**MR. BOUNDERBY**

The text is an extract from chapter 4 of Charles Dickens’ novel “Hard Times”, published in 1854. The narrator of the text is a third-person omniscient one, who uses both the techniques of showing and telling, although the use of telling is prevalent. In order to introduce Mr. Bounderby, the novelist starts the text with the question “who was Bounderby?”. Dickens begins presenting the character’s friendship with Mr. Grandgrind. Here it can be seen the use of irony, as their link is defined as the relationship between two “perfectly devoid of sentiment” men, which creates a contrast with the adjective “sentimental” associated to the relationship. Moreover, the repetition of the expression “a man perfectly devoid of sentiment” reinforces the description and creates in the reader a grotesque and pathetic idea of the character.

In the second paragraph, the novelist gives a description of Mr. Bounderby, although he is never explicitly named. Indeed, the repetition of the expression “a man” at the start of each sentence conveys the idea that Dickens is not only describing Bounderby, but a whole class of men, precisely those belonging to the middle-upper-classes during the Victorian Age. Through this description, Dickens’ goal is to criticize the upper classes of the English society: an example of this can be seen in part where he writes “A man who was always proclaiming, through that brassy speaking-trumpet of a voice of his, his old ignorance and his old poverty”. Dickens’ intention is to show how those from the upper-classes want to appear for what they are not, indeed he defines Bounderby “the bully of humility”, giving the reader the idea that appearance was extremely relevant in the Victorian society.

In the fourth paragraph the novelist highlights another central characteristic of the Victorian Age. Dickens writes that Mr. Bounderby was standing on the hearthrug “partly because he thus took up a commanding position, from which to subdue Mrs. Gradgrind”. This expresses the man-centric nature of the Victorian society, the submitted position of women to men and the need of the upper-classes to show their superiority in the social ladder, in order to appear superior to the others. In the final part of the extract, the novelist switches from telling to showing and presents a dialogue between Mr. Bounderby and Mrs. Gradgrind. In this section Bounderby describes the difficulties he had to face and overcome during his childhood so that he could become what he is and conquer what he has. Bounderby’s description seems voluntary exaggerated in order to impress Mrs. Gradgrind, and the reader, and to convey the idea he is a great, self-made man. Indeed Bounderby concludes the extract claiming “I was determined, I suppose. I have been a determined character in later life, and I suppose I was then. Here I am, Mrs. Gradgrind, anyhow, and nobody to thank for my being here, but myself.”. Once and again Dickens uses irony, this time thorough Bounderby’s word. The exaggerated and almost ironic tone Bounderby’s report assumes reinforces the initial impression of a grotesque and pathetic character. Through Mr. Bounderby’s character, Dickens wants to expose and criticize the real nature of the upper-classes of the Victorian society.