout the text, how reliable is the source of information, what do we learn about a character’s inner life and in which arrangements of character contrasts and correspondences is the character depicted.  

1.4.1 Explicit and Implicit Characterization

The most obvious technique of characterization is when someone (in the following excerpt: the narrator) tells us explicitly what a character is like:

*Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her* (Austen, Emma ch.1).

While employing various narrative techniques, the author uses either direct or indirect forms of characterization. In direct characterization, the author explains the personality of the character directly, he defines the traits of the character by using adjectives extensively. You will understand it from the following sentence. For instance, the impatient girl always misbehaved with her calm and quiet brother. The patient mother had to bear this every day. In this sentence, the girl, boy and their mother have been characterized directly, impatient, calm and patient are the adjectives used to describe the girl, her brother and the mother, respectively.

The indirect characterization is a bit complex than direct characterization, because the reader need to understand the nature of the character by his thoughts, speech, appearance, role, action, and his influence on other characters present in the plot (Sengupta). We often come across such examples where secondary characters deliver a soliloquy to define the protagonist or the protagonist himself delivers a monologue to symbolize his/her character. A general example is given below. For example, I'm paying today for my acts of cruelty, I have been treacherous all my life and have lost everything today. The negative side of the character i.e. treacherous and cruel is portrayed in the sentence written above. He doesn't directly claim himself as evil but these actions prove him to be an evil individual.
1.4.2 Characterization by Narrator or Character

Characters can be described, implicitly as well as explicitly, either by the narrator (sometimes, somewhat misleadingly, called authorial characterization) or by another character in the narrative (also called figural characterization) or even by the characters themselves (self-characterization).

Conclusion

The Victorian period was a great time of England and all the world, enormous changes occurred in Literature, political and social life, a significant change was the domination of the novel over the other forms of literature moreover, it was a principal form of entertainment. Another change is that by the first time women were major writers; the Brontes Sisters, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot are famous figures of that era. While Characters are the agents presented in a literary work, characterization is the process by which the writer introduces them to the reader, the techniques that are used in texts to enable the reader to form a mental construct of a character.
Chapter Two

Oliver Twist’s Critical Review
Introduction

*Oliver Twist,* published in 1838, is one of Charles Dickens's best-known and well-loved works. It was written after he had already attained success as the author of The Pickwick Papers. It has been adapted as a film and a long-running Broadway musical and has been considered a classic ever since it was first published.9

The book originally appeared as a "serial"; that is, each chapter was published separately in order, in a magazine called *Bentley's Miscellany,* of which Dickens was editor. Each week, readers waited avidly for the next installment in the tale; this partly accounts for the fact that each chapter ends with a "cliff-hanger" that would hold the reader's interest until the following chapter was published. The novel take place in numerous settings, it was written in London and environs; an unnamed smaller English city i.e. the English countryside (ibid).

2.1. Charles Dickens Biography

Charles Dickens is one of the greatest writers of English novels of all time according to many; moreover he wrote all kinds of literary works including the form of short stories and essays. He also had many great classics. David Cody states that:

*He was a great comic artist and a great entertainer, but his influence over his public was strongest, perhaps when he struck a vein of sentiment which ran deep in Victorian society* (Pamela 7).

Charles John Huffman Dickens was born on 7th February, 1812 in Portsmouth, Hampshire, England (now the Dickens birthplace become a Museum) the son of Elizabeth née Barrow (1789-1863) and John Dickens (1785-1851). Charles, the second of eight children, was a delicate child, and much of his boyhood was spent at home reading novels of *Smollett, Fielding, and Le Sage* and others 10.

When Charles Dickens is twelve years old, he has to work in a boot-blacking factory because his family has financial problems. This evident influences his childhood that is often humiliated. He uses his suffering and humiliation that has been experienced as the ideas of his fictional portraits (Salatiga 19).

Chapter Two

Dickens’ first book, was a highly successful collection of stories titled *Sketches by Boz* published in 1836, in the same year he becomes editor of *Bentley's Miscellany*, and Publishes in December the second series of *Sketches by Boz*. After the success of *Pickwick*, Dickens embarked on a full-time career as a novelist, producing work of increasing complexity at an incredible rate, although he continued, as well, his journalistic and editorial activities. *Oliver Twist* was begun in 1837, and continued in monthly parts in *Bentley's Miscellany* until April 1839 (Salatiga 20).

*Nicholas Nickleby* was started in 1838, and continued through October 1839, in this year Dickens resigned as editor of *Bentley's Miscellany*. The first number of *Master Humphrey's Clock* appeared in 1840, and *The Old Curiosity Shop*, begun in Master Humphrey, continued through February 1841, when Dickens commenced *Barnaby Rudge*, which continued through November of that year.11

*Martin Chuzzlewit* part of which was set in a not very flatteringly portrayed America, was begun in 1843 and ran through July 1844. *A Christmas Carol*, the first of Dickens's enormously successful Christmas books appeared in December 1844. The Chimes was published in London in December 1844 the next year, he published the third Christmas book *The Cricket and the Hearth*, and his *Pictures From Italy* appeared in 1846 in the "Daily News," a paper which Dickens founded and of which, for a short time, he was the editor (ibid).

In 1847, in Switzerland, Dickens began *Dombey and Son*, which ran until April 1848. *The Battle of Life* appeared in December of that year. In 1848 Dickens also wrote an autobiographical fragment, directed and acted in a number of amateur theatricals, and published what would be his last Christmas book, *The Haunted Man*, in December. 1849 saw the birth of *David Copperfield*, which would run through November 1850. In that year too, Dickens founded and installed himself as editor of the weekly Household Words, which would be succeeded, in 1859, by *All the Year Round*, which he edited until his death. In 1851 he found himself working on *Bleak House*, which appeared monthly from 1852 until September 1853 (Salatiga 21).

*Hard Times* began to appear weekly in *Household Words* in 1854, and continued until August. In October 1855, Dickens began *Little Dorrit*, which continued in monthly parts until

11 - Merriman, C. D. *Biography of Charles Dickens*. Online Literature
June 1857. *A Tale of Two Cities* was first serialized in (1859). *Great Expectations* (1860-1861) was followed by *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-1865). In 1869 he begins *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* which appears in September 1870 (Salatiga 21).

Dickens is a writer who touched the lives of many people of England who enjoyed his novels, including both the lower and upper classes. The events in his childhood created the richness and pathos which he uses for the representation of the characters in his novels. The main focus that his novels entail is on the poor population which connects to his own personal conflicts and frustrations of his childhood. His early life is a recurrent element in his childhood novels such as *Oliver Twist and Great Expectations*. The unpleasant childhood that Dickens experienced is noted in his biography by John Forster and one can read the bleakness and the bitterness.

In short, Dickens published fourteen major novels, several plays, numerous short stories, and many other books and articles. At times he was involved in writing as many as three novels simultaneously, a man of incredible energy and vitality, Dickens acted, edited several periodicals, and worked with various charitable organizations. He twice toured America, giving readings from his works to packed houses. Dickens’s novels-among them *Oliver Twist* (1838), *David Copperfield* (1850), *Bleak House* (1852), *Little Dorrit* (1857), *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations*, and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865)-dominated the Victorian literary scene throughout his life. He was arguably the most popular novelist ever to write in English. He left a final novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, unfinished when he died of a stroke on June 9, 1870, in Rochester, England (Allingham).

### 2.2 Social and Historical Context

Dickens was a lifelong champion of the poor. He himself suffered the harsh abuse visited upon the poor by the English legal system. In England in the 1830s, the poor truly had no voice, political or economic. In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens presents the everyday existence of the lowest members of English society. He goes far beyond the experiences of the workhouse, extending his depiction of poverty to London’s squalid streets, dark alehouses, and thieves’ dens. He gives voice to those who had no voice, establishing a link between politics and literature with his social commentary.

Dickens’s writings are always political and social commentaries. They provide a powerful insight into the social injustices and the political oppressions that the poor people
were subjected to in the England of the nineteenth century. *Oliver Twist* began to be published in a magazine in the year 1837 under Dickens’s pseudonym *Boz*, it was the author’s second novel, it is a vehement protest against the *Poor Law of 1834* (Cody).

The novel opens with a bitter invective directed at the nineteenth-century English Poor Laws. These laws were a distorted manifestation of the Victorian middle class’s emphasis on the virtues of hard work. England in the 1830s was rapidly undergoing a transformation from an agricultural, rural economy to an urban, industrial nation. The growing middle class had achieved an economic influence equal to, if not greater than, that of the British aristocracy.

### 2.3 Plot Summary

Oliver is born in a workhouse and named *Oliver Twist* by the Parish Beadle. His mother dies without revealing anything of her history, and Oliver becomes a workhouse brat, at first farmed out and then returned to the workhouse. He is apprenticed to an undertaker named Sowerberry. He fights, and beats, Noah Claypole, the other apprentice; this calls down the wrath of the powers and Oliver runs away to London.

On the road he falls in with the Artful Dodger, who shares his food with him and then takes him to Fagin." The first time Oliver goes out with Fagin's boys on the pinching lay he is arrested for a theft he did not commit. He is only released on the testimony of the Bookstall Keeper Mr. Brownlow, the old gentleman whose pocket had been picked, takes him home with him and has him cared for. When on an errand for his benefactor he is recaptured by Fagin's gang. He is then forced to take part in the housebreaking expedition to Mrs. Maylie's house at Chertsey. He raises the alarm, however, but is wounded, and is found next morning at the Maylies' house. His story is credited, and with the assistance of Dr. Losberne the Bow Street runners are deceived. Fagin and Monks hunt out Oliver's sanctuary and plan his recapture. But Nancy, who has been stricken with remorse, reveals everything to Rose Maylie. Nancy is murdered by Bill Sikes for this. Sikes accidentally hangs himself over the Folly Ditch in his attempt to escape, and the gang is broken up. Fagin is executed. Charlie Bates turns over a new leaf and becomes a farmer. Claypole turns evidence and becomes a paid informer with the assistance of Charlotte.

By the end of the novel, it transpires that Monks and Oliver are half brothers, and the former has been endeavoring to make the boy a criminal, to prevent his inheriting under their father’s will. Rose Maylie turns out to be the sister of Oliver's mother. Monks goes abroad
with the portion that has been given him, but dies in prison in a state of poverty Rose marries Harry Maylie, who takes a country parish. Mr. Brownlow again takes Oliver under his protection. Bumble and his wife are left inmates of the workhouse, where they had so long lorded over the former inmates.

### 2.4 Setting

The novel *Oliver Twist* consists of events in Oliver’s life in different locations. The first place in which the reader encounters Oliver is at the workhouse where he is taken at the age of eight. Dickens’ exposes the injustices of the workhouse officials and their practices through grotesque realism. The description of the workhouse board members is a satire on their incompetent administration of the system. When Oliver goes to the workhouse, he is introduced to “ten fat gentlemen” and one who was “particularly fat” with “a very round, red face” (12). The fat gentlemen are juxtaposed against the children at the poor house who were starved as evidenced by the scene in which the older children forced Oliver to ask for more food. In the novel, it is stated that the inmates were fed on small quantities of oatmeal, three meals of thin gruel a day and half a roll on Sundays. As a result, the pauper’s clothes “fluttered loosely on their wasted, shrunken forms, after a week or two’s gruel”.

Charles Dickens also exposes child labour enforced on children at the workhouses. The “red-faced gentleman informs Oliver that he is going to be trained in a new trade, which turns out to be picking oakum at six in the morning. He is later sold to Mr. Sowerberry the undertaker, where he takes the role of being a mute during funeral processions. The reader empathizes with Oliver because at a tender age, he is already being exposed to death. He later escapes from Mr. Sowerberry and goes to London where he is confronted by criminals. The three different locations in which Oliver finds himself, act as antagonistic forces against his innocence; however, his naivety remains untainted even after relations with the corrupt gang (Makati 12).

### 2.5 Characters

Dickens' characters are some of the most memorable ones in fiction, his genius is shown in the choice of names, the details he offered in each scene. *Oliver Twist* is a character-oriented novel; it is more about characters than about actions or events, it is full of characters.
2.5.1 Oliver Twist

The novel’s protagonist, Oliver is an orphan born in a workhouse, and Dickens uses his situation to criticize public policy toward the poor in 1830s England. Oliver is between nine and twelve years old when the main action of the novel occurs. Though treated with cruelty and surrounded by coarseness for most of his life, he is a pious, innocent child, and his charms draw the attention of several wealthy benefactors. His true identity is the central mystery of the novel.

2.5.2 Fagin

A conniving career criminal, Fagin takes in homeless children and trains them to pick pockets for him. He is also a buyer of other people’s stolen goods. He rarely commits crimes himself, preferring to employ others to commit them—and often suffer legal retribution—in his place. Dickens’s portrait of Fagin displays the influence of anti-Semitic stereotypes.

2.5.3 Nancy

A young prostitute, in her childhood she was a member of Fagin’s pickpocket gang who is the lover of Bill Sikes. Her love for Sikes and her sense of moral decency come into conflict when Sikes abuses Oliver. Despite her criminal lifestyle, she is among the noblest characters in the novel. In effect, she gives her life for Oliver when Sikes murders her for revealing Monks’ plots.

2.5.4 Rose Maylie

The sister of Agnes Fleming, after her father’s death she was raised by a beautiful, compassionate, and forgiving young woman named Mrs. Maylie. Rose is the novel’s model of female virtue. She establishes a loving relationship with Oliver even before it is revealed that the two are related.

2.5.5 Mr. Brownlow

A wealthy decent gentleman who sees the potential in Oliver and subsequently takes him in, it transpires that Mr. Brownlow owns a commissioned portrait of Agnes Fleming (Rose Maylies’ Sister) and at the time of Mr. Lee ford’s sister’s death was engaged to her. Mr. Brownlow always acts with absolute decency and compassion for Oliver Twist.
2.5.6 Monks

A nasty and unpredictable young chap, known for violent rages and seething with a stupendous level of hatred for the world. Monks couples with Fagin to make Oliver’s life impossible.

2.5.7 Bill Sikes

A brutal professional burglar brought up in Fagin’s gang. Sikes is Nancy's pimp and lover, and he treats both her and his dog Bull’s-eye with an odd combination of cruelty and grudging affection. His murder of Nancy is the most heinous of the many crimes that occur in the novel.

2.5.8 Mr. Bumble

The pompous, self-important beadle—a minor church official—for the workhouse where Oliver is born. Though Mr. Bumble preaches Christian morality, he behaves without compassion toward the paupers under his care. Dickens mercilessly satirizes his self-righteousness, greed, hypocrisy, and folly, of which his name is an obvious symbol.

In addition to those we notice other minor characters such as Agnes Fleming, Oliver’s mother. After falling in love with and becoming pregnant by Mr. Leeford, she chooses to die anonymously in a workhouse rather than stain her family’s reputation. A retired naval officer’s daughter, she was a beautiful, loving woman. Oliver’s face closely resembles hers. Also Mr. Leeford, Oliver and Monks’ father, who dies long before the events of the novel. He was an intelligent, high-minded man whose family forced him into an unhappy marriage with a wealthy woman. He eventually separated from his wife and had an illicit love affair with Agnes Fleming. He intended to flee the country with Agnes but died before he could do so.

Another one is Mr. Losberne the physician of Mrs. Maylie’s family. A hot-tempered but good-hearted old bachelor, Mr. Losberne is fiercely loyal to the Maylies and, eventually, to Oliver. Mrs. Maylie who is kind, wealthy older woman, the mother of Harry Maylie and adoptive “aunt” of Rose.

Moreover, we have Harry Maylie, Mrs. Maylie’s son, he is a dashing young man with grand political ambitions and career prospects, which he eventually gives up to marry Rose. Also Artful Dodger The cleverest of Fagin’s pickpockets, his real name is Jack
Dawkins. Though no older than Oliver, the Dodger talks and dresses like a grown man. He introduces Oliver to Fagin.

2.6 Major Themes

The theme or central idea of a story corresponds to the meaning of a human experience; it may be anything that could make a memorable experience. The reader can extract it from the details of character and action that compose the story (Salatiga 37). *Oliver Twist* novel is rich of themes, the prominent ones are:

2.6.1 The Failure of Charity

Much of the first part of *Oliver Twist* challenges the organizations of charity run by the church and the government in Dickens’s time. The system Dickens describes was put into place by the Poor Law of 1834, which stipulated that the poor could only receive government assistance if they moved into government workhouses. Residents of those workhouses were essentially inmates whose rights were severely curtailed by a host of onerous regulations. Labor was required, families were almost always separated, and rations of food and clothing were meager. The workhouses operated on the principle that poverty was the consequence of laziness and that the dreadful conditions in the workhouse would inspire the poor to better their own circumstances. Yet the economic dislocation of the Industrial Revolution made it impossible for many to do so, and the workhouses did not provide any means for social or economic betterment. Furthermore, as Dickens points out, the officials who ran the workhouses blatantly violated the values they preached to the poor. Dickens describes with great sarcasm the greed, laziness, and arrogance of charitable workers like Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Mann. In general, charitable institutions only reproduced the awful conditions in which the poor would live anyway. As Dickens puts it, the poor choose between “being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it” (*Oliver Twist* 67).

2.6.2 The Folly of Individualism

With the rise of capitalism during the Industrial Revolution, individualism was very much in vogue as a philosophy. Victorian capitalists believed that society would run most smoothly if individuals looked out for their own interests. Ironically, the clearest pronunciation of this philosophy comes not from a legitimate businessman but from Fagin, who operates in the illicit businesses of theft and prostitution. He tells Noah Claypole that “a
Chapter Two

Oliver Twist’s Critical Review

regard for number one holds us all together, and must do so, unless we would all go to pieces in company.” In other words, the group’s interests are best maintained if every individual looks out for “number one,” or himself. The folly of this philosophy is demonstrated at the end of the novel, when Nancy turns against Monks, Charley Bates turns against Sikes, and Monks turns against Mrs. Corney. Fagin’s unstable family, held together only by the self-interest of its members, is juxtaposed to the little society formed by Oliver, Brownlow, Rose Maylie, and their many friends. This second group is bound together not by concerns of self-interest but by “strong affection and humanity of heart,” the selfless devotion to each other that Dickens sees as the prerequisite for perfect happiness.

2.6.3 Purity in a Corrupt City

Throughout the novel, Dickens confronts the question of whether the terrible environments he depicts have the power to “blacken [the soul] and change its hue forever.” By examining the fates of most of the characters, we can assume that his answer is that they do not. Certainly, characters like Sikes and Fagin seem to have sustained permanent damage to their moral sensibilities. Yet, even Sikes has a conscience, which manifests itself in the apparition of Nancy’s eyes that haunts him after he murders her. Charley Bates maintains enough of a sense of decency to try to capture Sikes. Of course, Oliver is above any corruption, though the novel removes him from unhealthy environments relatively early in his life. Most telling of all is Nancy, who, though she considers herself “lost almost beyond redemption,” ends up making the ultimate sacrifice for a child she hardly knows. In contrast, Monks, perhaps the novel’s most inhuman villain, was brought up amid wealth and comfort.

2.6.4 The Countryside Idealized

All the injustices and privations suffered by the poor in Oliver Twist occur in cities—either the great city of London or the provincial city where Oliver is born. When the Maylies take Oliver to the countryside, he discovers a “new existence.” Dickens asserts that even people who have spent their entire lives in “close and noisy places” are likely, in the last moments of their lives, to find comfort in half imagined memories “of sky, and hill and plain” (Oliver Twist). Moreover, country scenes have the potential to “purify our thoughts” and erase some of the vices that develop in the city. Hence, in the country, “the poor people [are] so neat and clean,” living a life that is free of the squalor that torments their urban counterparts. Oliver and his new family settle in a small village at the novel’s end, as if a
happy ending would not be possible in the city. Dickens’s portrait of rural life in Oliver Twist is more approving yet far less realistic than his portrait of urban life. This fact does not contradict, but rather supports, the general estimation of Dickens as a great urban writer. It is precisely Dickens’s distance from the countryside that allows him to idealize it.

All in all, the main theme and universal truth contained in *Oliver Twist* is that the poor and disadvantaged will always be mistreated and overlooked by society as a whole. This truth was present then and still exists in our society today in many shapes and forms.

### 2.1.7 Style

Dickens uses lots of symbolism in this book. One use is the allusion to obesity, which in an inverse way, symbolizes hunger by calling attention to its absence. It is interesting to observe the large number of characters who are corpulent. Those who may be considered prosperous enough to be reasonably well fed pose a symbolic contrast to poverty and undernourishment. For example, the parish board is made up of “eight or ten fat gentleman”; the workhouse master is a “fat, healthy man” (ch1 3; Bumble is a “portly person”; Giles is fat and Brittles “by no means of a slim figure”; Mr. Losberne is “a fat gentleman”; and one of the Bow street runners is “a portly man”. Other uses are how evil people are described as dangerous animals or as typical stage villains. The weather is usually cold and rainy when bad things happen.12

Early Dickens drew heavily on traditions of graphic satire both for his narrative structures -and for his characterization. He was a lifelong admirer of William Hogarth, and his Gad’s Hill home contained 48 prints by the artist. Hogarth was his great ideological model, as uncompromising social realist, moral propagandist, and satirist, “with a power and depth of thought which belonged to few men before him,” as he wrote in his 1841 Preface to *Oliver Twist*. Dickens saw himself as the literary successor to the great artist in his own sincere, unromanticized portrayal of “the very dregs of life” in *Oliver Twist* (Mitchell ).

### Conclusion

*Oliver Twist;* or The Parish’s Boy Progress (commonly known as *Oliver Twist*) (1838) is Charles Dickens’ second novel. It is about a boy named *Oliver Twist*, who escaped from a workhouse, looking for a better life and meets a gang of pickpockets in London. The novel is

12 - *Oliver Twist*: Characters, Setting, Style, Audience and Diction.
one of Dickens’ best-known works, and has been the subject of numerous film and television adaptations, in *Oliver Twist*, Dickens presents the everyday life of the lowest members of English society. Dickens’ novel took place in three different locations, moreover it is thickly full of characters and rich of themes.
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Chapter Three

Investigating the Main Characters in

Oliver Twist
Chapter Three  Investigating the Main Characters in Oliver Twist

Introduction

Charles Dickens was very successful during his lifetime, many of his works inspires movie makers and the producers of television programmes since his death. The amusing names of many people in his works have become very well-known moreover his characters often seem funnier, stranger, better or worse than men, women and children in real life. This adds humour to stories that are often very serious and sad. Through these characters we can learn a lot about the society of 19th century of England. We can also enjoy a very good, exciting story.

3.1 Character Development

A well-developed character is one that has been carefully characterized, with many traits shown in the narrative, the better the audience knows the character, the better the character development. A thorough or comprehensive characterization makes characters well-rounded and complex, this allows for a sense of realism. Moreover, characterization in literary fiction has special importance, and authors need to develop their own sense of responsibility for full and effective character development.  

Character development is very important in character-driven literature, where stories focus not on events, but on individual personalities. The central character generally remains fixed with whatever character faced in his life. Historically, stories and plays focusing on characters became common as part of the 19th century Romantic Movement, and character-driven literature rapidly succeeded more plot-driven literature that typically utilizes easily identifiable archetypes rather than proper character development.

As the anchor of character development, Oliver helps reveal the redeeming qualities of Dickens’ Mr. Brownlow. Dickens moves through series of developments with Mr. Brownlow and it is only when he comes into contact with Oliver that his character is fully developed. He is initially described by Dickens as an "old gentlemen" with a "very respectable-looking personage, with a powdered head and gold spectacles" (114). The reader is left to draw his own conclusions about him as he is only described one dimensionally. When Mr. Brownlow gives chance to Oliver after being robbed by Oliver’s associates, it seems as though Mr. Brownlow might have little respect or mercy for the lower class. Instead, the reader finds that

Chapter Three

Investigating the Main Characters in Oliver Twist

Mr. Brownlow is a kind and merciful man; he takes pity on Oliver, telling the policeman not to hurt him and arguing for his release inside the court house. Mr. Brownlow takes Oliver to his house where he is very well cared for by Mrs. Bedwin (Sanchez).

3.2 The Main Protagonist and The Other Characters

In examining the depiction of the main character and also some interesting issues related to secondary child characters, the first thing that we observe is that unlike the other novels of Charles Dickens, such as David Copperfield and Great Expectations, the main protagonist’s story in this novel does not continue to his adulthood. Oliver’s story begins with his birth and ends when he is yet a boy or a young man. A great deal of space in the novel is devoted to the description of Oliver’s miserable living conditions, his sufferings and inner feelings of terror. When the reader witnesses the scenes from the workhouse also a strong and harsh social criticism should be taken into account. The rules, on which the workhouses are based as well as the laws concerning the poor valid in England, are not only described, but also judged there with irony. “What a noble illustration of the tender laws of England! They let the paupers go to sleep!” (Oliver Twist 13). This quote comments on the end of the day when Oliver goes to sleep after picking oakum together with other children (Němcová 21).

Although the novel centers itself on the life of the young orphan, Oliver Twist, he is not a deeply developed character, he stays the same throughout the entire novel; he has a desire to be protected, he wants to be in a safe and secure environment, and he shows unconditional love and acceptance to the people around him. These are the only character traits that the reader knows of Oliver. He is an archetype of goodness and innocence. His innocence draws many people close to him, moreover each character is attracted to his innocence for different reasons, some to destroy it and others to build it. Their relationships with Oliver reveal nothing more about his personality, they reveal more about their own personalities. Therefore, Oliver is used not as the protagonist of the story, but as the anchor for the development of the other characters.

A realistic description of the workhouse conditions is gained through describing various kinds of sufferings that children had to undergo. Apart from the fact that they were beaten and had to work hard, they suffered from starvation as shown in the first part of the novel: “Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months...” (Oliver Twist 15). Children were not abused only physically but also mentally.
Adults consider Oliver and other children inferior and they often express strongly that they look down on such beings as children. There is not any hope for children in adult’s behaviour and comments on children’s future destinies. Current social conditions of the orphans in the workhouse are considered satisfactory and Oliver is considered to be of a rebellious character. The child is intentionally terrified about his future and his prospects. Even the authorities do not seem to deal with children as with valuable human beings: “That boy will be hung” said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. “I know that boy will be hung” (Oliver Twist 16).

Despite these miserable conditions which are described in the former paragraphs, the reader might gain the impression that Oliver’s moral qualities seem not to be damaged by the influence of his background. Even after his life with thieves he is presented as a naive, pure and innocent child, who, despite his life experiences and tortures, still believes in good:

The darkness and the deep stillness of the room were very solemn; as they brought into the boy’s mind the thought that death had been hovering there, for many days and nights, and might yet fill it with the gloom and dread of his awful presence, he turned his face upon the pillow, and fervently prayed to Heaven (Oliver Twist 98).

The main protagonist does not seem to undergo significant changes of character. The reader might have the impression that the author seems to be concerned in the description of protagonist’s living conditions and injustices rather than in the portrayal of his character development. From this point of view, the character of Nancy can be interpreted in a similar way. She is a girl whose life is also miserable, she lives among the thieves and she is something like a prostitute for Sikes. However, her good character qualities do not seem to be much harmed by her surroundings. She is presented as a compassionate young girl, who tries to do her best to protect Oliver from beating and who dares to disobey Fagin:

I won’t stand by and see it done, Fagin cried the girl. ‘You’ve got the boys, and what more would you have? – Let him be – let him be – or I shall put that mark on some of you, that will bring me to the gallows before my time (Oliver Twist 143).

In fact, Nancy sacrifices her own life to protect and save Oliver.

On the other hand, some of the child characters seem to be already accustomed to their way of life in bad society and this is the case of the young thieves in Fagin’s gang, who seems to be quite conciliated with their lots and convinced that this way of life is not so bad and
uncomfortable after all. Although we do not have much information about their former way of life, it might be supposed that they come from the poor family backgrounds. In his “The Parish Boy’s Progress”: The Evolving Form of *Oliver Twist*” Lanckford William (1978) regards them as victims of the society in fact:

*By the plot’s subliminal logic these are the workhouse boys again, grown older, no longer asking for more but taking it, and at least partly justified by the corruption and injustice of the society on which they prey* (Němcová 23).

### 3.3 Characterization in *Oliver Twist*

Dickens genius was clearly observed in the portraying of his characters, through the depiction of details he represent the picture of every character in almost all the scene of the novel. Although Dickens denied that anti-Semitism had influenced his portrait of Fagin, the Jewish thief’s characterization does seem to owe much to ethnic stereotypes, he is ugly, simpering, miserly, and avaricious. Constant references to him as “the Jew” give the impression that his negative traits are intimately connected to his ethnic identity. However, Fagin is more than a statement of ethnic prejudice; he is a richly drawn, resonant embodiment of terrifying evil behavior. At times, he seems like a child’s distorted vision of pure evil. Fagin is described as a “loathsome reptile” and as having “fangs such as should have been a dog’s or rat’s.” Other characters occasionally refer to him as “the old one,” a popular nickname for the devil. Twice, in Chapter 9 and again in Chapter 34, Oliver wakes up to find Fagin nearby. Oliver encounters him in the hazy zone between sleep and waking, at the precise time when dreams and nightmares are born from “the mere silent presence of some external object.” Indeed, Fagin is meant to inspire nightmares in child and adult readers alike. Perhaps most frightening of all, though, is Chapter 52, in which we enter Fagin’s head for his “last night alive.” The gallows, and the fear they inspire in Fagin, are a specter even more horrifying to contemplate than Fagin himself.\footnote{Dan Mitchell (2013), *Oliver Twist Charles Dickens*. Web.}

There is no doubt that Dickens made special effort to depict Sikes, another leading character in the criminals’ world of London. Even after finishing this novel, Dickens picked up some scenes about Sikes and the girl Nancy who is always associated with him, revised those passages and brought them into his public reading activity, with the title like Sikes and
Chapter Three Investigating the Main Characters in *Oliver Twist*

Nancy. In the novel, Sikes is a complicated character that shows multiple aspects of psychology of human beings, especially of criminals.

Dickens was skilled in portraying a character through the description of details a wonderful image was the depiction of Sikes first appearance. Bill Sikes makes his first entrance in old Fagin’s hidden refuge:

*The man was a stoutly-built fellow of about five-and-thirty, in a black velveteen coat, very soiled drab breeches, lace-up half boots, and grey cotton stockings, which inclosed a bulky pair of legs, with large swelling calves; -- the kind of legs, which in such costume, always look in an unfinished and incomplete state without a set of fetters to garnish them. He had a brown hat on his head, and a dirty belcher handkerchief round his neck: with the long frayed ends of which he smeared the beer from his face as he spoke; disclosing, when he had done so, a broad heavy countenance with a beard of three days' growth, and two scowling eyes; one of which displayed various parti-coloured symptoms of having been recently damaged by a blow (Oliver Twist 90).*

It seems as if a dreadful middle-aged brutal man with muscular physique were standing in front of the reader, so vivid and even generating the readers fear; his clothes and accessories are filthy and ragged, which are dark (black and gray), symbolic of the unlit side of London where he and Fagin live. Unlike those idealized criminals in Newgate novels, Sikes is living a lower life, with no enviable treasures, finery and reputation but wearing bumps and wounds. This true-to-life depiction inputs a stereotype of violent mobster into readers’ impression, which laid the groundwork for showing Sikes cruel acting, such as gunning down innocent Oliver, beating his lover Nancy to death, and his rough treatment of his dog.\(^\text{15}\)

Sikes’ murder of Nancy might be the bloodiest scene in the whole novel. He finds that Nancy is trying to help Mr. Brownlow save poor Oliver out of the hand of Fagin. Fearing her betrayal, he decides to kill her to prevent divulgence. When he comes back to his dwelling place, Nancy is waken up by the noise of closing the door. While she is willing to serve some drink for him, Sikes started his murder:

\(^{15}\) Dan Mitchell (2013), *Oliver Twist Charles Dickens. Web.*
Chapter Three  Investigating the Main Characters in *Oliver Twist*

The robber sat regarding her, for a few seconds, with dilated nostrils and heaving breast; and then, grasping her by the head and throat, dragged her into the middle of the room, and looking once towards the door, placed his heavy hand upon her mouth...The housebreaker freed one arm, and grasped his pistol. The certainty of immediate detection if he fired, flashed across his mind even in the midst of his fury; and he beat it twice with all the force he could summon, upon the upturned face that almost touched his own (*Oliver Twist* 316).

The series of verbs (sat, regarding, grasping, dragged, looking, placed, freed-beat) are used here to express the detail of the process of Sikes’ murder of Nancy. The cruelty of this scene is enhanced by his calm discreetness in not firing the pistol, because the gunfire would draw neighbors attention so that his crime would be found out. Even in sheer exasperation, Sikes, a habitual criminal, can keep calm and choose the right activity in order to protect himself. Indeed, Sikes' violence is contrasted with Nancy’s pleading for mercy. Nancy says she loves him and will never betray him. However, her words fail to move this heartless man. Even being face to face with the woman who has been taking care of him for such a long time, this selfish man cares nothing except himself.

The contrast between Nancy’s pleading and Sikes' violence emphasizes the murders savagery in a dramatic way. In addition, another point deserves attention here. When the narrator called Sikes, he uses number of different nouns: robber, housebreaker and ruffian. These words which represent different types of criminals are applied to one single man, so that his flagrant guilt is easily grasped conspicuously by the readers.

Mr. Bumble, the beadle, is an excellent example of Dickens’ broad characterization at work. Bumble is an overlarge, terrifying figure: a tin-pot Hitler, who is both frightening to the boys under his control, and also slightly pathetic in his need to maintain his power over them. Fagin, too, is a wonderful example of Dickens ability to draw a caricature and place it in a story that moves quickly and always keeps our attention. Less the pantomime villain that is portrayed in a number of its adaptations, there is a streak of cruelty in Dickens' Fagin, with a sly charisma that has makes him such a lasting archetype.

3.4 Tools of Characterization in *Oliver Twist*

A character's occupation and way of life color his language as they affect other aspects of his behavior also, and from his earliest writings we find Dickens assembling an armoury of
Chapter Three

Investigating the Main Characters in Oliver Twist

jargon for imparting this colour. He took a delight in collecting the technical vocabulary of various occupations, and he uses this collections to give local colour.

3.4.1 Names

Any reader of Charles Dickens will notice something unique about his work: Many of the characters in his novels and short stories have rather colorful monikers. A lot of the names in Oliver Twist are important – especially for the main character. Oliver’s name is given to him by the parish authorities, “we name the new babies here in order from A to Z he explained when people asked I named the last one Swubble. This one is Twist” (Ch1.3), this has got to be an important moment, because it has to do with where Oliver’s name came from. Since Oliver’s the main character and his name is part of the title of the whole book, we figure it’s got to be pretty important, and Dickens didn’t name him at random, although he tries to make it seem as though Bumble did.

But how randomly did Bumble choose his name? Let’s look at it: is the alphabet random? The obvious answer is "no," because the alphabet provides order that everyone recognizes. But it’s an arbitrary order. What reason is there that "T" follows "S"? So it’s an arbitrary name that yet somehow isn’t arbitrary. And yet kind of is. Yes, it’s confusing. Bumble named him "Twist," and then everyone who meets him assumes that he’s going to die by hanging. And, as we all know "Twist" was slang for "hang." So Bumble really does set this kid up for a life of crime – the ambiguous part is whether he did it consciously or not.

Dickens’ choice of Oliver’s name is very revealing, because the boy’s story is full of “twists” and turns. Dickens uses his skills at creating character to make Oliver particularly appealing. The boy’s name is not actually a reflection of his real character. In fact, it’s actually in contrast to his true character. But the names of the minor characters are important, too: Rose Maylie, for example, is as fresh, delicate, pure, and natural as a rose, and that’s the idea her name is meant to convey. Her last name, too, connotes the freshness of springtime "May", and also of gladness (it rhymes with "gaily"). The same can be said of her mother, Mrs. Maylie, also Mr. Bumble’s name is pretty obvious – he’s a bumbling fool. The irony slices pretty deep with him – we’re not meant to look much beyond the surface of his name, because honestly, there’s not much there. Mr. Grimwig’s name is equally superficial, because although he’s a "good guy," he’s also a fairly two-dimensional character. Mr. Grimwig is
Chapter Three  Investigating the Main Characters in *Oliver Twist*

always "grimly" stubborn and pessimistic. And "wig" is a reminder of the fact that he’s always threatening to "eat his own head," wig and all.

More with the names, "He says his name’s Tom White, your worship," said this kind-hearted thief-taker. (Ch11.49) here’s yet another random person making up names (literally, this time) for Oliver. Oliver seems incapable of naming himself or telling his own story. Granted, this guy might actually be trying to help him out, but still: there’s all this emphasis put on Oliver’s name, and what his "real" name is.

### 3.4.2 Habits

The way a character spends his or her free time is a pretty good indication of what kind of character he/she is. Mr. Brownlow, for example, has a huge library and is a bookworm. The first time we see him, his face is buried in a book so he doesn’t notice the Artful Dodger sidling up to pick his pocket. We’re all reading a book, and Dickens is an author, so bookworms are generally going to be good guys. The Maylies like to go on long walks in the countryside – this fits in well with what we already know about them, based on their name. Sikes and the other criminals like to binge drink and that is not a good habit, therefore we suspect immediately that they are seedy characters.

For instance Fagin's initial description leaves no room for mistaking his evil character, and he seems to mesh into his seedy surroundings:

> The walls and ceiling of the room were perfectly black, with age and dirt...In a frying-pan which was on the fire, and which was secured to the mantelshelf by a string, some Sausages were cooking; and standing over them, with toasting-fork in his hand, was a very old shriveled Jew, whose villainous-looking and repulsive face was obscured by a quantity of matted red hair. He was dressed in a greasy flannel gown, with his throat bare; and seemed to be dividing his attention between the frying -pan and a clothes-horse over which a great number of silk handker-chiefs were hanging (Oliver Twist 65).

Readers may notice from his choice of meal that his faith bears little weight in Fagin's daily life, and much can be said of his apparent "divided attention" as well. The fact that he guards both his food and his handkerchiefs show that he distrusts people, even his own child recruits. His attention to food and goods suggest a survivalist mentality, especially since the goods are his stolen bounty from which he supports himself.
3.4.3 Physical Appearance

This is a biggie in Oliver Twist – pretty much if a character looks like a bad guy, he/she is a bad guy. But there are a couple characters that aren’t as easy to judge: Oliver himself, and Nancy. But only foolish characters (Mr. Bumble, the gentleman in the white waistcoat, Mr. Fang, the officers who arrest Oliver) think that Oliver is a thief; characters whose opinions the narrator wants us to trust (Mr. Brownlow, Mrs. Bedwin, Rose Maylie, Mrs. Maylie) all take one look at his face and think, "there’s no way this kid’s a criminal! He looks so innocent!" Nancy looks like a criminal, and she is one – but later on in the novel, when she starts trying to help Oliver, her looks are often misinterpreted. When she goes to visit Rose, for example, the servants take one look at her and think, "the creature was a disgrace to her sex" (40.39). But then Rose is able to look past her physical appearance and understand her true character.

It is interesting to observe the large number of characters who are corpulent. Those who may be considered prosperous enough to be reasonably well fed pose a symbolic contrast to poverty and undernourishment. For example, the parish board is made up of “eight or ten fat gentleman”; the workhouse master is a “fat, healthy man”; Bumble is a “portly person”: Giles is fat and Brittles “by no means of a slim figure”; Mr. Losberne is “a fat gentleman”; and one of the Bow street runners is “a portly man”. Other uses are how evil people are described as dangerous animals or as typical stage villains. Another example is Bill Sikes who is described as stoutly built fellow with legs that always look like they are in an unfinished and incomplete state without a set of fetters to garnish them.

The novel describes Fagin’s appearance in a straightforward way, even though his actions are often described sarcastically. "The Jew smiled hideously; and, patting Oliver on the head, said, [as long as Oliver behaved him] he saw they would be very good friends," and then he leaves the room and locks Oliver inside (Oliver Twist 126). Readers know immediately that the pat on the head and promise of "very good friends" is a thinly veiled disguise for a master, slave relationship. Fagin then takes on the likeness of a paranoid snake guarding his hoard:

It was a chill, damp, windy night, when the Jew: buttoning his great coat tight Round his shriveled body, and pulling the collar up over his ears so as to completely obscure the lower part of his face: emerged from his den. He paused on the step as the door
was locked and chained behind him; and having listened while the boys made all secure, and until their retreating foot-steps were no longer audible, slunk down the street as quickly as he could... The Jew stopped for an instant at the corner of the street; and, glancing suspiciously round, crossed the road, and struck off... It seemed just the night when it befitted such a being as the Jew, to be abroad. As he glided stealthily along, creeping beneath the shelter of the walls and doorways, the hideous old man seemed like some loathsome reptile, engendered in the slime and darkness through which he moved (Oliver Twist 131-2).

Dickens here is comparing Fagin to a snake or reptile as a satanic reference, adding that the "merry old gentleman" title by which he is often referred, is another name for the Devil (310). Socially, readers would likely agree with Fagin's comparison to Satan; as historian Larry Wolff explains, his "campaign to make Oliver a thief "was understood to be "a comprehensive assault upon the innocence of a child" (231-2), much like Satan's own campaign against humanity (Němcová).

3.4.4 Social Status

Social status is not always a reliable marker of whether a character is good or bad, but it is an important tool for characterization in Oliver Twist. For example, Mr. Brownlow and the Maylies are members of the middle class – they’re respectable, reasonably well-off, and seem to prefer the company of other members of the middle class. Monks, on the other hand, is also a member of the middle class, but he staunchly refuses to hang out with his social equals. He prefers "slumming" with members of the criminal class, and his rejection of his own social class in favor of the lower class is a big mark against him in the world of Oliver Twist.

Oliver’s loyalty to his dead mother when Noah insults her is really important to Oliver’s development as a character. For all he knows, Noah could be right when he calls her "a right down bad 'un," but he still jumps to her defense. Family is obviously very important to Oliver: even though he doesn’t have one of his own (or because he doesn’t have one of his own), he’s always trying to create surrogate families – first with little Dick at the baby farm, and then with Mr. Brownlow, and then with the Maylies. Monks, on the other hand, robs his mother and runs away from her, insults his dead father, and is out to get his baby brother hanged.
Chapter Three  Investigating the Main Characters in Oliver Twist

3.4.5 Actions

Obviously important – the Dodger and Charley pick pockets; Oliver refuses to and actually runs away. Mrs. Maylie takes in orphans: clearly a good thing in the world of this novel. Nancy, as usual, is an exceptional case her actions aren’t always easily interpretable, but that in itself is part of her characterization. She’s a complicated figure, and the readers (and other characters) don’t always know what to make of her. Is she acting for Oliver’s good, or not?

This is the exchange between Oliver and Mr. Brownlow when Brownlow learns Oliver’s real name. It’s a turning point in their relationship, because it’s the first time that Oliver is able to tell Mr. Brownlow a portion of his own story (what his name is) instead of having someone else tell it for him (all the crowd calling him a thief; the police officer calling him "young gallows" and "fogle-hunter," the man in the striped waistcoat making up a name because Oliver’s incapable of talking for himself, etc). And here’s the amazing part: Mr. Brownlow believes him, even though it "sounded so like a falsehood" (12.58). Oliver just has something in his face that seems truthful.

3.5 Good and Evil Characters in Oliver Twist

The characters in Oliver Twist can be divided into groups of good and evil. The groups are very different from each other but they all have one thing in common, they struggle with moral issues. To have good morals and virtues was very important in the Victorian era, especially for women (Dumovska 5).

3.5.1 Good Characters

Throughout Dickens’s novel, Oliver Twist, Dickens draws the image of the rising or ascension of morally good characters. Oliver Twist is born an orphan who is raised by the parish as underfed, unloved and overworked. As the child hero of a melodramatic novel of social protest, Oliver is meant to appeal more to our sentiments than to our literary sensibilities.
Chapter Three

Investigating the Main Characters in *Oliver Twist*

3.5.1.1 Oliver Twist

On many levels, Oliver is not a believable character, because although he is raised in corrupt surroundings, his purity and virtue are absolute. Throughout the novel, Dickens uses Oliver’s character to challenge the Victorian idea that poor people and criminals are already evil at birth, arguing instead that a corrupt environment is the source of vice. At the same time, Oliver’s incorruptibility undermines some of Dickens’s assertions. Oliver is shocked and horrified when he sees the Artful Dodger and Charley Bates pick a stranger’s pocket and again when he is forced to participate in a burglary. Oliver’s moral scruples about the sanctity of property seem inborn in him, just as Dickens’s opponents thought that corruption is inborn in poor people. Furthermore, other pauper children use rough Cockney slang, but Oliver, oddly enough, speaks in proper King’s English. His grammatical fastidiousness is also inexplicable, as Oliver presumably is not well-educated. Even when he is abused and manipulated, Oliver does not become angry or indignant. When Sikes and Crackit force him to assist in a robbery, Oliver merely begs to be allowed to “run away and die in the fields.” Oliver does not present a complex picture of a person torn between good and evil—instead, he is goodness incarnate.

3.5.1.2 Nancy

A major concern of *Oliver Twist* is the question of whether a bad environment can irrevocably poison someone’s character and soul. As the novel progresses, the character who best illustrates the contradictory issues brought up by that question is Nancy. As a child of the streets, Nancy has been a thief and drinks to excess. The narrator’s reference to her “free and agreeable . . . manners” indicates that she is a prostitute. She is immersed in the vices condemned by her society, but she also commits perhaps the noblest act in the novel when she sacrifices her own life in order to protect Oliver. Nancy’s moral complexity is unique among the major characters in *Oliver Twist*. The novel is full of characters that are all good and can barely comprehend evil, such as Oliver, Rose, and Brownlow; and characters that are all evil and can barely comprehend well, such as Fagin, Sikes, and Monks. Only Nancy comprehends and is capable of both good and evil. Her ultimate choice to do good at a great personal cost is a strong argument in favor of the incorruptibility of basic goodness, no matter how many environmental obstacles it may face.
Chapter Three

Investigating the Main Characters in *Oliver Twist*

Nancy’s love for Sikes exemplifies the moral ambiguity of her character. As she herself points out to Rose, devotion to a man can be “a comfort and a pride” under the right circumstances. But for Nancy, such devotion is “a new means of violence and suffering” indeed, her relationship with Sikes leads her to criminal acts for his sake and eventually to her own demise. The same behavior, in different circumstances, can have very different consequences and moral significance. In much of *Oliver Twist*, morality and nobility are black-and-white issues, but Nancy’s character suggests that the boundary between virtue and vice is not always clearly drawn.

Clearly Dickens sympathizes with Nancy in *Oliver Twist*, and although she is depicted as a prostitute, Dickens paints her life as one of unending abuse. Nancy belongs to the lowest class of London's underworld. In his preface to the third edition, Dickens writes that he purposely placed her among "the most criminal and degraded of London's population" (*Oliver Twist* 456).

3.5.1.3 Rose Maylie

The truly good characters in the novel are Dickens’s least satisfying. Rose Maylie represents Dickens’s early version of the ideal Victorian woman. She is sweet, unselfish, giving, loving, submissive, completely good—and unbelievable. Harry Maylie’s condescending sacrifice for Rose seems unnecessary at best. Mr. Brownlow fares better; he champions Oliver’s cause, leads the fight against Oliver’s enemies, and has enough personal foibles to make him believable.

3.5.1.4 Mr. Brownlow

As most of the author's characters, Mr. Brownlow too, is brought out with an indirect presentation but it is not long after introducing him that his wholesome goodness is revealed to us. Though at first he accuses Oliver of thieving, his concern over Oliver's welfare on the street is a direct hint of his innocence which successfully helps him convince Oliver to board at his house. A generous and trusting man he was, perhaps too good a man to be true; but with all the malicious characters in the story, a heroic and pure persona was needed to ensure a happy ending. With honesty and great wealth as his prime qualities, he assists Oliver in his times of need and demonstrates to society with an exemplary touch, the attributes of a perfect citizen.
3.5.2 Evil Characters

Charles Dickens tries to uncover the criminal underworld and how poverty can later turn into crime when it comes to surviving; he was severely criticized for impacting criminals to his work, *Oliver Twist* is full of such kind of characters prominent ones are:

3.5.2.1 The Artful Dodger

The Artful Dodger warrants a more detailed physical description than does Oliver in order to grasp many differences between the two. At first introduction, the Dodger is described as "about [Oliver's] own age: but one of the queerest-looking boys that Oliver had ever seen" (*Oliver Twist* 62). Since Dickens scholar Juliet John attests that both the Dodger and Charlie Bates are fashioned after real boys (Muntamah 30), it is likely that his "queerest" appearance is connected to his previously unknown (to Oliver) personality. Oliver certainly had his share of interaction with boys his age from growing up in the workhouse, and it is evident from the following and previous descriptions and the illustrations that the Dodger was no physical anomaly with alien features; it is possible, then, that Oliver was caught off-guard by some intrinsic quality that shown in his countenance, some outward expression of his inner villainy? Given that Oliver's innocence is reflected in his own appearance, it is quite likely that the Dodger's perverse childhood and values somehow manifested in his face.

3.5.2.2 Fagin

Arguably the most infamous criminal in *Oliver Twist* is Fagin, Dickens appears to have paid special attention to making his appearance as vile as his character. Dickens plays off stereotypes, creates negative comparisons, and continually reminds readers of the villainy in Fagin's features. It appears that with Fagin's enduring popularity and Dickens' extra attention, Fagin is intended as the criminal masterpiece in *Oliver Twist*.

The most compelling and damning description of Fagin, for Dickens' contemporary audience, is his Jewish ethnicity. In fact, in the first half of the novel, Fagin is as likely to be referred to as "the Jew" as anything else. Not only that, but as scholar Susan Meyer points out, Dickens "emphasizes aspects of [Fagin's] character familiar from the anti-Semitic tradition, namely his miserliness, his greed, his exotic and strange appearance, his effeminacy, his obsequiousness, his cowardliness- and the size of his nose" (239). And as seen in the examples below, Fagin is first given identity as his ethnicity, not by a name. As critic Maria
Chapter Three  Investigating the Main Characters in *Oliver Twist*

Paganoni discusses, Dickens worked within society's long-established anti-Semitic prejudice (310). As Dickens scholar Robert Butterworth explains, it is likely Dickens was unaware of his own tendencies towards anti-Semitism, although it is certainly apparent now, adding that as a newly popular writer, Dickens "would be ill-advised to write something grossly out of tune with the attitudes of his readers" (Churchill 134).

Although Dickens denied that anti-Semitism had influenced his portrait of Fagin, the Jewish thief's characterization does seem to owe much to ethnic stereotypes. He is ugly, simpering, miserly, and avaricious. Constant references to him as "the Jew" seem to indicate that his negative traits are intimately connected to his ethnic identity. However, Fagin is more than a statement of ethnic prejudice. He is a richly drawn, resonant embodiment of terrifying villainy. At times, he seems like a child’s distorted vision of pure evil. Fagin is described as a "loathsome reptile" and as having "fangs such as should have been a dog’s or rat’s." Other characters occasionally refer to him as "the old one", a popular nickname for the devil. Twice, in Chapter 9 and again in Chapter 34, Oliver wakes up to find Fagin nearby. Oliver encounters him in the hazy zone between sleep and waking, at the precise time when dreams and nightmares are born from "the mere silent presence of some external object". Indeed, Fagin is meant to inspire nightmares in child and adult readers alike. Perhaps most frightening of all, though, is Chapter 52, in which we enter Fagin’s head for his “last night alive”. The gallows, and the fear they inspire in Fagin, are a specter even more horrifying to contemplate than Fagin himself.

3.5.2.3 Sikes

It may seem strange that if Fagin is Dickens’ ultimate criminal, there is one who seems to trump his evil by comparison, but Bill Sikes does just that. He is the violent robber and "housebreaker" of the criminal gang (*Oliver Twist* 111) and his temper keeps even Fagin on his toes.

Textually, Dickens describes Sikes mainly by his clothing and spends little time on his actual facial features. Sikes is described as a "stoutly built fellow" around thirty-five years old, "in a black velveteen coat, very soiled drab breeches, lace-up boots, and grey cotton stockings" (*Oliver Twist* 90). He had "a very bulky pair of legs," "a brown hat," and a "dirty belcher handkerchief" which he used to wipe the beer of his face (90). Dickens also tells of
his "broad heavy countenance" with a scruffy beard, "and two scowling eyes", one having been recently blackened (90).

Another scene resembles the readers' introduction to Fagin, in that Sikes appears as a detail in an environment:

_In the obscure parlour of a low public-house, situate in the filthiest part of Little Saffron-Hill; a dark and gloomy den, where a flaring gaslight burnt all day in the winter-time: and where no ray of sun ever shown in the summer; there sat: brooding over a little pewter measure and a small glass, strongly impregnated with the smell of liquor: a man in a velveteen coat, drab shorts, half boots, and stockings, whom, even by that dim light, no experienced agent of police would have hesitated for one instant to recognize as Mr. William Sikes (Oliver Twist 103-4)._ 

Again, Dickens establishes the unpleasant, seedy bar as the perfect setting for Sikes; the sentiment here is that he is the typical looking criminal in the typical criminal hideout.

Interestingly, "Mr. Fagin and His Pupils Recovering Nancy" does not show Sikes as quite the towering figure as previously discussed. Instead, he is only slightly taller than the other criminals and is more facially exposed his beard and unkempt hair giving him a scruffy, unwelcoming appearance. "Sikes Attempting to Destroy His Dog" revives the housebreaker as a towering figure, which is made all the more notable in that his dog cowers at his outstretched palm. While he appears more neatly dressed in this image than others, his face appears more menacing than before, with bold, dark eyes, and a pinched, down-turned mouth that denotes hatred or contempt.

Sikes' general depiction as a menacing figure mirrors his role as the clearly dangerous member of the criminal gang. This also supports the point mentioned earlier that whereas Fagin represents a deceptive, Satan-like evil, Sikes portrays the more obvious, loud evil that threatens violence and oppression at the onset. Sikes' image as larger (and in most pictures, more centrally located) suggests that he is the type honest citizens watch for and easily spot, whereas Fagin is the more cunning force that sneaks in without causing alarm, much as they did in Oliver's life.
3.5.2.4. Monks

Monks is arguably the darkest, most mysterious criminal of the novel. In the first discussion of him, Nancy describes him how he likely goes by an alias in different social circles and holds conversation (about killing Oliver) with Fagin in the dark (268). Chapters later, readers learn that just as his initial description is mysterious and hidden, his actual physicality is likewise covert and "unseeable". Nancy, who has only seen him once and recollects other peoples' descriptions of him, shares with Rose Maylie how Monks is:

tall...and a strongly made man, but not stout; he has a lurking walk; and as he walks, constantly looks over his shoulder, first on one side, and then on the other. Don't forget that, for his eyes are sunk in his head so much deeper than any other man's, that you might almost tell him by that alone. His face is dark, like his hair and eyes; and, although he can't be more than six or eight and twenty, withered and haggard. His lips are often discoloured and disfigured with the marks of teeth; for he has desperate fits, and sometimes even bites his hands and covers them with wounds...I have only seen him twice and both times he was covered with a large cloak. ... Upon his throat: so high that you can see a part of it below his neckerchief when he turns his face: there is... [a large burn mark] (Oliver Twist 309).

Monks' appearance goes along perfectly with his secret identity as Oliver's half-brother and conspirator against the young boy. His physical appearance seems to try to hide itself as well, with a strong but not large build, deeply sunken eyes, and dark facial features that mimic the shadows in which he lurks. He is young but does not appear so, his lips appear changed because of his biting them, and his hands hide under wounds as well. He renders himself almost invisible, beyond distinction, in a large cloak and scarf to cover the distinct scar on his neck. He would stand out, but he does not. The reader can acknowledge his presence, but to imagine what he truly looks like is to cover up what makes him distinguishable as human; he is a shadow. He is very much present, but unseen, much like his role in the novel's plot.

Dickens employs the notion behind early physiognomy, that a person's character is reflected in their physical features, in his depictions of the criminals in *Oliver Twist*. The more vile the character is, the more unpleasant the character's appearance. The implication, then, is that unattractive or abnormal looking people are untrustworthy or dangerous, that physical presentation is a warning. In England's growing cities, with swarms of people
Chapter Three

Investigating the Main Characters in *Oliver Twist*

Flocking for industrial jobs and a chance at economic stability, those with less than ideal features found themselves at a disadvantage, for beauty had become not only a commodity, but a virtue. Regardless of the interest in upward social mobility, it appears to have been understood that unattractive people would have a much more difficult time climbing the ladder.

3.6 *Oliver Twist’s Narrator*

Charles Dickens uses a third person, a limited omniscient point of view. The narrator of *Oliver Twist* tends to be pretty hands-off. In general, we only get to see what’s going on in the heads of a very few characters (including Oliver, obviously). Particularly with the members of Fagin’s gang and the descriptions of London, Dickens backs off and is more objective. The effect is that these scenes seem almost journalistic – it’s like we’re reading a newspaper exposé on criminals in London, instead of a novel. But every now and then, the narrator launches into a lengthy discussion of how the plot is working, or what he’s planning on doing in this particular chapter. For instance, the famous passage from the beginning of Book 1, Chapter 15:

*If it did not come strictly within the scope and bearing of my long-considered Intentions and plans regarding this prose epic [...] to leave the two old gentlemen sitting with the watch between them long after it grew too dark to see it [...] I might take occasion to entertain the reader with many wise reflections on the obvious impolicy of ever attempting to do good to our fellow-creatures where there is no hope of earthly reward. [...] But, as Mr. Brownlow was not one of these [...] I shall not enter into any such digression in this place: and, if this be not a sufficient reason for this determination, I have a better, and indeed, a wholly unanswerable on, already stated; which is, that it forms no part of my original intention to do so (Oliver Twist 15.1-2).*

These digressions, or breaks in the story, remind the reader that this is in fact a novel and not real life (as if we need a reminding). They serve to add to the distance between us, the readers, and the characters and action of the story. The distance between reader and the characters in the novel was important to Dickens from an ethical, as much as from an artistic, point of view. Many of his contemporary critics and reading public feared that novels could be too realistic, and that naïve readers (often female readers) wouldn’t be able to tell the difference between fiction and reality. Especially for a novel like *Oliver Twist*, which is about
"dangerous" subjects like poverty, crime, and the relationship between the two, Dickens probably felt that it was prudent to put the occasional check on the reader’s sympathetic identification with the characters.

Dickens comes in with a rare first-person moment – he says, in the last sentence of the novel, "I do believe that the shade of that poor girl often hovers about that solemn nook – ay, though it is a church, and she was weak and erring", almost all of the earlier descriptions of churches and church organizations (like the workhouse or the baby farm) are negative – they make the Church of England seem institutionalized, unforgiving, and removed from real human life (see, for example, 2.1 and 2.59). But these last lines suggest that Agnes could find a place in the church – could even find forgiveness there, despite the fact that (gasp! scandal!) she had a baby without being married. And that seems like a hopeful place to end the book.\(^\text{16}\)

### 3.7 Character Function in *Oliver Twist*

Describing the character is not the essential purpose of analyzing it. Moreover, a worthy analysis should look at the character’s function in the narrative and that usually means considering a character in relation to other characters.

Plot- or character-oriented narratives usually have one or more major (also main) characters and any number of minor characters. The main character, especially when there is only one, is also called protagonist. The term protagonist has the advantage that it implies no value-judgment and can include heroes or heroines (i.e. positive main characters) as well as anti-heroes and anti-heroines (i.e. negative main characters). The protagonist is the character who dominates the narrative.

Oliver has few qualifications to have a novel named after him. He lacks the qualities and abilities ordinarily expected in a protagonist, whose acts and decisions have at least some influence on the course of events. Instead of being an active participant in the shaping of his own destiny, Oliver becomes the prize for which the opposing forces contend. The boy does take one crucial step when he flees from bondage to Sowerberry. After that, from the moment that he is taken in hand by The Artful Dodger until Brownlow assumes direction of his affairs, he is more acted upon that acting.

\(^{16}\) Oliver Twist Writing Style retrieved from http://www.shmoop.com/
Chapter Three

Investigating the Main Characters in *Oliver Twist*

Oliver emerges as a shadowy, unrealized figure. Our knowledge of his character comes largely from Dickens. The boy's harsh and repressive upbringing has made him yielding and wanting to please. When he is cast adrift in the world, he is wholly without defenses against the cruel and unscrupulous. For a protagonist, Oliver even speaks relatively little, which is fortunate because when the boy does talk, it is usually to recite stale mottos and generalities that come from Dickens.

Fagin exemplifies the pantomime traits of Dickens’s characters. An archetype of the seedy underbelly of Victorian England, Fagin also represents another stereotype, the greedy, amoral Jew. Dickens was hardly the first to take advantage of this stereotype for his villains. He descended from a long line of Englishmen — including Marlowe and Shakespeare — who drew upon cultural stereotypes to create monstrous Jews who leered at innocent children.

3.8 Relating Characters to the Themes Of The Novel

In Charles Dickens’ novel, *Oliver Twist* the poor innocent orphan stands out in this story as the main character but it is the supporting characters that allow this novel of much content to develop a much more satisfying and believable theme. With "Good V.S. Evil" as one of the major conflicts, in such categories are the secondary characters found as well. Three main auxiliary characters of *Oliver Twist* aid the elaboration of the story; these significant characters are Mr. Brownlow representing purity, integrity and goodness, Nancy as partially righteous, partially villain and lastly on the other extreme of the scale: Fagin, the symbol of evil, corruption and manipulation.

As most of the author's characters, Mr. Brownlow too, is brought out with an indirect presentation but it is not long after introducing him that his wholesome goodness is revealed to us. Though at first, he accuses Oliver of thieving, his concern over Oliver's welfare on the street is a direct hint of his innocence which successfully helps him convince Oliver to board at his house. A generous and trusting man he was, perhaps too good a man to be true; but with all the malicious characters in the story, a heroic and pure persona was needed to ensure a happy ending. With honesty and great wealth as his prime qualities, he assists Oliver in his times of need and demonstrates to society with an exemplary touch, the attributes of a perfect citizen. As the positive extreme in both social status and benevolence, Mr. Brownlow is a definite aid in the development of the theme throughout the novel. Nancy, for us, must be the weakest character. Trapped between wanting to help Oliver evade Fagin's exploitation and her
Chapter Three  Investigating the Main Characters in *Oliver Twist*

dedicated love for Sikes; she fails to survive to the end as she is convicted and ironically murdered by her own husband: Sikes, a brutal and abusive man. But there is a great need for this secondary character in the story, she serves not only as a tie between the scenes at the different households but as well she is the only hope for *Oliver Twist*.

Conclusion

Charles Dickens characters are very significant part of his writing he uses their moods and feelings to create imagery; he uses time to develop his characters by painting the characters in the present time, it is noticeable in all Charles Dickens works that he employs an extensive cast of characters, each of them makes an important contribution to the plot of the story. Despite the number of characters in the novel, each one can be easily distinguished and remembered--even if it is not mentioned for several chapters-- due to Dickens’s brilliant characterization methods. One of the techniques that he employs to enhance the uniqueness of his characters involves describing them connected to their surroundings, he creates scenes and residences that parallel the essence of the character found within. Dickens also adds time to the images or the scenes of the novel, furthermore he uses the past and future to create a vivid picture in the readers mind. Colors are another very critical part in Dickens writings. He uses colors contrasting the light with the dark to create a mood for his character.
General Conclusion
The Victorian epoch was exceedingly productive of literary works of high quality; precisely the novel was a great actual innovation. The Victorian literature represents an age which witnessed incomparably greater changes in all the conditions of life; material comforts, scientific knowledge, and, absolutely speaking, in intellectual and spiritual enlightenment. Moreover, to twentieth century students, Victorian literature makes especially strong appeal because it is in part the literature of our own time and its ideas and point of view are in large measure ours.

Charles Dickens (1812-1870), who came from a life of poverty and deprivation, but he drew from many of his earliest experiences to create some of the most memorable characters of all time, is still considered one of the greatest writers of the Victorian Period, with works including: "Oliver Twist", "A Christmas Carol," "A Tale of Two Cities," "Bleak House," David Copperfield," "Great Expectations," "Hard Times," and so on.

Through the analysis of the novel, we discover how Dickens draws the image of his characters and touched the importance of characterization in achieving the real meaning of any literary text and particularly the novel.

Charles Dickens was a great novelist, who set before his reader the image so vivid in his own mind, he simply describes and reports. We have, in general, a very precise and complete picture of externals, the face, the gesture, the habit. In this Dickens do extremely well; he proves to us by the use of visible detail how distinct was the mental shape from which he drew. We learn the tone of voice, the trick of utterance; he declared that every word spoken by his characters was audible to him, more than does the man reveal himself in a discussion; sometimes once for all, sometimes by degrees, in chapter after chapter we know these people because we can see and hear them.

Characterization is one of the strongest elements of literatures and one of the easiest ways to convey a complex theme. Dickens uses character foils, where a people who either are the opposite of what they seem or characters who highlight a common expectation Oliver Twist, the London Bridge represents the sharp divide between Nancy’s perfect world of Brownlow and Rose compared to Oliver’s slum. The metaphor of the bridge as a division between classes, serves to emphasize the large social divisions at the time Dickens was writing.
In his novel, Charles Dickens uses instances of explicit characterization to build strong and vivid characters. Moreover, the novel has some theatrical elements such as dialogue which enables the reader to identify the personalities of the characters in the texts and to understand the symbolic role of each character. Therefore, the Victorian novel, through its realistic depiction of characters and the Victorian society in general, enabled the readers to understand what was going on in England at that time.
Glossary
**Glossary**

**The Crimean War:** The Crimean War took place between October 1853 and February 1856. It took its name from the fact that it was mainly fought on the Crimean Peninsula, an area in the south of modern day Ukraine that sits within the Black Sea. The war saw Britain, France, Sardinia and the Ottoman Empire ally against, and ultimately defeat, Russia. It is a war that is remembered for the poor leadership, communication and organisation of the allied forces (often epitomised by The Charge of the Light Brigade), which resulted in a bloody and prolonged conflict.

What had been anticipated to be a short war in which the superior training, experience and technology possessed by the military forces of France and Great Britain were meant to quickly and conclusively dominate, ultimately proved to be a long, drawn-out affair.

**Anti-Semitism:** is a term used when people are prejudiced against Jews just because they are Jewish. Anti-Semitism is a modern racial term that was invented in 1879 by a German journalist called Wilhelm Marr. However, anti-Jewish feelings are much older than that (the free dictionary).

About 2,000 years ago, Jesus, according to the story in the Gospels, was executed for treason. He was crucified, which was the Roman method of execution. Christian teaching did not blame the Romans; it blamed the Jews. As his followers later regarded Jesus as God, so killing him became known as the crime of ‘deicide’ (killing of God). This was the basis of Jew hatred.

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Abstract
This study attempts at investigating Charles Dickens’ novel *Oliver Twist*, the Victorian novel that tells the story of a poor orphan and highlights the cruel reality and injustice of life among the needy at that time. Charles Dickens uses different kinds of characters and forms of characterization that make his novel enjoyable to read. Throughout the story, we are introduced to each of these characters through an omniscient point of view, and we are able to categorize them according to their personalities, thoughts and actions. With their different levels of honesty and social status, each of them plays a crucial role in the development of the story's themes.
Characterization is a crucial part of making a story compelling. In order to motivate readers, characters need to seem real. Dickens achieve that by providing details that make characters individual and particular. Good characterization gives readers a strong sense of characters’ personalities and complexities; it makes characters vivid, alive and believable.

*Key words:* character, characterization, character development, characterization tools.

الملخص
تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل شخصيات رواية *Oliver Twist* لكاتب الرواية الإنجليزي كارلز دينكس. استخدم تشارلز دينكس كثرى من الشخصيات و أشكال التوصيف التي جعلت قراءة القصة متمتعة. حيث قام بسرد أحداث القصة من خلال وجهة نظر كل القارئ. زيادة على ذلك قام بتحليل شخصيات الرواية بصفة قابلة للتصنيف وفقًا لشخصياتهم. أثارهم وأفعالهم مع مستويات مختلفة من الصداق والحياة الاجتماعية، كل شخصية تقوم بدور هام في بناء وتطوير القصة.
جعل دينكس *Oliver Twist* الشخصية الرئيسية للقصة مثل حي عن الناس الذين عانوا من أصعب الحياة، كما أنه قام بوصف الظروف القاسية التي تسببت في تشتيت الأسرة إذ كان على جميع أفراد الأسرة العمل من أجل كسب الرزق بما في ذلك الأطفال الذين اضطروا للعمل في إصلاحات.
التوصيف جزء هام في صناعة قصة متميزة تجذب اهتمام القارء، ولذلك الفصلية بحاجة لشخصيات تبدو حقيقية. سعى الروائي تشارلز دينكس لتحقيق ذلك من خلال توفير تفاصيل تجعل من شخصيات القصة مميزة و فريدة، فالتوصيف الجيد يعني القارئ إحساس قوي بالشخصيات فهو يجعلها مميزة و حقيقية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: شخصيات، تحليل، توصيف، *Oliver Twist*، بناء الشخصية.