

Homework for 20.02.2018

Analysis of the text 'Mr. Bounderby'

The text I am going to analyse is an extract from Chapter 4 Charles Dickens' novel 'Hard Times'. It is divided into 5 paragraphs. The narrator is a third person omniscient one and he uses both the techniques of telling and showing, but mainly the first one.

The narrator starts the text with a rhetorical question 'NOT being Mrs. Grundy, who was Mr. Bounderby?' (line 1) that creates in the reader the curiosity of know who's that man. This curiosity is immediately satisfied since the narrator answers to his question in the follow lines.

The first paragraph has an introductory function that introduces the figure of Mr. Bounderby. The first thing the narrator does is to compare Mr. Bounderby to another character of the novel, Mr. Grandgrind, telling that he's his best friend. He is described as a very cold man without feelings. The narrator uses some words like 'devoid of sentiment' (line 2) to make Mr. Bounderby appear like a grotesque, pathetic, but at the same time mysterious and authoritative man, typical of the Victorian Age.

The second paragraph is a description of Mr. Bounderby. The narrator continues to describe him using irony and hyperbolic adjectives. This idea is conveyed by expressions like 'big, loud man' (line 5), 'metallic laugh' (line 6), 'great puffed head and forehead' (line 7), 'swelled veins in his temples' (lines 7-8), 'such a strained skin to his face that it seemed to hold his eyes open, and lift his eyebrows off' (lines 8-9). Again, Mr. Bounderby seems like a big authoritative man described with ridiculous physical features.

The third paragraph is again a description of Mr. Bounderby. If the previous description could make the reader think about him in positive terms, now the narrator makes fun of him telling that 'he had not much hair' (line 15) and 'his seven of eight forty might have had the seven or eight added to it again, without surprising anybody' (lines 13-14-15). Once again Dickens' perspective creates an ironical image of the character.

The fourth paragraph sets the atmosphere of the extract and contextualises the scene: it is set in a formal drawing-room of Stone Lodge. The narrator uses the repetition to underline a concept: Mr. Bounderby is a man with an important social position and therefore he 'took up a commanding position, from which to subdue Mrs. Gradgrind' (lines 22-23) as it often happened in the Victorian Age. There's thus a social superiority of the man in the Victorian society that Dickens reports to the reader.

The last paragraph consists of a dialogue between Mr. Bounderby and Mrs. Gradgrind. Mr. Bounderby describes the difficulties he had to face during his youth. Dickens uses irony thorough Mr. Bounderby's word and the description seems voluntary hyperbolic in order to impress the reader. This conveys to an idea of Mr. Bounderby as a self-made man. This idea is supported by the last sentence 'nobody to thank for being here, but myself' (line 41). He's not sharing his success with other people, he thinks that he have exceeded the barriers on his way all by himself. Charles Dickens wants one again for the last time underline the lonely and egoistic nature of the men in the Victorian Age.