

David Copperfield

Charles Dickens

Retold by
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LEVEL B1.1

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My Early Childhood

Preview Questions

1. Look at the title of this chapter. What is the writer going to talk about?
2. Do you think the picture is of the writer? Why or why not?
3. Do you like books in the first person (“I”)? Why or why not?

To begin at the beginning: I was born on a Friday at twelve o’clock at night. My mother’s nurse believed that I was going to be unlucky because midnight was unlucky. I was born at Blunderstone in Suffolk, England, six months
5 after my father died. There was only my mother and I in our family. Well, there was also an aunt of my father’s called Betsey Trotwood. She was very unhappy in her marriage, and her husband left her and went to India, so she lived all alone by the sea. However, I never saw her
10 while I was growing up.

Now on that Friday night when I was born, my mother was sitting by the fire, feeling very sick and sad. Suddenly, she saw a strange woman coming up the garden path. Mother was immediately frightened of this woman, who
15 stood so straight and tall. This woman walked quickly to the window and looked inside.

It was Betsey Trotwood. My mother got up and stood behind a chair as Miss Betsey came in.

“You must be Mrs. Copperfield,” said the aunt.

20 “Yes,” said my mother.

“I have come to see your baby girl,” said Miss Betsey.

“Ask your servant to come in.”

“It might not be a girl,” said my mother.

“Nonsense!” said Miss Betsey.

“Peggotty,” called my mother. Peggotty was our servant;
5 she looked after us. She came to my mother right away.

“Get the doctor,” said Miss Betsey to Peggotty. “Mrs. Copperfield needs help.”

Soon afterwards, our doctor arrived. He was a kind old man and was surprised to see Miss Betsey there. He took
10 mother upstairs, and my aunt sat downstairs. My aunt waited. After an hour or two, the doctor came back down to see her.

“It’s going slowly. Mrs. Copperfield is not very strong.”

He went back upstairs, and again Miss Betsey waited -
15 for a girl.

At midnight he came downstairs and said, “Mrs. Copperfield is safe and well. She has a beautiful baby boy.”

At this, my aunt stood up and hit him with her **bonnet**. She didn’t say a word and left the house. She never came
20 back, just like a bad fairy.

* * *

While I was a young child, I lived with the two people I loved most - my mother and our servant, Peggotty. We lived in a beautiful old house with a large garden, and Peggotty
25 looked after us. She cooked and cleaned and read me stories. I loved her dark kitchen. She worked very hard, and we lived a wonderful life.

One night, I was sitting with her while she was reading a children’s book to me.



Chapter 10

via *prep.* by way of

housekeeping *n.* cooking, cleaning and looking after the bills of a house

shorthand *n.* a way to write in English code as fast as a person can speak

parliament *n.* the government in England

eagle *n.* large bird of prey

hug *v.* to put your arms around someone

Chapter 11

stand up on end *phr.* to go straight upwards into the air, not lying flat

fiancée *n.* the lady a man is going to marry

bride *n.* the lady to be married at a wedding

stern *adj.* hard, unfriendly

out cold *slang phr.* as if fast asleep after having drunk too much

Chapter 12

triumphantly *adv.* successfully

obviously *adv.* clearly

grab *v.* to take quickly

end up *phr.* finish

be rid of *phr.* not have someone interfering in your life anymore

page *n.* young male servant

candle *n.* a wax stick to light up with a flame

blossom *n.* a flower or a mass of flowers on a tree or bush

Chapter 13

punch *n.* a fruit drink

contact *v.* to touch; to connect

detestable *adj.* hateful; hated

forge *v.* to make a false document or sign another person's name

Chapter 14

sorrowfully *adv.* sadly

emigrant *n.* a person moving to a different country to live

IOU *n.* a document stating that a person owes money

mast *n.* a long pole holding up the sails on a ship

wade *v.* walk slowly through shallow water that is quite high up your legs

moan *v.* to make a low noise because of pain or pleasure

Chapter 15

sheriff *n.* a police officer

dock *n.* a place on land where ships stop to load goods or passengers

grief *n.* sadness over something lost

terrorise *v.* to make frightened; scare a lot

Chapter 16

novel *n.* a long fictional story

magistrate *n.* a local judge

hymn book *n.* a book of religious songs

weep *v.* to cry a lot

hearty *adj.* strong and healthy person owes money

mast *n.* a long pole holding up the sails on a ship

moan *v.* to make a low noise because of pain or pleasure

Chapter 15

sheriff *n.* a police officer

dock *n.* a place on land where ships stop to load goods or passengers

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Chapter 16

novel *n.* a long fictional story

magistrate *n.* a local judge

hymn book *n.* a book of religious songs

dwarf *n.* person of well below average height

weep *v.* to cry a lot

hearty *adj.* strong and healthy



David Copperfield

Cast

Aunt Betsey severe, elderly spinster

Mr. Dick plump, happy, rather simple middle-aged man

Mr. Murdstone severe, harsh middle-aged man

Miss Murdstone severe, harsh spinster

David eight-year-old boy

Aunt Betsey: (Shaking her head and her fist out of the window)
Go along with you! You have no business here.
How dare you trespass? Go along! Oh! You
bold-faced thing!

David: (Looking out of the window) Aunt! Aunt! That's
my step-aunt, Miss Murdstone. She's come to
visit you.

Aunt Betsey: I don't care who it is! I won't have trespassers.
I won't allow it. Go away! Janet, turn him
round. Lead him off! That's it, Janet. Pull the
donkey off! Pull!

Mr. Murdstone: Let go, young woman! Let go of my
sister's horse!

Aunt Betsey: That's it, Janet. Now you can let them in.

David: Shall I go away, aunt?

Aunt Betsey: No, certainly not!

Enter Mr. and Miss Murdstone, looking very angry.

Aunt Betsey: Oh! I didn't know it was you, but I don't allow
anyone to ride over my grounds. I don't like
donkeys and that's it.

Mr. Murdstone: We were on horses.

Before You Read

I. Work with your classmates. What do you know about the following? Write as much as you can to fill in the blanks.

Boarding school	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
-----------------	-------------------

Stepfamilies	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
--------------	-------------------

Poverty	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
---------	-------------------

II. Scan through the book and answer the following.

1. Match each person in the story with the correct description.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| (1) David Copperfield _____ | (2) Mr. Murdstone _____ |
| (3) Dora Spenlow _____ | (4) James Steerforth _____ |
| (5) Peggotty _____ | (6) Mr. Micawber _____ |

- a. a harsh and cruel man
- b. a servant and life-long friend of the Copperfield family
- c. a boy who goes to boarding school, works in a factory, and later travels throughout Europe
- d. a charming but selfish friend of David's
- e. David's landlord in London, and later his friend
- f. a lovable girl who acts like a child

2. Write the chapter title that matches each clue.

a. A good feeling and a bad message

b. My time of studying finishes

c. Visiting another place and returning

d. When I was very young

e. Remembering the past

My Early Childhood

I. Put the sentences in order from 1 (first) to 5 (last).

- _____ David was raised for a few years by his mother and her servant, Peggotty.
- _____ David was sent to live in a boarding school.
- _____ David's father died before he was born.
- _____ David's mother was remarried to a mean man.
- _____ David went to visit Peggotty's family with her and became friends with a girl named Emily.

II. Choose the best answer.

1. Why was Miss Betsey upset when David was born?
 - a. Because his mother wouldn't let her see him
 - b. Because she wanted him to be a girl
 - c. Because she wanted to take him home
 - d. Because his mother was very sick
2. Why did Peggotty take David to visit her brother?
 - a. So David's mother could get married
 - b. So David's mother could meet her brother
 - c. So David could have a father figure
 - d. So David could meet Emily
3. What did Mr. Murdstone tell David's mother not to do?
 - a. Give David presents
 - b. Kiss David
 - c. Punish David
 - d. Let David read
4. What did David have trouble with?
 - a. His Maths homework
 - b. Reciting a book from memory
 - c. Training his dog to do tricks
 - d. Reading the book his mother gave him

III. Write the correct word or phrase in each blank.

bonnet	fairies	chimney	drowned	timid
fussing	recite	from memory	whip	boarding school

1. We were so busy _____ over the flowers for the party that we forgot about the cake and it burned.
2. The kind man never uses a _____ on his horses.
3. The teacher told the children a story about _____ and other imaginary creatures.
4. Children should be able to recite the multiplication tables _____ by the time they are twelve years old.
5. I have to _____ the poem in front of the class tomorrow.
6. The girl was very _____ and didn't want to speak in front of the class.
7. The boy was sad to say goodbye to his mother when he went off to _____.
8. He knew it was warm inside because smoke was coming from the _____.
9. The boy couldn't swim, so when he fell in the water he _____.
10. The girl got a new _____ to match her dress.

IV. Complete the summary by writing the correct phrase in each blank.

- | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| • tried to hit | • stay at Yarmouth | • David bit him |
| • got married | • cruel and nasty | • born after his |
| • lived with his | • to boarding school | |

David was 1 _____ father died. He 2 _____ mother and servant, Peggotty. When David was a young child, his mother sent him to 3 _____ with Peggotty's brother. While David was away, his mother 4 _____ to Mr. Murdstone, a 5 _____ man. One night Mr. Murdstone became angry with David and 6 _____ him, so 7 _____. A few days later, Mr. Murdstone sent David away 8 _____.