

## THE REFLECTION OF THE WORKING-CLASS LIFE CONDITIONS DURING THE VICTORIAN ERA FOUND IN OLIVER TWIST IN DICKENS' *OLIVER TWIST*

Rusmini<sup>1,\*</sup>, Singgih Daru Kuncara<sup>2</sup>, Fatimah Muhajir<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> English Literature Department, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Mulawarman University

<sup>2,3</sup> Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Mulawarman University

\* Email: rusminiak96@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

This study examines *Oliver Twist* novel written by Charles Dickens as the object of the research. The aims of this research are to find out the conditions of working-class life during the Victorian era which are reflected in *Oliver Twist* novel, and to show the way Dickens reflected the conditions of working-class life during the Victorian era in Oliver's life. This research uses the sociology of literature theory in analyzing the working-class life conditions in the novel. The method of this research belongs to qualitative research, using mimetic approach. The data of this research are words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs that indicated as the working-class life conditions as reflected in the novel. Then the result of the research shows there are seven characteristics of the working-class life condition as reflected in Dickens' *Oliver Twist* such as the workhouse, fear and hopelessness, the smallest laborers, a difficult transition, an unsanitary life, crime in the city, and too much convicts; and the way Dickens reflected the working-class life conditions during the Victorian era in the novel through Oliver's actions, dialogues, speech, thoughts, appearance and the narrations of the story.

**Keywords:** working-class, character, *Oliver Twist* novel, sociology of literature

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji novel *Oliver Twist* yang ditulis oleh Charles Dickens sebagai objek penelitian. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menemukan kondisi-kondisi kehidupan kelas pekerja selama masa Victoria yang tergambar didalam novel *Oliver Twist*; dan untuk menunjukkan cara Dickens menggambarkan kondisi-kondisi kehidupan kelas pekerja didalam kehidupan Oliver. Penelitian ini menggunakan teori sosiologi sastra dalam menganalisa kondisi-kondisi kehidupan kelas pekerja didalam novel. Jenis penelitian ini termasuk penelitian kualitatif deskriptif, menggunakan pendekatan mimetik. Data dari penelitian ini adalah kata, frasa, kalimat, dan paragraf yang ditandai sebagai kondisi-kondisi kehidupan kelas pekerja yang digambarkan didalam novel. Kemudian hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan ada tujuh kondisi-kondisi kehidupan kelas pekerja yang digambarkan didalam novel yaitu rumah sosial, ketakutan dan keputusan, transisi yang sulit, kehidupan yang tidak sehat, buruh paling kecil, kejahatan di kota, dan banyaknya tahanan; dan cara Dickens menggambarkan kondisi-kondisi kehidupan kelas pekerja didalam novel melalui aksi Oliver, perkataan, percakapan, pikiran, penampilan dan narasi-narasi dari cerita.

**Kata Kunci:** kelas pekerja, tokoh, novel *Oliver Twist*, sosiologi sastra

## A. INTRODUCTION

The Victorian era was known as the most brilliant history of Britain. According to Chrisp, “Victorian era was period of the world as well as Britain history, for Queen Victoria ruled at a time when Britain had a vast global empire, including a quarter of the planet’s population” (5). This era was signed out as the change of England rapidly in many aspects, particularly the development of technology and economy.

Coinciding with time, Victorian literature also presented its existence in the other direction. The development of literature gave an influence as world moving to mirror and endorsed about social reality of the society which occurred in England. The novels that had created during the Victorian era were called “social problem novels”. Generally, the term social problem novels were used to English fiction in the mid nineteenth century. The novels were produced and tended for understanding social problems of society that concerned with the social condition of England.

Charles Dickens is one of the social novelist who wrote actively about the social problems of Victorian society. He grew up his writing to face the current situation of England. His awareness toward poverty and social stratification of Victorian society are represented by his novels such as *Great Expectation*, *Oliver Twist*, *Hard Times*, and *A Christmas Carol* (Stewart 73). Those novels became the most influential works in the Victorian literature.

*Oliver Twist* is Dickens’ second novel after *The Pickwick Papers* 1836 which published in 1838. This novel tells about the young orphan boy named Oliver who was born in the workhouse, and had a poor life as a child labor. The exposing of child labor, the workhouse, and criminality become the highlight in the story. Through this novel, Dickens criticizes the social conditions of society during the Victorian era, especially the miserable living conditions of the working people.

*Oliver Twist* novel is unique. The researcher is interested in investigating the novel widely, because it is one of the most famous works of Dickens in the Victorian literature. This novel clearly represents about the social reality at the time through the representation of the character, and the author represents about the working-class life conditions at that time that exposed in the novel.

Based on the background above, the aims of this research are: (1) to identify the conditions of working-class life during the Victorian era which are reflected in *Oliver Twist* novel; and (2) to show the way Dickens reflected the conditions of working-class life during the Victorian era in *Oliver Twist* novel through Oliver Twist’s life.

## B. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Sociology of Literature

Sociology of literature is one of the new branches of study that derived from two kinds of knowledge: sociology and literature (interdisciplinary study). Originally, the sociology of literature comes from mimetic approach. The feature of the literary narrative is the imitation of reality. According to Ricoeur, “narrative is imitation (*mimesis*) of actions” (qtd. in Longo 24).

Etymologically, the term *sociology* was taken by the Latin term *socius* (companion, associate) and the Greek term *logia* (study or science). According to Tischler, “sociology is a scientific study of human and social interactions” (4). For understanding society as a whole can be identified based on the social reality in the real life.

Like sociology, literature also can represent the social world. Coser underlined that literature has a capacity for representing social reality, social mores, social types, and social relations (qtd. in Longo 102). Besides that, literature is social product and source that created by society for understanding the social reality. Longo said that "... literature as a source is an important strategy for enriching our capacity to understand and describe social reality (149). It can be understood that literature is a source that can be used for understanding the social life of society.

Novel is one of literary genres that has capability of reflecting all aspects of human life and nature. Longo stated that "... the novel presents itself as a form of literature that capable of presenting human nature and social reality" (80). The relation both of character and a certain event in the novel deal with social institutions of society as Longo said in his book that "the novel deals with social institutions by directly depicting "characters and events" . . ." (81).

Both sociology and literature are related to each other. Mariano Longo in his book entitles *Fiction and Social Reality: Literature and Narrative as Sociological Resources* gives an explanation about literature, and its relation to sociology. Understanding the relationship both sociology and literature referred to the similarity both of them. According to Longo, the main similarity both of sociology and literature is the field interest of social life (144). It means that both sociology and literature focus their attention on social forces. The sociology of literature presents for understanding social reality in literary work.

## **2. The Working-Class Life Conditions during the Victorian Era**

### **a. A Difficult Transition**

The progress of technology and economy during the Victorian era greatly convinced that the life would be better for everyone in England, especially in the large cities like Manchester and London. For workers who moved from the farm to the city, making the transition is difficult for them. They must adapt with the time and must be on time to go to work. It is contrary to the action that they used to do on the farm. Besides that, the rising number of people in the big city cannot accommodate the place of living for workers, and they have to live in the slum area (Stewart 30). These conditions make a difficult transition for workers.

### **b. An Unsanitary Life**

The development of factory and mine has not only the positive effect, but also the negative impact. As the result, for the working-class people who lived in London, they have to live in such conditions especially an unhealthy conditions. Stewart described the unhealthy condition that experienced by the working-class people such as the pollution that contaminated the natural surroundings that can be proven by the black cloud (30). Besides that, the working-class people also do not have a toilet and no access to sewers. Stewart also mentioned that the working people must live in miserable condition, in fact, the chimney, black atmosphere, flaring furnaces, and wretched cottage around them.

**c. The Smallest Laborers**

As the result of the industrial revolution, the working-class especially women and children must go to work to earn money and fulfill their needs. In order to increase the income, the family of the working-class could work in factory and mine about twelve-hours a day. Their job is full of miserable conditions. The young children about four or five years old could work as "trappers" in the coal mine, and they have to work in cramped space in the dark and fell asleep in narrow (Stewart 32). On the other side, women and older children must work as coal hurries.

**d. Crossing Sweepers, Toshers, and Mud Larks**

The great difficulty to get a job for workers to make them do anything to earn much money. Despite the conditions, the children must create their own jobs to get money. During this time, most of the children create their jobs such as crossing sweepers, toshers, and mud larks (Stewart 34). First, crossing sweepers did a job to clean the pathways. For the children worked as crossing sweepers could make them get at least five pence a day. Then another job, the people, usually children who were called as "Toshers" searching the valuable thing such as coin or jewelry that fall out in the pocket in the sewer. They usually formed a group of four or five to go into sewer together. Another invented job is mud larks. This job is done by all ages, either the youngest or older. They bravely walk out in the mud to find anything of value.

**e. The Workhouse**

The workhouse was established in the early seventeenth century. It was provided to accommodate the poor, homeless and unemployed workers. As the new laws of Parliament 1834 demand that every local community like the city of London could provide the workhouse to feed and house, in order to overcome the problems of the poorest people of the city's poor (Stewart 35). It was conducted to make certain that the poorest people, especially for working-class could get free room and board.

**f. Fear and Hopelessness**

For working-class people who entered the workhouse would not be better. Although the workhouse was provided to accommodate the poor people, in reality, there was a fear in their heart to lived there. Every people have different living between women, men, and children. Some families would not be permitted to live together. These miserable conditions were experienced by the people who lived in the workhouse. The extreme poverty also haunted the working-class people. For parents to watch the condition that their children go hungry day after day. The hopelessness conditions make them survive in their own way.

**g. Crime in the City**

The problems of poverty apparently cause the increase in crime rate in the cities. The crime rate gradually increased every year during this time. The criminals mostly increase among the poorest and the working-class. Besides that, juvenile crime also increases during the Victorian era. the older criminals exploited the children to get

money or valuable things. They recruited the children (boys and girls as young as four or five) to pick the things up in the pocket, housebreaking, and the other kinds of theft.

#### **h. Too Many Convicts**

The rising number of convicts is one of the problems in Britain. The convicts are the youngest (as young as ten or eleven) and the older. They were imprisoned. Since the seventeenth century, the British official was sending the convicts to their colonies. It because they lacked jail space. Britain had successfully transported many convicts to the American colonies. Besides that, more than 165.000 convicts were sent to Australia.

#### **i. Increasing Calls for Reforms**

The domestic problems of Britain such as the increase of criminality and a small salary for workers seems could not be solved because there is no representation of the working-class in Parliament. By seeing these problems, the working-class protest groups emerged as a movement, and this group was called as "Chartists" that presented the call for reforms to Parliament. Their lists of demands such as the right to vote for all adults and a system in which the members of Parliament (MPs) received pay, so that the poor people could go to work in the office (Stewart 40). However, their demands are approved, in fact, it is ignored by the British government.

#### **j. Changes at Last**

After passing some effects of the revolution, the things begin to change at last. Stewart explained that the idea of reforms is opened by some members of Parliament that dominated by the upper class (40). In the education field, the children of the working-class finally have a chance to experience an education. Then during this time, Stewart added that in the legislation, the workers could use their right to vote, and they could appoint leaders, organize, and negotiate with employers to gain better working conditions, higher salaries, and other concessions (41). At least the idea to change has carried out.

### **3. Character and Characterization**

Character is one of the elements of fiction. It can be defined as the people in a fiction story. Griffith explains that characters are not only people, but also could form as animals, robots, or creatures from outer space (60). They are presented by the author as the objects who have an ability as a human in real. There are some types of characters that can be found in a story. Griffith has divided them into four types: flat and round character; static and dynamic character.

Characters cannot be separated from characterization. Both of them have relation to each other. According to Griffith, characterization is the author's presentation and development of the traits of characters (62). It purposes to tell the reader what the characters are like. There are two ways that can be used to reveal what the characters are like namely: direct and indirect characterization. *Direct characterization*, the author reveals what the characters are like through the narrator who tells the information to the reader, while *indirect characterization* is the way of the author to show the things that reveal what the characters are like (Griffith 62). In this way, the author shows the information of the

character to the reader rather than tells them. Griffith further explains that there are some ways to reveal what the characters are like in indirect characterization such as through characters' speech, actions, dialogue, thoughts, and external details (62).

### C. RESEARCH METHOD

In this research, the researcher used qualitative method. According to Kumar, the study is classified as qualitative research if the aim of the study is primarily to describe a situation, phenomenon, problem or event without quantifying it (12). Regarding Kumar's explanation, this research attempts to understand the social conditions of society, especially the working-class life conditions during the Victorian era in *Oliver Twist* novel. To give critical opinion on Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, the researcher used mimetic approach in analyzing the novel. The key instrument of qualitative research is the researcher herself. In this research, the researcher did the analysis by observing and collecting the data to identify the reflection of the working-class life conditions *Oliver Twist* novel through the representation of character.

#### 1. Data and Data Source

The data of this research are words, phrases, sentences, and paragraph that related to the conditions of working-class life as reflected in *Oliver Twist* novel. The primary data source of this research is *Oliver Twist* novel by Charles Dickens which published by Gramedia Utama Pustaka in 2017. To support the primary data, this research took some references from books, journals, thesis, and articles are included as the secondary data source.

#### 2. Data Collection

In collecting the data of this research, the researcher did some steps. First, the researcher determined the topic and the object of the research. Second, the researcher did the observation towards on *Oliver Twist* novel and read closely the text in the novel several times. Then the researcher took the important notes of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraph that indicated as the conditions of working-class life which are reflected in the novel.

#### 3. Data Analysis

After collecting the data, the researcher did some analysis activities. The researcher analyzes the data that have been collected through some steps. First, selecting and classifying the data that consist of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraph that indicated as the conditions of working-class life during the Victorian era. Second, analyzing the data by using the theory of the working-class life conditions during the Victorian era by Gail B. Stewart to answer the first research question: what are the conditions of working-class life during the Victorian era as reflected in *Oliver Twist* novel?; and characterization theory by Kelly Griffith to answer the second research question: how does Dickens reflect the conditions of working-class life during the Victorian era in Oliver's life?; And last, drawing the conclusion based on the result of analysis.

#### 4. Triangulation

This research uses data triangulation and theoretical triangulation. In order to validate the data, this research uses different sources of data triangulation from *Oliver*

*Twist* novel by Charles Dickens published by Gramedia Pustaka Utama in 2017, and the previous studies. Besides that, in this research, the data are approached with multiple theories. In theoretical triangulation, the researcher uses two theories which are the theory of the Working-class Life Conditions during the Victorian Era by Gail B. Stewart and Characterization theory by Kelly Griffith.

## D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Findings

#### 1. 1 The Conditions of Working-class Life during the Victorian Era as Reflected in *Oliver Twist*

##### a. The Workhouse

The first characteristic of the working-class life conditions as reflected in *Oliver Twist* novel is the living place which called the workhouse. The workhouse is one of public buildings that had existed in the early seventeenth century. It provides for accommodating the poor people, homeless, and the unemployed workers who need a shelter and food. This building is one option for people who need a living place. In *Oliver Twist* novel, the presence of the workhouse can be found in the beginning of the story as Dickens mentions in the following narration:

**“Among other public buildings in a certain town, which for many reasons it will be prudent to refrain from mentioning, and to which I will assign no fictitious name, there is one anciently common to most towns, great-or small: to wit, a workhouse; and this workhouse was born . . .”** (Dickens 4).

From the narration above, Dickens narrates that among other public buildings in towns, there is one anciently common public building had existed that called as the workhouse. This public building can be found in great or small towns. For working families who lived in town and cannot support themselves and try hard to survive on their own way, the workhouse is one option for their living place.

##### b. Fear and Hopelessness

The second characteristic of the working-class life conditions is the workhouse creates cruel system that makes the people feel frightened and hopeless. In the Victorian times, the workhouse system was deliberately harsh, in consequence, the people are treated badly, mostly being frustrated without hope. For the working people who led to the workhouse, they were treated like prison inmates. However, in *Oliver Twist* novel, Dickens illustrates how the workhouse rules make people feel fearful and hopeless as reflected in the following narration:

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. With this view, they contracted with the water-works to lay on an unlimited supply of water; and with a corn-factor to supply periodically small quantities of oatmeal; and issued three meals of thin gruel a day, with an onion twice a week, and half a roll of Sundays** (Dickens 21).

The narration above illustrates the rules of the workhouse that regularize the workhouse inmates. For the people who lead to the workhouse have to face injustice treatment and the practices of the workhouse system. They should have an alternative to survive there, even if

they are treating badly inside. Dickens illustrates clearly how the workhouse system operates. The workhouse systems regularize small quantity of meal for the people. As the narration above describes that the people must eat oatmeal with corn three times a day, with an onion that served twice a week, and half a roll of bread that only prepared on Sundays. The implementation of the workhouse system makes the people are getting afraid and hopeless.

### c. The Smallest Laborers

The third characteristic of the working-class life conditions is the children are employed to be labor in their young age. Importantly, the Victorian era was characterized by the use of children as a subject of working activity to help and develop economy, for instance, the children as young as four or five years old were involving into working activity in the industry, and the smallest children around nine or ten years old could find work as apprentice to any trade. In this novel, Dickens points out a social issue about the children who enforced to work any trade or business in their small age. They are involved into the working conditions in the workhouse as reflected in the following evidence:

**‘Well! You have come here to be educated, and taught a useful trade,’** said the red-faced gentleman in the high chair.

**So you’ll begin to pick oakum to-morrow morning at six o’clock,**  
added the surly one in the white waistcoat. (Dickens 20)

The quotation above explains when Oliver was sent to the workhouse. The board of workhouse authorities informed Oliver that he is going to be educated to any useful trade as an oakum picker. Through this information, Dickens actually points out the working condition about the young children who are involved into working activity, especially picking oakum. He presents the children are forced to be labor in their small age in the workhouse as reflected through the quotation above. It shows that the board member of workhouse authorities told Oliver could be qualified to work to any useful trade or business. So Oliver must be educated to work as a picker oakum, and he started to work tomorrow morning at six o’clock. Obviously, these conditions represent that the children as young as Oliver is forced to be a labor in his young age.

### d. A Difficult Transition

The fourth characteristic of the working-class life conditions is a difficult transition. The Victorian era was marked as the age of amazing transition in many aspects. The rapid change of England had resulted so much progress and convinced the life would be better for everyone. For the working families who moved from farm to the large city like London, they encountered change that made the transition from farm life is difficult for them. However, in *Oliver Twist* novel, Dickens illustrates the transition was experienced by Oliver when he moved to the large city of London as reflected through the narration below:

**London!- that great place!-nobody- not even Mr. Bumble- could ever find him there! He had often heard the old men in the workhouse, too, say that no lad of spirit need in London; and that there were ways of living in that vast city,** which those who had been bred up in **country parts** had no idea of (Dickens 85).

The narration above shows about Oliver walked away around five miles after escaping from the workhouse. He taught where he had better to go and try to reach of his destination. Oliver had ever heard the old men in the workhouse said that there were many ways of living in the great city of London. He thought that London is the best place for him to reach a better life there. Without thinking too much, Oliver finally decided to move to London. By

seeing the narration above, Dickens actually represents about the poor worker who moved from rural area to urban area. Both of areas have different background that made the transition is difficult. Besides that, Dickens also illustrates difficult transition from rural area to the cramped and crowded slum where the worker are relegated.

#### e. An Unsanitary Life

The fifth characteristic of the working-class life conditions is an unsanitary life. During the Victorian era, unsanitary condition and unhealthy environment became the most serious problem at the time. As the impact of the increasing number of people in the city, the infrastructure could not accommodate the people. In consequence, the people must live in the cramped and crowded slum. Typically, the slum area was characterized with bad sanitation, pollution, and rubbish in everywhere, for instance, London slums were inhabited predominantly by the working people. Besides that, the standard of living became the problem at the time too. For the working families who live in a large city of London, they must live in slum area with bad sanitation. In *Oliver Twist* novel, Dickens clearly illustrates the social condition particularly unsanitary life that can be shown by the following narration:

“ . . . **thence into little Saffron Hill; and so into Saffron Hill the Great:** along which the Dodger scudded at a rapid pace, directing Oliver to follow close at his heels. Although Oliver had enough to occupy his attention in keeping sight of his leader, he could not help bestowing a few nasty glances on either side of the way, as he passed along. **A dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen. The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odours**” (Dickens 93-94).

The narration above illustrates about the unsanitary area in London which known as Saffron Hill. Saffron Hill is one of places that reflects about the unsanitary place. The conditions of Saffron Hill are slum and wretched place that can be identified by the sentence *a dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen*. In addition, Dickens also mentions that the conditions of the road are cramped and muddy as an illustration from the sentence *the street was very narrow and muddy*. Furthermore, he also describes the environmental condition of Saffron Hill is unsanitary, for instance, the air is contaminated with pollution and vile odors. It can be seen by the sentence *and the air was impregnated with filthy odours*. These conditions definitely show the picture of unsanitary life in London slum, particularly in Saffron Hill area as reflected in the novel.

#### f. Crime in the City

The sixth characteristic of the working-class life conditions is crime in the city. During the Victorian era, the criminal actions were increased as a significant problem at the time. Ironically, the most category of criminal activity was contributed by children, for instance, the juvenile crime who become a thief (stealing pocket and handkerchief), and housebreaker. In addition, the contact between the criminal and the children often occurred in the city, particularly the older criminals who recruit the children for stealing. In the novel, Dickens portrays the interaction between the older criminal and the children in the novel as the following dialogue:

‘Good boys, good boys!’ said the Jew, **‘what have you got, Dodger?’**

‘**A couple of pocket-books,**’ replied that young gentleman.

‘Lined?’ inquired the Jew, with eagerness.

‘pretty well,’ replied the Dodger, **producing two pocket-books; one green, and the other red,**

... 'And what you have got, my dear?' said Fagin to Charley Bates  
'Wipes,' replied Master Bates; at the same time producing four pocket-handkerchief (Dickens 103).

The dialogue above shows the conversation between Fagin and two boys named Dodger and Charley Bates. Fagin asked the boys what they have gotten after working in the morning today. The boy named Dodger answered first that he has got a couple of pocket books; one green, and the other red. At the same time, other boy named Charley Bates had gotten four pocket-handkerchief too. Fagin was very satisfied with Dodger and Charley Bates' good performance who successfully got a couple of pocket books and four pocket-handkerchiefs. In here, Dickens actually presents Fagin as the older criminal and the boss of pickpockets who recruits the children to be a thief. He teaches the children finer points of picking pocket and handkerchief and exploits them to be child-thief for stealing goods. In the same way, Dickens characterizes Dodger and Charley Bates as child-thieves who work for Fagin. These child-thieves give Fagin what they have got after stealing. Indeed, by seeing this fact, Dickens eventually depicts the contact between the older criminal and the children is rampant in the city. The crowded place and public area are profitable for the child-thieves do their performance.

#### g. Too Much Convicts

The seventh characteristic of the working-class life conditions is too much convicts. In the Victorian period, the convict's population continued to grow in the city and became serious problem at the time. The Victorian society was worried how to overcome the rising of crime rate. Among of the convicts did various different criminal actions. In consequence, they had to be punished by sending them to the prison. However, in *Oliver Twist* novel, Dickens describes the criminals who were sent to the prison as reflected in the narration below:

**This cell was in shape and size something like an area cellar, only not so light. It was most intolerably dirty; for it was Monday morning; and it had been tenanted by six drunken people, who had been locked up, elsewhere, since Saturday night. But this is little. In our station-houses, men and women are very night confined on the most trivial charges- the word is worth noting- in dungeons, compared with which, those in Newgate, occupied by the most atrocious felons, tried, found guilty, and under sentence of death, are palaces (Dickens 117).**

From the narration, Dickens describes about the criminals who were jailed. He mentions that six drunken people were arrested in the dirty cell with shape and size like an area cellar without light. They had been looked up since Saturday night. Furthermore, men and women are confined every night in the station houses, while the convicts who had already executed for death penalty, they were sent to the prison named Newgate. In here, the convicts were imprisoned in a large room. However, as the narration above, it can be found that many convicts are imprisoned on the cell.

### 1.2 The Way Dickens Reflected the Working-class Life Conditions during the Victorian Era in Oliver's Life

In *Oliver Twist* novel, Dickens presents the social conditions that experienced by the working people through the main character. Oliver Twist is a major character who has capability of reflecting social conditions as a young boy who was born in the workhouse. His mother died after giving birth him, and nobody knows who his father is. Oliver spent his

early life in the workhouse. The journey of his life shows how Oliver survived on his own way to live in the workhouse. The way Dickens reflected the workhouse as Oliver's living place can be identified based on the narration below:

“... **being born in a workhouse**, is in itself **the most fortunate and enviable circumstance that can be possibly befall a human being**, I do mean to say that in this particular instance, **it was the best thing for Oliver Twist that could by possibility have occurred**” (Dickens 6).

This narration explains that the workhouse is the birth place of Oliver. As the part of the workhouse member, being born in the workhouse is not mostly fortunate for Oliver, but it is probably the best thing for continuing his life. Oliver is known as an orphan child who being born in the workhouse. As an orphan boy, Oliver can be categorized as the child who could not support himself. He needs a place for living, food, and clothe. Therefore, the workhouse is one option for providing Oliver's needs. Through this information, it can be identified that Dickens reflects the workhouse as Oliver's living place through the description of the narration that mentions Oliver was born in the workhouse. Furthermore, another evidence about the way Dickens reflected the workhouse in the novel can also identified based on Oliver's appearance as the following quotation:

“What an excellent example of **the power of dress**, young Oliver Twist was! ... **he was enveloped in the old calico robes which had grown yellow** in the same service, he was badged and ticketed, and **fell into his place at once- a parish child- the orphan of a workhouse-**...” (Dickens 9).

The quotation shows Oliver's social status as the orphan of a workhouse. It can be proven through Oliver's body who was covered by the old calico robes which had grown yellow. From Oliver's appearance by wearing the old calico robes, it automatically determines Oliver's social status as the parish orphan child of a workhouse; or, in other words, he is the part of the workhouse inmate. However, being sent to the workhouse is the most terrifying thing for Oliver. So many horrible conditions in the workhouse that make him suffered, mostly being fearful without hope. Under the system, the workhouse authorities also set small portion of food for people who lived in the workhouse. In consequence, the people became wild because of hunger. As the impact of starvation, Oliver and the boys showed their obsession with food. The boys enforced Oliver to ask some oatmeal to the master as reflected by the scene in which they winked and nudged Oliver. In the following narration also shows the way Dickens reflected starvation through Oliver's action and speech.

The boy whispered each other, and winked at Oliver; while his next neighbors nudged him. **Child as he was, he was desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery. He rose from the table; and advancing to the master, basin and spoon in hand, said:** somewhat alarmed at his own temerity: **'Please, sir, I want some more,'** (Dickens 23-24).

The quotation above illustrates that Oliver moved from the table and walked closely to the master by holding on basin and spoon in his hand in order to ask some more food. Oliver's action '*holding basin and spoon in*' by asking some food to the master shows the way he reflected the obsession of food. Beside that, the way Oliver reflected his obsession of food can also identified based on his speech. The words '*Please, sir, I want some more*' reflect Oliver's request that he needs more food to fulfill his stomach. However, Oliver's request for asking some more food becomes famous phrase in the novel which means that Oliver experiences hunger desperately.

Furthermore, being part of the workhouse made Oliver was expected to work. He became the subject of child worker in the workhouse. In the novel, Oliver is going to be

apprentice to help an undertaker man as coffin maker and servant as reflected through the narration below:

**THE MONTH'S trial over, Oliver was formally apprenticed. It was a nice sickly reason just at this time. In commercial phrase, coffins were looking up; and, in the course of a few weeks, Oliver acquired a great deal experience** (Dickens 67).

This narration shows how Oliver was offered to be apprentice to undertaker named Mr. Sowerberry. He was employed as coffin maker and servant in Mr. Sowerberry's shop. He got many great experiences for few weeks after working with the undertaker. Indeed, Oliver was successfully apprenticed that can be seen through sentence *THE MONTH'S trial over, Oliver was formally apprenticed*. However, the narration above shows that Dickens reflect the condition of Oliver who is driven into working activity as apprentice particularly coffin maker and servant.

Moreover, as the journey of Oliver's life, he worked with the master named Mr. Sowerberry as apprentice, and he was successfully apprenticed for month. Unfortunately, Oliver was bullied by another boy who also worked with Mr. Sowerberry. Oliver finally decided to run away from Mr. Sowerberry's place and move to London to reach of his destination. However, moving to London is not easy for Oliver. He encountered change that made the transition is difficult for him. The quotation below reflects Oliver found a difficult transition when he moved from rural area to urban area like London.

**'I suppose you want some place to sleep in to-night, don't you?'**

'I do, indeed,' answered Oliver. **'I have not slept under a roof since I left the country'** (Dickens 92).

The quotation above shows about the conversation between Oliver and his new friend named Jack Dawkins or his nickname "The Artful Dodger". Oliver first met with Dodger when he arrived in the city. Dodger supposed that Oliver needs place to sleep in tonight. Oliver told to Dodger that he had never slept under a roof after walking for seven days from the farm to London. Through Oliver's statement, it can be identified that Oliver encountered change when he arrived in London, in which there is no little space for Oliver to accommodate him. However, by seeing the information, it shows the way Dickens reflected a difficult transition through the dialogue above that mentions Oliver never slept under a roof since left the country.

Furthermore, seeing Oliver's difficulty, Dodger offered to introduce Oliver to the old gentleman who could give him a lodging and food without asking for change. Oliver could not resist this unexpected offer. He finally followed Dodger to the old gentleman's place. On the way to the gentleman's place, Oliver passed the place which quite confounded the scene. This place was unsanitary and wretch. It is reflected through Oliver's thought when he saw an unsanitary place in the city. As the narration below illustrates how Dickens reflected an unsanitary place through Oliver's thought.

**Although Oliver had enough to occupy his attention in keeping sight of his leader, he could not help bestowing a few hasty glances on either side of the way, as he passed along. A dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen. The street was very narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odours** (Dickens 94).

From the narration above, it describes when Oliver followed Dodger on the way to the old gentleman's place, he could not keep his attention toward the wretched place he had never seen before. By seeing the description, Oliver saw another side of London. He passed along the area and found a dirtier and wretched place, the cramped street with thick muddy, and filthy odors were contaminating the air. These views show that many people must to

face miserable living conditions in the large city of London. Through Oliver's thought, it clearly reflects about an unsanitary area or the image of wretched place in London which is occupied by the working-class people.

After arriving in the old gentleman's place, Dodger introduced Oliver to the old gentleman named Fagin and other boys there. Fagin was an older criminal who wants to recruit the children to be a theft and housebreaker. In the novel, Oliver is selected to be housebreaker as reflected through his thought.

And after meditating for a long time, concluded that **he had been selected to perform some ordinary menial offices for the housebreaker**, until another boy, better suited for his purpose could be engaged (Dickens 235).

This quotation describes that Oliver would be selected as housebreaker. Oliver was surprised to find a new pair of shoes, and his old one had been removed when he woke up in the morning. Oliver was sitting down to breakfast with Fagin, in a tone manner Fagin informed that Oliver would be taken to the residence of Bill Sikes at night and warned him with alarm that Bill Sikes was a rough man. With a trembling heart, Oliver just fell in silent on the words he had just heard. For the first time, Oliver thought that he has been selected to perform a criminal action for the housebreaker, until another boy, is not better suited for this job. By seeing the information from Oliver's thought, he is able for reflecting the children who are going to be recruited for criminal activity particularly housebreaking.

However, after involving into criminal activity, Oliver became the victim of systematic crime he had never committed before. He had been arrested on the charge of theft. As a result, Oliver was sent to the prison that can be proven through the narration below:

This was an invitation for **Oliver to enter through a door which he unlocked as he spoke, and which led into a stone cell**. Here he was searched; and nothing being found upon him, locked up (Dickens 117).

As the narration above explains that Oliver entered to the unlocked door which led into a stone cell. Oliver was imprisoned because he was suspected for stealing the old gentleman's handkerchief. Oliver became the victim of a charge of theft he had never committed. In consequence, Oliver was sent to prison and became a convicted criminal for a while. However, by seeing the evidences, Dickens actually reflects Oliver as the part of convicts who are jailed.

After analyzing the whole reflections of the working-class life conditions through Oliver's life, it can be understood the way Dickens reflected the working-class life conditions could be found through Oliver's actions, speech, dialogue, thoughts, appearance and the narrations of the story.

## 2. Discussion

*Oliver Twist* novel is one of social documents that has capacity for reflecting of what happened during the Victorian era especially the working-class life conditions such as the workhouse, fear and hopelessness, the smallest laborers, a difficult transition, an unsanitary life, crime in the city, and too much convicts. Besides that, *Oliver Twist* is one of social actors who also has capability of reflecting the social reality in the novel. The use of characterization method is necessary to identify the way Dickens reflected the social reality through Oliver's life in the novel. In this study, the researcher found the way Dickens reflected the working-class life conditions through Oliver actions, speech, dialogues, thoughts, appearance, and the narrations of the story. By presenting Oliver's actions, speech, dialogues, thoughts, and appearance from various situations, the researcher gained the information and the description of the working-class life conditions as reflected in the novel. In addition, the narrations are dominant in reflecting the working-class life conditions through Oliver's life.

## E. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the working-class life conditions during the Victorian era in *Oliver Twist* novel, the researcher draws some conclusions. Based on the findings of analysis, the researcher concludes that there are seven characteristics of the working-class life conditions during Victorian times that reflected in *Oliver Twist* novel. First, the workhouse. Dickens mentioned in the novel, the workhouse is one of public buildings that can be found in the great or small towns. In here, Oliver's character was born, and he spent his early life to live in the workhouse. Second, fear and hopelessness. In *Oliver Twist* novel, Dickens illustrated that men, women, and children who lived in the workhouse are separated in different wings; for married couple are divorced; the children go hungry day by day. Third, the smallest laborers. In *Oliver Twist* novel, Dickens portrayed the children who were employed as labor in their small age. The major character named Oliver was enforced to go to work any trade as an oakum pickier and apprentice in his nine years old. Fourth, a difficult transition. For displaced worker who moved from rural area to the vast city like London, they encountered change that made the transition is difficult for them. In *Oliver Twist* novel, a difficult transition was encountered by Oliver when he moved from farm to London. He must live in the cramped and crowded slum. For living in the crowded slum, it is difficult for Oliver to adapt with this condition. Fifth, an unsanitary life. In *Oliver Twist* novel, Dickens clearly illustrated the unsanitary conditions such as the air is impregnated by the pollution and filthy odor, the street is narrow and muddy, and the area is wretched and dirty. Sixth, crime in the city. The criminal activities reflected in *Oliver Twist* novel which the older criminal recruited the children for stealing goods. Dickens revealed that there are two forms of crime that exposed in the novel, particularly the children who become a thief and housebreaker. Seventh, too much convicts. In the novel, Dickens mentioned some convicts who did various different criminal actions. In consequence, they had to be punished by sending them to the prison. The convicts were classified into different cell based on the crime they had committed.

Furthermore, after identifying the reflection through *Oliver Twist*'s life, the researcher concludes that the way Dickens reflected the working-class life conditions during the Victorian era in the novel can be found through Oliver's actions, speech, dialogue, thoughts, appearance, and the narrations of the story.

## WORKS CITED

- Chrisp, Peter. *The Victorian Age*. New York: Balley Publishing Associates. 2005.
- Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*. Indonesia: Gramedia Pustaka Utama. 2017.
- Griffith, Kelly. *Writing Essays About Literature A Guide and Style Sheet*. 8<sup>th</sup>ed. United States: Wadsworth Cengage Learning. 2011. PDF File.
- Kumar, Ranjit. *Research Methodology a step-by-step to guide for beginners*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New Delhi: Sage Publications. 2004. PDF File.
- Longo, Mariano. *Fiction and Social Reality Literature and Narrative as Sociological Resource*. England: Ashgate Publishing Limited. 2015. PDF File.
- Stewart, Gail B. *Understanding World History Victorian England*. United States: Reference Point Press. 2014. PDF File.
- Tischler, Henry L. *Introduction to Sociology*. Tenth Edition. United States: Wadsworth Cengage Learning. 2011. PDF File.
- Silalahi, Selvy, Singgih Daru Kuncara, & Erna Wati. "An Analysis of Moral Development of Nim Rouse's Character in *Nim's Island* Film." *Ilmu Budaya (Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni dan Budaya)* [Online], 2.3 (2018): 261-267. Web.
- Indriani, Dinah, Surya Sili, & Setya Ariani. "An Analysis of Intrinsic Elements in *Mama* Film by Andres Muschietti." *Ilmu Budaya (Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni dan Budaya)* [Online], 3.1 (2019): 13-24. Web.