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**The Depiction of the Victorian society in Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend***

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## **ABSTRACT**

Victorian era was a time of the rapid industrial expansion, which led to many changes within the Victorian society. This bachelor thesis examines the portrayal of Victorian society in Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*. Through the analysis of several aspects of the society, the study explores the social and economic realities of the Victorian era, shown by the characters involved in the story. The thesis argues that the description of the society offers a critique of the values and attitudes. The transition between the social classes was possible, several characters undergo the transition. The position of woman in the society was limited by the male characters. The role of marriage was in many ways dependent on the characters, and their position in society.

Keywords: Victorian era, social class, social inequality, marriage

## **ABSTRACT**

Viktoriánská éra byla obdobím prudkého průmyslového rozvoje, který vedl k mnoha změnám v rámci viktoriánské společnosti. Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá zobrazením Viktoriánské společnosti v díle Charlese Dickense *Our Mutual Friend*. Skrz analýzu několika aspektů společnosti zkoumá sociální a ekonomickou realitu viktoriánské doby, kterou ukazují postavy v rámci příběhu. Z práce vyplývá, že popis společnosti kritizuje hodnoty a společenské postoje. Přejít mezi společenskými vrstvami byl možná, několik postav tento přechod podstupuje. Postavení žen ve společnosti bylo limitováno mužskými postavami. Role manželství byla v mnoha ohledech závislá na postavách a jejich postavení ve společnosti.

Klíčová slova: Viktoriánská éra, společenská třída, sociální nerovnost, manželství

## INTRODUCTION

Our society nowadays faces a lot of problems, like social inequality, poverty, exploitation, and in several countries also child labour. Those issues can be seen not only in the developing countries but also in the Western world. As a person, who likes to travel, I had the opportunity to see those aspects of the society. I always wondered when those issues appeared for the first time. According to many sources, the problems were caused by the Industrial Revolution.

The Victorian era saw significant social change and upheaval as a result of Britain's rapid industrialization and the rise of the middle class. Through a complex web of plotlines, Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* explores the themes of class, gender, and marriage. It depicts this era in great detail and vividness. The theoretical part of this bachelor thesis describes the Victorian era in the aspects of Victorian values, social class division, and occupations typical for each social class. The practical part is focused on Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, and analysis of the transition between the social classes, the position of women in society, and the role of marriage.

The bachelor thesis aims to analyse the Victorian society in the novel. Charles Dickens was one of few authors, who experienced life in many social classes, and describes the challenges each social was facing. He worked in Warren's Blacking Warehouse for ten-hour days, pasting labels on pots of boot blacking, which led him in the future to become a children's rights defender.

# **I. THEORETICAL PART**

# 1 THE DESCRIPTION OF THE VICTORIAN ERA

There are different definitions of the Victorian era in terms of duration. According to the Royal Museum Greenwich, the Victorian era is considered the period of the reign of Queen Victoria, who changed the role of the monarch reigned. (Royal Museum Greenwich,2023). The Victorian era is also defined as the historical period, which was started by the industrial revolution, and ended at the beginning of the 20th century (Klímová, 1997, p.43). Another source refers to the Victorian era as a period between 1820 and 1914, which corresponds closely to Queen Victoria's reign, extended to the reign of King Edward. (Steinbach, 1998).

The Victorian era was a time of important scientific discoveries, rapid change in terms of social reforms, and huge political development. There are several events and discoveries, which formed the Victorian era. (Victorian era Timeline, 2022) The major aspects of this period are the social differences among social classes, the rising population, connected to migration, and unemployment. (English Heritage, 2023)

The type of government in the Victorian era was a constitutional monarchy, where the main voice had aristocratic men, who were elected to the House of Commons to represent the countries of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. At the beginning of the period, half-million property-owning men were the only ones, who had the right to vote. During the period, Catholic men, and middle-class, and working-class men had the opportunity to vote. The women didn't have the right until 1918. The power of aristocracy in the governing sphere influenced social arrangement (Steinbach, 1998). However, Queen Victoria rejected the aristocratic way of life, and presented herself as a simple wife and widow (Klímová, 1997, p.44)

Victorian values and morals were in many ways an important part of the British culture of the 19th century. However, the values were different in each social class. The values were shared mostly at school, and many of them had the origin from the Bible “If ye do not work, neither shall ye eat” (Sigsworth, 1988, p.11). In Victorian society, labour was considered as a very important part, and because of the lack of welfare, people had no other option, than to work, even though they worked in difficult conditions. Charles Dickens described English people as the “hardest-worked people”. However, not everybody had the opportunity to attend school, so the values were shared by the authorities. Nietzsche expressed his opinion on Victorian society in his work “morality is not yet a problem”, where he describes the illusion that they could sustain morality without religion. According to Himmelfarb, he was



not referring to the English as a whole, however, he referred to the masses, who followed the values and morals set by the priestly class. (Himmelfarb, 1987, p.6)

## **2 SOCIAL CLASS DIVISION**

The concept of class in Victorian England was strictly restricted. It did not need to depend on income, even though it was part of the social class division, however, the very important part was their birth and family connections. Most people were aware of which social class they belong to. People express their belonging to the social class through education, values, manners, speech, and clothing. In the time of the Victorian era, it was believed that each social class has strict values, according to which people were expected to behave. (Mitchell,2009, p.28) Victorian society was divided into four major social classes – The Upper class, The Middle class, The Working class and The Under class. (UKEssays,2018)

### **2.1 The Upper class**

The Victorian society the Upper class consisted of the richest people. Their social setting was part of their heritage, and so were their properties and money. Part of their heritage was also a seat in the House of Lords, which allowed them to vote on political affairs. Their children were able to be educated, usually from the age of seven. Daughters were educated to have good manners and to marry a man of similar qualities. The oldest son was expected to take care of the family estate and supervise the workers, the other sons were presumed to join the army, navy, or church. The upper class consisted of the Lords and Ladies, Barons, Dukes, Duchesses, Royal Family, and other titled people. (Back in the day of, 2020) The Victorian Era strictly defined the role of women in all social classes. If the woman decided to adopt standards from another social class, it was considered very offensive. The role of the woman in the Upper class was to be gentle and to take part in social gatherings and other parties. Single women usually spend time with other women from the same social class. When a woman got married, their role was to keep the property tidy. The wife was also a symbol of her husband's wealth. It was judged according to the wife's wardrobe, and there was also this expectation, that the less work the wife had to do, the wealthier the husband was, so he could hire more people in order to do the job instead of her. Woman's role was also to accompany their husbands on the hunting. (UKEssays,2018)

### **2.2 THE MIDDLE CLASS**

The Middle class in the Victorian era was considered as the people, who did not inherit their wealth, however, the middle-class people were the ones, who had wealth, made by their work. Usually, they had “clean jobs”, and had regular monthly or annual incomes.

(UKEssays,2018) The most common jobs of middle-class people were lawyers, doctors, merchants, engineers, and bakers. Their children had access to education, mostly at the boarding schools by governesses. The daughters were educated in order to assimilate good manners in order to find a good husband from the middle class, or the upper class. The education of the sons was concentrated on the successful help of the family business. (Back in the day of, 2020) The middle class was assimilated with the growth of the economies. The other social classes differ according to their income. At the beginning of the Victorian era, the middle class was a very small group, however, in the end, it was the largest group in society. Thanks to the Industrial Revolution, the middle class were able to have more job opportunities and increase their income. The life of a woman in the middle class depends on a lot, how much money her husband made. Because of the large scope of the middle class, some women needed to work in the family business, some did not. The middle class participated in the activities that the upper class did before. They also gathered events, and they visited dancing halls, where they could get to know each other. (UKEssays,2018) For the upper-middle class, it was common to have a maid, who helped the wife with the household chores. The ruler of the household was the man, who led the family strictly, because he knew, that there is a low chance the wife could divorce him. The children were educated to respect and obey the rules. (Picard, 2009)

### **2.3 The Working Class**

The working class in Victorian society is considered to have been the majority of the inhabitants. It is well-known as the social class, which was the most affected by the social division. (UKEssays,2018) For this class was significant that they had very low income, for the hours they worked. There are several jobs typical for this social class, known as the physical, like sailor, fisherman, factory worker, servant, and docker. (Back in the day of, 2020)

People in the working class could not afford to buy homes, so they had to rent them. The majority of working-class people, particularly those who lived in cities, lived in rooms in slum housing because the size of their homes was determined by their income. Additionally, this meant that they never qualified to vote. (UKEssays,2018)

Because the majority of the education had to be paid for, the children were lucky if they got any, as the education was not necessary for the positions typical for the working class. Young adults from the working class frequently married within the class, which resulted in a circle

of poverty. (Holmes,2017, p.2) During the Victorian era, the working class suffered the most. Immigration was another issue that the lower class had to deal with. All of the working-class people's wages were affected, and they were barely able to make ends meet. Because the conditions for the working class were so bad, if a family did not have enough money to support itself and the children had to work, they might have to be separated from their parents while they were working. Their lives were greatly impacted by each of these things. The children's lack of education meant that their futures were decided before they even reached adulthood. They ended up working extremely hazardous and filthy jobs. Because they lived in total poverty, they were considered to be part of the “underclass”. (UKEssays,2018)

## **2.4 The Underclass**

The underclass in Victorian society were the people, who were helpless and reliant on the assistance of others. This mostly included some women, the homeless, orphans, beggars, and vagrants. The expansion of factories caused by the industrial revolution resulted in the employment of a large number of workers, who were mostly children and women. There were paid low wages to those workers, who worked frequently long hours in hazardous and unhealthy conditions. (Croley,2008. pp.74-104)

This social class also included people, who cause their poverty themselves, in many caused by alcohol consumption. There was developed a heavy drinking habit of the working men. (Brown, 1973, p.381-383) In the Victorian era, homelessness was a major issue. During the day, a vast number of people in the underclass walked the streets and sought shelter at night wherever they could, because they could not afford homes. (James, 2018)

Orphans were also considered part of the underclass of the Victorian era. Many of them were exploited by the factory workers, who provided them with accommodation in orphanages, which very mostly very unhealthy and dirty. Adoption is regarded as the miracle that would occur in the life of an orphan. Most orphans were adopted by their immediate family, neighbours, or married couples without children. If the children were adopted by people of a higher class, the child was unable to maintain relationships with people of a lower class. (Mahabal, 2022)

The life of women in the underclass of Victorian society was considered very difficult. There were several situations, in which the women dealt with the situation. In Victorian society, there was essentially a high number of prostitutes. Because of the importance of Victorian

values in society, people tended to look down on them. However, women in that social class had in many ways did not have the option to do a different job. (Walkowitz,1972, pp.105-114)

### **3 LABOUR IN THE VICTORIAN ERA**

The Industrial Revolution was a time of significant innovation and mechanization that began in Great Britain in the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and spread to a large portion of the world later. The mining of iron and coal dominated the British Industrial Revolution. (Chen, 2022) The Industrial Revolution influenced in many ways also Victorian society. As a result of that, the Victorian society was facing stark contrasts. The Industrial Revolution resulted in a shift in power from the aristocracy, whose position and wealth were based on land, to the newly wealthy business leaders, helping with the expansion of the middle-class. At the end of the Victorian era, the new aristocracy became one based on wealth rather than land, and they frequently purchased their own titles, which remained significant in British society. (Baker,2023)

Several factors influenced labour in Victorian society as class, gender, and race. Demographically, the Victorian era resulted in many changes. In the Victorian era, factories were built in towns that have since grown into cities. Further factory expansion was facilitated by the use of steam-powered machinery. People moved from the countryside to these towns in the hope of finding work in the factories that were being built. The first industrial city was Manchester, which was also known as Cottonopolis. As time went on, a lot of people moved to the cities in search of work, which led to the cities becoming overcrowded. Cities like London were ill-equipped to handle such a large population, despite the expansion of the industry. Those who were unable to afford better accommodations stayed in lodging houses, while those who could afford it rented rooms. (Mahabal, 2022)

#### **3.1 The Under Class Jobs**

Those in the underclass were helpless and reliant on the assistance of others. People in the underclass depended on the donation from others, in order to survive. In many cases, women turned to prostitution, since they had no other option (Penna,2018) In the underclass were also homeless people, orphans, and the ones, who causes their poverty by themselves, like alcoholics, and gamblers. (Croley,2008. p.74-104)

##### ***Child labour***

There are several factors related to child labour. As a result of the Industrial Revolution, the new mines and factories were in need of labourers to complete simple jobs that could be done by children with ease. When their parents were able to find work for them, poor

children often started working. Child labour increased as a result, creating a brand-new issue that Victorian society needed to address. The children were forced to work, in order to survive. (Griffin, 2014)

There are several jobs that children did, in many cases in dreadful conditions. A common job related to children was considered to work in the coal mines. During the Victorian era, steam was the most popular energy source. Trains, steamships, and factories that used steam to power their machinery were all powered by steam. Water and heat are required to create steam. As a result of that, coal mines employed a significant portion of Victorian child labourers in the 1800s. The conditions in the coal mines were unfavourable. The air was very thick with coal dust because there was not enough ventilation. It is simple to comprehend how respiratory issues could develop when one considers that Victorian children would work anywhere from 12 to 18 hours per day. The mines were plagued by rat infestation and had constant noise. (Steward, 2023)

Another common type of work that the children were forced to do was chimney sweeping. Victorian child chimney sweeps lived a brutal and dreary existence. Some of them were as young as three. They were a popular choice for descending the narrow chimney stacks due to their small size. In the 1800s, working as a child chimney sweep might have been the most hazardous occupation for children, particularly when the child was just starting out. The child's arms, elbows, legs, and knees would be raw after being sent up the chimney the first few times. (Steward,2023)

### ***Prostitution***

Prostitution was a widespread issue during the Victorian era. It was in the contrast to every moral principle that was advocated at the time. “Fallen women” disregarded and rejected morals like chastity, prudence, and grace. These women were forced into prostitution for a variety of reasons, the most common were the economic and social status. Brothels, military encampments, and streetwalking were just a few of the many options available to prostitutes when they first entered the industry. During the Victorian era, the number of prostitute women was staggeringly high. (Penna, 2018)

Most, in any case, spent extended periods in the wet conditions. Some of them worked in red-light districts, while others worked in their own communities. Prostitution was a common job in the Victorian era. (Flanders,2014) Even though sex work has never been against the law in the UK, the activities that go along with it were becoming more and more

punishable. The Contagious Diseases Acts, enacted by the British government in the 1860s, tightened regulations on sex work. Through moral politics, these actions contributed to the legalization of the cultural fears regarding prostitution. The sex workers needed to undergo physically invasive procedures, in order to test for venereal disease. Sex workers were also forbidden from operating near churches, universities, and army barracks. Prostitution was viewed as the “great social evil” in British society. (Mainwaring-Parr, 2021)

### **3.2 The Working-Class jobs**

As the Working class is considered in the beginning of the Victorian era the majority of the inhabitants. This social class had very low incomes for the hours they worked. Mostly, they did a lot of physical work. This social class include families, who lived in “Hand-to-mouth” conditions. (Working class living standards, 2023)

There are several jobs that people from the Working class in the Victorian era did. In the effort to try to provide for their families, the people have to work these jobs for very little pay, and for long hours. As the most common jobs related to the working class were sailor, factory worker, servant, fisherman, and docker. (Back in the day of, 2020) However, one of the jobs that is considered the most painful in the Victorian era was leech collection. Leech was used as a medicine treat for a variety of ailments. Leech collectors had to wade through filthy ponds in the expectation that the leeches would latch onto their legs, to be able to collect them. (What were jobs like in Victorian times, 2023)

Another occupation provided by the working class was sewer hunters, called also Toshers. For the sewer hunters, the sewer posed numerous threats. They had to get around falling earth and crumbling brickwork, which could easily threaten to bury them alive if even lightly touched. They were also at risk of becoming lost in the sewer systems, which were like a maze. This was due to a bizarre pattern of crossing and recrossing the sewer lines. Additionally, now and again downpours of water were permitted to hurry through the sewer framework when conduits were lifted, and ignorant they could be cleared away or set in outrageous danger. Toshers frequently scavenged in groups of three or four individuals due to the insatiable swarms or rats they faced. These people ignored the odours and unpleasant smells, in order to find some valuable items in the shorelines, and also dumps. (Walton, 2014)



### **3.3 The Middle-Class jobs**

In the Victorian era, the middle class was thought to be those who did not inherit their wealth; however, the middle class was made up of those who worked for it. They typically had regular monthly or annual incomes and “clean jobs”. (UKEssays, 2018). There are several jobs related to the Victorian middle class, and the field of work is much wider, compared to the under-class, and working class. As the most common jobs related to this social class were educators, shopkeepers, accountants and clerks, and doctors. (Victorian Occupations in City and Town, 2021)

There are several jobs related to the middle class, whose conditions are in many ways viewed as much better, compared to the working class and underclass. One of the jobs, who was done by the middle class was doctors. During the Victorian time, there was no procedure for preparing by the clinical schools. There were only a few hospitals in operation in the Victorian era. Books and old books should be used to teach medicine, according to many doctors. Therefore, even if there were a lot of medical schools during the Victorian era, none of them would have been successful. (Victorian Era Doctors, Medical Practitioners, 2022)

Another member of the middle class is the clerk. As a result of Britain becoming one of the most powerful empires, there were many clerks in need. Every factory and business required clerks, due to the rise in trade and banking technology. It was necessary to manually write each invoice, letter, and ledger entry with accuracy, speed, and legibility. (Picard, 2009)

An important position in the Victorian middle class had educators. Towards the start of the period, just young ladies who had never been married or more established ladies, who had never been married could function as educators or teachers. Men were less likely to be interested in teaching outside of higher education, and salaries were especially low. (Victorian Occupations in City and Town, 2021)

### **3.4 The Upper-Class jobs**

The Victorian Upper-class consisted comprised of the wealthiest individuals. Their social environment, as well as their wealth and properties, were part of their heritage. As a part of their heritage is also considered a seat in the house of Lords, which gave them the right to vote on matters pertaining to politics. (Back in the day of, 2020)

The members of the Victorian Upper class did not necessarily need to work. Their annual income was made by properties, rent, and interests. The Victorian Upper-class controlled most of the land in Britain. (Steinbach, 1998)

## **II. PRACTICAL PART**

## 4 THE TRANSITION BETWEEN THE SOCIAL CLASSES

There are several factors related to the transition between the social classes. In *Our Mutual Friend*, several characters were belonging to a specific social class. This division was in many ways made by their heritage. However, many characters wanted to change their social class, in order to have better conditions, in which they wanted to live. There are several characters, who were belonging to special social classes. The class system was strictly divided, and throughout the story was criticised by Dickens. Some of the characters were concerned about their social status and there are many ways of behaviour that the characters had in order to reach their goals. However, some of the characters became honest and kind through the story, for example, Lizzie Hexam.

### 4.1 Lizzie Hexam

There are several characters, who were aware of the social class setting. One of the characters, who knew that there is an opportunity to become a member of the higher class than in which they belong was Lizzie Hexam. Lizzie Hexam was a member of the working class. As a character, she is considered very kind, and very supportive, in her relationship with her brother. She works as a waterman, with her father Gaffer Hexam. Their occupation meant to remove dead bodies from the river, and to take cash from their bodies, before handing it to the authorities. “No. Has a dead man any use for money? Is it possible for a dead man to have money? What world does a dead man belong to?” (Dickens, 6) The conditions they worked in were in many ways unsanitary. Lizzie didn't have the opportunity to choose her job. Because of their social status, she needed to work in order to support her family. She was also forbidden by her father to have any kind of education. “As if it wasn't your living! As if it wasn't meat and drink to you!” (Dickens, 4)

Lizzie Hexam was a daughter of Gaffer Hexam. Gaffer Hexam was also a member of the working class and the father of two children. His occupation was waterman, which he did together with Lizzie. “He was a hook-nosed man, and with that and his bright eyes and his ruffled head, bore a certain likeness to a roused bird of prey”. (Dickens, 4) Throughout the story, Gaffer Hexam is considered to be insecure about himself and expects that other people are looking down on him. As a character, he also faces problems with alcoholism. “It's her drunken father. “(Dickens, 864)

Even though Lizzie grew up in conditions, in which she worked hard, she remained kind and very supportive. Her kindness is shown in her relationship with her brother, Charley Hexam, when she gives him money, in order to be able to study for the educator, even though her father forbids it. "Let him never come a nigh me to ask me my forgiveness," said the father, again emphasizing his words with the knife. 'Let him never come within sight of my eyes, nor yet within reach of my arm. " (Dickens, 89) As a member of the working class, Lizzie Hexam is forced to work hard, in order to provide for the family. The conditions the working class was facing, were in many ways difficult. However, within the working class, we can see many aspects of kindness, especially provided by Lizzie.

Her brother, Charley Hexam, dreams about becoming a schoolmaster. In order to reach that dream, he puts a lot of effort into that. However, to become a schoolmaster, it was necessary to have an education. Charley is supported by his sister, Lizzie, who believes in him in all ways. He is very grateful for everything Lizzie does for him. Also, he appreciates her presence in his life. "Don't go saying I never knew a mother,' interposed the boy, 'for I knew a little sister that was sister and mother both.'" (Dickens, 33) In his eyes, Lizzie could be considered his mother. Together, they experienced a lot of challenges, related to living in the working class.

After the death of their father, Lizzie is left on her own and without a support system. She is also bereft of her father's death and struggling to accept the possibility that he may have committed suicide. Even though Lizzie faces the fact that her surroundings are making assumptions that her father is a murderer, she always predicts that the assumptions are false. "Of her father's being groundlessly suspected, she felt sure. Sure. Sure. And yet, repeat the word inwardly as often as she would, the attempt to reason out and prove that she was sure, always came after it and failed "(Dickens, 83)

Since she was not forced to work as a waterman anymore, Lizzie had the opportunity to live with Jenny Wren, who is the dolls' dressmaker. Lizzie's brother, who is being educated, supports Lizzie in order to be in a relationship with his schoolmaster, Bradley Headstone. He wishes that Lizzie would be educated by Bradley Headstone, so they both would be closer together. However, in the meantime, Eugene Wrayburn arranged a teacher for Lizzie and Jenny. Bradley Headstone was in some kind of romantic relationship with Miss Peecher. However, he ignores her and falls in love with Lizzie. He purses her passionately, and in many cases also violently. After Lizzie politely declines his proposal, he becomes extremely

jealous. As a result of that, Headstone begins to follow Wrayburn through the night the London street, as a cause of all of his problems, which resulted in the unsuccessful murder of Eugene Wrayburn, which led Eugene to marry Lizzie. “Undraw the curtains, my dear girl,' said Eugene, after a while, 'and let us see our wedding-day.’“(Dickens, 890)

Lizzie falls in love with Eugene Wrayburn, who works as a barrister. Their love is in many ways pure, and their relationship is criticised by members of the upper class. “The question before the Committee is, whether a young man of very fair family, good appearance, and some talent, makes a fool or a wise man of himself in marrying a female waterman, turned factory girl. “ (Dickens, 964)

Lizzie Hexam as a character was facing many challenges during her life. She was born in a working-class family, where she was forced to work as a waterman, in very unsanitary conditions. However, even though she went through many difficulties in her life, she stayed very kind, honest, and very supportive. In her relationship with her brother, she gave away her own happiness, so her brother could reach better conditions for living. Even though her father treated her very badly, she still believed that the assumptions against him are false. In her relationships, she has chosen love over many other aspects related to that. As a result of that, because of her kindness, self-sacrificing, and honesty, she becomes happily married to an upper-middle class barrister, whom she loves from her deepest heart. Her brother, Charley Hexam, also experienced the transition between the social class, thanks to the support of Lizzie.

## **4.2 Bella Wilfer**

John Harmon, the protagonist of the story, should inherit the wealth after his father, under the condition that he marries Bella Wilfer. Bella Wilfer is considered a very beautiful girl, who is unsatisfied with the lower-middle class living standards. She is dreaming of marrying somebody wealthy, in order to live with higher standards. “Those ridiculous points would have been smoothed away by the money, for I love money, and want money—want it dreadfully. I hate to be poor, and we are degradingly poor, offensively poor, miserably poor, beastly poor” (Dickens, p.44) Her mother, Mrs Wilfer, is also the kind of woman, who is never satisfied with the conditions in which she is living. When Bella was made aware that her intended husband, John Harmon, is dead, she realizes how money can change the conditions of living in a very short time.

The Boffins are the ones, who should inherit the wealth after John Harmon, who was considered dead. In many ways, they show Bella the danger of wealth, and also that there are many more important things to be aware of. The Boffins are through the story considered very kind people. Even though they were to inherit the money, they showed kindness and empathy to the others. Mrs Boffin convinced her husband to take an orphan, so he can live in better conditions. There it is proven that goodness is shown by the working class. Now that he is past all benefit of the money, and it's come to us, I should like to find some orphan child, and take the boy and adopt him and give him John's name, and provide for him (Dickens, p.120)

For Bella, it is very difficult to be satisfied with the working-class condition, when she knew that she had the opportunity to become a member of the upper class. At the beginning of the story, she became obsessed with wealth, money, and upper-class standards. She also rejects the proposal from Rokesmith, who is John Harmon, after the “resurrection” from the river. In this part of the story, Bella is considered heartless, and selfish. However, as the story progresses, and as the influence of Mr and Mrs Boffin leads Bella, she realizes that her choice of marrying for money instead of love was a mistake. The first turning point in Bella's character we can see in the lines, where she sees, how the character of Mr Boffin changed when he received the wealth. Even though, the Boffins intended to give part of the heritage to her. “When I came here, I respected you and honoured you, and I soon loved you,' cried Bella. 'And now I can't bear the sight of you. At least, I don't know that I ought to go so far as that—only you're a—you're a Monster!’” (Dickens, p.706)

This event is considered a very important turning point for Bella because she is aware of the fact, that money and wealth can change the character of people. Even though Mr Boffin offers to Bella, that they are going to give her money, as part of her heritage, she rather rejects that agreeing with the cruelty made by Mr Boffin. “Do you think that any power on earth could make me take it, if you did, sir?” (Dickens, p.710) After that Bella finally sees her father, and the conditions, in which he works. She is very surprised; however, she came here to apologize, and ask for forgiveness, because of her treatment of him and her mother. Her father forgives her and is in some way grateful that his daughter was finally aware of the things, which are important in life. When Mr Rokesmith appears in the office, he gets to know, that Bella gave away the heritage and upper-middle-class standards, in order to take sides with him, which made them decide, that they will spend their life together, with the

allowance of Mr Wilfer. “‘You don't know, sir,’ said Rokesmith, ‘what a heart she has!’  
“(Dickens, p.718)

After Bella gets in touch with her true self, she marries John Harmon, whose identity is revealed at the end of the story. His identity is shown by Mr Boffin, who explains to Bella, why she was treated in the way she was treated by them, and that their behaviour was made by them to show her, how money can influence the behaviour of people, who are in the deepest of their heart kind, and emphatic to others. Bella is, in the beginning, confused; however, she apologizes for her treatment and is happily married to John Harmon. “‘but that I never shall be able to understand as long as I live. It is, how John could love me so when I so little deserved it, and how you, Mr and Mrs Boffin, could be so forgetful of yourselves, and take such pains and trouble, to make me a little better, and after all to help him to so unworthy a wife. But I am very very grateful.’” (Dickens, p.918).

Bella Wilfer as a character is considered a beautiful girl, who was deeply unsatisfied with the conditions related to the working class. After her intended husband was considered dead, she became even more obsessed with wealth, and her behaviour was in many ways considered as not appropriate. She was influenced by Boffins, who should inherit money from John Harmon's father. They showed her, in the way they behaved that wealth could change the behaviour of people, which let Bella change her opinion about the idea of being wealthy through marriage. After that, she becomes “‘reborn” again. When John Harmon sees that she changed, he falls in love with her, and they get married. The transition between the social classes finally happened, Bella becomes a member of the upper-middle class, however, through the fact, that when she rejected wealth, and her social status, and becomes kind and emphatic. Bella's character is shown that the transition was possible, through self-awareness of the behaviour.

### **4.3 John Harmon**

John Harmon is considered to be the protagonist of the story. Before he arrived in London, he had problems with his father, because he was defending his sister, who has chosen the marriage for love, instead the marriage for status. His father disowned him, however, afterwards he decided to give the wealth to him under a condition. As the condition, to inherit the wealth of his father, he is to marry Bella Wilfer, who is a beautiful girl, coming from a lower-middle class background, whom he has never met.



On the way to London, he discovers that his identity is being mistakenly changed, because people think that he died on the way to London. “Upon the evidence adduced before them, the Jury found, That the body of Mr John Harmon had been discovered floating in the Thames, in an advanced state of decay, and much injured; and that the said Mr John Harmon had come by his death under highly suspicious circumstances, though by whose act or in what precise manner there was no evidence before this Jury to show” (Dickens, 37). As a result of that, he prefers to stay anonymous and identifies himself as John Rokesmith.

The Boffins are the ones, who inherit the money, after John Harmon's death. One of the first things, Mr Boffin is to do with the inherited fortune, is to give a lot of money to the person, who would solve the murder of John Harmon. His intention is also to make sure that in the case of his death, his wife would inherit the fortune. A person, named John Rokesmith approaches him, and recommends himself as a personal secretary for them. “if you would try me as your man of business under any name, I know you would find me faithful and grateful, and I hope you would find me useful. You may naturally think that my immediate object is money” (Dickens, 114) Even though he cannot give some references, he promises to be loyal. After the approval, he becomes an employee of them. As a secretary, he is considered very hard-working, kind, and discreet, however, his position as a secretary is made to get to know Bella better.

In the beginning, as a secretary, he spends a lot of time with Bella. He is very disappointed in her behaviour. After the proposal, which Bella at first declines, he is finally persuaded, that his identity will not be revealed. In his eyes, she is considered a woman, who wants to get into a higher position in society through money and marriage. Deeply unsatisfied with that fact, he decides to stay John Rokesmith forever, and let the past behind him. However, as the story develops, we are witnessing a rapid change in Bella's behaviour. When she finally realizes, how cruel she was to other people, her position and points of view on the world change. Finally, she accepts the proposal from John Rokesmith.” ‘I knew you would come to him, and I followed you,’ said Rokesmith. ‘My love, my life! You are mine?’ To which Bella responded, ‘Yes, I am yours if you think me worth taking!’” (Dickens, 717) However, afterwards, his true identity is revealed, and what has changed his intentions, to have his identity hidden.

John Harmon is in many ways the interesting character of the story. Most of the characters were to improve their position in society, however, John Harmon did the opposite. As a

member of the upper-middle class, he decided to change his position to middle-class member, in order to get to know another character better. His main point of interest is the person, and her character, which was intended for him to marry. Throughout the story, he is hard-working, calm, and honest. He is witnessing the change in Bella's behaviour, which makes him get to know her better.

## **5 THE POSITION OF THE WOMAN IN THE SOCIETY**

The novel *Our Mutual Friend* describes the era of Queen Victoria's reign. In the novel, there are several factors related to the social class, social setting, and position of the women in the society. In the story, there are several characters, whose behaviour was in many cases determined by their social setting. As a very important part of analysis related to society, it is necessary to understand the position of women. In the novel, there are several characters, who had different conditions of living and related to that, different rights, and different positions. The position of women was in many ways determined by their social setting.

### **5.1 Lizzie Hexam**

There are several women, who were members of the working class. Lizzie Hexam, as a member of the working class, needed to work, in order to provide for her family. Under the constant supervision of her father, her position was determined. Her occupation was a waterman. “The girl rowed, pulling a pair of sculls very easily” (Dickens, p.2) The conditions she worked in, were in many ways very unsanitary, and difficult. “His arms were wet and dirty, and he washed them over the side” (Dickens, p.4) As a woman, she was in many cases facing the constant pressure from her father. “It's my belief you hate the sight of the very river.' 'I—I do not like it, father.' 'As if it wasn't your living! As if it wasn't meat and drink to you!’”. (Dickens, p.4) She cannot even decide, what kind of occupation she wanted to do, because it was determined by her father. The working-class setting has put her in that position.

Lizzie Hexam had a younger brother. She supported him, in order to escape the conditions in which they lived. From the work she has done, she gave money to him, so he would be able to study for being an educator. Because the father was in many ways limited, he did not allow his children to have some sort of education and wanted them to live in the working-class standards. However, Lizzie knew that education is very important, so she put a lot of effort into her brother's education. She made her best to make the father tolerable with the education, even though she did not have the opportunity to be educated herself. “I should be very glad to be able to read real books. I feel my want of learning very much, Charley. But I should feel it much more, if I didn't know it to be a tie between me and father“. (Dickens, 36) Her position in this situation was the uniting member, who wanted the best for her relatives and sacrificed herself a lot.

Her relationship with her brother was in many ways very interesting. Charley did not remember his mother, because she died when he was at a very young age. „Why, there are you and me, Charley, when you were quite a baby that never knew a mother” (Dickens, p.33) The fact led him to see Lizzie as if she was his mother. In the beginning, he treats her nicely and cares about her. However, as the story develops, he gave himself in a superordinate position, where he is the one, who wants to order the life of his sister. He is forcing his sister, in order to get married to his schoolmaster, Bradley Headstone. In his eyes, it is the opportunity for them to be closer together, however, the reason could be in many ways considered selfish. “‘You were obliged to tell him,’ repeated the boy angrily, between his teeth, and rudely pushing her away. ‘You were obliged to tell him! Do you know that he is worth fifty of you?’” (Dickens, p.474) After everything his sister did, in order to provide for him, his anger, and dominance against her could be in many ways considered very disrespectful.

However, even though Lizzie was forced by her brother to get married, she decided to politely reject the proposal and rather preferred the life she was living, instead of living with someone who she did not love. For Lizzie, there was love in the first place, more important than everything else. That resulted in the saving life of Eugene, who was attacked by Bradley Headstone. Even though Eugene is disabled after Headstone tried to kill him, Lizzie does her best, in order to cure him. This kind of loyalty makes them live happily together, which afterwards resulted in marriage. For Eugene, it destroyed his reputation, as for the upper-middle class member. “He means to tell us, that a horrid female waterman is graceful.” (Dickens, 964) However, for Lizzie it does not matter, she loves Eugene not for the social setting, but for the love, which is between them. Eugene behaves in many ways much better than Lizzie, and is very grateful, for everything she did for him. However, Lizzie is still subordinate to him, and in the relationship, he has the main word.

Lizzie Hexam is a complex character in the story. In the beginning, she was under the constant supervision of her father, who did not let her do anything, what she wanted. She was also forbidden to have any kind of education. Lizzie was self-sacrificing, and very supportive of her brother, whose dream was to become schoolmaster. However, her position was determined, and she could not choose another way of living, because of the pressure coming from the others. Lizzie's role in the story was in many ways difficult, related to the dominant toxic power of men, who were surrounding her. Even her brother, whom she supported, was forcing her to marry someone, whom she did not want to be with. However,

after she got married to Eugene, the position has changed a little. Her position has gotten better, but the main word in the relationship had her husband.

## **5.2 Bella Wilfer**

There are several women related to the Position of Women in the society. After the death of John Harmon, Bella realizes, how unsatisfied is she with the conditions of the lower-middle class. Her dream was to get into the higher social setting, because of the heritage from John Harmon's father. Bella's life in the story, is very dependent on men. She was educated in the way that in order to reach a higher social setting, she needs to find somebody from a higher social class, who provides her the lifestyle of the wealthy. Her parents were obsessed with money and with the higher social class setting. In the meantime, because of her dissatisfaction with the life of her parents, she prefers to stay with Boffins, who are the ones inheriting money from Harmon. Boffins took her as if she was their adoptive daughter. "There, Bella! At last, I hope you have got your wishes realized—by your Boffins. You'll be rich enough now—with your Boffins. You can have as much flirting as you like—at your Boffins. But you won't take me to your Boffins, I can tell you—you and your Boffins too!" (Dickens, p.133)

Since Bella lived with the Boffins, she felt as if she received higher standards of living. Throughout the story, she complained a lot about the conditions she was facing in her old home. However, with Boffins, she felt a small difference, because they had money, and Boffins behaved to her nicely, which made her feel very comfortable. She saw the kindness and the generosity, they provided for her. When she stayed with them, she did not have any kind of job. She came a lot in contact with John Rokesmith, who was employed by Mr Boffin as a secretary. However, Bella was still obsessed with money, and the higher-class standards, so she does not want to be married to him, because it would be very hard for her to adapt to the conditions of the lower-middle class. "If ever there was a mercenary plotter whose thoughts and designs were always in her mean occupation, I am the amiable creature. But I don't care. I hate and detest being poor, and I won't be poor if I can marry money" (Dickens, p.379)

Even though Bella was a member of the lower-middle class, her position in the story made her feel, thanks to Boffin's as if she was much higher. However, after she adopted the idea of being rich thanks to Harmon's heritage, she behaved in a way she will not fit into the lower-middle class again. In many ways, she disrespects people who are in the same class

as her, her parents included. In the story, her obsession with money could be considered unhealthy. “but my life and fortunes are so contradictory altogether that what can I expect myself to be!”(Dickens, p.381) The fact that wealth is so important to her, is limiting her behaviour, in a way to be in somehow contribute to society.

However, the longer Bella stays with Boffins, the more she realizes that her behaviour is not appropriate. She is aware of the fact, that she treated people around her in a way they did not deserve. Her position suddenly changes. She would rather be fully in the working class than be rich and oversee the things which are happening around her. She also apologized to her parents that she has treated them unfairly. Even though she did not behave well to them, she is not being disavowed. They still supported her, in order to be satisfied in life. Her position, especially when it comes to the relationship with Mr Rokesmith, whose proposal she finally accepts.”I knew you would come to him, and I followed you,' said Rokesmith.” 'My love, my life! You are mine?' To which Bella responded, 'Yes, I am yours if you think me worth taking!' And after that, seemed to shrink to next to nothing in the clasp of his arms, partly because it was such a strong one on his part, and partly because there was such a yielding to it on hers.“ (Dickens, p.717) Afterwards, she is told by Mr Boffin, that John Rokesmith was secretly John Harmon, who decided to change his identity, in order to discover her character. Even though she went through a lot of manipulation, she is satisfied with the position, in which she finally ended, and apologized to John, for her previous behaviour.

Bella Wilfer had a very special position in the whole story. At the beginning, her position was to change, because she was to marry John Harmon, and with that receive wealth and a higher social setting. However, when she is aware of the fact, that he is dead, her position changes. She leaves her family, and relatives behind, so she can live with the newly rich Boffins. There, she is in the position that she does not especially contribute in some way to the society. She is only waiting to marry someone wealthy, so she can get into a higher social setting. Even though she lived there, she did not do any sort of job or did not help Boffins in some ways. After the argument between Mr Boffin and John Rokesmith, she realizes, how money, and wealth can change the character of kind people, which leads her to rethink her position, and views on life and marriage. After finally accepting the proposal, she is told by Mr Boffin that John Harmon changed his identity, in order to get to know her better. Her position finally changes, however, after marriage she is considered the “New-Bella”, who has chosen love over wealth.

### 5.3 Mrs Henrietta Boffin

There are several women, who had different positions in society, related to their social class. As a very interesting position is considered the one of Mrs Boffin. After the death of John Harmon, Mrs Boffin inherited the fortune with her husband. As working-class people, they had the opportunity to get higher, thanks to the wealth they received. However, this position does not necessarily apply to women, who were mostly under the supervision of their husbands, what resulted, that their position and rights did not change at all. However, Mrs Boffin still remained very kind, caring, and loving, because she knew that from the wealth they have received, there are more people, who could benefit from that.

Mrs Boffin went through many life difficulties with Mr Boffin. They both are considered working-class members, which made them, in many ways, experience the difficulties made by the social setting. However, they were still kind, and caring. "to show you, now the affairs are wound up, that me and Mrs Boffin have ever stood as we were in Christian honour bound, the children's friend. Me and Mrs Boffin stood the poor girl's friend; me and Mrs Boffin stood the poor boy's friend; me and Mrs Boffin up and faced the old man when we momentarily expected to be turned out for our pains." (Dickens, p.106) Their relationship could be considered, related to the Victorian era, as very well working. However, the main word, when it came to the question of wealth, and how to deal with the money, had Mr Boffin. Mrs Boffin's position in this task was to take care of the household. "Very well; in my name, which is the same as Mrs Boffin's, and means both of us, is to be considered in drawing 'em up." (Dickens, p.109)

As for the married couple, there were many expectations for them. One of the expectations could be considered having children, who would take care of them, when they get older. "Mrs Boffin and me had no child of our own, and had sometimes wished that how we had one. But not now. "We might both of us die," says Mrs Boffin, "and other eyes might see that lonely look in our child." (Dickens, p.107) This fact, later in the story, leads them to many decisions. After the death of John Harmon, they were very empathetic, and warm-hearted, in their relationship with Bella. They knew that the position, she appeared in, must have been very difficult for her. It was offered to her that she can live by them, and it was intended by them that they would share part of their wealth with her. They also wanted to show her that she can be satisfied in life if she finds somebody, who she loves. Mrs Boffin

behaved to Bella beautifully and kindly, which could be considered, that Bella did not deserve.

Mrs Boffin wished to adopt an orphan. This act shows that even though she was rich, it does not necessarily mean that she forgot about the important things in the life. “Now that he is past all benefit of the money, and it's come to us, I should like to find some orphan child, and take the boy and adopt him and give him John's name, and provide for him. Somehow, it would make me easier, I fancy“ (Dickens, p.120)

From the beginning till the end of the story, Mrs Boffin is considered a very kind, lovely, and warm-hearted character. Her kindness is shown in many ways. However, because she was a woman, her position was to take care of the household, and not decide, what the new-rich couple would do with the wealth. The main decisions were made by her husband, and the only wish she had, was to adopt an orphan, which showed a high amount of empathy.



## **6 THE ROLE OF MARRIAGE**

The role of marriage in the story has a very important meaning. There are several characters, who were in some way experiencing marriage, or wanted to get into that status. The act of marriage had a lot of meaning in the Victorian era. There were many aspects related to the motivation of people to be married. Several characters had approached the act differently. In some cases, people have chosen love over wealth, in other cases, people preferred status over love. However, still, the act was very important for the story development, and for the influence of the behaviour of the characters.

### **6.1 Bella Wilfer and John Harmon**

Under the condition for the inheritance of the money after John Harmon's father, John was to get married to Bella Wilfer, who was coming from a lower-middle class background. However, John believed that marriage should be an act of two people loving each other, not the act, that would be made in order to receive money. After that, he had misunderstandings with his father, when John defended his sister, who married the man for love, not for money. His father changed his mind and decided to share the wealth with him, under the condition of marriage. When he arrived in London, people thought that he is dead. As a result of that, he preferred to stay anonymous, and thorough the story, he identifies himself as John Rokesmith.

Bella Wilfer was coming from a lower-middle class background. Her dream was to get married to somebody wealthy, and to get higher into the social hierarchy. After she is informed, that John Harmon is dead, her intentions are not the same. After moving away from her parents, she lives with the Boffins, who are the ones inheriting money from the old John Harmon. Her obsession with money is in some ways considered unhealthy. "I hate to be poor, and we are degradingly poor, offensively poor, miserably poor, beastly poor. However, her thoughts in the story were that living in the higher class, would be much better for her." (Dickens, p.44) When John Rokesmith offers himself to be a secretary for Boffin, he is much closer to Bella, which is in many ways helpful for him to get to know Bella better. However, in some ways, he feels dissatisfaction with her behaviour. After Bella declines the proposal from him, who is the lower-middle class secretary, she improves her position of the importance of money and the position in the social hierarchy. This act leads John Rokesmith not to reveal his true identity, and to stay as a middle-class secretary.

As the story develops, Bella realizes, how inappropriately she behaved to others, and realizes that there are more important things than wealth, and status, like kindness, and love. “What a shocking creature I was growing, when he saved me from myself! “(Dickens, 718) After the realization, she accepts the proposal, and they are getting married. The idea of marriage for love has changed for Bella. Instead of being in the higher social class, and being wealthy, she is satisfied with the idea of being with somebody, whom she loves. Afterwards, the true John Harmon's identity is revealed, and the marriage happens, which is made by two loving people.

The marriage of Bella Wilfer and John Harmon was supposed to be an act, in which two people get together in order to be wealthy. John Harmon intended to be with somebody whom he loves, not with somebody who cares about the wealth of his father. In the beginning, Bella is obsessed with the higher social standing, and with the money related to that, she declines the proposal from him. However, as the story develops, Bella's behaviour changes, and she realizes, what are the true values in life. This leads her to accept the proposal from him, and they are finally getting married. However, the idea of marriage, which was in the first place considered as an act to be wealthy, has changed in the idea of people loving each other.

## **6.2 Lizzie Hexam and Eugene Wrayburn**

Other characters who got married in the story were Lizzie Hexam and Eugene Wrayburn. Lizzie was a working-class character, who was to be a waterman. The conditions in which she worked were in many ways very difficult. Under the supervision of her father, she did not have many options, for what she wanted to do. However, even though the conditions were difficult, she supported her brother, in order to be educated, which was against the will of her father. “I wish I could, Charley! For if I could make him believe that learning was a good thing, and that we might lead better lives, I should be a'most content to die.” (Dickens, p.33) Through the story, she expresses herself as a very kind person, who sacrifices herself a lot, so her surroundings can be satisfied.

Eugene Wrayburn is a barrister, a member of the higher class. Even though he lived in a society full of opportunities, he did not like his occupations. In the story, he is considered a lazy person, however, he is convinced that he is not lazy, but he lacks motivation. In some ways, he can be also considered as a person, who thinks he is better than others. In many ways, he expresses his boredom with life. However, after he sees Lizzie for the first time, he

finds the purpose of his life. “His eyes were fixed again, and the only word that came from his lips was the word millions of times repeated. Lizzie, Lizzie, Lizzie” (Dickens, 876)

They both come from different social classes, and the way to get to know each other is in many ways difficult. The fact also complicated by Bradley Headstone, Charley's schoolmaster, who is in love with Lizzie. Another complication is Lizzie's brother, who forces her to be in a relationship with his schoolmaster. However, Lizzie prefers to find someone, who she loves, regardless of his position in society, or the wealth he has. Bradley proposed to Lizzie, but she declined. “Mr Headstone, I thank you sincerely, I thank you gratefully, and hope you may find a worthy wife before long and be very happy. But it is no.” (Dickens, p. 470) This fact leads him to be jealous of Eugene, because he knew, that he also likes Lizzie. “He can be a rival to me among other things,' said Bradley” (Dickens, p.472) This act is very criticised by her brother, who was imagining Lizzie with his schoolmaster. In many ways, he was very rude to his sister, after all she did for him.

The extreme jealousy escalates in the violent act, in which Brandley attempts to kill Eugene. After Eugene is found in the river, he finally found something worthy in life, and that is Lizzie. He does not want Brandley to be punished for his actions, because he is afraid that it could damage her reputation. “Her innocent reputation would be ruined, my friend. She would be punished, not he. I have wronged her enough in fact; I have wronged her still more in intention” (Dickens, p.873) His life, from the bored barrister changes because he finally found someone, who he loves. However, they are still facing many difficulties related to their relationship, mostly made by the higher-class members, who are criticising them for the fact, that Lizzie comes from a working-class background. „The question before the Committee is, whether a young man of very fair family, good appearance, and some talent, makes a fool or a wise man of himself in marrying a female waterman, turned factory girl.” (Dickens, 964) However, their love is pure, and they both are satisfied with each other.

The marriage of Lizzie Hexam and Eugene Wrayburn was an act of two people, who loved each other. In the beginning, it was unpredictable that two people from different social classes would get to know each other. However, their way to marriage was made through many complications. There were several characters, who made their way into marriage difficult, like Lizzie's brother and Brandley Headstone. After Lizzie declined the proposal from Bradley Headstone, he becomes jealous and attempts to murder Eugene, who he thinks

is in love with Lizzie. After that act, Eugene realizes that his meaning in love is Lizzie, which results in marriage.

### **6.3 Mrs Sophronia Lammler and Mr Alfred Lammler**

In the novel, there are several characters, who approached marriage differently. There are also several characters coming from different social classes, and characters experiencing many different situations. In the two previous analyses, the motivations for marriage were different, however, both finally ended as a unity of two people loving each other. However, in the story, there were more marriages. The marriage that ended differently as it was expected, was the marriage of Mrs Sophronia Lammler and Mr Alfred Lammler.

Mrs Sophronia Lammler is a character, whose dream was to get married to somebody wealthy. She and her husband, Alfred Lammler met through her mutual friend Mr Veneering. Her motivation to be married was to get rich. “I asked Veneering, and he told me you were rich.” (Dickens, 145) After the marriage, she realizes, that they both do not have money. “That you are a man of property?’ ‘No.’ ‘Then you married me on false pretences?’ ‘So be it. Next comes what you mean to say. Do you mean to say you are a woman of property?’ ‘No.’ ‘Then you married me on false pretences.” (Dickens, p.145) She is aware of the fact that this is not the life she was expecting. Her husband does not treat her well either. The position in which she is in leads her to understand the position of Georgiana Podsnap. Sophronia's husband was to lead her to marry Mr Fledgeby, which she does not support.

Mr Alfred Lammler is considered a character, who like many others, puts his self-interests in the first place. His wife, Mrs Sophronia Lammler he meets through their friend, Mr Veneering. They both want to get married because they are convinced that the other person is rich. However, Alfred realizes that Sophronia is not rich, he is in a calm state, and he wants to find a way to make things work out. As the story develops, Alfred's behaviour changes, and he treats her cruelly. “With this good understanding established between us, it is better never done. To wind up all:—You have shown temper today, Sophronia. Don't be betrayed into doing so again, because I have a Devil of a temper myself.” (Dickens, p.149) Since then he sees her as a person, who betrayed him, not as his wife. Even though both do not love each other, and they are not rich, they turn out to be stuck together.

The act of marriage of Mrs and Mr Lammler was an act of two people expecting to get richer. However, after the marriage, they both found out that they are poor. The confusion was

caused by their mutual friend Mr Veneering, who told them separately, that the other is rich. However, after they are aware of the fact, they are stuck together, and they both are trying to find some ways of figuring out the situation. The position, they were in, shows that it is important to be cautious and not choose marriage just for money and based on somebody's recommendation.

## CONCLUSION

The bachelor thesis “The Depiction of the Victorian Society in *Our Mutual Friend*” analyses the portrayal of Victorian society in Charles Dickens' novel *Our Mutual Friend*. There are several factors of the analysis related to society, such as the Transition between the social classes, the Position of women in society and the role of marriage.

The thesis begins by providing an overview of the historical and cultural background, followed by the social class division, and the occupation typical for each social class. The practical part is analysed, how Victorian society is reflected in the novel through the portrayal of several characters in several situations, with regard to the Transition between the social classes, the position of women in society, and the role of marriage.

The transition between social classes was possible, several characters undergo the transition, like Lizzie and Charley Hexam, Bella Wilfer, and John Harmon, whose motivation in order to change their social class was different. The position of the women in the society differed according to their setting. Lizzie Hexam as a member of the working class was in the beginning under the constant supervision of her father, who did not allow her to have any sort of education and forced her to work in unsanitary conditions. Bella Wilfer's desire for higher-class standards and wealth, made her dependent on men, which limited her position in society. Mrs Boffin's position in the society was to take care of the household, and not to decide, what to do with the wealth. The main word in their relationship had her husband. The role of marriage in the novel differed according to the characters. The motivation of Bella Wilfer was to marry somebody wealthy, in order to get higher living standards. However, after the change of her behaviour, she married John Harmon, because she loved him. Lizzie Hexam and Eugene Wrayburn's motivation to get married was the act of two people loving each other. The marriage of Mrs Sophronia Lammle and Mr Alfred Lammle was an act, when they both expected to be wealthy, however, after the wedding they discovered that they both are poor.

Overall, this thesis provides a detailed analysis of the portrayal of Victorian society in *Our Mutual Friend*, highlighting the ways in which Dickens used this novel to comment on the social and cultural issues of the times.

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## RÉSUMÉ

Viktoriánská éra byla obdobím prudkého průmyslového rozvoje, který vedl k mnoha změnám v rámci viktoriánské společnosti. Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá zobrazením Viktoriánské společnosti v díle Charlese Dickense „*Our Mutual Friend*“. Skrz analýzu několika aspektů společnosti zkoumá sociální a ekonomickou realitu viktoriánské doby, kterou ukazují postavy v rámci příběhu. Z práce vyplývá, že popis společnosti kritizuje hodnoty a společenské postoje. Přejít mezi společenskými vrstvami byl možná, několik postav tento přechod podstupuje. Postavení žen ve společnosti bylo limitováno mužskými postavami. Role manželství byla v mnoha ohledech závislá na postavách a jejich postavení ve společnosti.

Klíčová slova: Viktoriánská éra, společenská třída, sociální nerovnost, manželství

## ANNOTATION

Jméno a příjmení:	Ondřej Pospíšil
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Rok obhajoby:	2023

Název práce:	The Depiction of the Victorian society in Charles Dickens' <i>Our Mutual Friend</i>
Název práce v angličtině:	The Depiction of the Victorian society in Charles Dickens' <i>Our Mutual Friend</i>
Anotace práce:	Bakalářská práce se zabývá zobrazením viktoriánské společnosti v románu Charlese Dickense „ <i>Our Mutual Friend</i> “. Prostřednictvím analýzy třídního rozdělení společnosti, postavení žen ve společnosti a role manželství se tato bakalářská práce snaží pochopit ekonomické a sociální standardy viktoriánské společnosti v jeho době. Na základě zkoumání těchto otázek práce tvrdí, že dílo nabízí kritický komentář k sociální a ekonomické nespravedlnosti a nerovnosti v dané době. Analýza je podpořena detailní analýzou textu s vhodnými citacemi. V podstatě tato práce nabízí vysvětlení složitosti doby s kritikou v současné době.
Klíčová slova:	Společenská třída, postavení ženy, manželství
Anotace práce v angličtině	The bachelor thesis examines the depiction of Victorian society in Charles Dickens' novel <i>Our Mutual Friend</i> . Through the analysis of the social class division, position of women in society, and role of marriage, this study aims to understand the economic and social standards of Victorian society in his times. By exploring these issues, the thesis argues that <i>Our Mutual Friend</i> offers a critical commentary on social and economic injustices and inequalities of the era. The analysis is supported by close reading of the text with proper quotations. Essentially, this thesis explains the era's

	complexity with the critique of the contemporary times.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	Social class, position of woman, marriage
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