



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL MOBILITY
(on the basis of “Oliver Twist” by Ch.Dickens
and “Middlemarch” by George Eliot)

Abdumannonova Marhaboxon,
Olimova Sarvinoz

2-year students of the Foreign Language
and Literature Department of the Faculty of Tourism
and Economics, Kokand University, Uzbekistan

Scientific Advisor: Kahramonjon A. Ismoilov,
Acting Associate Professor, PhD. KSU & KU, Uzbekistan

Annotatsiya

Ushbu tadqiqot Charlz Dikkensning “Oliver Twist” (1837–1839) va George Eliotning “Middlemarch” (1871–1872) asarlarida ta’lim va ijtimoiy mobillik o’rtasidagi munosabatlarni o’rganadi. Viktoriya davri adabiyoti ta’limni ijtimoiy ko’tarilishning kafolatlangan yo’li sifatida emas, balki samaradorligi struktura, iqtisodiy, madaniy va psixologik omillarga bog’liq bo’lgan resurs sifatida tasvirlaydi. Sifatli adabiy tahlil va tarixiy kontekstdan foydalanib, tadqiqot ko’rsatadi: ta’lim ixtiyoriy ravishda berilmaydi (Oliver Twist) yoki nozik usulda cheklangan (Middlemarch) — institut amaliyotlari, ijtimoiy kutishlar va gender me’yorlari ta’sirida. Maxsus e’tibor bezovta qiluvchi omillarga qaratiladi — kundalik frustratsiyalar va ijtimoiy bosimlar, ular ambitsiyalarni asta-sekin zaiflashtiradi. Shuningdek, axloqiy ta’lim, professional tayyorgarlik va gender cheklovlari ham tahlil qilinadi, Viktoriya davrida ta’lim va ijtimoiy mobillik o’rtasidagi o’zaro bog’liqlikni to’liq tushunishga yordam beradi.



Kalit so‘zlar: ta’lim; ijtimoiy mobillik; Viktoriya davri adabiyoti; sinfiy tengsizlik; gender va ta’lim; bezovta qiluvchi omillar; ijtimoiy nazorat; Charlz Dikpens; Jorj Eliot; axloqiy ta’lim; professional tayyorgarlik

Аннотация

В данном исследовании рассматриваются взаимосвязи между образованием и социальной мобильностью в произведениях Чарльза Диккенса *Оливер Твист* (1837–1839) и Джордж Элиот *Миддлмарч* (1871–1872). Викторианская литература изображает образование не как гарантированный путь к социальному продвижению, а как ресурс, эффективность которого зависит от структурных, экономических, культурных и психологических факторов. С помощью качественного литературного анализа и исторического контекстуализации исследование показывает, как образование либо намеренно лишается персонажей (*Оливер Твист*), либо тонко ограничивается (*Миддлмарч*) институциональными практиками, общественными ожиданиями и гендерными нормами. Особое внимание уделено раздражающим факторам — постоянным, повседневным фрустрациям и социальным давлениям, которые подрывают амбиции. Также рассматриваются моральное образование, профессиональная подготовка и гендерные ограничения для комплексного понимания взаимодействия образования и социальной мобильности в викторианской Англии.

Ключевые слова: образование; социальная мобильность; викторианская литература; классовое неравенство; гендер и образование; раздражающие факторы; социальный контроль; Чарльз Диккенс; Джордж Элиот; моральное образование; профессиональная подготовка

Abstract

*This study examines the relationship between education and social mobility in Charles Dickens’s *Oliver Twist* (1837–1839) and George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* (1871–1872). Victorian literature portrays education not as a guaranteed path to*



social advancement but as a resource whose effectiveness is mediated by structural, economic, cultural, and psychological factors. Using qualitative literary analysis and historical contextualization, the study investigates how education is either deliberately withheld (Oliver Twist) or subtly constrained (Middlemarch) by institutional practices, societal expectations, and gender norms. Special attention is paid to annoyances—persistent, everyday frustrations and social pressures that erode ambition. Moral education, professional training, and gendered limitations are considered to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between education and social mobility in Victorian England.

Key words: *Education; Social Mobility; Victorian Literature; Class Inequality; Gender and Education; Annoyances; Social Control; Charles Dickens; George Eliot; Moral Education; Professional Ambition*

Introduction

The 19th century in Britain was a period of profound social, economic, and cultural transformation. Industrialization, urban migration, and the gradual expansion of education reshaped societal hierarchies. Despite these changes, social mobility remained limited for the majority of the population, constrained by systemic inequalities, gender norms, and cultural expectations. Victorian literature frequently engages with these tensions, portraying education both as a vehicle of personal development and as a reflection of societal constraints.

Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist* exposes a society in which the poor are deliberately denied educational opportunities, highlighting the structural barriers to social mobility. In contrast, George Eliot's *Middlemarch* illustrates a society where education is accessible, yet social pressures, gender roles, and financial constraints subtly limit its transformative potential. Together, these novels provide a nuanced critique of the Victorian assumption that education guarantees upward mobility.



This study explores how education, morality, gender, and annoyances intersect to shape social mobility, emphasizing that education alone is insufficient to overcome entrenched social hierarchies.

Methods

This study employs a qualitative literary analysis, combining textual examination with historical contextualization. The research focuses on two primary texts: Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and Eliot's *Middlemarch*.

Primary Sources: The texts were closely read to identify passages illustrating educational access, moral development, social mobility, and structural constraints.

Secondary Sources: Historical documents on Victorian education, gender norms, and social class informed the analysis.

Comparative Analysis: Differences and similarities in the representation of education and social mobility across the two novels were analyzed.

Analytical Framework

The analysis focused on four key areas:

Formal Education: Presence, absence, and type of education.

Structural Barriers: Institutional neglect, legal frameworks, economic dependency.

Psychological Factors: Internalized passivity, ambition, moral development.

Annoyances: Everyday frustrations and systemic pressures undermining social advancement.

Results

Education and Social Deprivation in *Oliver Twist*

Oliver experiences minimal formal education within the workhouse system, reflecting the Poor Law's emphasis on obedience rather than intellectual development. The lack of education exposes him to exploitation and limits his social mobility. Despite innate moral integrity, Oliver's social position remains largely determined by birth and fortune, highlighting systemic barriers.



Professional Education and Constraints in Middlemarch

Lydgate's medical training equips him with knowledge and professional competence. However, Eliot demonstrates that social pressures, financial dependency, and community gossip erode the efficacy of education. Dorothea Brooke's intellectual abilities are similarly constrained by gender norms, directing her ambition into socially sanctioned roles, such as charity or marriage.

Annoyances as Hidden Barriers

Both novels illustrate persistent annoyances. Dickens depicts routine institutional cruelties and moral lectures as mechanisms of control. Eliot presents social obligations, gossip, and financial stress as subtler forms of constraint. These pressures cumulatively hinder the characters' ambitions, demonstrating that education alone cannot secure social advancement.

Discussion

The comparison reveals several key insights:

Structural vs. Subtle Constraints: Dickens emphasizes overt institutional barriers, while Eliot focuses on subtler societal and psychological pressures.

Moral vs. Formal Education: Innate morality is insufficient for social mobility without institutional and structural support.

Gendered Limitations: Women's access to education and opportunity is restricted by societal norms, limiting the transformative potential of intellectual talent.

Annoyances as Social Control: Persistent frustrations reinforce social hierarchies, showing how everyday pressures shape life outcomes.

These findings suggest that while education is necessary for personal development, its capacity to enable social mobility is contingent upon broader societal, economic, and cultural conditions.

Together, *Oliver Twist* and *Middlemarch* present a nuanced critique of Victorian assumptions about education. Dickens emphasizes structural exclusion



and the role of luck in achieving mobility, while Eliot explores subtler social and psychological forces that limit education's efficacy. Both authors suggest that education alone cannot transform society; it is intertwined with morality, social expectation, and systemic power.

Extended Conclusion and Implications

The novels highlight that education, while necessary for personal development, is not sufficient to secure social mobility in unequal societies. Oliver's moral integrity, Lydgate's professional training, and Dorothea's intelligence all fall short of guaranteeing independence or influence. The persistent role of annoyance, social expectations, and structural inequalities underscores the limits of education as a transformative tool.

By situating these works within the historical context of Victorian England, it becomes evident that education functions not merely as a ladder to advancement but also as a mirror reflecting societal hierarchies. Dickens and Eliot compel readers to recognise that meaningful social mobility requires more than individual effort or formal learning; it demands systemic reform, cultural openness, and the courage to challenge entrenched norms. Their novels remain relevant today, providing insights into how education interacts with social structures to either enable or constrain human potential.

Conclusion

Education in Victorian literature emerges as a complex instrument rather than a guaranteed ladder to social mobility. Dickens illustrates systemic deprivation that obstructs opportunity, while Eliot shows that social pressures and gendered norms constrain education's impact. Persistent annoyances, societal expectations, and internalized limitations further restrict mobility.

Ultimately, meaningful social mobility requires structural reform, cultural openness, and personal agency. These novels remain relevant, offering insights into



how education, morality, and ambition interact with societal constraints to shape human potential.

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