Shine Brighter Terminale

File 9 Victorian fiction, social truths

Extrait p.80 – Roman, *David Copperfield*

Murdstone and Grinby's trade was among a good many kinds of people, but an important branch of it was the supply of wines and spirits to certain packet ships. […]

When the empty bottles ran short, there were labels to be pasted on full ones, or corks[1] to be fitted to them, or seals to be put upon the corks, or finished bottles to be packed in casks[2]. All this work was my work, and of the boys employed upon it I was one.

There were three or four of us, counting me. My working place was established in a corner of the warehouse[3], where Mr. Quinion could see me, when he chose to stand up on the bottom rail of his stool in the counting-house, and look at me through a window above the desk. Hither, on the first morning of my so auspiciously[4] beginning life on my own account, the oldest of the regular boys was summoned to show me my business. […]

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[1] *bouchon en liège*

[2] *tonneau*

[3] *entrepôt*

[4] favourably

No words can express the secret agony of my soul as I sunk into this companionship; compared these henceforth[5] everyday associates with those of my happier childhood—not to say with Steerforth, Traddles, and the rest of those boys; and felt my hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man, crushed in my bosom[6]. The deep remembrance of the sense I had, of being utterly without hope now; of the shame I felt in my position; of the misery it was to my young heart to believe that day by day what I had learned, and thought, and delighted in, and raised my fancy and my emulation[7] up by, would pass away from me, little by little, never to be brought back any more; cannot be written.

Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, 1849-1850

[5] *désormais*

[6] heart

[7] stimulation

Extrait p.81 – Roman *North and South* (Chapter 22)

"Mamma will come directly, Miss Hale. She desired me to apologise to you as it is. Perhaps you know my brother has imported hands from Ireland, and it has irritated the Milton people excessively—as if he hadn't a right to get labour[1] where he could; and the stupid wretches[2] here wouldn't work for him; and now they've frightened these poor Irish starvelings[3] so with their threats, that we daren't let them out. You may see them huddled in that top room in the mill, –and they're to sleep there, to keep them safe from those brutes, who will neither work nor let them work. And mamma is seeing about their food, and John is speaking to them, for some of the women are crying to go back. Ah! here's mamma!" […]

"They're at the gates! Call John, Fanny, –call him in from the mill! They're at the gates! They'll batter them in! Call John, I say!"

And simultaneously, the gathering tramp[4] –to which she had been listening, instead of heeding Margaret's words– was heard just right outside the wall, and an increasing din of angry voices raged behind the wooden barrier, which shook as if the unseen maddened crowd made battering-rams of their bodies, and retreated a short space only to come with more united steady impetus[5] against it, till their great beats made the strong gates quiver, like reeds before the wind. […]

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[1] *main d'œuvre*

[2] poor hungry people

[3] miserable people

[4] *martèlement des pieds*

[5] *élan, impulsion*

Mrs. Thornton watched for her son, who was still in the mill. He came out, looked up at them –the pale cluster of faces– and smiled good courage to them, before he locked the factory-door. Then he called to one of the women to come down and undo his own door, which Fanny had fastened behind her in her mad flight.

Mrs. Thornton herself went. And the sound of his well-known and commanding voice, seemed to have been like the taste of blood to the infuriated multitude outside. Hitherto they had been voiceless, wordless, needing all their breath for their hard-labouring efforts to break down the gates.

Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (Chapter 22), 1855

Extrait p.83 – Roman, *Jane Eyre* (Chapter 23)

Jane and Rochester's wedding ceremony was stopped when a lawyer revealed that Rochester was already married.

"I tell you I must go!" I retorted, roused to something like passion. "Do you think I can stay to become nothing to you? Do you think I am an automaton?—a machine without feelings? and can bear to have my morsel of bread snatched from my lips, and my drop of living water dashed from my cup? Do you think, because I am poor, obscure,plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong!—I have as much soul as you,—and full as much heart! And if God had gifted me with some beauty and much wealth, I should have made it as hard for you to leave me, as it is now for me to leave you. I am not talking to you now through the medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh;—it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God's feet, equal,—as we are!"

"As we are!" repeated Mr. Rochester—"so," he added, enclosing me in his arms. Gathering me to his breast, pressing his lips on my lips: "so, Jane!"

"Yes, so, sir," I rejoined: "and yet not so; for you are a married man—or as good as a married man, and wed to one inferior to you—to one with whom you have no sympathy—whom I do not believe you truly love; for I have seen and heard you sneer[1] at her. I would scorn[2] such a union: therefore I am better than you—let me go!"

"Where, Jane? To Ireland?"

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[1] smile with contempt

[2] reject

“Yes—to Ireland. I have spoken my mind, and can go anywhere now.”

“Jane, be still; don’t struggle so, like a wild frantic bird that is rending[3] its own plumage in its desperation.”

“I am no bird; and no net ensnares[4] me; I am a free human being with an independent will, which I now exert to leave you.”

Another effort set me at liberty, and I stood erect before him.

Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Chapter 23), 1847

[3] ripping

[4] traps

Extrait p.84 – Roman, *The Importance of Being Earnest*

Lady Bracknell: […] Are your parents living?

Jack: I have lost both my parents.

Lady Bracknell: To lose one parent, Mr. Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness[1]. Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?

Jack: I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me … I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was … well, I was found.

Lady Bracknell: Found!

Jack: The late Mr. Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.

Lady Bracknell: Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?

Jack: [Gravely.] In a hand-bag.

Lady Bracknell: A hand-bag?

Jack: [Very seriously.] Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a hand-bag—a somewhat large, black leather hand-bag, with handles to it—an ordinary hand-bag in fact.

Lady Bracknell: In what locality did this Mr. James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this ordinary hand-bag?

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[1] negligence

Jack: In the cloak-room at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.

Lady Bracknell: The cloak-room at Victoria Station?

Jack: Yes. The Brighton line.

Lady Bracknell: The line is immaterial. Mr. Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered[2] by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate bred, in a hand-bag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt[3] for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution. And I presume you know what that unfortunate movement led to? As for the particular locality in which the hand-bag was found, a cloak-room at a railway station might serve to conceal a social indiscretion—has probably, indeed, been used for that purpose before now—but it could hardly be regarded as an assured basis for a recognised position in good society.

Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, 1895

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[2] confused

[3] *mépris*

Extrait p.85 – Roman, *A Christmas Carol*

Oh! But he was a tight-fisted[1] hand at the grindstone, Scrooge! a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous[2], old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint, from which no steel had ever struck out generous fire; secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster. The cold within him froze his old features, nipped his pointed nose, shrivelled his cheek, stiffened his gait; made his eyes red, his thin lips blue; and spoke out shrewdly[3] in his grating voice. A frosty rime was on his head, and on his eyebrows, and his wiry chin. He carried his own low temperature always about with him; he iced his office in the dog-days[4]; and didn't thaw it one degree at Christmas.

Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*, 1843

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[1] *radin*

[2] greedy, envious

[3] cleverly

[4] *canicule*

Extrait p.92 – Roman, *Oliver Twist*

Oliver Twist is an orphan who was brought to a workhouse[1].

The room in which the boys were fed, was a large stone hall, with a copper[2] at one end: out of which the master, dressed in an apron for the purpose, and assisted by one or two women, ladled the gruel[3] at mealtimes. Of this festive composition each boy had one porringer[4], and no more—except on occasions of great public rejoicing, when he had two ounces and a quarter of bread besides.

The bowls never wanted washing. The boys polished them with their spoons till they shone again; and when they had performed this operation (which never took very long, the spoons being nearly as large as the bowls), they would sit staring at the copper, with such eager eyes, as if they could have devoured the very bricks of which it was composed. [...] Boys have generally excellent appetites. Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months: at last they got so voracious and wild with hunger, that one boy... hinted darkly to his companions, that unless he had another basin of gruel per diem, he was afraid he might some night happen to eat the boy who slept next him…

The evening arrived; the boys took their places. The master... stationed himself at the copper... The gruel was served out; and a long grace[5] was said over

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[1] building where very poor people in Britain used to work in exchange for food and shelter

[2] *chaudron*

[3] porridge

[4] spoon

[5] prayer

the short commons. The gruel disappeared; the boys whispered each other, and winked at Oliver... 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.”

The master was a fat, healthy man, but he turned very pale. He gazed in stupefied astonishment on the small rebel for some seconds, and then clung for support to the copper. The assistants were paralysed with wonder, and the boys with fear.

Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*, 1839

Évaluation de la compréhension de l’écrit – Guide pédagogique

Extrait – Roman, *Jane Eyre*

Jane Eyre, who has just become a governess at Thornfield Hall, is discussing Mr. Rochester, her employer, with Mrs. Fairfax, the housekeeper, before meeting him for the first time.

“Is Mr. Rochester an exacting, fastidious sort of man?”

“Not particularly so; but he has a gentleman’s tastes and habits, and he expects to have things managed in conformity to them.”

“Do you like him? Is he generally liked?”

“Oh, yes; the family have always been respected here. Almost all the land in this neighbourhood, as far as you can see, has belonged to the Rochesters time out of mind.”

“Well, but, leaving his land out of the question, do you like him? Is he liked for himself?”

“I have no cause to do otherwise than like him; and I believe he is considered a just and liberal landlord by his tenants: but he has never lived much amongst them.”

“But has he no peculiarities? What, in short, is his character?”

“Oh! his character is unimpeachable, I suppose. He is rather peculiar, perhaps: he has travelled a great deal, and seen a great deal of the world, I should think. I dare say he is clever, but I never had much conversation with him.”

“In what way is he peculiar?”

“I don’t know—it is not easy to describe—nothing striking, but you feel it when he speaks to you; you cannot be always sure whether he is in jest[1] or earnest, whether he is pleased or the contrary; you don’t thoroughly understand him, in short—at least, I don’t: but it is of no consequence, he is a very good master.”

This was all the account I got from Mrs. Fairfax of her employer and mine. There are people who seem to have no notion of sketching a character, or observing and describing salient[2] points, either in persons or things: the good lady evidently belonged to this class; my queries puzzled, but did not draw her out. Mr. Rochester was Mr. Rochester in her eyes; a gentleman, a landed proprietor—nothing more: she inquired and searched no further, and evidently wondered at my wish to gain a more definite notion of his identity.

Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, 1847.

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[1] joking

[2] prominent