

Classic Readers

DAVID COPPERFIELD

Charles Dickens
retold by Jenny Dooley



Express Publishing

Introductory Lesson

Before Reading

① In pairs, answer the following questions:

- Look at the front cover of the book. What can you see in the picture?
- When do you think the story takes place?
- Read the blurb on the back cover and discuss what kind of difficulties

you think David Copperfield might have experienced.

② Look at the following pictures. How do you think they are connected to the story?

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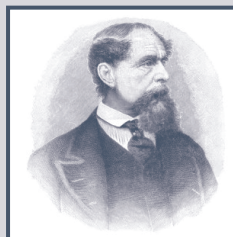
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Charles Dickens



Charles Dickens was born near Portsmouth, England, on February 7th, 1812. He was the second of eight children, whose father, John, was a clerk for the Navy. Although Charles had an idyllic early family life, his father was a poor manager of money

and got into financial difficulties. Eventually, he was put in prison, where his family later joined him. It was common in those days for the family of a debtor to live with him in prison. Charles was taken out of school and went to work putting labels on bottles of shoe polish. He worked long hours for very little money and lived away from his family, alone in London. He became a clerk in a lawyer's office when he was 15 and also worked as a reporter in the evenings. At 18, he fell in love with a pretty and careless girl, but the affair ended unhappily for Dickens after three years.

These events from his early life affected him deeply and he used these experiences to write his novels. Dickens wrote about 'David Copperfield', his eighth novel, "Of all my books I like this the best". It is largely autobiographical and was published in monthly parts between May 1849 and November 1850. Dickens wrote a total of fourteen complete novels and died in 1870 before completing 'The Mystery of Edwin Drood'. He is buried in Westminster Abbey in London.

③ Read the information about Charles Dickens and answer the questions that follow.

- a When was Charles Dickens born?
- b How many brothers and sisters did Charles Dickens have?
- c What was Dickens' first job?
- d How old was Dickens when he started to work for the lawyer?
- e When was 'David Copperfield' published?
- f What was the name of Dickens' unfinished novel?
- g When did Dickens die?

Beginnings

I was born in Blunderstone, Suffolk. We lived in a nice house with a garden and many trees outside. My father had named our house *'The Rookery'* because a type of bird – the rook – had nests in the trees all around our property.

It was after my father's death, and just before my birth, that his aunt, Betsey Trotwood, came to our home. Things were about to change at The Rookery, and my life was about to begin. Aunt Betsey marched into our house and gave everybody her opinions from the beginning!

"My nephew, David, was a good man. But like all men, he was a bit silly."

My mother was usually shy, but on this occasion, she told Aunt Betsey firmly that she did not like her to speak in an unkind way about my deceased father.

"Please, Madam! I will not have you talk about my late husband in this manner! My husband, David Copperfield, was a good and honest man with a heart of gold. If this baby is a son, I shall call him David Copperfield like him, and I hope that he will be exactly like his father!"

Aunt Betsey folded her arms and stared at my mother.

"The baby will be a girl! I will be her godmother and her name shall be Betsey. And she certainly will **not** make the mistakes in life that **I** did!"

Of course, Aunt Betsey was very disappointed when I was born. Her attitude towards males was a bit harsh. This was because of the problems she had had with her husband when she was married. He had treated her badly, and they were eventually



Life with the Wickfields

Sometimes my aunt was strict. She chased away the donkeys, or anyone else for that matter, who dared to walk over the grass near her garden. But she cared about me. Living there was like something from a storybook.

And I liked Mr Dick. He was an interesting person. His family thought he was mad and wanted to place him in a psychiatric institution, but Aunt Betsey let him stay with her. I must admit that Mr Dick was a bit odd at times, but he was gentle and kind. He was writing a book about his life. Aunt Betsey told me that he had been writing it for years, but he never seemed to finish it.

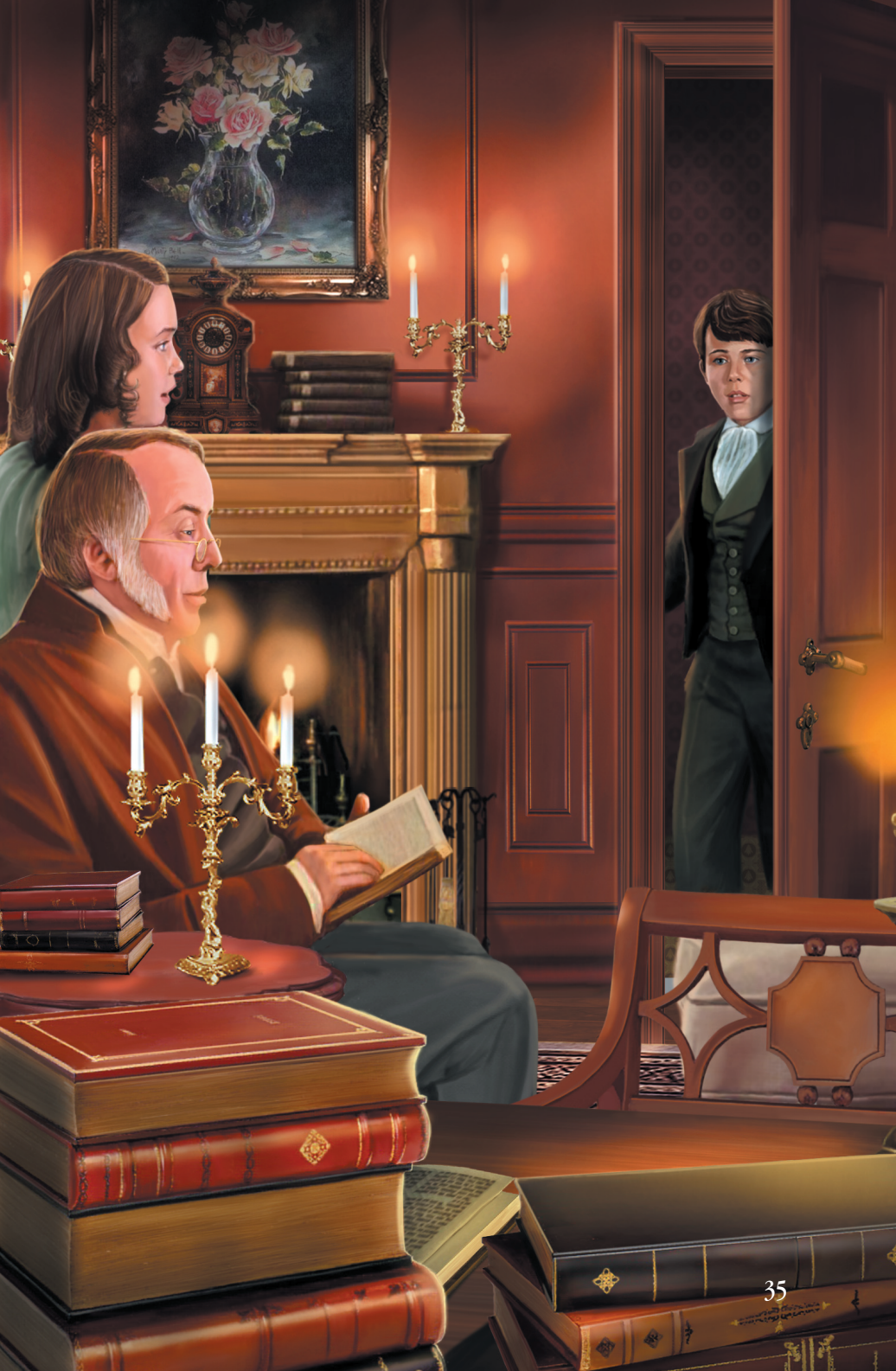
The time soon came when I had to go to school again. My aunt took the advice of her trusted friend and lawyer, Mr Wickfield, and I was enrolled at a school in Canterbury. Dr Strong was the headmaster there, and he was a polite and well-educated man. Aunt Betsey had arranged for me to live with Mr Wickfield while I was away at school.

I enjoyed living with Mr Wickfield and his lovely daughter, Agnes, who was thirteen – the same age as me. She had long brown hair and clear blue eyes. Agnes seemed very mature for her age and I often thought about what a wise and special person she was. She was like a sister. I trusted her and asked for her advice about many things.

“Agnes, I often think of my future and I don’t know what I will do.”

“Of course you don’t. No one knows the future. But you can prepare for it by doing well at school and learning from your mistakes.”

The only bad thing about living at the Wickfields was Uriah Heep, Mr Wickfield’s assistant. Uriah Heep was a skinny young man



DAVID COPPERFIELD

Life is full of changes for young David Copperfield. How will he react to the cruelty, the neglect and loss he experiences as a boy, and will he ever find the love and security he is looking for?



Level 1



Level 2



Level 3



Level 4



Level 5



Level 6

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