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**The Representation of Victorian Children through
Dickens' Oliver and Carroll's Alice**

*An Extended Essay Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement for a
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilisation*

Submitted by:
Miss Krantar Hiba

Supervised by:
Mrs. Z Hassaiene

Board of Examiners:

- **President:** Mrs. N Feddal, M.A B Belhadj Bouchaib University Centre -Ain Temouchent
- **Supervisor:** Mrs. Z Hassaiene, M.A A Belhadj Bouchaib University Centre -Ain Temouchent
- **Examiner:** Mrs. A Benfodda, M.A A Belhadj Bouchaib University Centre -Ain Temouchent

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Dedication:

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Abstract:

That literature is related to society and has always mirrored it has always been undeniable. Therefore, the objective of this study is to depict how Victorian literature reflected the struggling child in the Victorian society. To achieve this, the present study will rely on two notable literary works that represent children from different classes; the poor Oliver from Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and the rich Alice from Carroll's *Alice Adventures in Wonderland*. Through the former, we will examine orphanage and child labour and through the latter we will draw much attention on identity crisis and Victorian etiquette on *Alice* character. The focus will be on these two protagonists as we attempt to investigate the different problems poor and rich children went through in the Victorian age. Furthermore, this investigation will try to expose the crucial role Victorian literature played in drawing public attention toward the illness of the age as well as succeeding in making some social reforms. However, we will first provide a historical background that shows the impact of the industrial revolution on the Victorian society in order to understand well the main causes behind the suffering child of the time.

Key words:

Victorian Literature, Suffering children, Industrial Revolution. Orphanage. Identity Crisis. Social Reforms.

الملخص

ان الأدب مرتبط بالمجتمع وكان دائماً ما ينعكس عليه. لذلك، فإن الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تصوير الكيفية التي يعكس بها الأدب الفيكتوري الطفل المكافح في المجتمع الفيكتوري. لتحقيق ذلك، ستعتمد الدراسة الحالية على عملين أدبيين بارزين يمثلان أطفالاً من فئات مختلفة؛ أوليفر الفقير من رواية أوليفر تويست للكاتب تشارلز ديكنز وأليس الغنية من رواية أليس في بلاد العجائب للكاتب لويس كارول. من خلال الكتاب الأول، سوف ندرس دور الأيتام وعمل الأطفال، ومن خلال الكتاب الثاني سوف نقوم بلفت الانتباه إلى أزمة الهوية والأدب الفيكتورية التي انعكست على شخصية أليس. سيكون التركيز على هذين البطلين بينما نحاول التحقيق في المشكلات المختلفة التي مر بها الأطفال الفقراء والأثرياء في العصر الفيكتوري. علاوة على ذلك، سنحاول الكشف عن الدور الحاسم الذي يلعبه الأدب الفيكتوري في جذب انتباه الشعب نحو امراض العصر وكذلك النجاح في إجراء بعض الإصلاحات الاجتماعية. سنوفر أولاً خلفية تاريخية توضح تأثير الثورة الصناعية على المجتمع الفيكتوري من أجل فهم الأسباب الرئيسية الكامنة وراء معاناة الطفل في ذلك الوقت.

الكلمات الدالة:

الأدب الفيكتوري، معاناة الأطفال، الثورة الصناعية، دار الأيتام. أزمة الهوية. الإصلاحات الاجتماعية.

Le résumé

La littérature est liée à la société et l'a toujours reflété. Par conséquent, l'objectif de cette étude est de décrire la manière dont la littérature victorienne a reflété les difficultés de l'enfant dans la société victorienne. Pour y parvenir, la présente étude s'appuiera sur deux œuvres littéraires remarquables représentant des enfants de différentes classes sociales; le pauvre Oliver d'Oliver Twist de Charles Dickens et la riche Alice d'Alice au pays des merveilles de Louis Carroll. Dans le premier cas, nous examinerons l'orphelinat et le travail des enfants et, dans le second, nous attirerons beaucoup d'attention sur la crise d'identité et l'effet de l'étiquette victorienne sur le personnage d'Alice. L'accent sera mis sur ces deux protagonistes alors que nous essayons d'enquêter sur les différents problèmes rencontrés par les enfants pauvres et riches à l'époque victorienne. En outre, cette enquête tentera de mettre en évidence le rôle crucial joué par la littérature victorienne pour attirer l'attention du public sur la maladie du siècle et réussir à mettre en œuvre certaines réformes sociales. Cependant, nous fournirons d'abord un contexte historique montrant l'impact de la révolution industrielle sur la société victorienne afin de bien comprendre les principales causes de l'enfant souffrant de l'époque.

Mots clés:

Littérature victorienne, Enfants souffrant, Révolution industrielle, Orphelinat, Crise d'identité, Réformes sociales.

General Introduction:

General Introduction

The Victorian era is undoubtedly one of the most significant periods in the history of Britain. A period that witnessed an incredible change in relatively every aspect of life. Industrialization and urbanization played an important role in changing the lower and the emerging middle classes lives, while science and technology reversed society itself. As the countryside population moved into urban zones, the lower class wages decreased and many of them had to face unemployment, poverty and misery. As a result of the current situation, child labour started in Britain and was followed by long working hours as well as bad working conditions. In the light of these changes that the British society suffered from, children from both classes struggled the most in this transitional period as they were deprived from their childhood rights and were stuck between Class Crisis that marked the Victorian age.

Literature played an important role in delivering a concrete image of life and the conditions of living during that particular era; it was the mirror that reflected society with all its flaws. Children's problems made an important part in the field of literature since so many works were published at that time under genres like: fairy tales, fantasy, nonsense, animal tales and other genres. Many Victorian writers dealt with children topics in their writings and highlighted their issues in different ways. Two particular writers will make the center of this study: Charles Dickens and Lewis Carroll.

Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and Carroll's *Alice Adventure in Wonder Land* are going to be the masterpieces selected to show that Victorian literature was not indifferent to children's struggle to lead normal childhood regardless how much poor or rich they were. The two novels belong to different genres; the first is realistic and revolves around the life of young Oliver; an orphan who is abandoned to the mercy of the runners of a workhouse since his birth. He has to survive in the cruel Victorian society where he experienced hunger, poverty, child labour and many hardships that represent the actual lifestyle of the poor Victorians. The latter, is a fantasy book about Alice; a young girl who falls down in a rabbit hole full of adventures and finds herself wandering in a fantasy world that is filled of

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weird, wonderful and bizarre creatures, mainly animals. Despite the fact that Alice belongs to a higher class and has everything in her life compared to the poor Oliver, she has her own struggles. Victorian manners and social Etiquettes as well as restricted rules that were imposed on rich children led her to mislead a normal childhood. Alice was confused about her own identity since her behaviour was much more of an adult than a young girl. The little Alice was unsure about who she is when she was asked by one of the creatures she encountered in wonderland.

The confusion and the difficulty little girls had to go through growing up in rich Victorian households where it seems a must for these families to adapt to the rules of society and elderly people. Although, the two novels belong to different genres, yet they have one particular thing in common which is dealing with the Victorian child; the lower class orphan represented by Oliver and the upper class young girl represented by Alice.

This study seeks to remedy children problems by dealing with literature of the Victorian age. It will investigate first the major role that the industrial revolution played in changing Victorians lives. Furthermore, this paper will also question Victorian literature reaction toward the struggling child of the era as well as its representation of the child from both classes. This will be done through the analysis of Dickens's poor child Oliver and Carroll's rich girl Alice. We will be providing a theoretical and a practical framework based on historical, social and cultural context of the era.

The aim of this study is to depict the realistic parts books like *Oliver Twist* and *Alice Adventure in Wonderland* hold within them. Also, investigating Victorian children problems and highlighting the different struggles poor and rich children faced at that time, as well as the major role authors played in criticising society and bringing some social reforms. This study will focus on the role of literature in drawing public attention toward certain issues of the century through the analysis of the two protagonists of the selected works Oliver and Alice.

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Our motivation came from our primary interest in children stories at the first place. Novels revolving around children were always attention-grabbing for us. This directed us to Dickens's novel *Oliver Twist* that was all about the poor child. The Victorian era was mostly known for the phenomenon of child labour. Thus, Carroll's *Alice Adventure in Wonderland* that revolves around a rich girl grabbed our attention and was the reason behind our initial intrigue. Oliver issue was already clear yet we wanted to explore how children were represented in literature. Not only that, Alice belonged to an upper class family which was certainly living in different circumstances than that of Oliver. Therefore, this study was trying to investigate the different issues Victorian children had at that time and how authors represented them.

As for methodology, the following study is primarily based on the thematic analysis of the struggling child of the Victorian era. Two novels will be the focus of this study; Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and Carroll's *Alice Adventure in Wonderland*. We will rely mostly on the primary sources in the analytical chapters. Moreover, the secondary sources will include books, articles and educational websites. All along this research the qualitative research approach will be used.

This paper seeks to address the following questions:

- What was Victorian literature reaction to child labour and the struggling child of the time?
- Did Victorian writers try in any way to make a change and raise public awareness towards the miserable conditions of children?
- How did *Oliver Twist* and *Alice* represent the poor and the rich child of the era?

To carry out this research, we assume that Victorian Literature tried to raise public awareness toward children problems at that time and draw people attention to the struggling child of the era whether they were rich or poor. Literature reflects society as a whole and children conditions as well. It certainly holds some messages and books like *Oliver Twist* and *Alice Adventure in Wonderland* gives genuine representations of children conditions at that time.

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In the attempt to answer the former questions that constitute the focus of our study, the framework of this extended essay will be divided into three chapters. In order to understand children problems during the Victorian era it is important to know the primary causes that led to these issues. Thus, the first chapter will cover a historical background about the Victorian age and the effect of the industrial revolution on the society. Examining both the positive and the negative side of it. From the economic growth, the emergence of the middle class to the harsh working condition and the living condition of the poor as well as the child labour phenomenon of the age. Through this chapter we will get to understand how Victorian's life changed because of industrialization, focusing more on the family bond and children conditions from the different classes. Therefore, comparing lifestyles of both poor and rich children in the Victorian time since Oliver and Alice belong to these classes.

The second chapter will put emphasis on Victorian Literature as we try to show its crucial role in drawing public attention toward children miseries. We will start this chapter by providing an overview on the literature of the time along with its most influential authors. Furthermore, investigating Victorian children literature and its portrayal of childhood and children from different classes relying much on the two protagonists from our selected works Oliver and Alice to provide genuine examples. Moreover, this chapter will try to link literature with law and show how literature helped some children gaining some of their deprived rights as we deal with social reforms. We will also be paying much more attention to poor children since they were greatly neglected than the others.

The final chapter will draw upon the whole extended essay, but its main focus will be on the representation of the Victorian child of the era through the analysis of the two main characters of the selected works Oliver and Alice. Through the first we will examine orphanage and child labour on Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and through the latter we will draw much attention on identity crisis and Victorian etiquette on Alice character.

Chapter One:

The Effect of the Industrial Revolution on the Victorian Society

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Introduction:

The industrial revolution had a huge impact on the Victorian society. No matter how positive or negative it could have been no one can deny that it reversed the society itself. This chapter, therefore, will examine the historical context that shaped the Victorian society. It will also explore the effects of industrialization on the poor and rich Victorians, from the working and the living conditions to family life. Another main point in this chapter is to highlight issues of classes that marked the Victorian age and the huge gap between the poor and rich children's lifestyles.

1. The Positive Effect of the Industrial Revolution on the Victorian Era

1.1 The Industrial Revolution and the Victorian Age:

In order to understand how the industrial revolution affected and changed the Victorian society we need to comprehend the industrial revolution first. According to Charles More revolution indicates a sudden change. However, the industrial revolution was not an event that happened suddenly. In fact, many phenomena that were referred to as revolutions, happened over a long phase. What is important for More is how historians “conceptualised the ‘revolutionary’ nature of the changes” (1-2). According to him, the word revolution in some historian's viewpoint is an abbreviation of a huge structural change in the economy, and the industrial revolution was just a continuation of the previous changes. Hence, what industrial revolution initiated has a deep root in the past and was not something new.

Other historians think that the revolutionary part relies on the drastic shift of economic growth and the interrelation between the huge growths of population along with an increase in incomes that Britain has witnessed for the first time in the mid-nineteenth century. In other words, these sudden changes that became a part of life were not expected in the eighteenth century. Trying to understand what the industrial revolution really means and introducing it

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implies so many contradictions and this applies for the Victorian age where industrialization took place (More 1-2).

The Victorian age was painted with many contradiction. Many good and bad things happened at the same time and A.C Ward talked about all the changes that the Victorian era has experienced and he described it as “It was an age of faith and an age of doubt, an age of morality and hypocrisy of prosperity and poverty, of idealism and materialism of Progress and Decline, of splendour and squalor "(qtd. in Malik 156). The British economy and the upper classes took great advantages and benefited the most from this era. However, it was such a hardship for others especially the lower classes who struggled the most in this transitional and contradicting age.

1.2 Economic Growth:

The industrial revolution reversed Britain and its impact reached economy in the first place. All the technological inventions and improvements boosted the British economy. Britain was showing the world how great its industry was and how its immensity made her one of the most powerful countries that exports products across the globe. Even Queen Victoria exposed the greatness of the British industry through an exhibition that took place inside the Crystal Palace, London, in 1851 (McDowall 137).

McDowall believed that due to industrialization, no nation has defeated Britain in terms of production. Its greatness relied on the fact that it had sufficient coal, steel and iron for production. Though France produced more iron then Britain in the mid-eighteenth century, Britain in the mid-nineteenth century not only overcame France in iron production but it produced iron more than any country in the world. Such materials allowed Britain to produce even heavy industries like iron ships and steam engines. Britain also owned factories for traditional goods such as cotton clothes, which distributed clothes to different regions of the

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world; thus creating a fierce competition. All this empire of industry was sustained by a well-developed banking system that emerged in the eighteenth century (123-138).

1.3 The Structure of Society:

The economic growth and the rise of industrialization and factory owners in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain brought with it an immense increase of the country wealth. As a result, a new class emerged “the middle class”. This class existed before but it witnessed a rapid growth and included those who had occupations in the field of law, medicine, trade, banking and others. The new middle-class status and incomes improved as people belonging to it had many opportunities than before. This improvement made the middle class no more a small class for farmers and merchants. The inclusion of other professions made the British people proud and optimistic toward the future (McDowall 139, Malik 156).

According to Graber, the middle class of England was caught in the middle between the lazy rich and the exhausted poor. For him, many social historians through their assumption and observation concluded that this class also served as a turning point for lower classes because it helped them climb the corporate ladder. This, class also was obviously looking upward for gentry status. Yet many considered the middle class as a remaining layer of aristocracy; rich families who went through a bankrupt, usually had their children fall into this class (2). In general, the emergence of the middle class was one of the positive aspects that the industrial revolution inserted within the British society. It helped the class system in England and in some ways shortened the gap between the rich and the poor classes and served the two of them.

As stated earlier, as a consequence of the industrialization, Britain witnessed enormous changes in almost every aspect of life from the huge economic growth to the emergence of a new class. All these changes were followed by a notable transformation in

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family life and children conditions as well, especially for those who belong to the middle classes as their lives improved the most.

The middle class or the newly rich industrialists, typically came from poor families. For these people working hard and spending money wisely were necessary to maintain a normal lifestyle (McDowall 140). The upper and upper-middle class Victorians had strict rules to follow from the moment they leave their beds. This can be explained by the fact that the Victorian society had a considerable concern for the daily life activities of its people (Rose). Life for these classes was governed by a set of more or less strict rules agreed upon to ensure better integration that can be described by one word "Etiquette". From the way a gentleman speaks to a lady, to the choice of a proper form of discourse. Also, to select the appropriate outfit including the suitable piece of jewellery were all so important for this particular class. As a small burp could ruin their social life if it was heard. Upper class's lives were directed by do's and don'ts. For other classes, time for Etiquette did not exist.

Rose also argues that it was really essential to know how to dress properly according to the right occasion because making a fashion mistake was highly feared. Speaking to a member of the society mistakenly using the wrong label was one more source of fear, especially if one had not been well introduced to the person (Rose). These rules somehow restricted the upper classes from doing different things. Though their lives sounded much easier compared to the lower classes, yet they had their own struggles.

According to Wilde the British population around 1750 and 1850 saw a huge demographical growth. Indicating that the population more than doubled during the first phase of the industrial revolution. Studies suggest that immigration is one of the major factors behind this population explosion. However, Wilde assumes that there were some internal factors, which includes improvements in health sectors and lifestyle in general. Early

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marriages were considered as a primary factor for it helped increasing the number of child birth.

In the aristocracy environment, people stopped marrying for economic reasons and cared more about their own happiness. Though women were considered as companions to their husbands, yet they were not equal to them. Men kept their status of the rulers of the families and that was a source of power to them. Consequently, wives were more dependent on them, and their works outside the house were limited. Women were not encouraged to work especially when the family was well off. Such factors affected family life and its happiness (McDowall 137).

McDowall also expressed how life got much easier for the middle classes. Even if some children of this class succeeded in joining public schools, this was true mainly to those whose parent managed to pay for their fees. Public schools had two particular aims; providing these children with good education as well as preparing them to become future leaders. That was done through applying strict rules while they were distant from their hometown. Many officers in civil services, colonial administrations and armed forces were the products of these public schools. Despite that, other children favoured banking and commerce to industry, which was often the case of those whose fathers belonged to the first generation of factory owners. These children did not follow their parents much, even when it comes to politics or religion they took different roads. The most successful ones turned into lords or received chivalries and merged with the upper classes (140).

Almost every upper class or middle-class child was raised by a nannie. These children spent most of their times in a nursery while getting their first lessons by their mothers, nurses or through a tutor before experiencing school life (Victorian society). Unlike the lower classes, life of upper-class's children was the easiest among all Victorians. They were all

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educated, since their parents had enough money to afford school fees (Industrial Revolution). And this was only applicable for boys.

As for upper-class girls, Liza Picard assumes that they did not have the right to be educated because they were supposed to get married. Rather they received singing, dancing and piano lessons as well as flower-arranging courses in order to entertain their husband's guests. For girls being a good wife and giving birth to a certain number of children is important since it was their primary role. By the late nineteenth century Education for both sexes became official allowing girls to experience school life (Picard).

Alice is a great example of that: "Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the schoolroom, and though this was not a very good opportunity for showing off her knowledge," (Carroll 9) though girls lives improved by the end of the century, such girls like Alice who lived in the Victorian era had to learn Victorian Etiquette in an early age. How to talk properly and how to dress were necessary to follow the prestigious lifestyle of the upper-class families. Sure this is not comparable to the poor Victorian children who struggled the most in the industrial revolution time, yet rich children had their own problems and were somehow deprived from their childhood as well because they acted and behaved like adults.

1.4 The Negative Side of the Industrial Revolution on Victorian Society:

The industrial revolution was not as beneficial as it could seem for all the British people. For Some Victorian classes, industrialization was somehow a curse because their lives worsened during this particular era. That was true for the lower classes including the working class. The living and working condition of these classes deteriorated, as well as family life and children conditions.

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1.4.1 Unemployment and the Working Conditions:

In the first years of industrialization, Great Britain had no regulations of the new industries; businessmen were hiring children for a full time work in dangerous workplaces like mines or coal factories. Also factory wastes that were very dangerous to human health and the environment were not controlled. This was due to the free market capitalism. The controllers of the Government supported this system, mainly the small rich Victorian minority had the right to vote during the whole industrial revolution phase, which gave them this power. Consequently, Britain became a perfect example of a country undergoing free market capitalism with no restrictions (Entangling Alliances).

In the early eighteenth century the British population saw a demographic explosion. As a result, a number of people specialized in the agricultural field faced unemployment. Rural wages dropped or at least did not increase, so small wage workers had to move to towns. In other words, the industrial revolution somehow encouraged urbanization as the two were connected. People flew to cities to get closer to their work places in factories leaving their rural regions and experiencing the urban life (More 51).

More claims that unemployment was the result of the new technologies that replaced the previous methods which were used before industrialization. For instance, in the 1820s and 1830s the discovery of power loom in weaving industry replaced the traditional hand loom weavers. Consequently, people lost their jobs and struggled to get new ones (53).

The industrial revolution had a bad effect on the lower classes. Though this period saw so many changes, the drastic change that had a great impact on people was the factory work that replaced home or cottage work. The use of machinery endangered workers lives. These early factories had cruel working conditions especially mine factories. However, these workers never complained about their miserable conditions or low pay because they were afraid of losing their jobs (Social Effects of the Industrial Revolution).

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Whether directly or indirectly, capitalism was dominating the incomes of subsistence and production. Therefore, capitalism handicaps and its disadvantages fell upon the poor. Even if the poor were happy after the bourgeois grant them a job, low wages did not help them survive. Such conditions gave the poor two options whether to steal or to starve, and in fact many poor died from starvation at that time (F. Engels 25).

Engels also argues that the miserable condition of the working class was because of capitalism that developed in England since 1847. The system obliges wage workers who work per hours to trade their workforce to capitalists for a certain amount of money. Capitalists easily doubled their sums and made fortunes without any effort throughout the process (51-52).

1.4.2 The Living Conditions and Women Status:

Unlike rich families, many considered the poor ones were much warmer and affectionate toward each other's. The fact that rich people sent their children abroad at an early age for educational reasons, lessened family affection and created a sort of individuality among the members. These children only cared about their future and how they would build their own empires, trades or industries. However, poor families were more united. All the family members including women and children contributed in the family outcome. Wages were low and if the father was the only worker, the whole family would suffer from starvation (McDowall 120).

The rising number of destitution during the years of industrialization among lower classes, obliged some families to seek refuge in workhouses in order to stay alive. Pregnant women killed their own children or abandoned them at birth for fear that they would be thrown away. Feeding a woman and her child was considered burdensome for workhouses. So these women were usually sent away to different workhouses (120).

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The working class and the poor in general were living in miserable conditions, even Cities like London were filled with slums. Not only London, but slums were also spread throughout England in which these classes were mostly living in. Worst houses and cottages were dwelled for them. Their living conditions were so tough and beyond descriptions; streets were unpaved, sewer did not exist, dirt and animal refuse were everywhere and houses were usually filthy and has horrible smells. The ones who lived there were among the poorest of the English people, it included the victims of prostitution, thieves, low paid workers, and many others. Most of the time these classes had only one room which the whole family share so they were crowded in small spaces (Engels 22-27).

As for women, their condition witnessed a dramatic change during the industrial revolution as they joined for the first time in the workforce. These females' factory workers were approximately one-third of males. Soon these women started competing with men to get a job and they even called for change especially when many of them were involved in politics. Females also called for their right of suffrage and Britain granted them the right to vote around 1918, but only for those who were over their thirties (Social Effect of the Industrial Revolution).

Before women could get some of their rights, their employment to the labour force was somehow debatable. As marriages were business partnership frequently, many Women assisted their husbands. However, wives productive contribution to the family business remained invisible and unrecognized by historians. The thing that most historians agree with is that female work varied between three categories: domestic services, textile and clothing and these women covered eighty per cent of these jobs around 1851. Females also suffered from segregation throughout their occupations in the industry as jobs were not assigned randomly and gender really mattered (Joyce 1-13). By and large, despite the fact that women who started working during the industrialization period gained independence and managed to

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create a name for themselves, working in factories and taking risky jobs endangered these women lives. Also, they were not equal to men as they got lower wages compared to them, and faced many challenges especially for those who were obliged to work in order to survive. Even rich women contribution in managing a business for their husbands their efforts went in vain and were not recognized.

1.4.3 Child labour:

Perhaps the most striking phenomena that shook the Victorian age was the issue of child labour. According to Kirby, the term refers to young children overworking in a dangerous and unhealthy environment. For him, the term in the twentieth century was regarded by historians as a social problem and as an effect of the industrial capitalism. He also gave some Historians point of view concerning the issue as many of them pathetically regarded children since they were exploited, physically abused and were beaten up by factory owners. Nonetheless, The debate over the ethics of child labour continued in the twentieth century as many claimed that child labour contributed to the stability of poor houses and saved them from starvation during the industrial era (1-2).

If we go back to the beginning of the issue, McDowall assumed that by the end of the eighteenth century child labour highly increased among workhouses and factories. Basically, the population growth was made up of children. Poor children were expected to work so as to support their families. Starting from the age of three and by the age of six or seven all of them would be working. Factory owners benefited the most from them as they had small wages and were easy to discipline unlike adults (120). Factory owners hired children and women because their wages were less than men. Therefore, child labour increased at that time and the working class conditions worsened while bosses had higher profits (Social Effects).

Humphries argues that child labour was crowded out with different interpretations and ironically economic historian instead of turning their attention on how economic change laid

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strain on family work. A new social problem faced Britain while trying to reconcile between an advanced industrial economy and a steady family life. Britain was referred to as broken because many families were in the core of shattering at that time and scarcely parents and children interacted or spent time together.

Many children seem unhappy, neglected, even abused. One in four children in the UK comes from a fatherless family with mothers the vast majority of single parents. Lone parenthood sets the scene for child poverty; fatherlessness contributes to emotional and psychological problems, drug use, poor educational outcomes, teenage motherhood, crime, and domestic violence; 10 per cent of children self-harm, unknown thousands live rough, and 17,000 act as nurses for physically and mentally ill parents. (Jane Humphries 4)

The quote depicts children problems and the effect of industrialization on poor families in particular since each member was working in order to survive. Thus, affecting children in first place. Children were deprived from their childhood and family affection. Parents and children hardly spoke to each other while they were drained just to make ends meet. Poor children who went through such cruel experience barely had a childhood or a life in first place and Dickens's *Oliver Twist* genuinely portrayed all the struggles and the miserable conditions of the poor Victorian. The latter were the victims of the industrial revolution. Oliver represented orphans who were thrown in workhouses and the novel followed the journey of the kid while he was trying to survive despite the harsh living conditions of the age.

Oliver journey was bittersweet experience, despite all obstacles and barriers the little child faces, the character of Oliver remains innocent with a smiling face. Perhaps Dickens was trying to spread hope in the middle of despair through Oliver character.

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Conclusion:

It can be concluded that the impact of the industrial revolution was huge on the Victorian society. It was like a double-edged sword that reversed the whole society for better and worse at the same time. The effect of the industrialization varied between positive and negative as Victorian classes received the changes differently. Despite all the positive jump in economy and the great impact on rich classes, what marked the Victorian age was the solid print the industrial revolution left on the family life and children in particular. The latter issues remained somehow controversial and one of the bitter memories of the age. Whether poor or rich, children faced some problems and many of them struggled with different degrees. Therefore, nothing can be compared to the poor issues and the phenomenon of child labour. These children were miserable and suffered the most because of all the social changes and the circumstances that were imposed on them at an early age. Both Dickens and Carroll depicted the poor and rich Victorian child through Oliver and Alice, their main characters, regarding their actual situations of the time.

**Chapter two:
Victorian Literature Reaction toward the Struggling
Child of the Era**

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Introduction:

Literature is not merely imagination; the different genres of it may possibly embrace a degree of realism and some realistic characteristics of certain societies. Therefore, Victorian literature is no exception. Many scholars believe that it blended imagination and fantasy with realistic events that happened at that time. In the light of this, the following chapter will investigate Victorian literature and its crucial role in drawing public attention toward some of the problems of the age. Tackling some truthful events books like *Oliver Twist* and *Alice Adventure in Wonderland* hold within them. Furthermore, this chapter will emphasise on children representation on Victorian literature taking the two protagonists from our selected works Oliver and Alice as genuine demonstrative of the poor and the rich child. First, by providing an overview on the literature of the time along with its influential authors. Moreover, this chapter will investigate social reforms in order to link literature to law. Paying more attention to the role of literature in helping children regain some of their deprived rights. Alice will represent rich children's problems. However, Dickens and his work *Oliver Twist* will be the centre of this chapter since he played a significant role in highlighting the poor struggles.

2.1. An Overview of Victorian Literature and its Influential Authors:

The huge impact of the industrial revolution on the Victorian society left the country with much more scars than blessings. The Victorian age, this transitional and paradoxical period in British history with several changes in society had its own share in the literature of the time. Both the positive and negative stamps that industrialization awarded the Victorians with, were all referred to in literature. Despite the rapid changes in economy, science, and technology, these advances were all tied with misfortunes and miseries, especially for the lower classes.

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Literature mirrored what was happening in the country in a more entertaining way. Authors of the era contributed to raising public awareness through their realistic demonstration of the most controversial social problems and concerns that faced the Victorian age from the huge gap between classes to children miseries. Previous movements dealt with social problems in their writing as well. This was the case of the romantic period, which preceded the Victorian era. Romantics had Poetry as the fundamental literary form. However, the novel was the most popular form of literature in the Victorian age.

In this matter, Carter and McRae argue that the concerns of the century were mirrored in literature. From the beginning, the novel was neglected as it touched many areas of discontent and reflected society with all its flaws. Jacobin novels (1790) for instance, were repressed as they displayed some social problems and areas of concerns. This remains true, for romantic poets who gave some bold political statements such as Shelly pamphlet addressed Irish problems and the importance of atheism (224-225). Other social issues including child labour, unemployment and many illnesses of the century happened to be reflected in Victorian literature. These problems were mostly the consequences of the industrial revolution on the Victorian age.

The death of the greatest poets by the 1820s including Shelly, Keats, and Byron influenced negatively the poetry status in literature. However, this era witnessed the birth of another great influencer of the nineteenth-century which is Sir Walter Scott. His birth and the success of his works helped the novel to become a central form of literature in the Victorian era. (Carter and McRae 225). Sir Walter was not the only one to be counted; the Victorian age saw the birth of great novelists such as Thomas Hardy, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, the Bronte sisters, Elizabeth Barrett and several prominent names including Lewis Carroll and Charles Dickens. Such names brought the novel into prominence and gave it the recognition it deserves. According to Carter and McRae, this era was

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known for the historical novel as the novel exceeded poetry and became extremely popular at that time. Novelists like Sir Walter, Harrison Ainsworth, and Benjamin Disraeli became the literary representatives of the Victorian age (225).

To some degree, literature became a way to heal society from its wounds, especially the ones that were caused by the industrial revolution. Novelists used their writing to seek remedy and look for solutions for the most debatable troubles encountered by Victorians. Gilead described how the Victorians responded to the messages that literature of the time was trying to convey as follow: “[T]he Victorians sought in literature, especially in narrative, both a diagnostic tool and a cure for social, cultural, and psychical malaises; sought a means of dramatizing a wide variety of dearths, contradictions, and inadequacies characteristic of the ‘age of transition’, as well as a format for reimagining traditional culture-generating myths” (qtd. in Thacker and Webb 42). Such a statement makes it clear that literature was not merely for entertainment, it delivered strong and bold messages, dramatized and criticized some of the country's shortage, shed the light on social problems and made the public more aware of possibly overlooked issues.

The Victorian novel became a worthwhile tool for social reforms, a way to unfold the truth behind successful Britain after the industrial revolution. The novel revealed how the poor were living, suffering, and struggling to make end meets. It revolutionized the way of thinking and provided new insights into the actual situation of marginalized people. Those who challenged the living conditions of the century. The novel became a great historical source since it provided readers with actual situations and events under fictional characters. Authors became such an influential part of society exposing social polemics and controversial topics of the era.

According to Adams, authors became influential through their challenging yet realistic topics they dealt with in their writing. Realism became an important characteristic of the Victorian novel.

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Social polemics and controversial matters were as well a crucial element of the novel of the era. Adams argues that authors called for attention and change through their use of realism in their writing in which fiction was just a way to deliver everyday life (53).

2.2. Children in Victorian Literature:

Children literature reached its highest peak in the Victorian era. More precisely, the last forty-five years of the nineteenth-century was usually referred to as its golden age. According to Ackerman, children literature flourished around that time until it gradually became a significant and distinctive genre. He also assumes that Children literature is historically rich as it dealt with many social, political and religious problems of the time (1-10). Furthermore, the lasting works of Lewis Carroll and Charles Kingsley have set a defined style that was purely directed to children who speak of the societies of the age rather than just children fantasies (Thacker and Webb 41).

Ackerman believes that Adults used children literature as a way to teach youth morals and the right behaviour. For him, this literature reinforces the codes of society and the duties even children have to follow. These ideas that Victorians adopted in their literature originated from the rational John Lock and even from philosophers like Plato. Both Lock and Plato emphasized on the importance of teaching children morals from an early age. They believed that parents should select stories that would help their children formulate specific ideas. Therefore, educational stories that teach a lesson or moral were the most discussed themes in Victorian children literature (1-3).

Children literature in its golden age touched many topics. Literary nonsense, for instance, was a distinctive genre that indicates the lack of meaning, a literary phenomenon that flourished in the middle of the nineteenth century Britain. Carroll's *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland* is a great example and a classic work of this genre. Its common characteristics include the use of reversal language as well as the lack of logic. Carroll's main features in this genre contain talking animals or animals with human

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traits. This is exactly what happened in Wonderland. Alice encountered many animals and had a conversation with them like the caterpillar. She even listened to a song sung by a mock turtle. Despite the fact that nonsense stories are known for the absence of logic, they sometimes convey a moral like the chapbook 'World Turned Upside Down' in some stories like 'Children at War, and 'Cats and Dogs at Peace' were a way to humiliate children and make them behave well (Dubois). Concluding that even though Alice belongs to nonsense literature, it can hold a message and reflect the rich child of her age.

Lewis Carroll became an influential author and *Alice Adventure in Wonderland* remained until now an important book in the history of the British literature. The work is considered as a masterpiece, a combination of abnormality and imagination. Despite the fact that the use of talking animals and a lost child was not something new, yet Carroll turned things upside down playing with language, logic, and math creating an inspirational work of art for contemporary writers. The golden age of children literature witnessed many great works including Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio* and L. Frank Baum *The Wizard of Oz*. In this period many captivating animal stories were published and were loved by children up to the present time (Rivera).

Not only nonsense, children literature dealt with many themes including adventures, coming of age stories and many others. Mullan believes that realism has been often one of the tendencies of Victorian fiction. According to him, the earliest usages of the word realism used to describe the faithful representation of the actual situation in both art and literature. As mentioned earlier, literature was somehow a way to draw public attention toward some problems the Victorian age was facing. Thus, authors like Lewis Carroll and Charles Dickens introduced in their writing some of the problems children of the time were going through. Dickens's *Oliver* was more realistic compared to Carroll's *Alice*. The latter was a fantasy and an adventures book. Yet, *Alice* represented the upper-class and shed the light on issues mainly rich little girls faced.

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The physical changes that Alice experienced throughout the novel made her confused about her identity. The sudden shrinking and growing made her uncertain about her true self and confused at the same time. The unexpected growing can be a sign of her sudden growing up to an adult girl, also the sudden shrinking can indicate the child inside her. We believe that Carroll through Alice character deliberated the theme of “the deprived childhood”. A controversial topic both rich and poor children like Oliver experienced.

Alice for instance, in the book, was behaving like an adult, full growing up woman. The way she speaks and behaves makes the reader question her age. In fact, she was just a seven years old upper-class girl in the Victorian era where girls were supposed to be prepared at an early age to become good wives. The concept of girlhood in England was well explained in the 1920’s note of Nelson and Vallone, for them girls were: “poised between childhood and adulthood but also between purity and desire, home and market, tradition and change . . . [and they] tended to be specific as to class and vague as to age, so that a ‘girl’ could be any unmarried female of genteel family background between the ages of ,Claudia Nelson and say, five and twenty-five” (qtd. in Delaney 34).

Nelson and Vallone described how girls were confused finding themselves sitting on the edge of childhood and adulthood at the same time, not knowing were to stand in the first place. Despite the fact that they were children, they were treated like adults and matured women. As if there was no transitional period between the two. Little girls from upper-class England took the role of women with all the responsibilities at an early age. Carroll’s Alice truthfully represented a child from her era despite the imaginative world the book revolves around. This said, one can see that realism covers a huge part of Victorian Literature.

On the other hand, Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*, for instance, gave an idealistic image of a poor child in the nineteenth-century Victorian era which remains pure, kind and innocent no matter how cruel the

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world he was living in or how hard his life was. Oliver is portrayed as a character who cannot harm others. Dickens probably was trying to emphasize on childhood innocence in an age where children were mostly deprived of that right. Children were working and making meet ends, experiencing adulthood lives instead of enjoying their childhood days.

Oliver also demonstrates genuinely what it feels like to be born poor in the Victorian age. Not only that, throughout the novel, Dickens displayed almost all children struggle from poverty, hunger, orphanage to ill-treatment. Everything was portrayed in a way that made the public more aware of the other side of Victorian society. Children were mostly neglected because they experienced many hardships in their lives without the interference of anyone. Such struggles and miseries were projected in this book. Dickens also used strong language and expressions to criticize his own society along with the system. If we take the workhouse, for instance, the description of characters like Mr Bumble shows how frightening and terrifying to be born in such a place. In this passage “Oliver cried lustily. If he could have known that he was an orphan, left to the tender mercies of churchwardens and overseers, perhaps he would have cried the louder”(4), Dickens gave a strong statement against the workhouse, believing that it is better to be born as an orphan rather than be born in a place like that. The living conditions were so harsh and painful for anyone to bare and rulers like Mr Bumble made life more miserable.

The phenomena of child labour and deprived childhood were central themes in literature and Dickens works in particular. Oliver representation in the novel was so authentic and true that it drove several problems to float into the surface. Dickens did not only present children miseries, but he also shed light on issues surrounding them. For instance, he described the corrupted environment children were thrown at, especially the workhouses along with the corrupted rulers.

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2.3. Social Reforms:

Thanks to literature several social reforms were established in British society. Many problems were somehow neglected or not that much appealing to the public. Authors of the era displayed realism in their writing so the literature of the time in a way shed light on them. As a result, the public became aware of these issues the British society was facing at that time. For instance, Benjamin Disraeli's political novels were a turning point in Victorian literature. *The two nations* set the difference between the rich and the poor; the title suggests that the two classes were like two different nations because of the huge gap between them. The implication of such novels makes it clear that Victorian novels exposed social problems and many of the nation concerns as well as reforms. Before Disraeli became Prime Minister of Britain, he tried and succeeded to some extent to fulfil some reforms he had previously mentioned in his novels (Carter and McRae 225).

Disraeli was not the only novelist that contributed to social reforms through his writing. Dickens also had his own contribution concerning this matter. *Oliver Twist* is a great example of a literary work that helped changing children lives. According to Ruth Richardson, Dickens worked as a parliamentary reporter before he became a successful author. He watched politicians up close and recorded their words and transcribed them into daily reports. Upon working there, he was disgusted by the parliament and MP's attitudes toward humans. While Dickens was writing *Oliver Twist* a new law started to be implemented all over the country. It was "the poor amendment "act of 1838, also known as "the new poor law" that establishes the workhouse system. The workhouse became like a prison rather than providing food, clothing and a refuge for elderly, sick and poor people. The deterrent regime used by the government was intended to slash expenses on poor people. Henceforth, the new law abolished any donations to the parish poorhouses whether its cash or food or any other supplies. The only way to

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survive there by the new act was to work hard inside the workhouses in exchange for a slight subsistence.

Dickens through *Oliver Twist* showed how difficult to survive in a place like a workhouse especially when it is run by heartless men. The rulers were described as self-centred with no sympathy or compassion towards human beings. The living conditions were cruel as well; families were separated, children were sent away and homes were broken. The precise details in *Oliver Twist* show that Dickens made some researches before writing the novel and maybe came across them while working. For instance, the 'man in the white waistcoat' in the book represents the self-satisfied elegant rulers of the workhouses along with their wickedness wrongdoings. The poor were treated as if they deserve all kind of hardships and struggles they were going through as if it was a punishment well deserved (Richardson).

Gubar argues that reforms did not come easily or quickly. At dawn of the nineteenth century, the idea that children have rights and they should be protected sounded silly. However, around the time Queen Victoria passed away in 1901, the idea gained much more support. It is important to know that starting from the 1830s, the Victorians attempted to protect the wellbeing of children whether at work, home or at school. The motivation of these activists came from romantic ideas on children. They considered them innocent creatures that should enjoy their childhood and they should always be protected from the adult world. Writers and artists started writing stories in which they gushed children with love, exposing their angelic and adorable images. However, real reforms did not happen fast. Major children problems including child labour, inappropriate schooling and a high rate of mortal children were still persisting.

A campaign that aims to improve the lives of poor children was launched around the 1840s. It was led by many benefactors, journalists, artists, doctors, and religious leaders. For instance, Lord

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Ashley who later became the seventh Earl of Shaftesbury attempted to help the Employment Commission of children. Parliamentary reports were published on the condition of children on mines and collieries. Such reports contained some shocking testimonies which later inspired Elizabeth Barrett's well-known protest poem "The Cry of the Children" (1844). Later, Shaftesbury became the president of the Ragged School Union. An evangelical organization that helped to establish hundreds of schools for the poor. Mary Carpenter and Dr. Thomas Barnardo, two famous names for saving children, both taught in ragged schools before opening their own institutions for destitute youth (Gubar).

Charles Dickens showed an intense concern toward children. In fact, when he was twelve he experienced child labour himself. He worked at a blacking factory after his father was sent to prison due to debt. Such incident haunted him most of his life. Dickens novels displayed most of the time neglected, abused or exploited children; like Tiny Tim the Cripple, Oliver Twist the orphan, Smike the powerless and others. Just like Elizabeth Barrett, Dickens was determined to reveal the actual struggles and the horror life the poor were facing at that time. *Oliver Twist* which was written in 1837 is believed to be a reaction to the cruel new poor act of 1834. The law that created a prison-like system called the workhouse, neglected the poor and people in need, split families and subjected them into harsh living conditions and labour (Gubar). The workhouse was described as worse than being thrown in the street, the following set of lines from the novel express it: "So they established the rule, that all poor people should have the alternative (for they would compel nobody, not they,) of being starved by a gradual process in the house, or by a quick one out of it" (13). In this passage, Dickens seem to give a strong statement criticizing the workhouse system. Arguing that being in a place like that will just make people die a little bit late than being thrown outside of it and die from hunger immediately.

In his criticism, Dickens relied on testimonies of real child labourer that inspired him to write relatable characters. Despite the fact that there were outraged activists like him who transmitted

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children problems to the public; yet, many still considered that children did not need protection. Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, spoke instead of many people when he claimed that children of working men are their source of power since they contribute to the family income. The law attempted to reduce or regulate child labour and not to prohibit it completely. The Factory Act of 1833 and the Workshops Act of 1867 had no implementation. Thus, child labour continued in England. Around 1891 more than 100,000 girls, aged between 10 and 14, were still working as domestic servants. Child labour continued despite the promises the British government made in order to regulate it and to extend part-time work for infants up to 12 years old in factories (Gubar).

Gubar assumes that reforms in education proceeded at a sluggish pace as well, and one of its impediment was religion. The religious instructors postponed parliamentary efforts until 1870 when the national network of primary schools was created due to the elementary educational act. Similar acts for secondary school did not proceed until 1901. However, the slow pace of reforms was mainly because of the industrial capitalism that required cheap workers which children can fill. Thus, many politicians and economists embraced a laissez-faire approach deciding not to interfere in the current situation. Poor families had to send their children labouring at an early age in order to survive. Ideas that states children need protection got accepted slowly by the nation and the same goes for educational reforms. By the end of the nineteenth-century, ninety percent of English children were educated and it coincided with the golden age of children literature.

Writers in the golden age of children literature presented children differently. Catherine Sinclair's work *Holiday House* (1839) is usually referred to as the one that shifted children literature from instruction to amusement. Works like Lewis Carroll's *Alice Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and Edward Lear's *A Book of Nonsense* (1846), two classic books that mixed fantasy with realism. Authors like Charles Dickens voiced their beliefs into the purity of children (Gubar). Carter and McRae

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believe that The Victorian literature can be described through Disraeli political novels. His novel *Sybil* which was subtitled *The Two Nations* addressing the problems and differences between the poor and rich became a representative of the Victorian age. It is a shred of solid evidence that the Victorian novel addressed social problems and reforms and Disraeli fulfilled some of them when he became a political figure (225).

Conclusion:

To sum up, Victorian literature reflected its own society and highlighted a great deal of social concerns of the age including poverty, injustice, caste and children problems. This literature provided a voice for the needy and was a call for reforms and change. Children problems took a great share of the Victorian literature especially when children literature came to prominence. Many authors succeeded in drawing public attention to some issues the Victorian age was facing. They also succeeded in making people more aware of what was happening in the country. Their writings were basically directed to the rich as the poor were not educated at that time. Thus, several educated people including politicians used their writing as a way to reconstruct society. The various literary works produced at that time helped in making life much easier for the poor as they suffered the most at that time. Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and Carroll's *Alice Adventure in Wonderland* mixed fiction and elements of fantasy with realism to represent the two different lifestyles of the upper and the lower classes as well as the major issues faced children during the Victorian age.

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Introduction:

The combination of realism along with fantasy in the Victorian literature remained up till now a debatable topic. The outbreak of the industrial revolution and its huge impact on Victorian's lifestyle urged several authors to direct their attention toward some issues the society was facing by creating imaginative characters that both entertain and transmit a message at the same time. Despite the huge gap between the poor and rich at that time, children from both classes struggled the most throughout the whole phase of the Victorian time. Literature in its golden age did not only focus on educational stories that taught youth the right behaviour and guided them to the right path. Entertaining stories had a big share in Victorian literature. However, what is still arguably among scholars until now is how realistic Victorian literature was.

On this light, the final chapter will be mainly depicting the realistic parts Dickens and Carroll highlighted in their writing. This will be through the analysis of the two main characters of the selected works Oliver and Alice. Throughout the former, we will examine orphanage and child labour and the living conditions of the poor Victorians especially children. Throughout the latter, we will draw much attention to identity crisis and Victorian manners, highlighting some issues concerning Alice character and rich girls in general. All in all, the main aim of this chapter is to depict the realistic parts *Oliver Twist* and *Alice Adventure in Wonderland* held within them.

3.1. *Oliver Twist* as the Victorian Child:

The poor childhood Dickens had to go through especially after his father was jailed made him more dedicated and focussed to change the conditions of this particular category of society. Children were often the main characters in a number of Dickens books and they were frequently portrayed enduring several hardships. Dickens's child labour experience remained in his memory. His work in a

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black booting warehouse while he was surrounded by poor children in ragged clothes explains his obsession with children problems in his writing like *Oliver Twist* (Mackenzie 202-203).

Indeed *Oliver Twist* is considered as a brilliant work of art as well as a significant social document. The work is known for bringing to light the cruelty bankrupts and orphans faced in Dickens's time (Topham). In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens displayed several realistic facts. He presented to the entire nation how the poor were living. Not simply that, most of the events that faced Oliver in the fictional story turned out to be the ugly reality poor Victorians were living every day. Dickens honest and realistic description gave people a new insight to what was truly happening to the lowest classes.

The book was full of detailed descriptions of streets, homes and pretty much the actual environment the poor were living in: "Some houses which had become insecure from age and decay, were prevented from falling into the street, by huge beams of wood reared against the walls, and firmly planted in the road; but even these crazy dens seemed to have been selected as the nightly haunts of some houseless wretches" (42), such authentic depiction the destitute Victorians' were living every day were all projected in the book. Images of dirt, narrow streets, roofless homes, and much worst situations. All of these images gave readers a glimpse of poor Victorian's statues.

Oliver portrays many children's struggles, especially those who belong to the lower classes. Such families suffered the most of poverty and many of them if not all had to send their children to work at an early age, experiencing child labour with all of its dangerous conditions. Child labour is one of the fundamental issues the book discusses. The problem that was basically one of the bad consequences of the industrial revolution. Child labour was not just an issue that deprived children of their typical right of having a normal childhood, it also destroyed many children's lives. According to Mackenzie many of the destitute children who worked from 14 up to 16 hours per day, committed suicide at an early age. This act was considered by Dickens as a crime against children. Therefore, one can notice that his writings about childhood are full of anguish, abuse, and suffering (203).

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Throughout *Oliver Twist*, Dickens discussed the dilemma of chimney sweepers in Victorian Britain. The book reveals how these young children were hired because of their small bodies. It also reveals that such jobs were the reason behind many children illness and diagnoses of chemical carcinogenesis (Mackenzie 203). Children were not ready to join workforces and the cruelty of bosses as well as the dangerous conditions made the situation worse. Thus, child labour became a more resentful issue that drove several Victorian authors like Dickens to shed some light on it in their writing.

According to Mackenzie, Dickens experienced both the best and worst times in Britain and he was extremely influenced by the industrial revolution. Through his writing, he discussed children exploitation and the horrible environmental conditions as well as the inappropriate sanitary practices and many social diseases of the time. In many of his writings, Dickens dealt with pollution issues and he was very concerned about sanitary problems. The fact that he was a reporter helped him know more about legislation dealing with poor issues. Sanitary problems and the condition of water in the poorest areas of England were barely mentioned in the poor law of 1834 (202).

Dickens was against this and he became more sarcastic about the politics of his time, “there is no doubt that he awakened the public consciousness to the need to cleanliness, decency, and humanity towards the sick, and gave impetus to the public health movement that began in Britain about that time. Easton” (qtd. in Mackenzie 204). Somehow, Dickens revelations of Victorians real life helped to improve their situation and their lives as the public became aware of their concerns including politicians and many made a move for a better change.

Despite all the touches of melancholy and hardships the poor endured in the Victorian time Dickens kept the character of Oliver pessimistic and innocent. Probably it was his way to show readers that even cruelty cannot change the purity of children. Or maybe it was his way to show how strong and hopeful poor children were. The fact that Oliver found peace at the end of the story makes it clear

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that Dickens still look for a better future for Victorian children. He emphasizes on making Oliver character so relatable and considerate.

His description also made readers sympathize with the character, feel his pain and his struggles, “think how young he is; think that he may never have known a mother’s love, or the comfort of a home; that ill-usage and blows, or the want of bread, may have driven him to herd with men who have forced him to guilt”(251). Passages like these made public empathize with orphans and those who were thrown in places like the workhouses since their lives were much harder to endure in such places. They also show the lack of affection and care which all children need despite their age differences or social status.

3.2. The Workhouse and Orphanage in *Oliver Twist*:

The Victorian society had a large number of poor including orphan children at that time. Plenty were sent to workhouses or orphanages in order to survive or at least not die from hunger. Such places were meant to provide shelter to the needy and keep them protected and safe. However, these places were oppressing, harassing them and treating them with brutality instead of care.

The protagonist Oliver was born in a workhouse. His mother passed away at his birth so he was sent to a nearby orphanage. Upon growing up there Oliver and his fellow children were mistreated. They experienced all sorts of cruelty, these children were beaten up frequently and they were poorly fed. The harsh system was shown in a scene when Oliver asks for more gruel. 'Please, sir, I want some more. The master aimed a blow at Oliver’s head with the ladle; pinioned him in his arms; and shrieked aloud for the beadle'(15).

His small request was considered an impertinence and was the reason behind losing the so called shelter in the parish house (Topham). The poor child crime was asking for more food. Due to this, he was immediately confined. The next morning, a reward of five pounds was offered to anyone

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who is willing to take him. The parish house rulers did not care about his future nor did they care where Oliver would be sent to. In this scene, Dickens exposed the bad treatment and conditions the lowest members of society were living and enduring daily. The first reaction of the parish rulers was assuming that Oliver will be hung. His small request of food could take his own life. ‘That boy will be hung,’ said the gentleman in the white waistcoat. ‘I know that boy will be hung (Dickens 15).

The novel basically treated important issues including child labour, caste and the importance of social order during the Victorian age. Not only that, the book held in it so many realistic parts of the actual living conditions. In many passages, the book attempted to cover the regime of the time that gave more significance to people with authority and greatly neglected the ones in need such as Oliver and the penniless Victorians. “A field-marshal has his uniform; a bishop his silk apron, a counselor his silk gown; a beadle his cocked-hat. Strip the bishop of his apron, or the beadle of his hat and lace; what are they? Men. Mere men. Dignity, and even holiness too, sometimes, are more questions of coat and waistcoat than some people imagine” (313).

Several children who lived in charity schools like orphanage died because of underfeeding, extreme punishment or illness. In some cases, one school held 14,000 children nearly 10,000 of them died (Mackenzie 203). The condition of children’s nutrition was one of Dickens’s concerns so *Oliver Twist* was a great way to expose such an issue. The novel in general, depicted every poor child struggles, from hunger, maltreatment, exploitation, child labour, workhouse miseries along with the corrupted bosses and several dilemmas of the age. Oliver became an extraordinary example of childhood suffering at that time.

3.1. Literary Analysis of Alice:

The second half of the nineteenth century became extremely popular with fantasy writing. Fantasy books that were set in different realities and worlds expanded the most when Victorian reality

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became negative and unbearable. Detective stories, ghost stories and fantasy books for children as well as utopian stories were all a way to escape reality. Carroll's *Alice Adventure in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* are considered the most lasting works of mid-Victorian's fantasies. Such works were unlike any other children books of the time that held a great deal of moral in them. Carroll works were absurd, surreal and humorous and his carrier as a mathematics lecturer explains his use of absurd logic (Carter and McRae 249).

The book follows the story of Alice, a seven years old Victorian girl who falls into a rabbit hole and ends up in Wonderland. The latter is a fantasy world full of adventures, talking animals and unexpected events, a weird place where logic does not exist. Unlike Oliver, Alice belongs to the upper-class Victorian. Children from these classes had an easy life compared to the poor ones who joined workforces in their early childhood days. These kids were educated, well fed and they had comfortable houses. They did not experience hunger or harsh working conditions. Yet, their childhood were not problem free.

3.2. Alice's Identity Crisis:

Throughout the dreamy journey of Alice, she encounters different creatures and undergoes emotional disorder along with several physical changes. The sudden transformations of her body were the reason behind her loss and search for identity. The wonderland for Alice was a land of adults, from the anxious white rabbit to the inquisitive Duchess and the psychopathic queen of hearts. Alice engagement with these weird creatures and others including the Cheshire cat and the caterpillar made her question her own identity.

The little Alice was described with a curious tendency to understand people around her. She was also inquisitive toward growing up and adulthood. Her curiosity made her steal a glance into her sister's book at the beginning of the story. This explains her interest in the adult world which is

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considered different from her own. Her disappointment after realizing that the book had no pictures on it, made her conclude that this world is far different from her own (Aihong 126-127).

Alice experienced identity crises due to her frequent physical changes. The transition between her shrinking size and her giant look made her confused about her true self. In chapter five when she was asked who she was, she was not able to give a solid answer about her true identity. “for I can’t understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing” (Carroll 48). Her frustration and confusion about her identity were shown in different parts of the book. “...I wonder if I’ve been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I’m not the same, the next question is, who in the world am I” (Carroll 19)

The several changes her body go through during the course of the novel can symbolize the identity problems Victorian girls were facing at that time. These girls were mostly treated as adults and grown-up females while they were just little children. The novel in a way exposed such problems that the rich Victorian girls had to go through in their childhood days.

According to Delaney, the Victorians notion of girlhood was well explained by Nelson and Vallone note, for them, these girls were torn between childhood and adulthood, between desires and pureness. These girls were not sure if they should follow traditions or accept the change and it was difficult for them to choose between home and market (34). Alice’s young age and interest in the adult world represents Victorian girls. The confusion all these girls went through was well demonstrated through Alice several size changes and her multiple personalities. What makes Alice a heroine is the fact that she had a double personality (Aihong 127).

She generally gave herself very good advice (though she very seldom followed it), and sometimes she scolded herself so severely as to bring tears to her eyes; and once she remembered trying to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet

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she was playing against herself, for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people. (Carroll 14)

Throughout the novel, we notice that most of the time, Alice talks to herself, questions herself and even scolds herself sometimes. The little girl plays with two identities at the same time and displays her identity issues. It is as if she has more than one personality or at least she is not the same person all the time. The duality in her personality can be regarded as a highlight on the childhood adulthood transition problem in the Victorian age that made several children feel confused and wonder about their true identity not knowing if they are children or adults.

3.5. Victorian Etiquette in Alice's Character:

During the Victorian era, women's role in society was determined to be only in the household. This domestic culture was intended for wives and daughters of middle to upper-class white protestant men. Therefore, women's place in society was structured by the domestic cult system and their roles were limited to domestic duties only. The Victorian time created a different sphere of influence for both men and women. The former had work and politics and the latter was restricted to home and family as they were considered the centre of the house.

However, from childhood, these little girls were taught etiquette and manners in order to achieve the title of a lady. Males would choose for marriage the utmost lady that would make a perfect wife.

Consequently, females had to learn these etiquettes to achieve the respectful title of a lady and became a desirable one (Heller). Such manners were somehow burdensome for females, especially for little girls. Etiquette culture was severe, it obliged girls to act and behave like grown-up ladies while they were just kids.

Alice in the novel represented these girls. Throughout her journey, her personality changed several times which made readers confused and wonder about her true age. She acts childish in some

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parts of the book and wisely in others which can refer to her identity problems and her duality character. Yet, this can also be a reference to the cruel etiquette system that deprived Victorian girls of having a normal childhood and led them to behave as women sometimes. Aside from their personalities, they were never supposed to have. Whenever Alice encounters a new creature in wonderland she deals with the absurd situations that she was put on cleverly and acts politely displaying her social status and her manners.

In this passage, "Please, would you tell me," said Alice, a little timidly, for she was not quite sure whether it was good manners for her to speak first, "why your cat grins like that?" (62). Carroll shows how Alice was afraid of addressing someone mistakenly and simply afraid of breaking one of the etiquette rules that she has learned. The book also shows how the rules of her society still control her although she is in a different world, a world where logic does not exist. The fact that it was a big problem at that time to make such mistakes enforced her to keep her polite attitude and manners throughout her whole journey in Wonderland.

The novel also focused on Alice personality that can be both silly as any child and responsible like an adult. She was curious and eager to discover new things whenever she encounters a new creature in wonderland. "What a curious feeling!" said Alice; I must be shutting up like a telescope.' (13). Her curiosity was behind her wonderful journey in wonderland. The little girl was also brave as she tried several new things yet she kept a wise attitude without making any reckless decisions "It was all very well to say "Drink me," but the wise little Alice was not going to do that in a hurry. "No, I'll look first," she said, "and see whether it's marked 'poison' or not." (12).

Her sense of pride belonging to an upper-class family of the Victorian era was clear in the novel. The way she speaks maintaining her manners was obvious and her politeness was clearly shown. She kept imposing her rules and providing some remarks to the weird creatures of wonderland. For instance, in the mad party she was not pleased with the Hatter, March hare and the Dormouse's table

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manners. When they offered her wine while there was not any, her response came a bit harsh “There isn’t any,” said the March Hare. “Then it wasn’t very civil of you to offer it,” said Alice angrily. Not only that, Alice was even giving orders and somehow teaching them some table etiquette “You should learn not to make personal remarks,” Alice said with some severity: “it’s very rude.” (73).

The novel also shed some light on the daily classes and routine of rich Victorians including dancing and music lessons along with few others. In the second chapter Alice showed her huge knowledge on several things “let’s try Geography. London is the capital of Paris, and Paris is the capital of Rome, and Rome—no, *that’s* all wrong, I ’m certain! I must have been changed for Mabel! I’ll try and say ‘*How doth the little—*’ ” and she crossed her hands on her lap, as if she were saying lessons,” (19-20) when she could not answer basic questions she thought that she must turned into Marbel; her maid. Such passage also refers to the educational system in the Victorian time. Alice was educated in a period when most of the poor children were not, she even had a comfortable life compared to them.

Alice Adventures in Wonderland held in it various realistic facts about Victorian’s lifestyle as well as several issues of the century, more precisely problems of upper-class girls. Carroll did not only present identity issues, but he also showed how important manners were among upper-class Victorians. These rules that were applied on young girls controlled their lives, deprived them of childhood and innocence and prepared them early to be women in a time where they were supposed to be playing like any kid their age. The book had several realistic parts in it that show that the life of the rich Victorian girls were blended in a fantasy and imagination character. This was enough a reason to push Carroll to create Alice to speak for all those girls who had only one dream; that of leading their lives as simple little girls.

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Conclusion:

The Victorian literature represented children of the time differently. Books like *Oliver Twist* were realistic and straightforward. They displayed all the hardships of the poor. The protagonist succeeded in winning public heart and attention as Dickens displayed many heart-warming scenes and tragic ones. He also presented to the readers the cruelty of rulers and society in general toward the lower classes, especially children. The book also discussed one of the nineteenth century biggest phenomenon, the child labour issue.

Unlike *Oliver Twist*, Carroll's *Alice Adventure in Wonderland* was a fantasy book that belonged to nonsense children literature. Due to its falling under this literary kind many considered that the novel was merely entertaining. In fact, the book held within it several realistic parts concerning the lives of upper class Victorian and even highlighted some issues rich girls were facing at that time.

The protagonist Alice represented the upper-class children of the Victorian society with all of their concerns. From the restriction of etiquette culture to identity problems that most girls went through. Alice displayed a great curiosity as she attempted to fit in the wonderland. She kept insisting on the importance of good manners and social Etiquette when she deal with rude creatures in her adventure. The sense of the unsatisfied childhood was present in both books. All in all, fictional characters like Oliver and Alice demonstrated to the world some of Victorians' struggles and draw public attention to the illness of the age.

General Conclusion:

Within the pages of imaginary literary works several realities are displayed to the world. This was our conclusion after a qualitative analysis of the main characters in the two Victorian novels; Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and Carroll's *Alice Adventure in Wonderland*. We concluded that nothing about literature is merely imagination or a simple narration. In fact, Victorian literature used realistic events blended with fantasy in order to draw public attention to certain concerns of the age.

Many of the social concerns that faced the Victorian age were because of the huge impact of the industrial revolution on society. As a matter of fact, the industrial revolution had a positive and a negative effect on the Victorian era. Life before and after industrialization witnessed a drastic change. Britain was rewarded with a massive economic growth, an emergence of a new social class. Also, the immensity of the British production granted her the title of the world's most powerful country of the time. The structure of society and family life changed radically and faced a notable transformation for both rich and poor. For The former, life got much easier. Their children were well educated, raised by nannies, had the best food and clothes. Yet, their childhood was far from a happy one. They were burdened with carrying their parents business and were treated like adults. As for the latter, their statues deteriorated and worsened because of industrialization. Most of them lost their jobs especially farmers ever since machinery replaced them. Thus, the number of unemployment raised among the poor and they suffered just to make end meets. As a result, parent's wages reduced and were not enough to feed a family. Therefore, Children had to join work forces in their early childhood in order to help their families.

Our research highlighted the fact that the cruelty of the Victorian society and many of the social concerns were all projected in the literature of the time. In fact, many Victorian authors including Charles Dickens sought in literature a remedy for the most debatable and controversial illness

especially children problems. Literature was a way to unveil realities of certain classes and many used it to heal society and call for change.

Literature also succeeded in a certain extent to bring some improvements to Victorians' lives. Social reforms took place gradually, meanwhile many acts were declared to upgraded children statuses. The crying voices of children were finally heard thanks to authors who directed their attention to these issues. Charles Dickens and Lewis Carroll served as genuine examples of two Victorian authors that depicted through their writings some of the problems that faced Victorian children. The focus on the two protagonists Alice and Oliver helped readers understand the shortage both rich and poor children went through.

Through the analysis of *Oliver*, we concluded that he presented all the poor Victorians. His tragic orphan life, the maltreatment he received in the workhouse as well as the cruelty of the rulers helped readers understand more about the living condition of the poor. Dickens presented several issues concerning children along with the phenomenon of child labour. The fact that he experienced child labour helped him comprehend children struggles and their needs. Child labour became one of the most painful realities of Victorians. These children started working around the age of three in the most dangerous places including mine and coal factories. This explained the reason behind their incurable diseases and death. The novel had heart-breaking passages and Dickens realistic descriptions brought both sympathy and attention toward children issues. Through this our argument that Dickens was the reason behind several social reforms that took place in the Victorian society mainly concerning children was backed.

On the other hand, Carroll's Alice helped in providing a glimpse of rich girl's problems. The burden of growing up in a rich family and holding responsibility in a young age. Following rules and learning social etiquette were some of the difficulties these children had to go through. Carroll presented these issues in a more unique way. The adventurous story of the little girl who dived into the

wonderland presented to readers more than just an entertaining story. The protagonist Alice delivered a concrete image of girls belonging to upper classes. We concluded that the book referred to the restricted childhood these children had. The novel also showed how social etiquette and manners obliged rich children to act and behave like adults. From the moment they wake up, rich children had responsibilities and specific rules to follow in order to match the need of their society.

All in all, Victorian literature played a significant role in displaying reality and highlighting the country's concerns. In fact, Realism became one of the important characteristics of the literature of the time. In our work, we attempted to show how realistic Charles Dickens and Lewis Carroll's fictional characters Oliver and Alice were. Through realism, Dickens and Carroll succeeded in drawing attention toward children problems. Therefore, small steps and reforms were performed gradually toward children and other social issues. In the near future, we wish to conduct further studies concerning children in the Victorian era and exploring different authors' representations that may lead us to different conclusions.

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