Charles Dickens and national identity: Poverty, Wealth and Empire

Abstract
This dissertation examines the concepts of poverty, wealth and empire in the work of Charles Dickens. The concepts are widely known and have been the subject of countless books and academic studies since Charles Dickens's death in 1870. Yet what seems to have been given less attention is a close analysis of how these concepts were inextricably linked and bound together in Dickens's novels, and in the society they reflected. This study aims to address that deficit. The concepts of poverty, wealth, and to a lesser extent, empire formed the bedrock of all Dickens's novels, and it was Dickens's close observation of these aspects of society that formed the basis of his work's clarion call for major social reform in the nineteenth century. This study establishes Dickens's credibility in accurately portraying these concepts by analysing the influence of social reformers of the time, such as Friedrich Engels, Henry Mayhew, Thomas Carlyle, and Edwin Chadwick. Some of Dickens's novels are omitted due to the sheer scale of his output, but the study closely examines the novels Oliver Twist (1838), Bleak House (1853), Hard Times (1854), Little Dorrit (1857), Great Expectations (1861), and Our Mutual Friend (1865), as well as Dickens's periodicals, Household Words (1850-1859) and All the Year Round (1859-1870). This study aims to demonstrate how poverty, wealth and empire, and their intricate, closely-bound relationship, as reflected in the work of Charles Dickens, formed the nucleus of British national identity of the time, and informed national policy and decision-making at every level of society.

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Filmed at the Charles Dickens Museum, London. Britain in the 19th century was an extraordinarily dynamic place, one that was pioneering new forms of social and urban organisation. People often think of Victorian society as a stratified one with rigidly fixed class identities, but Dickens's novels tell a very different story. Like Dickens himself, the characters in his stories often make huge social transitions, both from wealth to poverty and the other way round. He only wrote two novels in the first person. There is little sense in the book that you can get pleasure from wealth or social status. Miss Havisham is very wealthy but it is power and revenge that matter to her, not pleasure or self-fulfilment. Formation of the American nation and national identity. 4. beginnings of american literature. Colonial literature. The loss of the American colonies in 1783 had made the idea of further empire building unpopular. However, by 1850, in the face of fierce competition from its commercial rivals in Europe, Britain once more began to fight colonial wars, such as the Crimean War against Russia in 1854, the. 4. Charles Dickens was put to work in Warren's Blacking Factory. Later he described his experience at the factory in David Copperfield, while his impressions of the prison where he visited his family on Sundays, served as the material for Pickwick Papers and Little Dorrit.