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**Considering Cultural Schemata in Interpreting**  
**Charles Dickens 'Novel *Oliver Twist***

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# *Dedication*

To our darling Parents

To all members of our families

To our lovely people

To our closest friends

# *Acknowledgements*

*Above all, we thank Allah, the Almighty for giving us the strength and the will to undertake this work.*

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## **List of Abbreviations**

**EFL:** English as Foreign Language

## Abstract

Culture is agreed to be a major element in the comprehension of literary texts but it did not take the needed attention from teachers especially in the field of foreign languages in literary courses. For that, this study was conducted to show the importance of possessing the cultural schemata by EFL learners in the process of reading literary works. Because of the richness of the British culture, we have chosen one of the outstanding novels *Oliver Twist* written by Charles Dickens to reach our aim. Different types of sources about the British society around the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> were read and analyzed to obtain the cultural elements from including the social, political and economical conditions of that period and the same with the novel regarding the principles of the two theories applied: New Historicism and Cultural Materialism. From this study, we conclude that cultural schemata have a major role in interpreting literary texts and enhancing the reader's comprehension.

**Key words:** Schema theory, cultural schema, interpretation, literary text, New Historicism/ Cultural materialism.

## المخلص

أظهرت الدراسات أن للثقافة دور هام في فهم النصوص الأدبية لكنها لم تحظى بالقدر الكافي من الاهتمام من طرف الدارسين والأساتذة خاصة في الأقسام الأدبية الخاصة باللغات الأجنبية. لذلك قمنا بالدراسة الحالية لإبراز أهمية المعلومات القبلية المكتسبة من طرف المتعلمين للغات الأجنبية في مسار قراءة و تحليل النص الأدبي ولأن الأدب البريطاني يعتبر واحدا من أكثر الآداب الثرية ثقافيا ارتأينا أن نقوم بتحليل واحدة من أشهر الروايات تحت عنوان أوليفر تويست للكاتب شارلز ديكنز لتحقيق أهداف هذه الدراسة . ولتحليل الرواية قمنا بدراسة مختلف المصادر حول المجتمع البريطاني في بدايات القرن التاسع عشر وتحليلها لاستخراج العناصر الثقافية المتكونة من الأوضاع الاجتماعية و السياسية والاقتصادية تحت غطاء المفاهيم الأساسية للنظريتين المطبقتين في هذه الدراسة وهما النظرية التاريخية الحديثة و نظرية الثقافة المادية. أهم ما تم استخلاصه من هذه الدراسة هو أن للمعلومات الثقافية القبلية المكتسبة أهمية كبيرة في تحليل النصوص الأدبية حيث تمكن للقارئ بتطويرها من بلوغ أعلى مستويات الفهم.

**الكلمات المفتاحية :** النظرية التخطيطية, المعلومات الثقافية القبلية المكتسبة, التحليل, النص الأدبية, النظرية

التاريخية الحديثة, نظرية الثقافة المادية

# Table of Contents

<b>Dedication</b> .....	I
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	II
<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	III
<b>Abstract</b> .....	IV
<b>المخلص</b> .....	V
<b>Table of Content</b> .....	VI
<b>General Introduction</b> .....	02
1. Background of the Study.....	02
2. Statement of the Problem.....	02
3. Aims of the Study.....	03
4. Research Questions.....	03
5. Purpose of the Study.....	03
6. Hypothesis.....	03
7. Motivation.....	03
8. Methodology.....	04
9. Dissertation Structure.....	04
<b>Literature Review</b>	
<b>: The Notion of Cultural Schemata Chapter One</b>	
1.0. Introduction.....	06
1.1. The Theory of Schemata.....	06
1.1.1. Background to Schema Theory.....	06
1.1.2. Definition of Schema Theory.....	08
1.2. Types of Schemata.....	09
1.2.1. Linguistics Schemata.....	09
1.2.2. Formal Schemata.....	09
1.2.3. Content Schemata.....	09
1.2.4. Cultural Schemata.....	09
1.3. The Notion of Cultural Schemata in Reading Comprehension.....	09
1.4. Models of Reading.....	10
1.4.1. Bottom-up Processing.....	09
1.4.2. Top-down Processing.....	09
1.4.3. Interactive Processing.....	11
1.5. The Role of Cultural Schemata in Developing Cultural Awareness.....	11
1.6. Conclusion.....	12
<b>Chapter Two: Victorian Period: Historical and Literary Background</b>	
2.0. Introduction.....	14
2.1. Victorian Period.....	13
2.1.1. Historical Context of Oliver Twist.....	13
2.1.2. Overview of Victorian Literature.....	14
2.1.3. Victorian Prose/ Novel.....	14
2.2. Dickens' Profile.....	15
2.2.1. Dickens' Style of Writing.....	15

2.2.2. Insights from Dickens' Life.....	16
2.3. Victorian's Cultural Value.....	16
2.3.1. Politics.....	16
2.3.2. Economic and Power.....	17
2.3.3. Social Aspects.....	18
2.3.3.1. Social Structure.....	18
2.3.3.2. Education.....	19
2.3.3.3. Religion.....	20
2.3.4. Art and Architecture.....	20
2.4. Conclusion.....	21

### **Chapter Three: Corpus Analysis**

3.0. Introduction.....	24
3.1.. Method of Analysis.....	24
3.2.. The Analysis.....	24
3.3. The Cultural Aspects.....	25
3.3.1 Politics.....	25
3.3.2.. Law and Crime .....	26
3.3.3. Economy and Power.....	27
3.3.4. Social Aspects.....	28
3.3.4.1. Social Structure.....	28
3.3.4.2. State of Women.....	30
3.3.4.3. Social Mobility.....	31
3.3.4.4. Education .....	32
3.3.4.5. Religion .....	32
3.3.5. Art and Architecture.....	33
3.4. Discussion.....	34
3.5. The General Interpretations.....	43
3.6. Conclusion.....	35
<b>General Conclusion</b> .....	36
<b>Works Cited</b> .....	37



## **General introduction**

1. Background of the Study
2. Statement of the Problem
3. Aims of the Study
4. Research Questions
5. Purpose of the Study
6. Hypothesis
7. Motivation
8. Methodology
9. Dissertation Structure

### General Introduction

#### 1. Background of the Study

Literature, readers and context (culture) are considered necessary elements to shape knowledge. This knowledge is acquired by having the ability to suggest, deduce and interpret. In the process of this interaction, an English learner is met with a set of decoded textual lines that have a specific language 'English'. The learner may lack to identify what the point is discussed in. For that, context is the needed piece to solve the puzzle. The question of whether to contextualize or textualize leads to a diversion in ideas, different theories were put into practice to synthesize the ideas in certain literary works. Moreover, in some cases, those texts hold a unique beliefs or ideologies. Learners are facing a more complex situation in which more efforts are asked to be done in order to decode their meaning. As a result, we ought to conduct this research, as a step to point out what many teachers do not give an importance. Schema is contemporary applied in literary courses especially the cultural side. EFL learners are asked to read more about different topic such as sociology, anthropology, and culture in order to fill those frames in their brain. The latter term which is known as culture helps the reader to enhance and extract explicit and implicit details even if it has been omitted.

Regarding the importance of cultural knowledge in reading comprehension, the focus of our study is to integrate cultural background knowledge with the corpus of Charles Dickens '*Oliver Twist*'. Thus our aim is to analyze it to in order to detect and answer the major questions related to the study; to investigate how Charles Dickens' ideology is reflected in his writings. In addition to that, we seek to know how Victorians' cultural values are represented in *Oliver Twist*. Our study focuses mainly on the thematic features and how the social values during 19 century existed and are portrayed in the novel referring mainly to the social factors that influence Dickens' experience, such as politics, economy, and social aspects in which we identify the real conditions at that time.

#### 2.Statement of the Problem

Reading is an active complex process in comprehending literary text, EFL learners faced many difficulties in comprehending literary because of lacking the required knowledge especially culture background. Despite, learners needs to interpret the text to

grasp its meaning, what leads us to claim that the effective way to understand literary text '*Oliver Twist*' is to supply themselves as possible as they can with schemata to reach an appropriate understanding. Typically, In this study, we attempt to identify the degree to which can the background knowledge enhance the comprehension and interpretation of the text.

### **3. Aim of the Study**

The objectives for conducting this study:

- To evaluate the extent to which cultural background can help in interpreting Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*.
- To encourage readers to consider the cultural aspects in reading a literary text in order to increase their personal cultural awareness.

### **4. Research Questions**

The study intends to answer the following questions:

- To what extent do the Victorian values affect the cultural aspects in *Oliver Twist*?
- To what extent can the reader's cultural background foster the comprehension and interpretation of *Oliver Twist* novel?

### **5. Purpose of the study**

By presenting the significance of the prior knowledge especially the cultural schemata in reading comprehension, the aim of the study is to shed the beam on the importance of cultural knowledge in understanding and interpreting literary text to achieve high comprehension of the novel.

### **6. Research Hypotheses**

Based on the research questions mentioned above, we state the following hypotheses:

- The Victorian values may have an impact on the cultural aspects introduced in *Oliver Twist* and the reader's prior knowledge.
- Cultural Schemata may enhance and increase the comprehension of the literary text.

### **7. Motivation**

The masterpiece of Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* gives us a great pleasure; thus, we developed a special appreciation for the author and the work and an interest to delve deeply in analyzing it as culturally representative work and give our own explanation for the meaning behind.

### **8. Methodology**

The method followed in this study is analytical descriptive. It is used to investigate the importance of cultural schemata in reading comprehension through the analysis of some extracts from the novel *Oliver Twist*, and to be analyzed according to the New Historicism theory, holding the idea that literary works are interpreted in their context. Historians agree that the author is affected by his own society and '*the interaction between the many different discourses shapes a culture*' (Bressler 187). In accordance with Cultural Materialism theory which asserts that through discourse, authors reflect the political and social powers in their writings, in addition to the cultural production (Berry 128-183).

### **9. Dissertation structure**

The paper is divided into three chapters. The first chapter provides a theoretical overview about the cultural schemata including its types including its role in reading comprehension. The second chapter is about the historical background, giving the prominent events and literary background about Victorian Era in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Third chapter is left for the analysis of the novel *Oliver Twist* and the concluding results of the study.

## **Chapter one: The Notion of Cultural Schemata**

1.0.Introduction

1.1.The Theory of Schemata

1.1.1 Background to Schema Theory

1.1.2. Definition of Schema Theory

1.2.Types of Schemata

1.2.1. Linguistics Schemata

1.2.2..Formal Schemata

1.2.3. Content Schemata

1.2.4. Cultural Schemata

1.3. The Notion of Cultural Schemata in Reading Comprehension

1.4. Models of Reading

1.4.1. Bottom-up Processing

1.4.2. Top-down Processing

1.4.3. Interactive Processing

1.5.The Role of Cultural Schemata in Developing Cultural Awareness

Conclusion

### 1.0.Introduction

For Foreign language learners, reading is a crucial skill that can improve their language especially with literary works, which have different intentions, styles, and special use of techniques and devices. The process of reading can occur easily if the text carries the same culture values, customs or beliefs of the reader. In contrast, the reader may encounter some difficulties in comprehending this kind of text when the writer has a different culture. For this reason students have to get engaged more in those cultures. Thus, schemata as the cognitive theory came as a solution to retrieving the language learning ability. Several studies have been conducted to exhibit how such a prior knowledge about a specific culture can help in interpreting its literature. This chapter provides an overview about the theory of schema and its types, as well as its role in the process of interpretation.

### 1.1. The Theory of Schemata

#### 1.1.1.Background to Schema Theory

The word “schema” ( plural Schemata) refers to the knowledge of the world. It is all about the individual’s knowledge stock in the mind about his/her world. It is a term that portrays models of knowledge existed in the memory, containing frames, scripts or scenarios (Emmot,01). It is originally found in the ancient philosophers and psychologists’ works then it was introduced by Kant (1781/1963) as a technical term in the field of psychology which means that every one’s experiences are stored in the brain. (Maurcer, 169). Later on, Bartlett defined it as ‘*the reflection or active organization of people’s past experience*’ (ibid 201). What make him believed that understanding and remembering occurs in the contexts of people’s previous experience and information. Many researchers continued in arguing this ideas till the recent days where modern schema theory represents either ‘*the mental picture of some area of experience*’ or ‘*a collection of organized and interrelated ideas, concepts and prior knowledge structures that are abstract representation of objects, events and relationship in the real world*’ (Jing-tae, p 916 ).

In all cases, Schema as a word refers to the memorized experiences which can help us in interpreting, predicting or even solving problems in new settings. This theory has been used in many areas of learning including reading comprehension where the reader is alone with the text. It is the process which enables the reader to create and build a

new experience through referring not only to the text itself, but also to the cultural knowledge already gained by the reader.

### 1.1.2. The Definition of Schema :

Schema theory is considered as an explanation of how the pre-existed knowledge developed through experience stored in the person's mind helping the reader to understand a text. That is to say, it is all about how to acquire knowledge; Bartlett defined schemata as:

*' ... an active organization of past reaction, which must always be supposed to operating in any well-adapted organic. That is whenever there is any order or regularity or behavior, a particular response is possible only because it is related to other similar responses which have been serially organized, yet which operate, not simply as individual members coming one after another, but as unitary mass'. (Maurer 170)*

On the other hand, Nishida defined it as “*generalized collection of knowledge of past experiences which are organized into related knowledge group and are used to guide our behaviour in familiar situation*” (Ju-yun 401). Accordingly, schemata (background knowledge) can order and organize the new information and develop a new perception which control our comprehension and affect the reader's performance.

From the point of view of Anderson and Pichert sets that schemata have six functions. It provides scaffolding for incorporating text, facilitates a reader's ability to decide where to pay close attention, helps make inferences, provides a guide to search for memory, aids in editing and summarizing, and helps to produce hypotheses about information (02).

It is assumed from the tent of the theory of schema that the text is ambiguous and vague. What motivates the readers to construct and extract meaning from their pre-existing knowledge known as readers' background knowledge or schemata. Carrell and Esterhold agree that '*text, any text, whether written or spoken, does not by itself carry meaning . Rather, according to schema theory, a text only provides the direction for listeners or readers as to how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own, previously acquired knowledge.*' (AL-Salami,700). Thus,our evaluating, comprehending and interpreting for the literary text depends not only on the text itself which just provides hints, but also to the cultural knowledge already gained by the reader to gain the general meaning of the text .

### 1.2.Types of Schemata

Mainly, there are different types sub-categorized from schemata, namely, linguistic, formal schemata, content schemata and cultural schemata which affect the comprehension and appreciation of the text.

#### 1.2.1.Linguistic Schemata

Linguistic schemata tackle the reader's existent language competence including grammar rules, vocabulary and idioms. It is very important in reading comprehension because understanding what the text is saying is the key to interpret the message behind. ( Al-Salami,701)

#### 1.2.2. Formal Schemata

Formal schemata refer to the construction of a text in which knowing which type literary, scientific, or legal, and so on. Or genre as novel, short story, or drama,... is belonging to, or its rhetorical features are the most important. Add to that, by recognizing those features and readers should take in the account know the unique structure of each text according to its type and the special use of language, vocabularies and even the level of formality. Thus, by storing this amount of information, readers will be able to understand the texts and construct a meaning from. (Carrel and Eisterhold 79).

#### 1.2.3.Content Schemata

Content schemata are concerned more with the subject matter of a text. The readers' acknowledgment of the topic, problem or the culture aspects of other nations that was developed previously is present while reading in addition to their personal experiences .As a result, by relating what they read with what they formed as knowledge in their minds, readers can easily grasp the meaning of that text. It increases the people and especially the EFL students to wider their knowledge by reading more about different topics. ( Op cit,702).

#### 1.2.4.Cultural Schemata

### 1.3.The Notion of Cultural Schemata: Reading Process

As we have mentioned above, "schemata theory" as a **mental structure** which explains the pre-existed knowledge represents a generic knowledge, based generally on



the interaction between the individual and ideas, events, and by various cultures etc. In the process of interaction, culture, however, is considered as a prop of the society. Richard et al. defined culture as “*The total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behavior, social habits of the members of particular society*” (Li,117) .Thus, it has a great impact on EFL classes, that readers face a tremendous difficulty when they lack cultural knowledge which contributes to the way they write and communicate. The process of interactions appears when the readers engage with the text.

Researchers during the years of 1970 and 1980s focus on the role of EFL readers in the process of assimilation and comprehension in the process of reading. Hence, Anderson refer to the process of reading as :

*Reading is an active, fluent process which involves the reader and the reader material in building meaning. Meaning does not reside on the printed page... Synergy occurs in reading, which combines the words in the printed page with the readers' background knowledge and experiences . (ibid 105)*

Accordingly, the comprehension process is acquired within some patterns that facilitate the analysis of the new information in accordance with already existed data. Those patterns are divided into three approaches. Psychologist sets that there are three main models of how reading occurs: Bottom-up, Top-down and Interactive models

### **1.4. Reading Models**

#### **1.4.1. Bottom-up Processing**

In this model, reading is seen as a process of building symbols into words, words into sentences and sentences into overall meaning (Al-Salmi,702).It was named ‘bottom –up ‘because it starts from the smallest unit in which they analyze phonemes then moves to the word and how are combined into phrases or sentences till they construct a full meaning for the text. They are supposed to get the meaning of that text by simply decoding those parts of speech. This process is criticized for focusing only on the words and not referring to the histo-background or the writer’s life (Ibid)

#### **1.4.2. Top-down Processing**

In this model, the socio-historical background of the text is given more importance. The most efficient model is put by Kenneth S Goodman stating that “*the goal of reading*

*is constructing meaning in response to text, it requires interactive use of the grapho-phonetic, syntactic and semantic cues to construct meaning” (Ibid 703).* What is emphasized here is the process of reading, in which readers are encouraged to get a general idea from the text as a whole unit, and then relate what they acquire as their own experience, information; background of the text to wide their understanding.

### **1.4.3. Interactive Processing**

This model came as a combination of the two previous models. In other words, understanding a text can occur neither by knowing just what the words in a text mean nor by focusing on the phonics only. Interactive processing is a way in which a student may apply the lowest level of understanding including the linguistic competence till reaching the highest level that is the recapitulation of what they have as knowledge or experience to the text they want to understand. (Al-Salmi 703).

The essence Cultural Schemata in reading process appears when the reader interacts and integrates with the text. The process when schema activities existed as a motive to memorizing and remembering the pervious knowledge stored in the mind to reinforce the incorporation with the text. Thus will promote full interpretation and appreciation for the text. In the field of cultural studies, EFL learners should be familiar with the attributes which are linked to culture by relating topic such as: Politics, economy, social aspects, science because those elements are touched directly to men’s life.

## **1.5.The Role of Cultural Schemata in Developing Cultural Awareness**

Literature is the mirror of life, and society in specific that reflects and clarifies social reality, beliefs and ideas what gives a new insight to human mind. Han adds that *‘In literature of the past we can find the roots of the present, Literature contains and presents both the transition of time and social reality as the agent of the change’ (74).* In fact, its aim is to make the literary text vague and hide the cause which contributes in developing awareness of EFL readers toward world. Grellet suggest that the importance of what the reader brings to the text is greater than what he find in it. (AL-Salami,698)

Regarding the importance of cultural knowledge, as was cited in the article of The Function of Cultural Schemata in the Chinese Reading Comprehension and Reading

Time Of College Students In Taiwan, Johnson explain that *'cultural background knowledge has a great impact in the process of reading rather than its 'semantic and syntactic'*(Li,106). Its crucial role is to facilitate the process of prediction, expectation and interpretation based mainly on the way they read and the way they can foster their reading value; indeed, to seek the exact intention of the writer, who will not explain his message directly in literary text, but open to the reader the gate and opportunity to create and illustrate. Thanasoula affirmed that *'literary text not only helps students to increase their language competence, but help them to define and redefine their own culture value by exploring and interpreting the assumption and beliefs of target culture'* (Ibid 07)

### **1.6.Conclusion**

Reading is an active process in which the reader engaged with the text in order to negotiate meaning to get full comprehension. The present chapter illustrates the notion of cultural schemata in reading comprehension and its importance in EFL classes. For that, teachers should take into their account to familiarize EFL learners with the cultural knowledge and instill it in their minds and assess to benefit their students with background knowledge to get full comprehension. The motive that contribute and motivate English learners to develop their cultural awareness and to improve the way they communicate.

Readers should take into account that the development of their awareness depends not only on the printed page but also with their prior knowledge that they have already gained.

## **Chapter Two : Victorian Period :Historical and Literary Background**

### 2.0.Introduction

### 2.1. Victorian Era

#### 2.1.1. Historical Context of Oliver Twist

#### 2.1.2.Overview of Victorian Literature

#### 2.1.3. Victorian Prose/ Novel

### 2.2.Dickens' Profile

#### 2.2.1. Charles Dickens' Style

#### 2.2.2.Insights from Dickens' Life

### 2.3.Victorian's Cultural Value

#### 2.3.1 Politics

#### 2.3.2. Economic and Power

#### 2.3.3. Social Aspects

##### 2.3.3.1 Social Structure

##### 2.3.3.2. State of Women

##### 2.3.3.3 Religion

##### 2.3.3.4.. Education

#### 2.3.4..Art and Architecture

### 2.4.Conclusion

## **2.0.Introduction**

In accordance with the notion of cultural schemata, this chapter deduces back the context in which the novel of ‘Oliver Twist’ was written and published. First, it begins with the historical context of the work that goes with the Victorian period and its major changes and development. Then, we introduce the Victorian literature with focusing on the novel including its major characteristics, style and famous figures. The second part presents an overview about the different social, economical and political aspects which shapes the cultural values in this period, These broad dimensions are related to the themes discussed in Oliver Twist that will be analyzed later.

## **2.1.Victorian Era**

### **2.1.1. Historical Context of *Oliver Twist***

The Victorian era is the period dated between (1837-1901),in which queen Victoria came to the throne, after the Georgian period and before the Edwardian, described as the longest reign. It is argued that this era have many crucial changes. Many characteristics were acquainted with this period: the numerous political and social acts devoted to organize parties, people's life and institutions (Briggs 261). The industrialization raised the number of factories and the mechanical development but it left the monarchy between two conflicting ideas, one is the big progress that spread all over the monarchy and the extreme poverty that the working class was suffering from, Bagehot states that

*‘Queen Victoria reigned over a society dominated by contrast. On one side were men of ideas and men of power, who had made their way to success or inherited it; on the other side were’ ignorant’ Dorset labourers’( ibid 254 )*

London is the capital of Great Britain and its powerful center because of ruling enormous change after the industrialization which made it attractive for different immigrants especially those from the countryside. Those changes were one of the causes for the increased population as it was the case for the entire empire in parallel with the state of peace. The British population grow up from 1million in 1800 to 6 million in the later century .Also, this era witnessed an interest in assisting new railways and buildings .This crowded society with its harsh conditions lead to the rise of crime because men were starving from famine as well as the children with hard labor. However, laws were very restricted against the beggars and robbers ( Ross Victorian London).

### 2.1.2. Victorian Literature

Literature in this age moves from some of the romantic vision into being more realistic and concerned with the ordinary man's life .The circumstances that the Victorian people especially the poor class live in were transformed as they were in literature by giving a full description and creating characters whom are a sample from the real ones. Though there were many great poets such as Alfred Tennyson and Browning, novels take the wide concern and emerged, for that, authors are considered to be the prominent figures at that time including the Bronte sisters (Charlotte Emily and Anne), Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, William Thackeray, George Eliot and others.

### 2.1.3. Victorian Prose/ Novel

The works of Jane Austin and Walter Scott opened the gate for the novel to be the prominent genre in the nineteenth century. Reading those works was practiced by people from different social status . Novels were characterized by the linear plot and the narrative structure because of being mainly descriptive in time and space. Add to that, because of their extensive description, those works were very long( Flint 19).

Those works tend to deal with the same topics including the workers or the poor's struggle to have a better life, good against evil and situations in which innocent people. Also, they portrayed the industrialization effect and conditions. Authors intend to give moral lessons through this type of novels(V.U 01). For that, they have used heavy words in order to have its direct effect on readers' ears but were simple and accessible in presenting it. Characters were given a full description till they seem to be real and the majority were from the working class. Many of them were published in serial form which influenced other writers in the British colonies ( op cit 22).

Women writing also flourished but because of the look of society for women's for taking this advantage to express their own interests, they have published many works with a literary name in order to make their publications read .Taking the example of George Eliot, it is a pseudonym used by Mary Ann Evans(Thompson 7-9).Their famous works include *Shirley* by Charlotte Bronte and Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and the South*(op cit 5-6)

By the mid of the era, Gothic literature emerged as a way of writing with its gloomy atmosphere by creating the supernatural and archaic characters. Many memorable

characters were introduced in those works such as Charlock Holmes, Dracula and the Invisible Man and many others ( Mccan 23)

### 2.2. Dickens' Profile

#### 2.2.1. Charles Dickens' Style

Charles Dickens is considered to be one of the most influential novelists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the British and English literature and the best example of its novelists with a huge number of works that are consumed till nowadays. Dickens is known for his well chosen characters and the detailed characterization and description of places beginning with his first novel *Pickwick* in which he could path his way into the world of literature successfully.

Then came *Oliver Twist* (1837-8) a story of an orphan child who was brought into the dark side of London with its worst criminal and suffered from extreme poverty till he could find a safe land at the end (Pasaribu,182).He also wrote historical novels including *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) and *A Tale of Two Cities* (1849) . In addition to that *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-9) followed by *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *Hard Times* (1854) and *David Copperfield* (1849-50) which was called out by many critics and people whom they have a direct contact with Dickens to be his biographical novel(Edward 390).

Although, Charles Dickens is known for his fondness of the happy endings, all his works are satiric for the British bourgeoisie, social injustice and the city of London. Add to that, he criticize some institutions such as the workhouses in *Oliver Twist*, the schools in *Nickleby* and factories system in *Hard times* giving the most touched scenes of poverty and crime mixing between reality and fantasy (Ibid 391).

Dickens' characters are very memorable ones in literature .They were created in a way people while reading have a sense of their existence because they are an examples from the real world and by both giving a detailed description and some characterized features by their actions. Also, those characters are no more than his surrounded persons and some from his personal experience by tackling the theme of child labor which he did experienced it in his early age or orphanage which spread in those days(Gholami and Joodaki 645). The majority of his novels were written episodically in journals then gathered in one book. This way let his readers very excited to know what will happen next. (Sculten and Sculetis 04)

### **2.2.2. Insights from Dickens' Life**

The need to work in an early age was the first formation for Dickens the child. This jump in his life after his father got imprisoned develops a feeling of regret for the social hierarchy in the Victorian age. In almost all his workings, Dickens tackled the poor and law in parallel with child labour (Op.cit)

Working as a journalist gave Charles Dickens a great opportunity to have close sight on real events. Carlyle states that '*Dickens the journalist had great deal with Dickens the novelist. There is his abiding concern with social justice, with the plight of the weakest and most neglected members of society. There is his characteristic mixture of pathetic sentiment and irony anger*' (402). For that, it is signaled through his writing that he was reporting the Victorian's daily life and true events that were happening in the outside world and that he take upon his duty to express and defend those people (Gholami and Joodaki 650).

### **2.3.Victorian Cultural Values**

The term culture has manifested itself in many ways, Greenblatt discussed that it has been used in different expressions which may or may not have a real sense to it. Later, he defines it as the component of individuals' beliefs and practices and broadly their way of life. He affirmed that, culture cannot be known by the physical objects but being attached with persons makes the 'material culture' (Frank 225). Furthermore, culture has many aspects, in order to explore it in literary studies, we have to centralize it within the economic context, social aspects (education gender and sexuality and others). (Ibid 225-226).

#### **2.3.1. Politics**

After Her majesty, the parliament resembled the prominent authority in the monarchy. This parliament is composed of two houses: House of Commons with a major task that was to stand for the gathering of taxes and House of Lords whom are responsible for voting on laws accordingly with the House of Commons and the queen in addition to the prime minister(O'driscoll 90-97).Many political laws and acts were signed during the Queen's reign, starting with the First Reform Act (1832) with giving the right for the men who have a house with a defined property to vote and followed by the Second Act (1867) and the Third Act (1884) that encouraged Victorians to vote and their number raised gradually(Sferlazza and Alexis, Laws in Victorian England )



In 1834 came the Poor Laws, it was devoted to manage the workhouses interior policy in order to give help only for the ones who really need it especially the rates given by the upper and middle classes to those institution. Several principles were stated by the prime minister including building new workhouses and give the Board of Guardians the rule of managing and administering the life inside for the benefits of the poor. But, it's bad instruction was the 'regime' which made people starves to death. Those laws were could decrease some of the daily suffering the poor if it was put on the ground (Besley and Coate 4-5) .

Because child labor was a remarkable feature of the Victorian era mostly for their lower wages, the government managed Child Labor laws (1834) to protect them from the misuse by stating hours of works for the children in textile factories, then in (1842) the laws were revised and those who works in mines were included too and in (1847) children both boys or girls under the age of 10 were stopped from working in mines. Those laws were very significant step to prevent the long history of poor Victorian children' misery ( op.cit ) .

### 2.3.2. Economy and Power

The Industrial Revolution spread in England around the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century .By this, science was developing and machines became the dominant by doing people's work with much speed and cheapness which brought wealth to the British economist. It was called a revolution for having such power to transfer a whole nations 'way of life. whereas, people changed their way of acting or even thinking with affecting multiple spheres: The use of coal in the engine, the spread of steel and iron factories, and transportation advancement by new roads .The communication by telegraph extend through the European countries (Briggs 206-212).

This revolution affected many fields including literature, authors turned to write about the industrialization and its consequences on human. As explained in the book of A Social History of England, the entire Victorians have to work with different sexes and generations (qtd in Briggs 205). That's to say ,all member of family went to work mainly in mines and factories even though work condition were not helpful with low wages, long work hours ,bad weather and diseases. Poverty became a prominent feature in London cities with people moved from the countryside and the immigrants especially the Jews.

Opinions about this revolution were in between. The first were satisfied because of the wealth that they could have and the unsatisfied because of the bad consequences that they lived in. (ibid 206)

Imperialism was another point of strength and power for Britain. First was the Old imperialism, at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Victorian monarchy reached outward South Africa, the West and Egypt in its North with Latin America and west of Indies for establishing trade road toward Asia. By the end of the century, Britain continued her foreign policy with colonizing parts from Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Mueller, A list of Countries Colonized by the British in the Victorian Era)

“The Sun never sets on the British Empire” a sentence was said to represent the glory and the greatness of the British monarchy at that time because of the huge colonies with the huge colonies and populations its rule. In addition to the wealth that could be gained from these colonies for their natural resources and available markets for the British industrial goods( Ross ,The Sun Never Set On The British Empire).

### 2.3.3 Social Aspects

#### 2.3.3.1.Social Structure

Synchronous with the new age of Industrialization, The system of class in the British society become more complex in its structure and obviously determined by its economic powers. The society was divided into three classes The Aristocratic ( the Upper ), The Middle Class and The Working or Lower Class. Jumping across these ranking boundaries was possible by being educated that gives the opportunities for having higher occupation or by having a source of wealth especially because of the factories and the mines or by the marriages between different classes (Tomida 273).

Upper class included the elite of society including the royal families, lords and Dukes with the officers and business men .Those people have no need to work because of the wealth they possess. The next class was the middle, it include people who have a job which mean that they have to earn their living with enjoying an appropriate social conditions. The last is the lower class where were skilled and unskilled labors with adding the poor people. Those classified in this category have no rights, place to live in and sometimes no food to eat (ibid).

Having different class means having different a style of life. Language is one of those features, as we moves from down to up the language turned to be more formal

with the variation in diction and accent. Another feature that differentiates those classes is their clothes and even newspapers were read according to each one interest or the topics that deals with. Upper classes were famous with their leisure and distinguishing manners in their way of eating, walking and acting in public places (ibid 274-277).

### **2.3.3.2. State of Women**

British society was a conservative with religious constraint especially within the relationship between man and women. Girls in their earlier age were taught some basics to be responsible and etiquettes in front of their husband or to be chosen as a wife. The immoral relationship between the two sexes were prohibited even while dating, holding hands or meeting each other in closed places alone was something unacceptable. However, whether in the name of love or by the force of bad social condition, women practice those sexual relationships. As a result, prostitution emerged as well as single mothers (Levin 1-5).

*'Victorian women, therefore were not only divided between working class and middle class, they were divided between 'ladies' and 'women' categories'(Davidoff 91)*

This quote explains how the idea of sex and gender emerged in which females were treated according to their social state and their manners that were connected with their class also. In marriage, husband was considered the head of house and the good wife have to respect him. Women's rule is centered within house holding that is cleaning, cooking and raising their children .However, most of the rich people have servants and nannies to do women's works, all what they have to do is to manage things inside the house and to teach the children some of the moralities and values and what is supposed from them in future to be like (Ibid 93-95). Several marriages were arranged as a means to have a better position in society and others were prevented for the same reason(Ibid).

### **2.3.3.3.Education**

Many schools were opened to satisfy children's need. Public schools were for the children with high position families whom begin at the age of 10. There were no exact curriculum, children were taught Greek and Latin languages in accordance with rhythmic, reading and writing in addition to some sports (football and cricket ).Parish schools in the workhouses could not offered the needed knowledge for their pupils only

few lessons were delivered by the authorities including reading and writing. In some places, they went to Sunday schools ( Liza Picard, Education in Victorian Britain ).

Different schools were established at that time from the Charity schools for the families whom cannot pay for the public schools to the Jews free schools. Poor children could not have the opportunity to go to schools in a time where they have to get a work in order to have something to eat. Children from the upper class have the great chance to be educated and finish their studies in big universities like Oxford and Harvard. Hence, when they finish their studies, they would get a respectable occupation (Ibid).

Few girls could go to school like boys in contrast they stayed at home and were given lessons to be good lady as a preparation for marriage or if they were from the upper class, they were lucky to have a governess teaching them reading and writing and sometimes the French language or playing pianos, it was till the late of the century where colleges for girls as governesses were opened and followed by other. It was until 1870 with the Education Act, Boys from different social status or religions were given a chance to attend schools supported by the government but it was till 1881 that this law could be applied (Ibid).

### 2.3.3.4. Religion

Victorians were known by their seriousness about religion and since the middle ages, England witnessed an explosion of building churches. The parish is considered to be the ‘smallest unit of Church hierarchy’ with different sizes from place to place (Prewitt Brown 34). Those churches were very integrated with politics by selecting members whom they possess a higher property or class ‘*The Victorian church was run by power elite. Younger sons of the upper class traditionally went into either the Army or the Church. Ambitious sons of the middle class used the church as spring board to the gentry*’ (Ibid 41)

It was the age of intellectual variation and changing views included strong challenges in the fields of philosophy and science as what is known from recent years the conflict between the church and Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* in 1859 and his ‘Theory of evolution’. Protestant religion or Anglican religion becomes the dominant ideology in England during Victorian age. It is branched from Christianity distinguishes from the Orthodox and the Catholic doctrine lead by Martin Luther (1483-1546) as a reform separate from the Rome Catholic church during 16<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover,

established and embraced in the Church of England. It is a faith that has two main sacraments called Baptism and Communion. (Tomida 284).

### 2.4. Art and Architecture

The Crystal Palace or the great exhibition was the most interesting building in the Victorian era with its huge surface and sophisticated design that was made by a request from Prince Albert in order to give a space for thousands of exhibitors from all around the world to show their product ( Briggs 210). Architecture of the normal houses was renewed by being large and using shingles in their roofs with emphasize on the Gothic revival (Hughes, Victorian Buildings Architecture Morality )

Painting was present in this era with the Pre-Raphaelite movement whom their main objective was to preserve the medieval art. Their painting manifest itself in moral seriousness and the use of gothic and renaissance style (Doyle1-2).Other types of painting were devoted to draw the life in the Victorian era of different classes especially the working class, urbanization and gender (Pelpola 73)

Victorian furniture was made of the dark wood taking its shape from the Norman Gothic style. Many high posited people used simple classical furniture and many other pieces that were inspired from the Japanese style. Art and Craft movement appeared lead by William Morris in order to encourage the original and handmade arts with high level of decoration (Patricia 63).

Fashion passed through several modifications; at the beginning of that age, some of the romantic era fashion remained and the changes begin with bond bodices and bustle to give more shape for the women's waist. Then, women moved to wear dresses with wide shoulders and hips and the skirts were made shorter and a rigid corset undeit. In the mid of the century, skirts were made wider than before with the use of crinoline and the hoops that later were made larger and the dresses were tighter with the use of bustle ( Monet Women 's Fashion of The Victorian Era: From Hoop Skirts to Bustles 1837- 1901)

For men, change in costume throughout the period was not that observed. They wore white shirts with loose crafts under their suit in addition to the hat. In the middle of the age, clothes were made for different activities. Their suits become more elegant as the time progressed ( Emily,Victorian Era Men's Fshion)

### 2.5.Conclusion

During the 19 century, the period which coincided with the Industrial Revolution, Victorian society was moving in the direction of progress, despite the impact of Industrialization which affected it negatively in some aspects. Dickens confessed that this era as “*it was the best times, it was the worst times*”.

Victorian era, with its highlighted events belongs to its history known by its values and traditions rooted back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was familiar by its pureness and considered as a cautious society. The period attends unprecedented change in the history of Europe in all the fields of society, By means of ‘Victorian Era’ it means Victorian society ‘society’ in its real means a group of people share same beliefs and traditions influenced by factors such as politics, economy, religion, family tradition and so on.

Thus the role of literature is to illustrate the real facts about society to identify the nations about his culture.

## **Chapter Three: Corpus Analysis**

- 3.0. Introduction
- 3.1. Method of Analysis
- 3.2. The Analysis
- 3.3. The Cultural Aspects
  - 3.3.1. Politics
  - 3.3.2. Economy and Power
  - 3.3.3. Social Aspects
    - 3.3.3.1. Social Structure
    - 3.3.3.2. State of Women
    - 3.3.3.3. Social Mobility
    - 3.3.3.4. Religion
    - 3.3.3.5. Education
  - 3.3.4. Art and Architecture.
- 3.4 Discussion.
- 3.5. The General Interpretations.
- 3.6. Conclusion

### 3.0. Introduction

*Oliver Twist* or *Parish Boy's Progress* is one of the brilliant works by Charles Dickens' in the record of the British and the English literature. In this chapter, the novel will be analyzed deeply. The corpus was chosen for its effectiveness for the current study as long as it including multitude pictures of the British culture during the nineteenth century. For accomplishing this research, we have adopted two theories, the New Historicism which looks at the historical and cultural context representation in literary texts. The second theory is Cultural Materialism that is applied in order to approach the material context involving both the socio-political and historical contexts.

### 3.1.Method of analysis

The method followed in this study is analytical descriptive in which pertinent passages are taken from the novel and analyzed according to the main principles of the New Historicism theory/Cultural Materialism with full discussion at the end. Then, we give the results reached by this analysis about the British culture in the Victorian age and how people were affected by the industrialization to show its importance in comprehending *Oliver Twist* novel.

At last, we give the possible interpretation that the reader by having this prior knowledge may develop. After having this background knowledge about the era under study, we conclude with stating the role that cultural schema play in the process of interpretation.

### 3.2.The Analysis

In our analysis, we will focus on the first assumption made by Greenblatt in Cultural poetics or New Historicism

*'... literature has a historical base and literary works are not the products of single consciousness by many social and cultural forces. In order to understand literature one has to take resource to both culture and society that gave rise to in the first place'*(118)

Literary works can be better understood in accordance to what happen at the mean time of its publication . One of the principles of the approach followed in this study is



that *'the text is culture in action'* (ibid 183). For that any work should look at it within its political, economical, and social discourse.

### 3.3.Cultural Aspects

Cultural Materialism theory affirms that *'culture cannot transcend the material forces and relations of production. Culture is not simply a reflection of the economic and political system, but nor can it be independent of it'*(Berry 183).

#### 3.3.1. Politics

Under the hard social circumstance in the British society especially the lower classes, British government sets an official reforms for the poor people to save them from the neediness, which is known as the New Poor Law Act of 1834.

Dickens introduced the workhouses in which Oliver was born. Those houses were established by the government as charity for the poor, endeavored to ensure a better life to them. *'One anciently common to most towns, great or small-to wit, workhouse and this workhouse was born'*. (*Oliver Twist* 03). Thus the majority of those houses were inhabited by orphan children, it may be the reason for chosen Oliver's character in the first place, and this was given a full description of the people that work in it. *'Now if during this brief period Oliver was surrounded by careful grandmothers, anxious aunts, experienced nurses, and doctors of profound wisdom.'* (*Oliver Twist* 03).

As was described in the quote, the conditions in those workhouses were made to satisfy the basic needs of the poor people including women whom their works surround around cleaning cooking and giving care as nurses for the old and sick people and babies. In addition to the board, elected responsible for managing things inside the houses, as was stated:

*'The members of this board were very sage, deep, philosophical men and when they came to turn their attention to the workhouse, they found out at once what ordinary folks would never have discovered-the poor people like it! It was a regular place of public entertainment for the poorer classes; a tavern where there was nothing to pay; a public breakfast, dinner, tea, and supper all the year around; a brick and mortar Elysium, where it was all play and no work.'* (*Oliver Twist* 11).

However, the advantage of having three meals per day without paying , let many of those poor prefer to stay surrounded by the workhouse walls but this didn't stay along :

*'...when they came to turn their attention to the workhouse, they found out at once what ordinary folks would never have discovered-the poor people like it! It was a regular place of public entertainment for the poorer classes'.( Oliver Twist 11)*

The Poor Law Amendment Act (1834) came to make the conditions harsher than it was in order not to let the chance for other people to get access to it. These laws were received by refuse from the poor for its bad policy add to their miseries in which they have to work in hard condition in farms, picking oakum or breaking stones.

*'Where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws rolled about the floor all*

*day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing' (Oliver Twist 05)*

In Addition to that

*'Poor-laws really were too hard on people, and that men who ran away from their wives, leaving*

*them chargeable to the parish, ought, in justice, to be visited with no punishment at all, but rather*

*rewarded as meritorious individuals who had suffered much' ( Oliver Twist 253)*

Moreover, this had its consequences on Oliver.

*'The hungry and destitute situation of the infant orphan was duly reported by the workhouse authorities to the parish authorities'. (Oliver Twist 05)*

Although those authorities were chosen for serving the children in the workhouse, they ill-use them in doing hard work to gain money as was the case for Oliver when the Parish authorities decide to made him work in farm as many others. Those institutions were prison-like for given the inhabitants no sense of a home or a space to practice a habit. The poor inside it felt that they were criminalized especially after these laws, nothing gets better.

*'I begged for her in the streets; and they sent me to prison'.(Oliver Twist 34)*

### 3.3.2. Law and Crime

By representing the dark side of Britain in the Victorian era especially London city, some of Dickens' characters in *Oliver Twist* were criminals. Those characters practiced different kind of illegal jobs such as robbing, picking pockets and killing.

*'He was an imposter and robber' ( Oliver Twist 206) and,*  
*'the robber sat regarding her, for a few a few seconds, with dilated nostrils and*  
*having 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[.....]she staggerd and fell,nearly blinded with the blood that rained down*  
*from a deep gash in her forehead' (Oliver Twist 312-313)*

Those actions were practiced differently, and Dickens transfer such images in a way to realize the extent of poverty that people reach when deciding to beg or rob others. Another reason was to characterize how bad some Victorians turned to be like for using innocent children or disparte women like a toy for collecting money as he declare in the following sentence :‘

*'Oliver wondered what picking the old gentleman's pocket in play had to do with his chances of being a great man' (Oliver Twist 58)*

However, laws stand against this type of bad practice. People were sent to prison after being caught by the police officers to get the appropriate punishment regardless of their position, age or circumstances.

*'I begged for her in the street; and they sent me to prison' (Oliver Twist 34)*  
*'I consider, sir, that you have obtained possession of that book under suspicious and disreputable circumstances [......]the law will overtake you yet' (Oliver Twist 68)*  
*'To be hanged by the neck till he was dead-that was the end- to be hanged till he was dead!'(Oliver Twist 351).*

Accordingly, Victorian Politics witnessed a great change during the industrial revolution. Those changes are realized by a set of reforms. That is to say, readers cannot understand the text without supplying themselves with the political circumstances at that time. In other word, they need to be familiar with the cultural knowledge about this side of human life to facilitate their comprehension and have the appropriate interpretation to the novel.

### 3.3.3. Economy and Power

In the time when the novel was written, Britain witnessed several changes due to the industrial revolution. This change raises the economy of the empire and set its fingers on the life of the Victorians. In his novel *Oliver Twist*, Charles Dickens expresses the life of the poor which was less developed in terms of their way of life. Many descriptions were given to the situation of poverty.

Due to the advancement in science many machines were invented ‘ *The man that invented the machine for taking likeness*’ (*Oliver Twist* 72) , in addition to that , their traditional tools used in their living has changed ‘ *as they passed a gas-lamp* (*Oliver Twist* 99), instead of using candles they start to use a new means that is “gas-lamp”. And some start their own commerce with using iron and steel and their expensive price what made coffin making considered a trade

*‘well-seasoned timber is an expensive article, sir and all the iron handles come by canal from Birmingham since the new system of feeding has come in, coffins are somewhat narrower and more shallow than they used to be’* (*Oliver Twist* 23).

Another feature of the Victorian society was discussed in the story, is the move of people from the rural areas to one of the big cities or London as was the case for the little Oliver when he decide to path his way to wealth there.

*‘I am running away they beat and ill-use me, Dick; and I am going to seek my fortune some long away off’* (*Oliver Twist* 45 )

*‘There were ways of living in that vast city which those who had been bred up in country parts had no idea of’*(*Oliver Twist* 45).

Ultimately, Victorian Britain was characterized by its economic power during industrial revolution especially the trade, the motive that contributes in the richness and prosperity of the country. Hence reader should ponder in their minds to be well-acquainted with the economic state which affect the development and the progress of the country and the way of life to get an exact appreciation and comprehension of *Oliver Twist* novel.

### 3.3.4. Social Aspects

The social aspects refer to the quay of people’ live and interact, mainly men’s relations, family, social diversity and so on. So in this section we are going to explain

the major social factors involving social structure, the state of women (Family and marriage), religion and education.

### 3.3.4.1. Social Structure

The most prominent feature of the Victorian period is its hierarchal social structure. Big diversion was stretching out between the high class 'Bourgeoisies' and the lower class 'poor people' and in between those two exist the middle class, many examples shows this

*'Could not fail to remind them of his superior position in society' (Oliver Twist 181)*

*'From their look, to hold much the same position in society as Mr.Sikes himself' (Oliver Twist 99)*

*Oliver twist'* novel is a total depiction for the poor's life and struggles starting from the major character Oliver, his state of being orphan, his life in the workhouse and working in farm.

*'What an excellent example of the power of dress, young Oliver Twist was! Wrapped in the blanket which had hitherto formed his only covering, he might have been the child of a nobleman or a beggar; it would be hard for the haughtiest stranger to have assigned him his proper station in society' (Oliver Twist 5)*

It is an exclamation sentence made by the authorities of the workhouse about Oliver's ancestors which show how did people at that time classified others by their social classes and we notice that idea of the division embedded in the Victorian minds years ago.

The bourgeoisies passed their daily life enjoying all the advantages of the advancement in different fields. They could read books to pass time, have large houses with servants and well furnished and comfortable and even a special treatment by others. They have their own manners in practice like the way of walking, their dressing, eating and speaking.

*'The old gentleman was very respectable looking personage, with a powdered head and gold spectacles. He was dressed in a bottle-green coat with a black velvet collar, wore white trousers, and carried a smart bamboo cane under his arm.'*(Oliver Twist 60)

Additionally, the way of their greeting explained in :

*'The old gentleman bowed respectively' (Oliver Twist 65)*

The poor on the other side with no definable occupation or sources for living were unable to have a good meal to eat, a clean clothes to wear, or a house. Dickens draws the very touchable scenes of poverty:

*‘some houses which had become insecure from age and decay were prevented from falling into the street, by huge beams of wood reared against the walls’.*(*Oliver Twist* 33)

*‘The very rats, which here and there lay putrefying in its rottenness, were hideous with famine’*(*Oliver Twist* 33).

Thus, Dickens portrays the misery and rottenness in which poor people’s live and their needs to work *with unemployed labourers of the lowest class, ballast-heavers, coal-whippers, brawen women, ragged children* (*Oliver Twist* 329),In contrast with the comfortable life of high class. The harsh condition of oppression and ignorance later on lead them to behave in bad way in order survive from the starvation and poverty.

Socially, Victorian era was defined by its class division, thus, the existence in the society depends on the economic power whether it was high or low. Dickens in his masterpieces indicates two social classes: The middle class (high) and the poor class (lower). Both of them differ in life style which leads the society to give them a great consideration. Hence, readers should be acknowledged as much as about social hierarchal structure during Victorian period when and how it emerged to be engaged with the text in order to foster their assimilation.

### **3.3.4.2. The State of Women**

Females were given less opportunities in those days in comparison to the other sex. Their role was to adopt a certain behaviour and learn to be a good wife in the future. This differs in accordance to the social state that they belong to.

Taking the example of Rose in which it was characterized by being so polite, pretty, and tried to denote her help to Oliver and Nancy *‘The kind tone of this answer, the sweet voice, the gentle manner, the absence of any accent of haughtiness or displeasure,’* (*Oliver Twist* 263 ) and also as a young girl she had the chance to be educated in accordance to playing piano or sing:

*'The young lady would sit down to the piano, and play some pleasant air, or sing'*  
(*Oliver Twist* 208)

Others have been urged to work in the workhouses as nurses or care for the orphan children. In addition to, the governess who rolled the upper class houses as it was the case for Mrs Bedwin possessed motherly kindness, politeness and love.

The fallen women were not accepted by the British society and any women whom they have any sexual experience out of marriage was considered immoral. This can be seen in the scene when Oliver's mother died, the doctor said *'The old story, he said, shaking his head; 'no wedding ring, I see. Ah! Goodnight!'*(*Oliver Twist* 04) he did not care for her because she was considered one of those whom with or without their will gave birth and drop their children to the charity of the workhouse to hid their shame *'And the place, the crazy hole, wherever it was, in which miserable drabs brought the life and health so often denied to themselves-gave birth to pulling children for the parish to rear; and hid their shame, rot'em, in the grave!'*(*Oliver Twist* 239).

As a consequence, many of the children were raised without knowing their parents or relatives. In most cases ,those prostitution were practiced for the need of money as Nancy confess during her meeting with Rose *'The poorest women fall back as I make my way along the crowded pavement'*.(*Oliver Twist* 263) and they described as *'disgrace to her sex'* (*Oliver Twist* 267).

### 3.3.4.3. Social Mobility

In some cases, there was an engagement between marriage and social classes. In one hand, Dickens states the example of marriage between Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Corney.

*'Mr Bumble had married Mrs Corney, and was master of the workhouse. Another beadle had come into power, and on him the cocked hat, gold-laced coat, and staff had all three descended (...)'I sold myself,' said Mr Bumble, pursuing the same train of reflection, 'for six teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and a milk-pot; with a small quantity of second-hand furniture, and a twenty pound in money. I went very reasonable. Cheap, dirt cheap!'*(*Oliver Twist* 233)

This examples shows how Mr. Bumble married with the matron of the workhouse Mrs.Corney to be the responsible in the workhouse and that he was ready to do anything to have good deal and this is more evidenced in the end of the story ‘*Mr. Bumble heard to say, that in this reverse and degradation, he has not even spirits to be thankful for being separated from his wife*’(Oliver Twist 358) .In the other side, Rose felt unequal to marry Harry and refused him in order not to diminish his in position society and his elegant future

*‘Yes, Harry. I owe it to myself, that I, a friendless, portionless girl, with a blight upon my name, should not give your friends reason to suspect that I sordidly yielded to your first passion, and fastened myself, a clog, on all your hopes and projects. I owe it to you and yours, to prevent you from opposing, in the warmth of your generous nature, this great obstacle to your progress in the world’ (Oliver Twist 228)*

Later, they get married after recovering the real identity of Rose’ family and considered in the same social as Harry was.

Victorian high class woman was the symbol of the elegant, perfect lady in her time which be renewed it since years ago, on the other hand, as what is noticeable in the last years that there is something described as corruption and deviation the fall of the lower class women under Social circumstances. Accordingly, readers need to aware about the social aspects in specific the state of the women at that time for better interpretation of the novel.

### **3.3.4.4. Education**

Education during 19 century was in its value especially for the high classes, and considered as a main path in social mobility in contrast with the lower class whom they have no opportunity to study in schools. Dickens refer to the workhouse institution, thus while living in the workhouse, Oliver and the other children have no sort of education. It was till his meeting with Mrs Mylie and Rose that they could offer him some basic rules of reading and writing:

*‘Every morning he went to a white headed old gentlemen who lived near the little church, who taught him to read better, and to write; and spoke so kindly (..) sit near them in some shady place, and listen whilst the young lady read, which he could have done until it grew too dark to see the letters. Then he had his*



*own lessons for the next day to prepare' (Oliver Twist 208)*

This was in addition to reading some chapters from the Bible. And after that, he received a special kind of teaching from Brownlow at the end of the story.

Thus, education was considered as a major standard in Victorian society. As a consequence, readers should benefit themselves with the appropriate information to fill the gaps of the missing information to reform their comprehending.

### 3.3.4.5. Religion

Christianity was the dominate religion in Britain, a heavenly ideology based on teaching about Jeuses' life and Biblical lessons .The workhouse was established by the parish authorities but there were no reflection in the novel about the religious lessons or spaces for the children to read the Bible.

*'...Oliver was denied the benefit of exercise, the pleasure of society, or the advantages of religious consolation' (Oliver Twist 15)*

*And ' so far from being denied the advantages of religious consolation, he was kicked into the same apartment every evening at prayer-time and there permitted to listen to, and console his mind with, a general supplication of the boys, containing a special clause, herein inserted by authority of the board (Oliver Twist 15)*

This shows that children could not get the needed religious instruction but they were asked to tell their prayers. After being in the Mylies house, Oliver has been given some lessons by the old clergy men:

*'Oliver read a chapter or two from the Bible, which he had been studying all the week, and in the performance of which duty he felt more proud and pleased than if he had been the clergyman himself' (Oliver Twist 208)*

The novel is full of religious words that reflect the spread of religion at that time and how people believes in God and Heaven. In addition to that, the protestant Church was the dominant faith in England ;

*'That's not the point' said the doctor mysteriously. 'Mr Giles, are you a protestant?'*

*'yes, sir, I hope so,' faltered Mr Giles, who had turned very pale.*

*'Lord bless me, sir!' replied Brittles, starting violently; 'I'm-the same as Mr Giles, sir'*

*Then tell me this both of you! Are you going to take upon yourselves to swear'*

*(Oliver Twist 192).*

Victorians were conservative nation with their religion , believing in God and practicing their ritual accurately. Thus, readers should take into their account to have a knowledge about the trends followed by the Victorian society and their liturgy in devotion in order to be aware and competent in comprehending and assimilating the novel.

### 3.4. Art and Architecture

Victorian period was the era of prosperity in all the fields. Art and architecture are one of the main sides of people's style. Few were said about the architecture in the story. What can we notice is the large houses in which upper class people live with being well furnished in contrast with the poor whom they lived in very old houses that may fall on their heads. Accordingly in discussing paintings, we find the example of Oliver's mother painting that is was drawn in a very professional way as was described by the old lad.

*'painters always make ladies out prettier than they are'.(Oliver Twist 72).*

Moving to clothes in which there were different styles especially for men whom they have a high position:

*',,who was dressed in a blue coat, striped waistcoat, nankeen breeches and gaiters, and a broad-brimmed white hat, with the sides turned up with green. A very small-plaited shirt-frill stuck out from his waistcoat; and a very long steel watch-chain'(Oliver Twist 87).*

In addition to that :

*He was dressed in a smartly-cut snuff-coloured coat,with large brass buttons, an orange necherchief, a coarse, staring,shawl-pattern waistcoat, and drab breeches. (Oliver Twist 139)*

Another form of clothes is the uniforms, as showed in the next passage, which were made for each occupation:

*A field-marshal has his uniform, a bishop his silk apron, a councilor his silk gown, a beadle his cocked-hat. Strip the bishop of his apron or the beadle of his hat and lace'.(Oliver Twist 233 )*

### 3.5. Discussion

Dickens portrayed a part from the British culture during the Victorian period. This representation of culture took two sides as a consequence for the huge difference between people in the society from their lives' forms:

- Those whom were satisfied with their conditions, they developed a high level of values and moralities such as respecting others, give help for whom they need (e.g. children and poor) and they have strong believes in the good of humans and God mercy . Also, they respect the rule of the Queen and law as the effective way for the life to be organized better.
- The biggest part was those whom were in their run for seeking their fortune; they became materialist with the absence of ethos such as sincerity, respect, duty, etc. They practice crime, oppression against the weakness ‘women, children, poor’ and ill-treat them. ‘*She knew what was good for children: and she had a very accurate perception of what was good for herself. So she appropriated the greater part of the weekly stipend to her own use*’(*Oliver Twist* 5-6)

Some of them were corrupted and use their authority to set laws to help in a time it was without help and even not applied. ‘

*Dignity, and even holiness, too, sometimes are more questions of coat and waistcoat than some people imagine*’ (*Oliver Twist* 233). This excerpt shows how people thought that the uniform and the position that one possess is the evidence for his sincerity but in parallel many of them care just about themselves.

### 3.6. The General Interpretations

After reading the novel of *Oliver twist* and delving in the context in which it had been written and published starting from the historical and social background of the Victorian era. That is to say, investigating what were re the main event that happened in this era? And how was the life of the Victorian look alike? What are the reasons for Charles Dickens to wrote the story in such way?. As a result, the readers' mind will be evoked to give a set of possible interpretations for the text and by developing such understanding can grasp the events in *Oliver Twist* the novel and Dickens’ reason behind writing such novel. This interpretation will turn around these possible suggestions:

- Dickens criticizes the hypocrisy of his age.
- The industrialization has a great impact on the British’ ideology and its negative influence may be more its positives.

- Dickens uncovers the hidden corruption that was in political system during the early Victorian age.
- Dickens's life was the motive for defending the poor and be their silenced voice.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we depend on the textual evidences to show the cultural dimensions discussed in the novel from the social aspects and the themes introduced by the author. Dickens did not only reflect his culture but he expressed it in a way that is very sensitive. Through our analysis, those evidences have been highlighted.

Literature was the medium in which Charles Dickens portrayed his society and its culture. Reading about this period: including the historical, social and the interaction between the people at that age and how the big advancement was exposed in the British Empire with its changes will be developed into cultural understanding and frames a cultural schema in the reader's mind. By developing these schemata, the reader while interacting with the text will retrieve all what he/she read to build a special understanding and the way to give the accurate interpretations.

## **General Conclusion and Works Cited**



### General Conclusion

In Academic fields, cultural studies have an essential importance in the process of reading comprehension. The corpus has an effective role in the process of evaluating and interpreting literary texts because Charles Dickens' writings are known for illustrating and picturing his real world. Additionally, Charles Dickens is well-known for his social novels criticizing his society: *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield* and *Little Dorrit*, make anybody wonder about his experience.

The ultimate aim of this study is to investigate the extent to which cultural schemata can foster the interpretation and evaluation of literary texts, the case of Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. Then to achieve this, pertinent passages were taken from the novel and analysed by applying New Historicism approach which investigates three main areas: The social rules found within text, the author's life, and the reflection of the historical situation of the work. In addition to that, by using the theory of Cultural Materialism we explain the socio-political power and the historical context.

The analysis intended to answer the questions which are concerned mainly with the significance of cultural background knowledge in developing cultural awareness. This paper comprises three chapters. The first chapter presents an overview about the Notion of Cultural Schemata. Whereas, the second chapter deals with Victorian Period (Historical and Literary Background). The third chapter, however, is about the analysis of the corpus. Moreover, the analysis covered a confirmation of the hypothesis we have claimed.

The analysis of the extracts from Charles Dickens novel *Oliver Twist* reveals that Cultural Schemata enhance and increase the comprehension of the literary text. Therefore, the Victorian values have an impact on the cultural aspects introduced in the novel and the reader's prior knowledge. Hence, EFL learners whenever processing literary texts should consider cultural knowledge to achieve full interpretation.

Lastly, the results obtained from the study show that background knowledge would increase the assimilation and comprehension of the ideas and thoughts introduced by the writer. We hope that our study will benefit the EFL learner and help them to comprehend and interpret literary materials appropriately.

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