



THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF DAVID COPPERFIELD BY CHARLES DICKENS.

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Abstract. *This thesis explores the role of education in shaping the character of David Copperfield in Charles Dickens's novel. It examines how formal education and life lessons contribute to David's personal and professional growth. The excerpts from the novel highlight that education is not limited to the classroom but is influenced by mentors, experiences, and personal reflection, demonstrating that education is central to David's journey from a vulnerable child to a self-reliant adult.*

Key Words. *Education, David Copperfield, character development, mentorship, personal growth, and self-learning.*

Introduction

Many scholars have studied the depiction social life and the role of education through the works written by Charles Dickens and his famous pedagogical philosophies depicted in the novel David Copperfield, a semi-autobiographical novel that reflects the author's life experiences and observations about 19th-century society. For example, one of the researchers, Kimberly Sutherland, talks about the attitude that the author Charles Dickens had when referring to education in the novel, inferring from his in-depth research of the educational philosophies of Charles Dickens, including his novel David Copperfield.

*"Along with the key component of defining education, the debate also argued the methods by which students should be taught. Some viewed the classroom as a place to force facts into students' minds believing that knowledge was education. Dickens' method is a gentle, at the knee experience, not a harsh-handed forcing of information"*¹⁹.

Also, critics like John O. Jordan highlights how characters like Mr. Creakle and Mr. Micawber embody contrasting aspects of Victorian education - oppression versus guidance.²⁰ Similarly, co-researchers Safarova Zilola and Saidova Dilduza in their scientific work analyze how moral guidance, support, and compassion play a part in creating a learning environment and in the protagonist's education.

"David's path is greatly influenced by the people who teach and coach him, from Mr. Micawber and Aunt Betsey to Dr. Strong's caring advice and the strict discipline of Mr.

¹⁹ Kimberly Sutherland. Dickensian pedagogy, a novel approach: Educating David Copperfield, at the knee learning. Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 2020. – P.7.

²⁰ Jordan, John O. Supposing "Bleak House": Social Class and the Limits of Self-Help in Dickens. New York: Yale University Press, 2001.





MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS

Creakle".²¹ This study employs a qualitative analysis of key passages from David Copperfield, focusing on the interplay between formal education, mentorship, and self-learning. The research examines how these elements are portrayed through the narrative structure, character interactions, and Dickens' social commentary.

A lot of factors have played a significant role in shaping the protagonist David Copperfield's personality, of which education – formal and informal, stands out. Formal education at Salem House is the cornerstone. *"I pass over all that happened at school, until the day arrived when we were to be examined in the presence of the mighty Mr. Creakle. ... The boys were all passive and meek; and seemed to have but one thought in their heads: and that was, to keep there as long as possible. ... Tommy Traddles was never in the most pathetic situations of Tragedy so throbbingly pathetic as he was now, as the representative of a country boy who died young."*²²

Through these lines we can vividly feel the harshness of formal education at Salem House. Under Mr. Creakle's oppressive rule, learning was driven by fear rather than intellectual curiosity.

*"Mr. Creakle caned me for not cheering loud enough; and caned Steerforth for cheering in the wrong place."*²³

It highlights the inadequacy of formal education, revealing the flaws of Victorian schooling. Despite this environment, David learns resilience and begins to form bonds with classmates like Tommy Traddles, which subtly shapes his understanding of camaraderie and perseverance.

*"Traddles was the merriest and most miserable of all the boys. He was always being caned—I think he was caned every day that half-year, except one holiday Monday when he was only ruled on both hands—and was always going to write to his uncle about it, and never did. After laying his head on the desk for a little while, he would cheer up somehow, begin to laugh again, and draw skeletons all over his slate, before his eyes were dry."*²⁴

This scene depicts Tommy Traddles as a cheerful yet frequently punished boy at Salem House. Despite enduring harsh treatment, Traddles' resilience and good-natured spirit shine through. For David, witnessing Traddles' ability to maintain his optimism and humor despite adversity subtly influences his understanding of perseverance and camaraderie. David learns to appreciate the importance of mutual support and enduring

²¹ Safarova Zilola Tolibovna1, and Saidova Dिल्фуза Baxritdinovna2. The role of educators in the life of the protagonist in "David Copperfield" by Charles Dickens. EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) – Peer Reviewed Journal Volume: 10| Issue: 6| June 2024|| Journal DOI: 10.36713/epra2013 || SJIF Impact Factor 2024: 8.402 || ISI Value: 1.188

²² Charles Dickens. David Copperfield. Penguin Classics, 2004. – P.196.

²³ Charles Dickens. David Copperfield. Penguin Classics, 2004. – P.88.

²⁴ The same source. – P. 91.





MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS

hardship with a positive outlook, lessons that shape his character in later life. Apart from formal education, people around him serve as life lessons. For instance, Betsey Trotwood acts as a moral guide and a supportive figure in David's life. Her encouragement helps David focus on his studies and future career. This episode highlights the emotional aspect of education, as Betsey's belief in David instills confidence and motivates him to work hard toward his goals.

*"You shall have a profession," said my aunt, 'shall make you a man. And the sooner you begin it, Trot, the better.' ... 'And when you attain any position, Trot, let Mr. Dick and me know, will you? I shall be proud of you, my dear.'"*²⁵

Another real-life figure affecting him would be Agnes Wickfield.

*"Her words touched me to the quick. They were the first, I might almost say, I had ever heard from any lips but hers that were spoken with any reference to my worldly position, and they awakened in me an earnest resolution to attain a good one."*²⁶

From the words stated above, it can be seen that Agnes is David's moral compass and source of inspiration. Her quiet encouragement teaches him to strive for success with integrity. This interaction marks a turning point in David's emotional and intellectual maturity, showing how mentorship can guide self-improvement. The final character teaching him a valuable lesson is Mr. Micawber. His advice to David *"My dear young friend ... annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen nineteen and six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, result misery. The blossom is blighted, the leaf is withered, the God of Day goes down upon the dreary scene, and – and in short, you are forever floored."*²⁷

This advice on financial management, although humorously delivered, becomes an essential life lesson for David. It reflects how mentorship - even from unlikely sources - plays a role in his development, teaching him practical wisdom about managing resources.

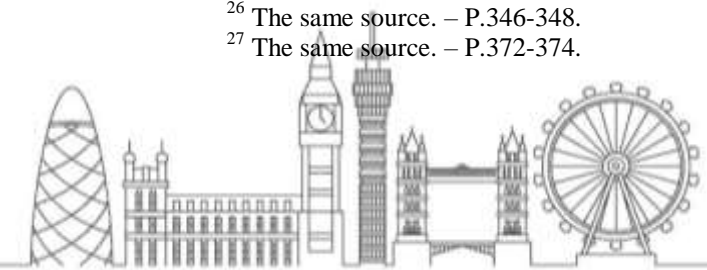
The later events of the novel concern David's only known relative, his paternal great-aunt, Betsy Trotwood. Having spent several years in peace with his aunt, David, with her support, attends Dr. Strong's school and has the opportunity to receive a quality education. This school is described in contrast to schools such as Salem House. Dickens shows the place of good education in human life in the example of the latter school. Here children have all conditions to get education and they are treated like human beings. However, it should be noted that in those days, all schools taught strictly. David faces professional challenges in his post-school life. The author's aim was to draw readers' attention to how difficult it was for young men without sponsors to find a job and succeed in their profession despite having a good education.

Conclusion

²⁵ The same source. – P.198.

²⁶ The same source. – P.346-348.

²⁷ The same source. – P.372-374.





MODERN PROBLEMS IN EDUCATION AND THEIR SCIENTIFIC SOLUTIONS

These excerpts reveal the multifaceted role of education in David Copperfield. Through mentors like Betsey Trotwood and Agnes Wickfield, and formal schooling at Salem House, David learns resilience, responsibility, and emotional intelligence. Dickens uses David's journey to highlight education's transformative power in shaping an individual's character and destiny.

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