



Little Dorrit (Charles Dickens)

By Charles Dickens

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'She? That's Little Dorrit. She's nothing. She's just a whim.' Poor Little Dorrit. Her future looks as bleak as her past and her present. Born and brought up in a debtors' prison, she relies on her sewing skills to help support her father. Little does she know that her sewing will soon present an opportunity for change. When change arrives in the form of Arthur Clennam it is accompanied by secrets and dangers. Who is he? What are his motives for wanting to help Little Dorrit? Follow Little Dorrit's tale as it winds its way through London and Italy. Enjoy the rich variety of characters she encounters, and share with her the twists and turns of the road she travels.

Real Reads are accessible texts designed to support the literacy development of primary and lower secondary age children while introducing them to the riches of our international literary heritage. Each book is a retelling of a work of great literature from one of the world's greatest cultures, fitted into a 64-page book, making classic stories, dramas and histories available to intelligent young readers as a bridge to the full texts, to language students wanting access to other cultures, and to adult readers who are unlikely ever to read the original versions.

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Editorial Review

Review

At a recent department meeting, it became evident that Dickens is an author who can divide a room. 'Let's teach some Dickens at key stage three,' some argued. 'I can't imagine anything worse,' others said. 'Too difficult', 'too wordy', 'enough to put anyone off'. 'But the stories are great,' I argued. It's easy to see both sides of the argument. As someone who has dipped in and out of Dickens over the years, I have always been delighted by the actual reading of the novel, but sometimes it has taken a considerable effort of will to start the thing. Many are long, all are complex, and there is some truth in the assertion that they are too difficult-not for all, certainly, but for some children at key stage three, Dickens could sound the death knell for reading pleasure. There is a case, then, for a differentiated Dickens, and here, as with other literary classics, Real Reads provides a helpful solution. The series currently includes nine of the major novels: Bleak House, A Christmas Carol, David Copperfield, Hard Times, Oliver Twist and Great Expectations, The Old Curiosity Shop, A Tale of Two Cities and Little Dorrit. All follow the same format-a couple of pages introducing the characters with some delightful illustrations by Karen Donnelly, forty-seven pages of narrative and a 'Taking Things Further' section at the back. Like other Real Reads, too, the novels are not designed to replace the originals, but to complement them. The publisher's hope is that for some readers, the Real Reads are a springboard into the original texts; for others it is to broaden their range of cultural experience and introduce them to a world of wonderful plots and characters. What makes these retellings particularly appealing from a classroom point of view is that significant attention is paid to the language use characteristic of the authors. The novels are retold with some integrity to the original-that is that some of the cadence of Dickens is retained; that some of the vocabulary remains authentic, and that some of those seminal passages remain relatively unaltered. Take the opening of A Tale of Two Cities as an example, 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness; it was the season of wealth, it was the season of poverty. In short, it was a time very much like the present.' In short, it is very much like the original. The retellings go some way to preserving Dickens's characters and while there are of course casualties, the characters that remain are rounded and engaging. For Oliver we feel pity as he pleads with Sikes 'P-p-p-please don't make me steal,' in the face of Sikes terrifying whisper 'Quiet, vermin'. We long for Nancy to be saved by Mrs Maylie and feel the poignancy of her departure: 'You must take Oliver to safety. I must return to my life.' We sense the justice in Fagin's wait for death 'his face so distorted and pale, his eyes so bloodshot, that he already looked more dead than alive as he awaited his punishment.' Of course, we also feel the delight and relief as 'Oliver and Mr Brownlow walked hand in hand to their carriage.' Some of Dickens's humour is preserved: Mrs Joe is to be found bringing Pip up by hand and at the birth of David Copperfield, Peggotty's 'bosom swelled with such joy and pride that two buttons popped from her bodice and flew across the room.' The heartbreak remains too: 'As he wasted away over the next few days, Little Dorrit didn't leave her father's side. His spirit was like a maimed bird, able to think only of the place that had broken its wings. Finally, his spirit broke free of all earthly concerns. Little Dorrit wept bitterly. The 'Filling in the Spaces' section at the back of each book provides a helpful resource for teachers. Elements of the plot that have been omitted in order to contain the retelling in such a thin volume are listed here --Jane Campion

English in Use

About the Author

Charles Dickens (7 February 1812 - 9 June 1870) is considered the greatest novelist of the Victorian era and created many of the worlds most notable fictional characters, including Fagin, Mr Micawber and Miss Havisham.

GILL TAVNER was an English Teacher and Head of Department before turning to writing when she had

young children of her own. She has also taught English in South East Asia, worked as a personal trainer, been a management trainee in an insurance company, led treks in Africa, run her own business and painted fake tattoos on Blackpool Pleasure Beach. Perhaps it is this variety that makes her such a versatile writer.

KAREN DONNELLY lives in the English seaside town of Brighton, where for the past twenty years she has been working as a fulltime illustrator, mostly of children's books. She has solid experience in illustration for publishing, advertising and commercial clients.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Samantha Campbell:

Have you spare time to get a day? What do you do when you have a lot more or little spare time? That's why, you can choose the suitable activity intended for spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a walk, shopping, or went to the particular Mall. How about open as well as read a book allowed Little Dorrit (Charles Dickens)? Maybe it is being best activity for you. You know beside you can spend your time using your favorite's book, you can more intelligent than before. Do you agree with the opinion or you have different opinion?

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