

## **TEXTUAL ANALYSIS: Oliver Wants Some More**

The extract is taken from the second chapter of the novel *Oliver Twist* written by Charles Dickens.

The text is organized into three sections: the first is the introduction; the second is the fact and the last the reaction.

The novel is about social problems of Dickens' time.

The novel is about the conditions of working children. The introduction is about the condition of Oliver. Indeed the scene takes place in a room of a workhouse ("a large stone hall") where there was a "copper": indeed copper was the material of which the object in question, a caldron, was made.

Dickens presents three characters: a master and two women who were serving meal. Dickens used a formal language to describe the master and his simple action. Indeed the narrator tells the fact using grotesque, that is the exaggeration of tones, in order to make the reader delight and interested in the story.

The expression "at meal time" suggests that the narration is refer to an everyday occurrence.

Dickens uses again the grotesque to describe children's meal: he distinguishes festive meals from meals of "occasions of great public rejoicing" as portions would be relevantly different, when they verily were not.

The description is focused on things: indeed characters are all conformed and do not show an identity. In order to describe boys' hunger the narrator describes the bowls: they initially shone and after the children have eaten the soup, they shone again insomuch as the narrator says "the bowls never wanted washing". The register used is a rhetorical language that creates a contradiction between what children are supposed to do in the novel and what they really do. The grotesque generating irony: Dickens is using it in order to criticize the Victorian society and report children's ad condition of living in workhouses. All this together explains why reader in that period could gain an alibi. They could do it because the novel presents a more dramatic society than reality. Another important choice in the novel is to tell how children watched at the copper: their eyes provides an indirectly information: they are starving. Dickens plays on sight and taste and inserts onomatopoeias in the narration: the description creates a mental image in reader's mind. The image is usually exaggerated to create a distance between the character and the reader.

It is interesting to notice the master and children's different behaviour: the man imposes his authority, while the children act together. The description reminds to the theme of the struggle for democracy, a problem present during the Victorian age.

Dickens use a celebrative tone to describe Oliver's walk towards the master: he seems to be a little hero facing the evil. The concept is reinforced by the use of the verb to rise, usually used to describe the sun: the narrator's aim is to convey that Oliver is a symbol of change and progress for his companions. The basin and the spoon the guy held are two symbols of power.

By the use of the grotesque Dickens creates the caricatures of the two main characters: the choice initially makes the reader laugh, but next it also provokes the reader's reflection about the problem of children's bad conditions of living in the workhouses.