



Charles Dickens

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Before reading

- 1 Look at the titles of the chapters and write what you think Dickens's life was like.

While reading

Chapters 1–2

- 2 Compare schools in Dickens's time and schools today using the information below. Then compare what you think with another student's sentences. Do you agree?

- a like prisons
- b only one classroom
- c around twenty children in a classroom
- d teachers hit their pupils
- e many classrooms
- f are big and comfortable
- g teachers don't hit their pupils
- h two hundred children in one classroom

Schools in

Dickens's time ...

Schools nowadays ...

- 3 Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- a Charles was able to buy the house of his dreams.
- b Charles's father taught him to read.
- c Charles walked less than two kilometers to reach the factory.
- d It was unusual for children to work in factories in the 1820s.
- e Marshalsea Prison was different from other prisons.
- f At fourteen Charles got a job as a newspaper reporter.
- g The stories in *Sketches by Boz* weren't all funny.
- h Charles's first novel came out in forty parts.
- i After the success of *The Pickwick Papers*, Charles's work as a reporter ended.
- j *Oliver Twist* didn't have a serious side.

Chapters 3–4

- 4 In pairs, write in *Oliver Twist's* diary (a) about the day he asks for more gruel and (b) about the day he meets Fagin. Then read your texts to the whole group.
- 5 What are Smike and Wackford Squeers thinking on page 15?



- 6 Put these events in the right order. Number them, 1–12.

- a In parliament, Dickens took down notes on the New Poor Law.
- b Dickens became ill and had to go to hospital.
- c Dickens' *Oliver Twist* started to come out.
- d The family moved to a nice house in Regent's Park.
- e Dickens started to publish *Nicholas Nickleby*.
- f Dickens traveled to Edinburgh.
- g Dickens's next novel, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, came out every week.
- h Charles and Catherine had a daughter, Mary.
- i A third child was born to Charles and Catherine after *Nicholas Nickleby*.
- j Charles and Catherine had their first son.
- k *Barnaby Rudge* also came out every week.
- l Mary Hogarth died in Charles's arms.

Chapters 5–6

- 7 Write the newspaper article that appeared in a Boston newspaper when Dickens and his wife arrived.



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8 Work with another student. What does each ghost show Scrooge?

Marley's ghost	
The ghost of Christmas Past	
The ghost of Christmas Now	
The ghost of Christmas Future	

9 With another student, imagine a conversation between Bob Cratchit and Scrooge after Scrooge's 'change'. Then have the conversation.

Chapters 7–8

10 Complete the chart with the name of the novel that each character belongs to: *Dombey and Son*, *David Copperfield*, *Bleak House* or *Hard Times*

Dora Spenlow	
Rachel	
Jo	
Paul Dombey	
Edward Murdstone	
Stephen Blackpool	
Mr. Micawber	
Esther Summerson	

11 Answer the following questions.

- Which character doesn't have any hair on his head?
- Which character can't be with his true love?
- Which character doesn't know that people have more than one name?
- Which character is the first police detective in English fiction?
- Which character has to wear a sign around his neck: 'He bites'.

Chapters 9–10

12 Dickens doesn't like Maria Beadnell any more. She's old, ugly and silly. Write what he says to her when they talk for the last time.

13 *Little Dorrit* and *A Tale of Two Cities* are very different novels. Which of the two is greater fun? Why? Ask another student what he or she thinks. Do you agree?

Chapters 11–12

14 Who did this? Choose the right names.

Abel Magwitch Estella Pumblechook
Pip Miss Havisham

- escaped from a prison ship.
- brought the prisoner food.
- took Pip to Miss Havisham's house.
- told Pip to play.
- called Pip a stupid village boy.

15 Complete the sentences with the names of the novels which appear in Chapter 12.

- Dickens never finished
- In his last tour he liked to read a scene from
- was his last full novel.
- The last time he read from his books in a London theatre he chose a scene from
- A scene from appeared on a ten pound note for some time.

After reading

16 With another student, choose the novel by Dickens which you think is the best of all.

- Go to the library or use the Internet and read the first chapter in English or in your own language. Then discuss the following questions with your friend.
 - Is the story fun?
 - Does Dickens describe places well?
 - Are the conversations between the characters interesting?
- Watch a film of the book and discuss the following questions:
 - Did you like the actors that played the different characters? Why (not)?
 - Did you imagine the story as it is shown in the film? Why (not)?

17 Using the Internet or the school library, find two or three book covers of the novel you have chosen and decide which you like most and why.

Design your own book cover. Remember to include the title, the writer's name and the name of the publisher.



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Chapters 1–2

1 Match the names and the right description.

1 John Lamert	a Charles's father
2 Maria Beadnell	b Charles's mother
3 Boz	c Charles's nurse
4 Catherine Hogarth	d a friend of the family
5 John Dickens	e Charles's first love
6 Elizabeth	f Charles Dickens
7 Mary Weller	g Charles's wife

Chapters 3–4

2 What's the right answer? Circle 1, 2 or 3.

- a Dickens wore Mary Hogarth's ring for the rest of his life because ...
- 1 it was expensive.
 - 2 he liked its colour.
 - 3 Mary was his great friend.
- b Workhouses saved money by giving people ...
- 1 small amounts of expensive food.
 - 2 cheap food.
 - 3 bread and water.
- c Some readers didn't like Nancy because ...
- 1 she is a thief.
 - 2 she isn't kind to Oliver.
 - 3 she continues to love Bill Sikes.
- d In *Nicholas Nickleby* Dickens attacked ...
- 1 workhouses.
 - 2 bad schools.
 - 3 criminals.

Chapters 5–6

3 Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

- a Dickens wrote only one travel book, *American Notes*.
- b Dickens thought that the character of an adult is shaped by his or her life as a child.
- c Dickens called his wife his 'best and truest friend'.
- d Dickens thought that only the government had to help the poor.
- e In *A Christmas Carol*, Bob Cratchit is mean and unkind.
- f Marley's ghost is pulling a long chain.
- g The second ghost shows Scrooge three children.
- h The third ghost doesn't frighten Scrooge at all.
- i Scrooge understands at last that money is everything.

Chapters 7–8

4 Answer why.

- a Why didn't Miss Trotwood like David Copperfield when he was born?
- b Why does Mrs Micawber suffer so much?
- c Why is *Bleak House* partly a detective story?
- d Why did Dickens visit Manchester in 1853?
- e Why did Dickens attack the rich owners of mills and factories in *Hard Times*?
- f Why didn't Dickens become a politician?
- g Why was he angry with his sons?

Chapters 9–10

5 Put the following sentences in order. Number them, 1–10.

- a Dickens wrote a play with Wilkie Collins.
- b He took the play to Manchester.
- c With the money he got from *Little Dorrit*, he bought Gad's Hill Place.
- d When Catherine found out about Ellen she moved out of the house.
- e He fell in love with Ellen Ternan.
- f Dickens went on his first reading tour.
- g After the second tour he started a new magazine.
- h He burnt all his personal letters and papers in a great fire.
- i Dickens wrote *Little Dorrit*.
- j He wrote *A Tale of Two Cities* for the magazine.

Chapters 11–12

6 Fill in the sentences with the right places.

- a In *Great Expectations*, Pip, the child, lives with his sister in a
- b Magwitch is sent to live in but he never forgets Pip.
- c In 1865, Dickens went to with Ellen and her mother.
- d On their way back to their train crashed.
- e In *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens attacks He calls it a 'hopeless city'.
- f Dickens went back to the in 1867.
- g Queen Victoria invited Dickens to
- h In June 1870, his daughter Kate visited him at
- i Dickens wanted his body to rest in but his readers did not agree with this.