

Analysis of the Influence of Charles Dickens' Experience on His Works

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Abstract

Every work is the reflection of the author's ideas and his or her experiences and opinions. Authors of different characters tend to produce works which will indicate the authors' characters, life experiences and educations. This present thesis aims to deal with the relationship between Dickens' experiences, especially those of his childhood and his works. His childhood played an important role in shaping his values and was represented in his many works such as Oliver Twist or Christmas Carol.

Keywords

Dickens; Experience; Influence.

1. An Introduction to Charles Dickens and His Works

Dickens was born and raised in a poor family in England, and his father was addicted to alcohol, spent money like water and had enjoyed entertaining the guests. As a result, when Dickens was a teenager, his father was put into prison for the guilt of being in heavy debt. At that time, Dickens had no choice but to drop out of school. After dropping out of the school, at the age of 11, he had to shoulder the difficult responsibility of taking care of house. Doing chores is very exhausting and hard for adults, let alone children. Besides, he had to work in a shoe polish factory for 10 hours every day. So, Dickens had a bitter taste of the real world when he was young, which helped him to be more close to working people of lower class and led to his being able to describe the life of people from lower class in a very detailed way and with a amiable and positive attitude. It also accounts for his sympathy for the poor lower class people. Because he had a miserable childhood, he also tried to portrait some poor child who live a very difficult life and had to work at a young age in his novels, such as Oliver Twist. Later, his father inherited a fortune, which enabled the family to get out of the debt and live a better life than before. Charles Dickens thereby was able to go back to school. At the age of 15, he graduated from Wellington College and worked in law firm. Later, he switched to a newspaper agent and worked as a journalist. This job enabled him to be acquainted with the problems of parliamentarism, which made it possible for him to describe the whole society not even from the perspective of lower class but also from the perspective of a journalist with a deep insight for the politics of parliament. During his whole life, he had been go to school and college for several years on and off. He gained knowledge by teaching himself and became a knowledgeable person.

Charles Dickens took to writing when he was around 21 and worked in London Morning Paper. At first, he wrote some feature story, which demonstrated the customs and scenery in London. After that, he began to work on Pickwick Papers, his first well-known long story. The novel was known for the humorous and sarcastic style. It is a long but fascinating story. Samuel Pickwick, the hero, is a middle-aged and wealthy gentleman. He leads a group of single men. The group was named after him and they began a travel which last for more than two years. During the travel, Pickwick and his followers had got involved with laws, women and unsavory persons. With his novel, Dickens tried to illustrate and criticize the capitalism of the UK where the

government uphold the separation of the executive, legislative and judicial powers. Politic affairs are supposed to be serious. But Dickens described it as a ridiculous and foolish thing with a sarcastic and satire style. It tells the reader the ridiculous and sensational thing the parties and their candidates do in order to gain more vote. Through the novel, Dickens reveals the hypocrisy of the upper class and the cruelty of the society. All sorts of upper class people are depicted. Different life situation also appear in the novel. From this novel, readers are able to gain an insight into the early modern life in London. Besides, this novel also contributes lots of well-known sayings about life and society. It is a great enjoyment for the readers.

The novels of Charles Dickens fall into the category of realistic novels. as can be seen from the following table, as a prolific writer, Charles Dickens has produced lots of novels.

Table 1. Charles Dickens' works and years

<i>Sketches by Boz</i>	1836	<i>Dombey and Son</i>	1846-1848
<i>The Pickwick Papers</i>	1836	<i>David Copperfield</i>	1849-1850
<i>Oliver Twist</i>	1837-1839	<i>A Child's History of England</i>	1851-1853
<i>Nicholas Nickleby</i>	1838-1839	<i>Bleak House</i>	1852-1853
<i>The Old Curiosity Shop</i>	1840-1841	<i>Hard Times</i>	1854
<i>Barnaby Rudge</i>	1841	<i>Little Dorrit</i>	1855-1857
<i>American Notes</i>	1842	<i>A Tale of Two Cities</i>	1859
<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	1843	<i>Our Mutual Friend</i>	1864-1865
<i>Martin Chuzzlewit</i>	1843-1844	<i>The Mystery of Edwin Drood</i>	Unfinished

2. The Relationship between Writers' Experience and Their Writings

Every work is the reflection of the author's ideas and his or her character. Authors of different characters tend to produce works which will indicate the authors' characters, life experiences and educations.

Authors produce works because of different motives, such as interests, duties, a sense of achievement and so on. All these play an important role in what the author write.

Among the shaping forces of character, culture and experiences are the most eminent factors. Undoubtedly, gene also plays an important role in the shaping forces of character. First of all, culture has a universal effect on shaping people's character. Few people can resist the influence of the culture in which they grow up and live. For example, with the influence of Chinese ancient culture, ancient Chinese tended to possess a conservative and self sufficient character. While many people of USA are open-minded and more ready to accept new ideas and to explore the new world because of the influence of American culture. Secondly, experiences will always give arise to the desire and pursuit of the people. We can interpret people's some behaviors with their experiences in the past. Some authors might have a miserable childhood. And through writing and creating a happy-ending childhood, he can compensate for the unhappiness of his childhood. Thirdly, genes determine one's character. To some extent, whether a person is

optimistic or pessimistic, extroverted or introverted depends greatly on his genes. This element is deeply rooted in the physiology. It originates in the human beings themselves.

3. The Influence of Dickens' Experience on His Works

Dickens was a prolific writer. He wrote 20 novels, not to say the host of his other writing that came out in print. His effect on the readers can be such that they feel instantly that they are in the presence of greatness. This present thesis aims to deal with the influence of Dickens' character on one of his work, Christmas Carole.

Dickens lived in the Victorian period, when Christian was prevalent the country. Most people believed in Christian. Dickens was no exception. He was well acquainted with Bible and had a firm faith in Christian. He understood bible in his own way and had his original opinion about theology. He emphasized on the love of Jesus and underlined mercy, forgiveness and being humble. This coincides with the happy-ending, reunion, the approval of kindness, which were shown in his works. However, scholars tend to describe the essential social thoughts of Dickens as Christmas philosophy or Christmas spirit, which refers to a kind of fraternity which people bear for each other on the merry Christmas. In fact, it is a spirit which shows concerns for the whole human beings' well fare and calls for people to care for each other. Dickens has written several novels about Christmas. So, with the influence of Christian, Dickens was lenient and kind. With a personality like that, Dickens tended to be lenient with the characters in his novels. Many of his novels have happy-endings. For example, David Copperfield, the hero of his most famous work David Copperfield, through faced with many difficulties since his childhood, finally led a happy life through his industry and persistence. The hero in the Christmas Carol, Scrooge, although he had been mean, cruel and cold-blooded, didn't die a miserable death because he gained salvation through his confession and repentance.

Born in a poor family, Dickens experienced all kinds of sufferings in his childhood. There is no doubt that the experience affected him profoundly. All those sufferings caused him trauma, which was difficult to brush off his mind. According to his biography, Forster argued that Dickens never got over the trauma. He said that Dickens was reluctant to mention his painful childhood, while on the other hand, Dickens tried to represent his experiences of childhood in his novels. Therefore, though Forster's Life suggests that Dickens seemed never fully got over the pains, the shame and the fear caused by the blacking factory episode, we may draw a different conclusion from evidence in his novels. With his strong will, Dickens not only got over the trauma and "the self-absorbed grief of childhood" as the modeFn biographer Edgar Johnson calls it but also took strength from it. The recurrent allusions to the unhappy past become his reminder of the traumatic experience. In him, writing exerts its magic power of healing. One of the most symbolic reflections is seen in Nicholas Nickleby: in the office where young Nicholas works, there is always a bootblack bottle within which there was no blacking but a flower! This image implies an essential Dickensian motif: even in the bleakest circumstances, something beautiful will still bloom. Because he got over his pain, he was able to see the positive side of his experience of childhood. We can find evidences in his novel. In the Christmas Carol, Crachit, the clerk of Scrooge, earned a meager salary to barely support his big family. Although the whole family lived a poor life, they tried their best to make life as happy as possible. For example, Mrs. Crachit, who never had any money to make a new dress and sometimes wore an old dress that had been repaired in many places. But the old dress had many ribbons on it. Ribbons are very cheap, and they could make an old dress look a little prettier. Peter, the son of Crachit, wore his father's best shirt in honor of Christmas day. He felt very proud of himself, and wished that he could show his clothing to his friends in the park. As a boy, Dickens had a family which is as poor as the Crachits'. But Dickens' childhood was much more miserable than that of those children of the Crachits. He had to live on his own even at 11 and therefore was deprived of the

happiness of living with parents and other members of his family. Loneliness and helplessness must have been unbearable for him. If he didn't get over all these sufferings after he grew up, he would not describe the life of the Crachits' in such a cheerful way. Dickens did not have a happy Christmas day when he was a child. But he must have longed for a merry Christmas with his family. In the Christmas Carol, with the help of the magical ghost, the Crachits had a wonderful Christmas day. The big dinner was completed with gin, lemons, juices and spices. Besides, Peter and the two younger Crachit children went to pick up the goose from the baker's. and it was the rarest and most delicious of all birds, and truthfully, the Crachits, being a poor family, thought that nothing could be better! The wonderful Christmas day was not only featured with affluent food, but also permeated with a warm atmosphere of love for God and fraternity. They even prayed for scrooge, who had Conclusion.

4. Conclusion

Dickens's life experience had a great influence on his writings. His misery and hardship had been sweetened in his novels. His novels helped him get over his pains and reflect his own life. Experience and writing are indispensable to each other. Experience made writing possible and writing help people embrace life in a more lenient and grateful way.

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