

SOME BASIC FEATURES OF THE NOVELS BY CHARLES DICKENS

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Abstract: Charles Dickens created his writings in the spirit of critical realism, it is possible to find romantic or even fairytale features in some of his works, especially in the early ones. For example the novels *Oliver Twist* or *David Copperfield* are characterized by them. It is possible to regard invincible positiveness of the main characters, constancy of their character despite all the negative influential experiences which on the contrary only strengthen their character, and above all happy endings of these novels, often quite improbable, as the fairytale features.

Key words: novel, Charles Dickens, Ebenezer Scrooge, *A Christmas Carol*.

Britain's most important authors is Charles Dickens. His books were written in Victorian times but are still enjoyed today, studied at schools and universities the world over and have been made into countless films, plays, TV series and musicals. Dickens is certainly worth reading! He advocated for the poor, was a super star of unimaginable proportions in his own life, and wrote works that are hugely fun to read because they were intended to appeal to the people, to draw people back in to buy the stories one chapter at a time in periodicals.

First of all, let's take a look at what Charles Dickens actually wrote!

He penned works in many different forms: at least 12 novels, along with many short stories, essays, nonfiction works, plays, and articles. While his essays and political agitations were highly regarded at the time (Queen Victoria frequently read his work!), it was Dickens' novels which captured the hearts and minds of the readers of the world. For the most part, his novels were written as serials, published one chapter at a time in periodicals (like magazines or a regular journal today). The chapters would be released as he wrote them, so that he frequently changed the characters and plots according to the feedback he received on the previous chapter! Once reader read about *Oliver Twist* or any of his other wonderfully real characters, you never forget.

English novelist Charles Dickens had a knack for expertly portraying the symptoms of medical conditions. He also had a tendency to slip those descriptions into his works in subtle terms, such that historians and physicians have made it something of a hobby to interpret them medically and attempt to diagnose afflicted characters. In some cases, Dickens's descriptions actually predated those offered by medical doctors,

revealing his skill for observation. "Dickensian diagnoses" ascribed to nine of the novelist's characters are explored in this list.

Fungus Poisoning

On Christmas Eve in *A Christmas Carol*, miser Ebenezer Scrooge relives his past and has visions of the present and future in a series of vivid hallucinations. The following day, as detailed by Dickens, the mature-age (presumably 50-something) Scrooge was atypically generous and joyful. Scrooge's complaint of indigestion on the night of the visions has been interpreted by some as evidence of poisoning with the hallucinogenic fungus ergot, which once was a common contaminant of rye bread. Others have suggested that Scrooge may have experienced a stroke or been afflicted by dementia or brief psychotic disorder.[<https://www.britannica.com/story/9-dickensian-diagnoses>]

Vitamin D deficiency

Whatever it was that ailed Scrooge, his visions in *A Christmas Carol* may have saved Tiny Tim Cratchit's life. Indeed, Scrooge was warned, "If these shadows remain unchanged, I see an empty chair where Tiny Tim once sat." With this, Dickens suggests that if Scrooge were to be generous—to, for instance, raise Bob Cratchit's wages—then the family would be able to afford more food. And, more important, they might have been able to buy fish oil, which, if modern-day physicians are correct in their assertions that Tiny Tim suffered from vitamin D deficiency, would have helped strengthen the boy's crippled legs. Why Tiny Tim may have lacked vitamin D is uncertain, though the condition may have been caused by renal tubular acidosis or rickets, or even by a combination of rickets and tuberculosis, which were common among London's children in the 19th century.[<https://www.britannica.com/story/9-dickensian-diagnoses>]

Dyslexia

"He can make all the letters separately and he knows most of them separately when he sees them...but he can't put them together."

That was how Dickens described the reading ability of shopkeeper Mr. Krook in *Bleak House*. Some have postulated that it might have been the first written description of dyslexia, and if that is the case, then Dickens penned it some three decades before the term itself reached the medical literature. Krook also suffered from alcohol dependency and died a most unusual death, having spontaneously combusted.[<https://www.britannica.com/story/9-dickensian-diagnoses>]

Dystonia

"He had a way of writhing when he wanted to express enthusiasm, which was very ugly."

"Writhing" was used frequently by Dickens in his descriptions of the villain Uriah Heep in *David Copperfield*. Heep's constant wriggling and twisting has been

interpreted by some as indicative of the physical disorder known as dystonia. Dystonia is characterized by repetitive movements resulting from the involuntary contraction of muscles. The unusual twisting movements and postures associated with dystonia can be socially disturbing, for sufferers and observers alike, which Dickens captured well.

As Miss Trotwood exclaims in Heep's presence, "If you're an eel, Sir, conduct yourself like one. If you're a man, control your limbs, Sir! Good God!"

All of his works are readable, Dickens has thousands of fans not only in England but also around the world. The writer could found his own writing style and methods in order to make the novels and essays easy to understand for all types of readers.

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