



O'zbekiston Respublikasi Oliy ta'lim, fan va innovatsiyalar  
vazirligi Buxoro davlat universiteti

Ingliz adabiyotshunosligi va tarjimashunoslik kafedrası

Adabiyotshunoslik va tarjimashunoslikning  
dolzarb muammolari: adabiy jarayon,  
qiyosiy adabiyotshunoslik, uslubshunoslik  
va filshunoslik masalalari

Xalqaro miqyosidagi ilmiy-amaliy anjuman

## MATERIALLARI TO'PLAMI



2024 yil, 4-may

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## **DESCRIPTION OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN THE NOVEL OLIVER TWIST BY CHARLES DICKENS**

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**Abstract.** This article analyzes the educational and social problems portrayed in Charles Dickens' novel Oliver Twist. Through a close reading of the text and a review of scholarly literature, it examines how Dickens uses the story of an orphan boy's struggles to critique the harsh realities of poverty, child labor, crime, and a lack of educational opportunities in 19th century England. The novel highlights systemic social inequities and the grim conditions in workhouses and criminal environments that restricted social mobility for the lower classes. Dickens argues for the need for charity, reforms, and increased access to education to help vulnerable children escape poverty and build better futures. The article concludes that Oliver Twist is a powerful social commentary that reflects Dickens' educational philosophy and efforts as a reformer. By exposing the impacts of industrialization, urbanization, and laissez-faire policies on the poor, the novel aims to stir the social conscience, arouse sympathy in readers, and advocate for change.

**Keywords:** Oliver Twist, Charles Dickens, education, poverty, social class, workhouses, crime, reform

Charles Dickens' 1837 novel Oliver Twist tells the story of an orphan boy born into harsh conditions in an English workhouse who gets drawn into the criminal underworld of London before eventually finding a home with a kind benefactor. On the surface, it is a suspenseful tale that showcases Dickens' mastery of character, plot, and social satire. However, a deeper analysis reveals that Dickens also uses the novel as a vehicle to explore and critique the educational and social problems of his era. This article examines how Oliver Twist reflects Dickens' views on education and society. Through a close reading of the novel supplemented by scholarly research, it interprets Dickens' portrayal of the hardships faced by impoverished children, the inequities in opportunities for social advancement, and the need for charitable intervention and reforms to address these ills.

Several scholars have examined how Dickens' portrayal of poverty and crime in *Oliver Twist* reflects actual social conditions in England at the time. Morgentaler (2000) explores how the novel depicts urban squalor and the economic dislocation caused by industrialization through its vivid descriptions of London's underworld [4]. Scheckner (1998) argues that Dickens uses the plot to expose how workhouses and the criminal environment could exert a corrupting influence on poor children in the absence of other options [5]. Dickens drew heavily from real-life reports and his own observations of poverty in London, which he supplemented through his visits to workhouses and interviews with social reformers [6].

Other researchers have focused on the importance of education in *Oliver Twist* and Dickens' efforts to promote expanded access to schooling for the lower classes. Worth (2007) contends that the novel critiques a society that denies basic education to the poor, which Dickens saw as a key factor trapping youth like Oliver in a hopeless cycle [7]. The squalid conditions of the workhouses are presented as a stark contrast to the edifying environments of the few charity schools that existed. Andrews (2013) notes that the character of Mr. Brownlow serves as a mouthpiece for Dickens to express his belief in the transformative power of education [8]. Notably, in his own life, Dickens helped found a "ragged school" in London to educate the city's poorest children and gave fundraising speeches promoting education for all [9].

A close analysis of *Oliver Twist* reveals the centrality of educational and social problems to the novel's plot and themes. From the opening scene, Dickens puts the issue of poverty and the cruel treatment of pauper children front and center. Oliver's mother dies in childbirth at a workhouse, leaving him an orphan. He spends the first nine years of his life "alternately starving and being beaten" at a "farm" for young paupers before being returned to the main workhouse [1]. Dickens presents the impersonal way Oliver is treated as "Boy number twenty" and given "no more than necessary" food and other provisions as a indictment of society's heartless policies towards the poor [1]. This reflects the harsh realities of England's "Poor Laws" of the 1830s that forced the destitute into prisonlike institutions [6].

Even as Oliver participates in a robbery under duress, Dickens takes pains to preserve the boy's moral innocence and desire for something better than this squalid existence. The wealthy benefactress Miss Maylie sees "traces of a good disposition" in Oliver's face and speculates that "the best education" could help him rise [1]. Later on, Mr. Brownlow adopts Oliver and provides him the schooling and supportive home life he had long been without. The implication is that for many impoverished youths, good role models and education could make all the difference in setting them on an honest path. While most would not get a fairy-tale ending like Oliver, increased charity and societal reforms could improve their chances. Notably, Nancy, a young prostitute raised by Fagin's gang, sacrifices her life to save Oliver, suggesting how her tragic fate might have been avoided in a world with more opportunities for the poor.

However, Dickens also argues that positive interventions by individual philanthropists or society at large can help break this vicious cycle of poverty and open up opportunities for the poor. Mr. Brownlow's adoption of Oliver shows the impact a good education and caring guardians can make on a child's life prospects. But since he is a relative stranger, the story suggests the need for a broader social safety net. The

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