



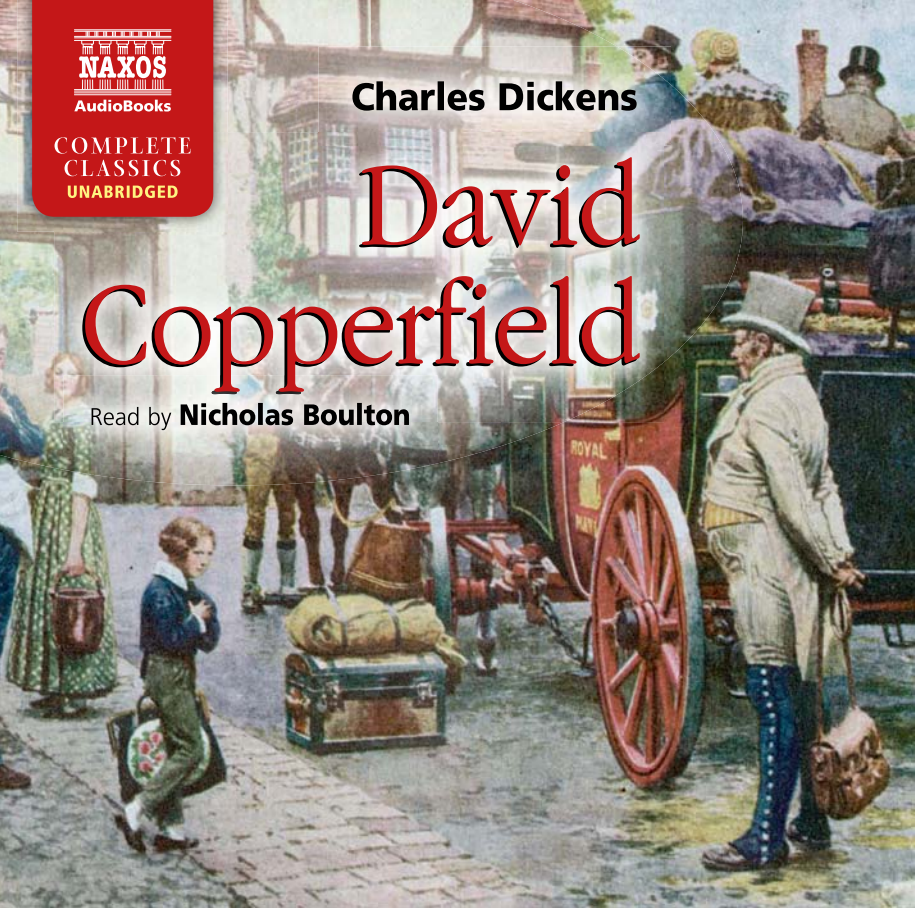
NAXOS  
AudioBooks

COMPLETE  
CLASSICS  
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Charles Dickens

# David Copperfield

Read by **Nicholas Boulton**



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1	<b>David Copperfield</b>	4:47
2	An aunt of my father's, and consequently a great-aunt of mine...	6:32
3	'In the name of Heaven,' said Miss Betsey, suddenly, 'why Rookery?'	4:14
4	'You were speaking about its being a girl,' said Miss Betsey.	6:31
5	Mr Chillip, looking mildly at my aunt with his head on one side...	6:38
6	<b>Chapter 2: I Observe</b>	7:04
7	And now I see the outside of our house...	7:01
8	I never saw such a beautiful colour on my mother's face before.	5:50
9	We went to bed greatly dejected. My sobs kept waking me...	7:06
10	We walked about on the cliff after that, and sat on the grass...	4:35
11	It seems to me, at this distance of time, as if it were the next day...	4:25
12	<b>Chapter 3: I Have A Change</b>	6:59
13	All this I saw in the first glance after I crossed the threshold...	7:35
14	I was very sensible of my entertainer's goodness...	7:02
15	We strolled a long way, and loaded ourselves with things...	7:41
16	'I an't what I could wish myself to be,' said Mrs Gummidge.	4:50
17	The door opened, and I looked, half laughing and half crying...	4:44
18	<b>Chapter 4: I Fall Into Disgrace</b>	5:26
19	'David,' he said, making his lips thin, by pressing them together...	6:05
20	As well as I could make out, she had come for good...	7:39

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21	I could hardly find the door, through the tears that stood in my eyes.	6:07
22	I hand the first book to my mother.	4:06
23	It seems to me, at this distance of time...	4:30
24	One morning when I went into the parlour with my books...	4:41
25	How well I recollect, when I became quiet...	4:24
26	On the last night of my restraint, I was awakened...	6:49
27	<b>Chapter 5: I Am Sent Away From Home</b>	4:57
28	'So she makes,' said Mr Barkis, after a long interval of reflection...	4:39
29	After watching me into the second chop...	5:30
30	The blowing of the coach-horn in the yard...	4:59
31	The night was not so pleasant as the evening, for it got chilly...	5:46
32	I was in the height of my fever when a man entered...	7:59
33	I dreamed, I thought, that once while he was blowing...	7:14
34	There was an old door in this playground...	4:50
35	<b>Chapter 6: I Enlarge My Circle Of Acquaintance</b>	7:21
36	Next morning Mr Sharp came back.	5:51
37	I heard all kinds of things about the school and all belonging to it.	5:16
38	<b>Chapter 7: My 'First Half' At Salem House</b>	5:03
39	Here I sit at the desk again, watching his eye...	7:23
40	Steerforth was considerate, too; and showed his consideration...	7:15

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41	Steerforth's place was at the bottom of the school...	7:56
42	'Since you expect me, Mr Creakle, to justify myself,' said Steerforth...	5:36
43	I soon forgot him in the contemplation of Steerforth...	6:11
44	Ham was quite as earnest as he.	6:37
45	<b>Chapter 8: My Holidays</b>	6:58
46	'He is your brother,' said my mother, fondling me.	5:57
47	While I sat thus, looking at the fire, and seeing pictures...	7:20
48	When we had had our tea, and the ashes were thrown up...	6:55
49	In the evening, sometimes, I went and sat with Peggotty...	5:50
50	What irksome constraint I underwent, sitting in the same attitude...	4:13
51	<b>Chapter 9: I Have A Memorable Birthday</b>	7:01
52	I left Salem House upon the morrow afternoon.	4:09
53	'I have been acquainted with you,' said Mr Omer, after watching me...	4:25
54	The chaise soon came round to the front of the shop...	8:02
55	There are many faces that I know, among the little crowd...	6:55
56	<b>Chapter 10: I Become Neglected, And Am Provided For</b>	7:26
57	Mr Barkis came into the house for Peggotty's boxes.	7:50
58	It looked just the same, except that it may, perhaps, have shrunk...	4:35
59	'Ah!' said Mr Peggotty, taking up her curls, and running them...	4:39
60	The days passed pretty much as they had passed before...	6:02

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61	Away we went, however, on our holiday excursion...	5:50
62	With morning came Peggotty; who called to me, as usual...	6:28
63	I had been out, one day, loitering somewhere...	6:56
64	<b>Chapter 11:</b> I Begin A New Life On My Own Account...	8:12
65	Mr Quinion then formally engaged me to be as useful as I could...	5:51
66	Mrs Micawber was quite as elastic.	6:30
67	Yet I held some station at Murdstone and Grinby's too.	6:11
68	Mr Micawber had a few books on a little chiffonier...	7:52
69	Mr Micawber's affairs, although past their crisis, were very...	4:44
70	<b>Chapter 12:</b> Liking Life On My Own No Better...	7:27
71	I had grown to be so accustomed to the Micawbers...	6:37
72	I think, as Mrs Micawber sat at the back of the coach...	4:32
73	My box was at my old lodging, over the water...	4:09
74	<b>Chapter 13:</b> The Sequel Of My Resolution	5:23
75	Sleep came upon me as it came on many other outcasts...	5:55
76	'Oh, what do you want?' grinned this old man...	6:44
77	My bed at night was under another haystack...	5:22
78	I inquired about my aunt among the boatmen first...	7:40
79	'I am David Copperfield, of Blunderstone, in Suffolk...'	5:22
80	My aunt was a tall, hard-featured lady, but by no means ill-looking.	5:50

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81	The bath was a great comfort. For I began to be...	5:47
82	'Well, well!' said my aunt, 'the child is right to stand by...'	3:57
83	<b>Chapter 14:</b> My Aunt Makes Her Mind Up About Me	4:45
84	I promised to obey, and went upstairs with my message...	7:29
85	My aunt smoothed her dress and shook her head...	7:30
86	Miss Murdstone, during the latter portion of the contest...	5:39
87	'But about the respectable business first,' said my aunt.	7:31
88	Miss Betsey, without taking the least notice of the interruption...	5:37
89	<b>Chapter 15:</b> I Make Another Beginning	6:34
90	When the pony-chaise stopped at the door, and my eyes...	7:35
91	At length, much to my relief, my aunt and Mr Wickfield came back...	5:47
92	By five o'clock, which was Mr Wickfield's dinner-hour...	2:24
93	<b>Chapter 16:</b> I Am A New Boy In More Senses Than One	5:29
94	The schoolroom was a pretty large hall, on the quietest side...	6:08
95	As he held the door open with his hand, Uriah looked at me...	6:36
96	'If it is miserable to bear, when she is here,' he said...	5:59
97	He had a way of writhing when he wanted to express enthusiasm...	7:55
98	It was very pleasant to see the Doctor with his pretty young wife.	7:39
99	The daughter had sat quite silent and still during this speech...	6:39
100	We all drank the toast, and all shook hands with Mr Jack Maldon...	5:32

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101	<b>Chapter 17: Somebody Turns Up</b>	5:17
102	'Trotwood,' said Mr Dick, with an air of mystery...	5:04
103	These Wednesdays were the happiest days of Mr Dick's life...	4:52
104	One Thursday morning, when I was about to walk...	4:11
105	We entered a low, old-fashioned room...	4:59
106	I had begun to be a little uncomfortable, and to wish...	5:35
107	It was a little inn where Mr Micawber put up...	5:50
108	I felt the utmost sympathy for Mr and Mrs Micawber...	7:26
109	<b>Chapter 18: A Retrospect</b>	6:12
100	It is a summer evening, down in a green hollow, at the corner of a wall.	7:19
111	Generally, but not always. Sometimes brighter visions rise before me.	6:16
112	<b>Chapter 19: I Look About Me, And Make A Discovery</b>	6:23
113	In pursuance of my aunt's kind scheme, I was shortly...	5:32
114	We were to drink tea at the Doctor's.	7:00
115	'Now let us see,' said Mrs Markleham, putting her glass to her eye...	5:29
116	The main object on my mind, I remember, when we got...	7:22
117	Being then in a pleasant frame of mind...	7:10
118	<b>Chapter 20: Steerforth's Home</b>	1:52
119	'Now, Copperfield,' said Steerforth, when we were alone...	6:48
120	Her own views of every question, and her correction...	5:22

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121	It was no matter of wonder to me to find Mrs Steerforth...	6:25
122	<b>Chapter 21:</b> Little Em'ly	6:48
123	We bade adieu to Mrs Steerforth and Miss Dartle...	4:34
124	'Servant, sir,' said Mr Omer. 'What can I do for you, sir?'	6:51
125	As they had spoken in a subdued tone...	6:49
126	We left the room, in compliance with this request.	4:46
127	A murmur of voices had been audible on the outside...	7:19
128	Mr Peggotty, in simple earnestness, waved his right arm...	5:04
129	So Mr Peggotty went into my old room to fetch little Em'ly.	4:54
130	<b>Chapter 22:</b> Some Old Scenes, And Some New People	6:05
131	He gave such a start when I put my hand upon his shoulder...	7:38
132	'She must be newly rigged,' said Steerforth...	6:19
133	I looked at the doorway and saw nothing.	4:54
134	From this employment she suddenly desisted...	7:45
135	I never did in my days behold anything like Mowcher...	7:36
136	With the bag slung over her arm, and rattling...	6:27
137	'Martha wants,' she said to Ham, 'to go to London.'	6:06
138	<b>Chapter 23:</b> I Corroborate Mr Dick, and Choose a Profession	6:44
139	I made allowance for Steerforth's light way of treating...	6:37
140	My aunt finished eating the piece of toast on which...	6:07



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141	Doctors' Commons was approached by a little low archway.	7:34
142	In the space within the horse-shoe, lower than these...	6:43
143	<b>Chapter 24: My First Dissipation</b>	6:31
144	I acted on Mrs Crupp's opinion, and gave the order...	7:14
145	Owing to some confusion in the dark, the door was gone.	6:26
146	<b>Chapter 25: Good And Bad Angels</b>	6:40
147	'It is very bold in me,' said Agnes, looking up again...	7:16
148	I had never before seen Agnes cry.	7:28
149	I was much impressed by the extremely comfortable...	7:48
140	As she was not among people with whom I believed...	7:01
151	Something in the emphasis he laid upon the kindling...	6:31
152	A timely observation of the sense of power that there was...	7:06
153	<b>Chapter 26: I Fall Into Captivity</b>	7:40
154	We were very pleasant, going down, and Mr Spenlow gave me...	4:18
155	There was a lovely garden to Mr Spenlow's house...	3:56
156	The idea of dressing one's self...	5:21
157	All I know of the rest of the evening is, that I heard...	7:23
158	Miss Murdstone had been looking for us.	4:53
159	Mrs Crupp must have been a woman of penetration...	4:55
160	<b>Chapter 27: Tommy Traddles</b>	5:19

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161	In a corner of the room was something neatly covered up...	7:02
162	Traddles rose from his chair, and, with a triumphant smile...	4:12
163	Mr Micawber immediately reappeared, and shook hands...	5:24
164	<b>Chapter 28:</b> Mr Micawber's Gauntlet	6:58
165	I suppose – I never ventured to inquire...	7:48
166	He comprehended everybody present, in the respectful bow...	7:08
167	'Very well,' said Mrs Micawber.	7:42
168	Our conversation, afterwards, took a more worldly turn...	5:18
169	'Why, Daisy, old boy, dumb-founded!' laughed Steerforth...	6:11
170	'I tell you what, Steerforth,' said I...	5:24
171	<b>Chapter 29:</b> I Visit Steerforth At His Home Again	7:32
172	Mrs Steerforth was particularly happy in her son's society...	4:15
173	One other little circumstance connected with Miss Dartle...	6:50
174	<b>Chapter 30:</b> Loss	5:51
175	Mr Omer's face and manner went for so much...	5:08
176	Hearing this, and learning that Mr Peggotty was there...	8:31
177	<b>Chapter 31:</b> A Greater Loss	6:38
178	'You're first of the lot, Mas'r Davy!' said Mr Peggotty with a happy face.	6:50
179	He pushed me hastily into the open air...	4:42
180	At length I ventured to take his hand...	5:27

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181	<b>Chapter 32:</b> The Beginning Of A Long Journey	6:00
182	He walked a little in front of us, and kept before us...	5:23
183	It was between nine and ten o'clock...	7:09
184	Miss Mowcher sat down on the fender again, and took out...	7:51
185	I gave Miss Mowcher my hand...	5:13
186	No Littimer appeared. The pleasanter face which had replaced his...	7:57
187	She now observed to me, aloud, resuming her former restraint...	4:05
188	The mere vehemence of her words can convey...	4:00
189	<b>Chapter 33:</b> Blissful	5:28
190	We were a little like undertakers, in the Commons...	7:21
191	I must say that I had my doubts about the strict justice of this...	5:12
192	I have set all this down, in my present blissful chapter...	5:25
193	I shall never have such a ride again. I have never had such another.	6:41
194	I was intoxicated with joy. I was afraid it was too happy to be real...	7:38
195	'You didn't care for that happiness in the least,' said Dora...	5:33
196	<b>Chapter 34:</b> My Aunt Astonishes Me	4:47
197	'My dear Copperfield,' cried Traddles, punctually appearing...	7:32
198	I was unwilling to damp my good friend's confidence...	8:50
199	<b>Chapter 35:</b> Depression	5:22
200	My aunt was walking up and down the room when I returned...	6:45

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201	How miserable I was, when I lay down!	6:15
202	I explained with tolerable firmness...	5:48
203	I was completely bewildered between Mr Spenlow...	5:44
204	We found my aunt alone, in a state of some excitement.	6:48
205	'I have been thinking, Trotwood,' said Agnes, diffidently...	5:37
206	'Well, Wickfield!' said my aunt; and he looked up at her...	4:01
207	'Uriah Heep,' said Mr Wickfield, in a monotonous forced way...	4:31
208	<b>Chapter 36: Enthusiasm</b>	1:52
209	In this state, I went into a cottage that I saw was to let...	6:55
210	How could it be anything else! His pockets were as full of it...	6:36
211	I was pretty busy now; up at five in the morning...	7:21
212	I hardly know which was the better pleased, Traddles or I.	6:57
213	These observations, and indeed the greater part...	4:58
214	On looking at Master Micawber again, I saw that he had a certain...	5:43
215	<b>Chapter 37: A Little Cold Water</b>	5:26
216	Dora came to the drawing-room door to meet me...	7:08
217	I was going on at a great rate, with a clenched hand...	6:50
218	<b>Chapter 38: A Dissolution Of Partnership</b>	5:11
219	I was always punctual at the office; at the Doctor's too...	5:57
220	Here she ceased; and snapping her reticule again...	4:22

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221	'You are right,' interrupted Mr Spenslow, nodding his head...	4:42
222	There was a serenity, a tranquillity, a calm sunset air...	6:44
223	I was surprised, when I came within sight of our office-door...	7:21
224	It appeared a wonderful thing to me, but it turned out...	7:17
225	<b>Chapter 39: Wickfield And Heep</b>	6:07
226	Arrived at Mr Wickfield's house, I found, in the little lower room...	6:12
227	'Ah, Agnes!' said I, when we were sitting together...	7:22
228	I had no longer any doubt on the subject.	6:01
229	Towards the twilight I went out by myself...	5:30
230	'Before we leave the subject, you ought to understand,' said I...	7:04
231	'What's the matter?' said Uriah, turning of a deadly colour.	6:01
232	The door opened, and Agnes, gliding in...	6:18
233	<b>Chapter 40: The Wanderer</b>	4:02
234	We shook hands heartily. At first, neither of us could speak a word.	4:55
235	'When I come to any town,' he pursued...	6:08
236	'Oh what will you feel when you see this writing...'	7:05
237	<b>Chapter 41: Dora's Aunts</b>	4:04
238	I was a little disappointed, I must confess, but thoroughly...	4:02
239	His honest face, as he looked at me with a serio-comic...	4:52
240	Each of the sisters leaned a little forward to speak...	5:14

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241	Now, although I had not received any express encouragement...	7:43
242	Miss Lavinia then arose, and begging Mr Traddles to excuse...	5:06
243	I was wonderfully relieved to find that my aunt and Dora's aunts...	6:33
244	<b>Chapter 42:</b> Mischief	6:14
245	My heart quite died within me.	5:22
246	I never was so pleased as when I saw those two sit down together...	7:43
247	We were now within the little courtyard...	4:19
248	This was to the Doctor, who had moaned.	5:04
249	'I am sure,' said Uriah, writhing himself into the silence...	7:09
250	I could not see him for the tears which his earnestness...	6:33
251	In the morning, when I came out, the early church-bell was ringing...	5:42
252	When I think of him, with his impenetrably wise face...	5:08
253	<b>Chapter 43:</b> Another Retrospect	5:28
254	Peggotty comes up to make herself useful, and falls...	7:21
255	I go home, more incredulous than ever, to a lodging...	7:48
256	<b>Chapter 44:</b> Our Housekeeping	7:34
257	I took another turn across the room, full of love for my pretty wife...	7:01
258	The next domestic trial we went through, was the Ordeal of Servants.	7:51
259	My poor little wife was in such affliction...	5:05
260	First of all, she would bring out the immense account-book...	6:38

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261	'Please let me hold the pens,' said Dora.	2:35
262	<b>Chapter 45:</b> Mr Dick Fulfils My Aunt's Predictions	7:01
263	'Now, boy,' said Mr Dick...	6:43
264	It was fortunate he had proceeded so far with his mystery...	6:54
265	The gentleness of the Doctor's manner and surprise...	4:34
266	When I had finished, Annie remained, for some few moments...	6:31
267	I pondered on those words, even while I was studiously attending...	4:03
268	I used to think there were so many whom you might have married...	4:40
269	<b>Chapter 46:</b> Intelligence	7:03
260	'Mr James and myself have been abroad with the young woman...'	6:49
271	'When it was clear that nothing could be done, Miss Dartle -'	5:59
272	I saw, by the change in her face, that someone was advancing behind me.	7:24
273	He looked almost like a man inspired, as he said it.	7:04
274	<b>Chapter 47:</b> Martha	1:49
275	The neighbourhood was a dreary one at that time...	6:47
276	Her sobs broke out afresh, and she murmured some inarticulate...	6:52
277	I read, in every word of his plain impressive way...	6:02
278	It was midnight when I arrived at home.	6:39
279	<b>Chapter 48:</b> Domestic	6:12
280	At last I ran away myself...	6:44

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281	I pressed Traddles into the service without his knowledge...	5:56
282	In fulfilment of the compact I have made with myself...	5:32
283	Dora had helped him up on the sofa...	4:21
284	<b>Chapter 49:</b> I Am Involved In Mystery	5:56
285	'My best regards to Mr Thomas Traddles...'	6:36
286	We acknowledged his politeness, and made suitable replies.	5:48
287	Without attending to this invocation...	5:57
288	'My employer, ma'am – Mr Heep...'	4:34
289	I really had some fear of Mr Micawber's dying on the spot.	3:48
290	<b>Chapter 50:</b> Mr Peggotty's Dream Comes True	5:53
291	Now much disturbed, and dazzled...	6:12
292	When Miss Dartle spoke again, it was through her set teeth...	6:46
293	Rosa Dartle sprang up from her seat; recoiled...	7:57
294	<b>Chapter 51:</b> The Beginning Of A Longer Journey	6:48
295	He was more affected by this act of kindness...	7:35
296	I could not repress a cry of joy.	6:54
297	He forgot nobody.	6:55
298	I changed the subject by referring to Emily.	4:39
299	After a stroll about the town I went to Ham's house.	6:33
300	With a slight wave of his hand...	4:39



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301	We brought the locker out, extinguished the candle...	0:22
302	<b>Chapter 52:</b> I Assist At An Explosion	5:01
303	I strolled into the country for an hour or so...	5:41
304	I had not seen Uriah Heep since the time of the blow.	5:46
305	Uriah fell back, as if he had been struck or stung.	4:58
306	After some rubbing of the lower part of his face...	7:32
307	Mr Micawber was so very much struck by this happy rounding off...	6:45
308	Mr Micawber read on, almost smacking his lips...	6:39
309	I whispered a few words to Agnes, who was weeping...	6:35
310	Here, Mrs Heep broke out again...	6:09
311	'Excuse me, dear Mr Copperfield,' said the poor lady...	5:26
312	<b>Chapter 53:</b> Another Retrospect	5:41
313	It is night; and I am with her still.	6:57
314	<b>Chapter 54:</b> Mr Micawber's Transactions	5:46
315	I don't know that Mr Micawber attached any meaning...	6:53
316	'My dear Copperfield,' said Traddles...	7:33
317	'Then I am delighted to say,' cried Traddles...	6:29
318	Seeing that Traddles now glanced anxiously at my aunt again...	4:35
319	We went back next day to my aunt's house...	4:57
320	<b>Chapter 55:</b> Tempest	6:22

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321	It was a murky confusion – here and there blotted...	7:56
322	I hastily ordered my dinner, and went back to the yard.	8:00
323	There was a bell on board; and as the ship rolled and dashed...	7:21
324	<b>Chapter 56:</b> The New Wound, And The Old	7:04
325	That Mrs Steerforth might not be induced to look behind her...	5:05
326	She said it with a taunting pride in the midst of her frenzy...	4:25
327	<b>Chapter 57:</b> The Emigrants.	2:34
328	I had told Traddles of the terrible event, and it had greatly...	6:11
329	Mr Micawber withdrew, and was absent some little time...	4:43
330	With that he flourished off the contents of his little tin pot...	6:45
331	I went down again next morning to see that they were away.	6:34
332	<b>Chapter 58:</b> Absence	6:32
333	I had found a packet of letters awaiting me but a few...	5:12
334	I cannot so completely penetrate the mystery of my own heart...	5:32
335	<b>Chapter 59:</b> Return	5:20
336	I had seen nothing like this since I went away...	7:24
337	Observing that he slightly faltered...	6:29
338	They were a perfect nest of roses; they looked so wholesome...	3:59
339	Altogether, it was a scene I could not help dwelling on...	6:41
340	As the little man put his now empty glass to his lips...	7:09

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341	I found it not difficult, in the excitement of Mr Chillip's own brain...	2:30
342	<b>Chapter 60:</b> Agnes	6:01
343	My aunt withdrew her eyes from mine...	7:14
344	She smiled again, and went out at the door by which she had come.	4:45
345	His bowed head, and her angel-face and filial duty...	4:42
346	<b>Chapter 61:</b> I Am Shown Two Interesting Penitents	7:37
347	After we had both laughed heartily...	5:44
348	Now, it struck me, when we began to visit individuals...	7:24
349	I observed that several gentlemen were shading their eyes...	4:10
350	General commiseration. Several indignant glances directed at me.	5:09
351	<b>Chapter 62:</b> A Light Shines On My Way	6:22
352	I echoed it, parted from my aunt...	4:51
353	'I must say more. I cannot let you leave me so!'	5:36
354	'I am so blest, Trotwood.'	5:34
355	<b>Chapter 63:</b> A Visitor	1:20
356	'Let him come in here!' said I.	6:24
357	We silently observed him as he sat, still looking at the fire.	4:42
358	Mr Peggotty pointed to a certain paragraph in the newspaper...	6:32
359	<b>Chapter 64:</b> A Last Retrospect	6:25
360	And lo, the Doctor, always our good friend...	4:26

**Total time: 36:10:55**

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## Charles Dickens

(1812–1870)

# David Copperfield

*David Copperfield* is often regarded as Dickens's most autobiographical novel. There are many good reasons for this. The principal character's initials are the author's, reversed; Dickens had written a part of his life story shortly before he wrote *David Copperfield*; there is definitely something of his father in the character of Mr Micawber; and there are several specific elements that draw directly on his own experiences. It was also his first book with a first-person narration, and the combination of the intimate narrative 'I' and the detailed recollections is more than a little suggestive.

All this, however, overlooks the most crucial distinction: Dickens was a writer. He transformed rather than mirrored; he fabulated rather than recorded. He told truths about Victorian

society and he illuminated human nature with unforgettable characters. But he did this through fiction, melding imagined elements with detailed observation. This applied as much to his own life as to the lives of those he knew, met or just happened to notice. Although he constantly mined his own life, only parts of it were subjected to the kind of imaginative analysis that ended up in his fiction; he glossed or ignored the stranger and perhaps more compelling elements.

The son of a Navy clerk, he was born just outside Portsmouth and moved to another naval town, Chatham, in 1816. For the next few years he was enormously happy, especially in the company of books, and was given some formal education to encourage what was already a keen mind. It is not pushing speculation

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too far to suppose that he saw his adult self enjoying the fruits of this intelligence, energy and generous potential. This is one of several reasons why the sudden slump of his family's finances when they moved to London caused a profound and essentially incurable wound. The move was brought about because of changes in the Navy's structure, but the result was that his father ran out of money and Charles stopped going to school. The fact that one of his sisters continued her education stung him; but when his father was imprisoned for debt, Dickens was dealt a truly staggering blow.

He was sent to work in a filthy blacking factory near the river. It was not merely the humiliation of having a father in a debtor's prison; it was not merely the long, miserable hours of manual labour; it was not merely having to walk miles alone, at the age of 12, through a slum area of a city to try to earn enough to pay for basic essentials: it was the crushing of all his life's hopes, beliefs and expectations that Dickens suffered. It was as if he had been abandoned, as if all

his potential was devalued, as if he as a person simply did not matter. The streets through which he walked were filled with plenty of people whose lives were harder and far more wretched than his, and he was only there for a year or so; but he was forever marked by a sense of having been forsaken.

On his father's release, Charles went back to school and then started his professional life as a clerk in a solicitor's office. He moved on to journalism (as his father had done), learned shorthand extremely quickly, and became a parliamentary reporter who was renowned for his speed and accuracy. His energetic delight in language now found a new ally in his strikingly perceptive observations and imaginative vigour. He began to write sketches of people and places that he knew, and by 1836 had his first collection published. That year also saw the publication of *The Pickwick Papers*, a novel that appeared – as would all his later works – in serial form, and the phenomenal success of which brought Dickens immediate celebrity. It also

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indicated another facet of his genius: comedy. The great humanity of Dickens's writings is as much in his delight in foibles, frailties and idiosyncrasies as it is in his indignant fury at injustice. In less than three years, he also published *Oliver Twist* and *Nicholas Nickleby*, creating a lasting mythology and some of the greatest characters (heroes, villains and comic) in all English fiction.

Dickens was driven by an urge to earn and never be idle, as much as by his creativity. He travelled widely, in Europe especially, and in the late 1850s he started doing readings all over the country in popular but increasingly demanding performances. These contributed to his physical decline, although his determination to carry on with them even when unwell was indicative of the obsessive work ethic that perhaps did more damage.

He was married and had children – 10 in all – but the marriage was not a happy one for very long. Catherine never shared his intellectual curiosity or had his verve; and Dickens would have

been exhausting to live with. He had a deep fixation with an idealised notion of woman (pure, sisterly) that was irremediably at odds with real life as a father. These issues were exacerbated by the fact that Catherine suffered terribly from post-natal depression, or something very similar, which must have made so many motherhoods almost unbearable for her. She and Dickens separated after 22 years, in part because their life together had become untenable, and in part because he had met Ellen Ternan, a young actress who was appearing in one of his many amateur productions. Dickens managed to keep this relationship largely secret, and the nature of it has never been established clearly.

He edited magazines and continued to write stories, travel journalism, sketches, articles and novels, the latter including *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, *Great Expectations*, *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Our Mutual Friend*. *David Copperfield* was published between 1849 and 1850. Dickens was such a celebrated author that the idea of writing his life story had

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already been suggested, and he wrote an autobiographical fragment for his friend John Forster. This coincided with a sense that his still-to-be-written novel should involve a reminiscence, an exploration of the past, and perhaps thereby a reinvention of it for himself: a fictionalising of what was still a painful and largely secret subject. But all the references in *David Copperfield* that can be pinpointed to Dickens's own life – his favourite books, his learning shorthand, his time as a clerk at Doctors Commons', his success as an author – are still fictions. They are templates for invention, or starting points for broader imaginings, changed by the restless and seemingly endless power of his imagination into something like believable myths. His heroes and villains are completely recognisable but never truly real; his fictional themes had a broader purpose than mere reality can effect.

**Notes by Roy McMillan**



**Nicholas Boulton** studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, winning the BBC Carleton Hobbs Award for Radio in 1993. Since then he has been heard in numerous productions for BBC Radio 4 and the World Service. Work for Naxos AudioBooks includes Cecil in *Lady Windermere's Fan* and most recently Mozart in *The Life and Works of Mozart* and *The Squire's Tale* from *The Canterbury Tales*. Film work includes *Shakespeare in Love* and *Topsy Turvy*. Theatre credits include *Platonov* for the Almeida, *Henry V* for the RSC and *Arcadia* for the Theatre Royal Haymarket.

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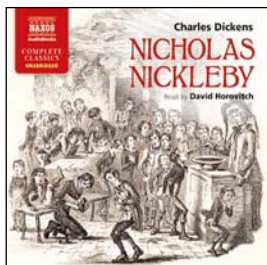
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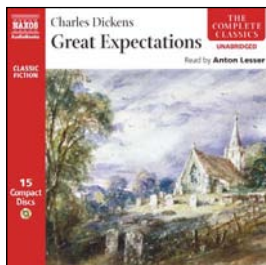
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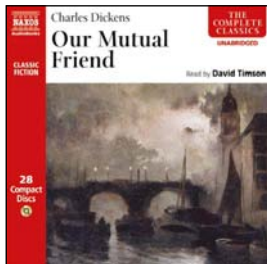
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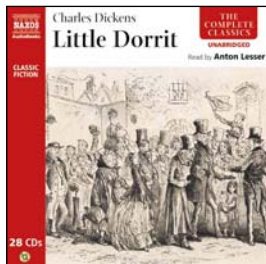
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