



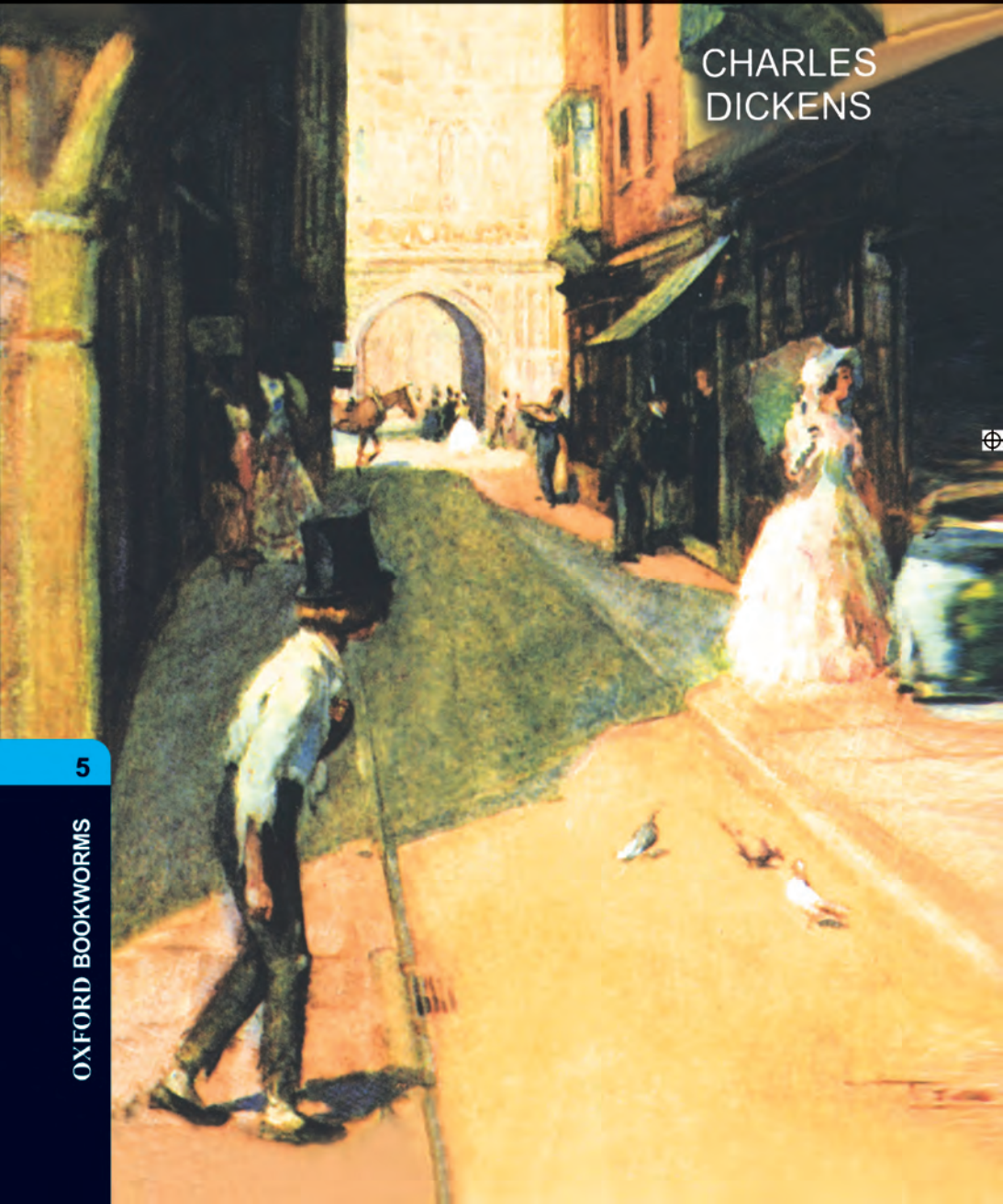
RAHNAMA
P R E S S

@RAHNAMAPRESS

WWW.RAHNAMAPRESS.COM

David Copperfield

CHARLES
DICKENS



5

OXFORD BOOKWORMS

CONTENTS

STORY INTRODUCTION	i
PEOPLE IN THIS STORY	viii
1 David Copperfield's childhood	1
2 David is sent away to school	6
3 David the orphan	14
4 David and his aunt	23
5 David meets old friends again	35
6 David falls in love	44
7 Good news and bad news for David	55
8 David's new life	65
9 David gets married	74
10 Death and discovery	78
GLOSSARY	89
ACTIVITIES: Before Reading	92
ACTIVITIES: While Reading	93
ACTIVITIES: After Reading	96
ABOUT THE AUTHOR	100
ABOUT THE BOOKWORMS LIBRARY	102

1

David Copperfield's childhood

I was born at Blunderstone, in Suffolk, in the east of England, and was given my poor father's name, David Copperfield. Sadly, he never saw me. He was much older than my mother when they married, and died six months before I was born. My father's death made my beautiful young mother very unhappy, and she knew she would find life extremely difficult with a new baby and no husband.

The richest and most important person in our family was my father's aunt, Miss Betsey Trotwood. She had in fact been married once, to a handsome young husband. But because he demanded money from her, and sometimes beat her, she decided they should separate. He went abroad, and soon news came of his death. Miss Trotwood bought a small house by the sea, and lived there alone, with only one servant.

She had not spoken to my father since his marriage, because she considered he had made a mistake in marrying a very young girl. But just before I was born, when she heard that my mother was expecting a baby, she came to visit Blunderstone.

It was a cold, windy Friday afternoon in March. My mother was sitting by the fire, feeling very lonely and unhappy, and crying a little. Suddenly a stern, strange-looking face appeared at the window.

'Open the door!' ordered the stern-faced lady.

My mother was shocked, but obeyed at once.

'You must be David Copperfield's wife,' said the lady as she entered. 'I'm Betsey Trotwood. You've heard of me?'

David Copperfield

‘Yes,’ whispered my mother, trembling.

‘How young you are!’ cried Miss Betsey. ‘Just a baby!’

My mother started sobbing again. ‘I know I look like a child! I know I was young to be a wife, and I’m young to be a mother! But perhaps I’ll die before I become a mother!’

‘Come, come!’ answered Miss Betsey. ‘Have some tea. Then you’ll feel better. What do you call your girl?’

‘My girl? I don’t know yet that it will be a girl,’ replied my mother miserably.

‘No, I don’t mean the baby, I mean your servant!’

‘Her name’s Peggotty. Her first name’s Clara, the same as mine, so I call her by her family name, you see.’

‘What a terrible name! However, never mind. Peggotty!’ she called, going to the door. ‘Bring Mrs Copperfield some tea at once!’ She sat down again and continued speaking. ‘You were talking about the baby. I’m sure it’ll be a girl. Now, as soon as she’s born . . .’

‘He, perhaps,’ said my mother bravely.

‘Don’t be stupid, of course it’ll be a *she*. I’m going to send her to school, and educate her well. I want to prevent her from making the mistakes *I’ve* made in life.’ Miss Betsey looked quite angry as she said this. My mother said nothing, as she was not feeling at all well. ‘But tell me, were you and your husband happy?’ asked Miss Betsey.

This made my poor mother feel worse than ever. ‘I know I wasn’t very sensible – about money – or cooking – or things like that!’ she sobbed. ‘But we loved each other – and he was helping me to learn – and then he died! Oh! Oh!’ And she fell back in her chair, completely unconscious.

Peggotty, who came in just then with the tea, realized how

David Copperfield's childhood

serious the situation was, and took my mother upstairs to bed. The doctor arrived soon afterwards, and stayed all evening to take care of his patient.

At about midnight he came downstairs to the sitting-room where Miss Betsey was waiting impatiently.

'Well, doctor, what's the news? How is she?'

'The young mother is quite comfortable, madam,' replied the doctor politely.

'But *she*, the baby, how is *she*?' cried Miss Betsey.

The doctor looked strangely at Miss Betsey. 'It's a boy, madam,' he replied.

Miss Betsey said nothing, but walked straight out of the house, and never came back.

That was how I was born. My early childhood was extremely happy, as my beautiful mother and kind Peggotty took care of me. But when I was about eight, a shadow passed over my happiness. My mother often went out walking, in her best clothes, with a gentleman called Mr Murdstone. He had black hair, a big black moustache and an unpleasant smile, and seemed to be very fond of my mother. But I knew that Peggotty did not like him.

A few months later Peggotty told me that my mother was going to have a short holiday with some friends. Meanwhile Peggotty and I would go to stay with her brother Daniel in Yarmouth, on the east coast, for two weeks. I was very excited when we climbed into the cart, although it was sad saying goodbye to my mother. Mr Murdstone was at her shoulder, waving goodbye, as the driver called to his horse, and we drove out of the village.

When we got down from the cart in Yarmouth, after our journey, Peggotty said, 'That's the house, Master David!'

David Copperfield

I looked all round, but could only see an old ship on the sand. 'Is that – that your brother's house?' I asked in delight. And when we reached it, I saw it had doors and windows and a chimney, just like a real house. I could not imagine a nicer place to live. Everything was clean and tidy, and smelt of fish. Now I was introduced to the Peggotty family. There was Daniel Peggotty, a kind old sailor. Although he was not married, he had adopted two orphans, who lived with him and called him Uncle. Ham Peggotty was a large young man with a gentle smile, and Emily was a beautiful, blue-eyed little girl. They all welcomed Peggotty and me warmly.

I spent a wonderfully happy two weeks there, playing all day on the beach with Emily, and sleeping in my own little bed on the ship. I am sure I was in love with little Emily in my childish way, and I cried bitterly when we had to say goodbye at the end of the holiday.

But on the way home to Blunderstone, Peggotty looked at me very worriedly. 'Master David, my dear,' she said suddenly in a trembling voice. 'I must tell you – you'll have to know now . . . While we've been away, your dear mother – has married Mr Murdstone! He's your stepfather now!'

I was deeply shocked. I could not understand how my mother could have married that man. And when we arrived home, I could not help showing my mother how very miserable I was. I went straight to my room and lay sobbing on my bed, which made my poor mother very unhappy too. As she sat beside me, holding my hand, Mr Murdstone suddenly came in.

'What's this, Clara, my love?' he asked sternly. 'Remember, you must be firm with the boy! I've told you before, you're too weak with him!'

David Copperfield's childhood

'Oh yes, Edward, I'm afraid you're right,' my mother replied quickly. 'I'm very sorry. I'll try to be firmer with him.'

And when she left the room, Mr Murdstone whispered angrily to me, 'David, do you know what I'll do if you don't obey me? I'll beat you like a dog!'

I was still very young, and I was very frightened of him. If he had said one kind word to me, perhaps I would have liked and trusted him, and my life would have been different. Instead, I hated him for the influence he had over my dear mother, who wanted to be kind to me, but also wanted to please her new husband.

That evening Mr Murdstone's sister arrived to 'help' my mother in the house. A tall dark lady, with a stern, frowning face, she looked and sounded very much like her brother. I thought she was planning to stay with us for a long time, and I was right. In fact, she intended to stay for ever. She started work the next morning.

'Now, Clara,' she said firmly to my mother at breakfast, 'I am here to help you. You're much too pretty and thoughtless to worry about the servants, the food and so on. So just hand me your keys to all the cupboards, and I'll take care of everything for you.'

My poor mother just blushed, looked a little ashamed, and obeyed. From then on, Miss Murdstone took complete control of the house, keeping the keys hanging from her waist as she hurried through the house, checking that everything was being done just as she wished.

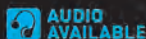
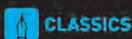
David Copperfield



'Please, Mr Murdstone! Don't beat me! I've tried to learn my lessons, really I have, sir!' sobs David.

Although he is only eight years old, Mr Murdstone does beat him, and David is so frightened that he bites his cruel stepfather's hand. For that, he is kept locked in his room for five days and nights, and nobody is allowed to speak to him.

As David grows up, he learns that life is full of trouble and misery and cruelty. But he also finds laughter and kindness, trust and friendship . . . and love. [Word count 24,770]



Text adaptation by Clare West
Cover image by Frank Reynolds/Blue Lantern Studio
courtesy of Corbis
STAGE 5 1800 Headwords

THE OXFORD BOOKWORMS LIBRARY: GET MORE FROM YOUR READING

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

www.oup.com/elt

OXFORD ENGLISH
ISBN 978-0-19-479219-6



9 780194 792196