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Expository Essay Option One: Explanatory Essay

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The Resurrection of Boz: Making A Name for The Other Eleven

Were Charles Dickens (physically) alive, he would remind the world of his tombstone engraving: "I rest my claim to the remembrance of my country on my published works." Yet on December 6, 2010, Oprah Winfrey "shamefully" admitted to the world that she'd never read Dickens, and it was at that time that she announced as her 65th and final book club selection, *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations*. Not choosing *A Christmas Carol* (being a likely choice for Oprah's Christmas time reveal) would have had Dickens bursting with joy; all the same, choosing two of the famous four, especially knowing that anything Oprah touches turns to gold, did nothing to increase the \$68 million dollar man's assets and one can imagine Dickens turning over in his grave. Perhaps Dickens could thrive again through the resurrection of Boz (the pseudonym Dickens borrowed and transformed to establish his literary career since he was an unknown writer at that time) in the twenty-first century through the use of modern 21st century technologies, so that the famous four can still receive their timeless classic glory, but more importantly the other eleven can make their mark and nevermore shall Oprah, her followers, and the rest of society in "the best of times" and in "the worst of times" shamefully admit that the great works of Charles Dickens are not in their Nooks and Kindles.

With the widespread popularity, availability, and use of the Internet, digital tools, and other 21st century technologies, the young Charles Dickens, who transformed the media environment during his time, could easily exploit today's technologically advanced environment for his self-promotion. The culminating moment of Oprah's book club occurs when she invites the author to speak about his book and respond to audience and book club members' reactions. If Dickens were alive today, he could take advantage of this mass audience by means of Skype

(might be tough getting back to America for an interview after a long British tour; it would be even tougher from the graveyard). Dickens could very well set up his own hours of availability for live webcast or video cast and the public could question him about his works, his politics, his personal life, or about the world of writing and his thoughts on being an author for any hopefuls.

Skype reaches millions of people of diverse backgrounds from various regions all times of day and this could connect him to the most people in a short amount of time. These Skype sessions could also be taped and he could telecast them from his personal web page, sell to the highest bidder on eBay or Craig's List (where I'm certain the die hard Dickens fans spend some of their time looking for good buys), and make a profit while still exposing all fifteen of his major works. Besides, can you imagine how many hits this video would get on You Tube, were it to go viral? Oprah Winfrey interviewing one of the world's most renowned authors? The public's response would be huge, I'd say; and the technology masterminds would find ways to manipulate the video to their individual tastes; yet if Dickens opened his own You Tube account, posted and remixed his own videos about his works and what he wanted audiences to take away, it would have an ever greater impact both now and when he is dead and gone.

Aside from the Skype and You Tube crazes, Boz could resurrect himself through a creative blog site, aptly titled "What the Dickens?" a euphemism if one is in extreme awe or puzzlement, and I imagine Dickens, known to satirize and comment on Victorian society, could take a satirical view of America's issues through a series of daily blogs and examine those issues through his point of view. These blogs could then turn into short stories on major topics such as the presidential election of 2012, the national debt, greedy gas companies, or health care, and many would be quick to post their responses to such a wise voice. Now Dickens, being who he is, may have particular demands, telling responders that their posts become his official property and may be used to his particular liking if and when they become part of a larger work later to be published. Instead of the *Pickwick Papers* of the nineteenth century, Dickens would transform these satirical, reflective blogs into the *Nitpicking Papers* of the twenty-first

century, sell it to *The New Yorker* or *The Onion*, forcing people to pay to read what they'd written to Dickens, and they would pay because some of us thrive off controversy; fact, when made somewhat comical and fictional, is easier to deal with than pure fact, or it is bound to have all shouting "What the Dickens!" at the pure audacity and bravery of his comments (without apology) about the follies of American society.

As stated in Elliot Engel's *A Dab of Dickens & A Touch of Twain*, the reader was informed of books being placed on the back bookshelf with the strong chances of never being perused. While bookstores and libraries still exist for those of us who enjoy flipping and smelling the pages of a new hardback or paperback (we have Dickens to thank for the latter), a new wave of book reading has emerged that Dickens could exploit to get avid readers and non-readers "tasting, chewing swallowing, and digesting," (surely you've read "Of Studies" by Francis Bacon; I refuse to resurrect him too.) not just the four, but even more, the other eleven. This new wave comes in the form of the Amazon Kindle or the Barnes & Noble Nook. The maker would demand that anyone who wanted to purchase *A Christmas Carol*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Oliver Twist* and/or *Great Expectations* would have to first purchase over a year's time samples or the full copy of maybe one or two of the neglected eleven works, such as *Chuzzlewit*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, or even *Little Dorrit* for two dollars per copy. This would ensure that other works were exposed to avid readers, ensure that his legacy extended beyond the most common texts, and garner some exposure to lesser known works that were of equal merit. Being as stingy as Ebenezer Scrooge, he would order the two e-reading companies to charge four dollars per copy of the desired four only after the purchase of any of the other eleven. Another 21st century digital tool that may generate appeal to a younger generation may be to turn his unfinished work, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, into a mini graphic novel. It contains just enough suspense, just enough color, a minimal amount of text put to words, and awesome graphics, which Boz could really get into based on his first work, *Sketches by Boz*, also containing illustrations. To extend this further, Dickens could invite young artists to write the

next chapter as a comic strip using ToonDo or Animato and upon completion and submission, upload to his personal website and charge one shilling for those who want to read the chapters or add a chapter.

This list wouldn't be complete if the two latest trends of social networking weren't included. Dickens of course would be guaranteed lifelong exposure by creating a Facebook and having society "friend" or "like" him and become a follower on his Twitter page. Would he have rejected Twitter? Being a man of many words, 140 characters a Tweet may not get his point across about the significance of the other eleven novels; however, it's just enough words to get people to listen, hold them in suspense, and keep them coming back to await the next tweet. Then again, Mark Spring (a colleague of mine) thought he might have enjoyed the irony of promoting 900-page novels via 140-word Tweets. A number of opportunities exist in today's ever progressing world of technology that Dickens and other classical and even modern day authors could use to their advantage to bring their well-known and lesser-known works to the public's attention. I "proudly" admit to Oprah and 'Oprahites', that I have read Dickens, so has twenty-eight others (all those journeying to England), and so will the rest of the world by the time I've posted this paper to the surreyteachweebly.com. Dickens, I do believe your claim has been rested and Boz has indeed been resurrected. "God bless us, everyone!"

References

Engel, Elliot. *A Dab of Dickens, A Touch of Twain*. New York: Pocket Books, 2002. Print.