

The text I'm going to analyze is an extract from the fifth chapter of *Hard Times*, novel written by Charles Dickens between 1849 - 50.

The reader could understand, reading the title, that the text probably talks about an English City called Coketown. The name assigned to the city, protagonist of the extract, doesn't exist and this contributes to create, in the reader's mind, expectations and curiosity.

The first world that the novelist used to introduce this chapter is Coketown. This highlights the key position of that place, and influenced the reader. In the end, thanks to this repetition, the reader's attention is focused on the particular that describes this city. He wanted to know "some more" about this city.

The opening scene tells about two men, Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby, that walk around the city. If two people with the same characteristics are walking in a particular city means that it suits their tastes.

After the introduction, Dickens describes the city from a materialistic point of view by using the senses. The first sense he appeals to is sight. The reader can imagine "*a town of unnatural red and black*". The adjective "*unnatural*" seems to be the combination of the colors of damnation, black and red, as if it is referred to damnation, even Hell. The second sense is the smell. "If the smoke" To add to Coketown's overall grimness, its blocky uniform buildings are covered with soot. This comes from the coal that is burned to power the factories. None of this seems to bother the mill owners. The polluted air is a point of pride for them. Maybe, that's why they call the place Coketown - "coke" is coal distilled into its fuel form. To some, the black residue that coats the town may symbolize productivity and industry. To others, it may just be downright gross and depressing. It is therefore a poor city (manufactured homes regardless of the aesthetic effect but only to their functionality), and based on industry. Due to the similarity that binds it to the painted face of a savage, the reader can grasp the primitive state in which the locals live: the work will probably be inhuman and so will also be life conditions. Moreover, the verbs "*rattling*" and "*trembling*", which appeal to the sense of hearing and the onomatopoeic sound of the pistons, that give the reader a clear image of the monotony of worker's lives. This image is reinforced by the anaphoric use of the adjective "*same*" ("same hours", "same sounds", "same pavements", "same work"). With the brief description, Dickens creates an obsessive and suffocated atmosphere that perfectly embraces the reality of his time.

In the fourth paragraph the narrator keeps the reader's attention on monotony and sadness of town life. In an industrialized town everything looked the same. The idea of oppression and rush is conveyed by the anaphoric repetition of the word "*fact*". Dickens uses this technique to inform the reader that people have lost their personality, there isn't the idea of identity. The narrator also uses references to the religious code.

Indeed, he uses the image of "interminable serpents" to represent the smoke that comes out from the chimneys: serpents that, in the Puritan mentality, symbolize the devil. But also the ended world "Amen" underlines this.

Also this final part of the description shows the technique of the grotesque, effect obtained thanks again to exaggeration, and in this second case, also thanks to repetition. The overall idea the the reader make about the city is a negative one. It seems in the same time to be a very realistic city but also a caricature that gets a reaction of pathos in the reader. This reaction is made even more immediate and spontaneous by the period of closure of the extract: Amen. The narrator is a third person omniscient intrusive narrator and he influences the reader, in order to lead him through the novel.