Coketown's analysis

The text is an extract from chapter five, Hard Times by Charles Dickens. The background is an imaginative place, Coketown. The protagonists are Thomas Gradgrind and Josiah Bounderby; they are the subject of Dickens’ denunciation. The guideline is the imaginative place. The extract is arranged into five paragraphs.

The first paragraph conveys the urban structure of the city; the main activity of the city (the work) is explained in the second paragraph. The third is about the society's materialism wich developed in the Victorian Age; the fourth paragraph is about the social relationships between social classes. The fifth paragraph is a critic addressed to the protagonists belonging to their social classes.

In the first sequence (ll from 1 to 18) Dickens uses exaggeration and irony to represent the urbanistic structure of the city: for example, "purple ill-smelling". Dickens wants to exaggerate the representation of pollution and the enormous structures of the city by comparing the constructive elements to animals: for example, "serpents of smoke". Dickens wants to criticize the change of the cities during the Victorian age and he condemns the perpetuation of poverty.

The second sequence (ll from 19 to 24) is short and it's about the main activity of the city: the work. The narrator conveys the idea of work like the only existing activity in the city. This is a critic of the progress of the Victorian Age; the men can have only an objective, their work.

The third paragraph (ll from 25 to 39) conveys the idea of religion as not relevant. Dickens critics the bourgeois class and he underlines that during the Victorian age life's areas of citizens have been mixed. This aspect can be caught in the description of buildings, they all look the same and it's easy to confuse one with another. The use of the repetition of the word “fact” conveys the idea of materialism, wich means the standardized lifesyle during the Victorian Age. Another important aspect of criticism are the social relationships between citizens. Relationships are standardized and pale because of work.

In the fourth sequence (ll from 40 to 68) there is competition between social classes. The class of workers is seen from the point of view of the bourgeois. They are described like alcoholics. The Victorian Age is characterized by the different roles between the social classes. Its weaknesses are poverty, the alienation of work and the alienation of relationships.

In the fifth sequence Dickens shows Mr. Gradgrind and Mr. Bounderby and their dissatisfaction that characterizes them and the bourgeois class. Dickens makes a list of the foods that the working class can't afford to underline the difference between the social classes.