

Charles Dickens:
Mini-e-book Resource:

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Introduction and Brief Biography:

Charles John Huffam Dickens (1812-1870) - is widely acknowledged as one of the all time literary greats.

During his lifetime, Charles Dickens was an active social campaigner – and indeed used his writing to highlight social inequalities and other topical issues of the day.



Charles Dickens was not, however, without his critics during his lifetime - with fellow authors of the time such as George Lewes, Henry James and Virginia Woolf all criticising his story-lines as being either being fetched, over sentimental or stereotypical. Charles Dickens' plots unquestionably showed, however, great insight of human nature - and their lasting quality has been confirmed by the fact that his work has never gone out of print.

Many of Charles Dickens' novels were published in serial form within magazines and other weekly or monthly periodicals - as was common practice for many writers of the time. This approach made the stories widely accessible at an affordable price - but also influenced the writing style as each episode often ended with a 'cliff-hanger' to ensure suspense and anticipation for the next episode.

Charles Dickens was born on 7th February 1812, in Portsmouth, Hampshire, England and was the second of eight children.

Charles Dickens' mother Elizabeth Dickens (nee Barrow) (1789-1863) was married to John Dickens (1786-1851) – a clerk in the Navy pay office at Portsmouth.

At the age of five, Charles and his family moved to Chatham, Kent and later at the age of ten the family moved again - this time to Camden Town, London.

As a young boy Charles was a keen reader of authors such as Henry Fielding and Tobias Smollett - and these influences can clearly be seen in his writing, particularly in, for example, the vivid description of many of his characters.

During his early childhood years Charles Dickens benefitted from some private education at William Gile's school, Chatam - although this came to an end at the age of twelve when his father was imprisoned and jailed in Marshalsea debtors' prison for un-paid debts.

To pay his way, the young Charles Dickens obtained a job applying labels to jars of shoe polish at Warren's Blacking workhouse Hungerford Street London - working ten hours a day, for six shillings a week. His initial instruction was given by a rather dishevelled boy by the name of 'Bob Fagin', a name which he was to include within his book 'Oliver Twist' (1838).

During this time, Charles Dickens obtained lodgings at the house of a friend of the family, Elizabeth Roylance - whom he was to later model the character 'Mrs Pipchin' in the novel 'Donbey and Son' (1846-1848).

Charles later moved into lodgings owned by an elderly father together with his grown up son; these characters were again the basis of the 'Garland family' in the novel the 'Old Curiosity Shop' (serialised between 1840 and 1841).

After a few months in prison, Charles' father John inherited £450 from his grandmother Elizabeth following her death. This legacy allowed him to pay his debtors and so gain his release from prison; this financial windfall for the family also ultimately allowed the young Charles Dickens to continue his education at the Wellington House Academy in London.

His time within the shoe polish factory are thought to have affected Charles as seen in by many references in his writing to the desperate workplace conditions that were all too common place at the time. 'David Copperfield' in this context is thought to be the

most autobiographical of his works with clear parallels being visible to this phase of his life.

In 1827, Charles Dickens began working as an article clerk in the law firm of 'Ellis and Blackmore' - and this position offered an opening into the legal profession that would ultimately lead to his admission to the bar. This legal training was also to inform and influence many of his novels such as 'Bleak House' and 'Donbey and Son'

Charles met his first love Maria Beadnell whilst working for 'Ellis and Blackmore'; unfortunately for the young Charles, Maria's parents did not approve of their courtship and sent Maria to complete her education in Paris.

In 1834 Charles Dickens started writing for the 'Morning Chronicle' as a political journalist under the pseudonym of 'Boz'.

In 1836, Charles Dickens married Catherine Thompson Hogarth (1816–1879), the daughter of the editor of the 'Evening Chronicle'; George Hogarth.

Charles and Catherine Dickens first lived in Bloomsbury, London and ultimately had seven sons (Charles, Walter, Francis, Alfred, Sydney, Henry and Edward) - and three daughters (Mary, Kate, and Dora).

From 1836 to 1839, Charles Dickens additionally held the position of editor for 'Bentley's Miscellany' whilst also writing 'Oliver Twist', 'Nicholas Nickleby', 'The Old Curiosity Shop' and 'Barnaby Rudge' – each initially being published in serial form.

In 1842, Charles Dickens travelled with his wife to the United States and Canada, and by this time was progressively becoming a household name both in Britain and northern America.

Charles Dickens continued to publish 'Dombey and Son' in 1848, 'David Copperfield' between 1849 and 1850, 'Bleak House' between 1852 and 1853, 'Hard

Times' in 1854, 'Little Dorrit' in 1857, 'A Tale of Two Cities' in 1859 and 'Great Expectations' in 1861.

In 1856, Charles Dickens bought a large house 'Gad's Hill Place' in Higham, Kent.

In 1858, Charles Dickens separated from his wife, although he continued to maintain her financially for the remaining 20 years of her life till her death in 1878.

On 8th June 1865, Dickens was involved in the Staplehurst rail crash from which he was extremely lucky to survive - travelling in the only first class compartment not to become de-railed. This experience was to give rise to the short story, 'The Signal Man'.

During the next five years, the rate of output of Charles Dickens' writing rapidly declined, as ill health started to take its toll. In 1869 Dickens collapsed as a result of a mild stroke - and although he recovered from this episode he died the following year on June 8th.

Charles Dickens was buried in the Poet's corner of Westminster Abbey. Charles Dickens asked that no memorial be made in his honour - and to this date, the only public statue to Charles Dickens is to be found in Clark Park in Spuce Hill Philadelphia - USA.

Charles Dickens Museums:

1) The Carles Dickens Museum – London:

The Charles Dickens Museum, in Doughty Street, Holborn, London is housed in one of Charles Dickens's homes. Although he only lived there for two years some of his most famous works such as Oliver Twist, The Pickwick Papers and Nicholas Mickleny were written here.

<http://www.dickensmuseum.com/museum.htm>

2) Charles Dickens' Birthplace Museum:

The 'Charles Dickens' Birthplace Museum' in Portsmouth is based in the house in which Charles Dickens was born. The house is now maintained in the style of 1809 - and was the first home for Charles Dickens parents, John and Elizabeth Dickens.

3) Dickens House Museum – Broadstairs:

The Dickens House Museum in Broadstairs is the home of Miss Mary Pearson Strong - who Charles Dickens based much of the character of Miss Betsey Trotwood, in the novel David Copperfield. The museum contains some of Dickens's letters, memorabilia and general Victoriana.

<http://www.dickensfellowship.org/DHMB.htm>

Charles Dickens' Festivals:

1) The Dickens Festival in Rochester, Kent - UK.

The Summer Dickens fesitval is held annually during the last week of May - or the first week of June and comprises street entertainment, a ball and other fesitivities over a 3 day (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) – long weekend.

Details can be found at:

<http://www.historic-uk.com/DestinationsUK/Rochester.htm>

2) The Riverside Dickens Festival in Riverside, California – USA:

This fesitival includes takes place during the last four to five weekends of the year annually. A range of entertainment and details can be found at:

<http://www.dickensfair.com>

3) The Greater Jefferson-Northern Brookhaven Arts Council Dickens' Fesitival:

This fesitival is held annually in Port Jefferson, New York annually.

Further details can be found at:

<http://www.gpjac.org>

Online Resources to Becoming Published:

1) **Novel Writing Made Easy:**

Professional Authors Step-by-step System (manual & Workbook Included) For Planning A Novel.

<http://snipurl.com/3g5rg>

2) **Newnovelist:**

This software provides a Step-By-Step Guide to Writing and Publishing Your First Novel.

<http://snipurl.com/3g5cm>

3) **Advanced Fiction Writing:**

Writing a Novel is Easy! Writing a Great Novel Is Hard: Award-winning Novelist And Acclaimed Fiction Teacher Randy Ingermanson Tells You His Secrets. Learn The Three Things You Must Have To Sell A Novel.

<http://snipurl.com/3g5bz>