
Charles Dickens: A Chronology

- 1812 Birth, February 7, in Portsmouth, the first son and second of eight children of John and Elizabeth Barrow Dickens.
- 1812–24 His father, a clerk in the Navy pay office, is sometimes stationed in London but usually in the twin towns of Chatham and Rochester on the south coast of Kent. Charles becomes an avid reader, especially of eighteenth-century novels.
- 1824 John Dickens is imprisoned in the Marshalsea, a debtor's prison. Charles, no longer attending school, becomes an ill-paid manual laborer in a London blacking warehouse, where he works for a few months.
- 1824–27 Resumes schooling after his father's release from prison. Leaves school at age fifteen and awarded prize for Latin.
- 1827–30 Employed as clerk in law offices.
- 1830–34 Becomes an expert shorthand-reporter of debates in Parliament, an institution that he likens to a pantomime "strong in clowns." Rounds out his education by reading in the library of the British Museum. Falls in love with Maria Beadnell, a banker's daughter. Her parents regard him as unsuitable. The relationship is broken off after four years.
- 1833–36 Becomes a newspaper reporter for the *Morning Chronicle* and travels extensively outside of London. Begins publishing short articles and stories that are collected into a volume, *Sketches by Boz* (1836).
- 1836–37 Marries Catherine Hogarth; first child born (first of ten); publishes his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, in twenty monthly installments. Its triumphant success enables him to give up newspaper reporting.
- 1837–41 Publishes in *Bentley's Miscellany* installments of *Oliver Twist*. Loses his much-beloved sister-in-law, Mary Hogarth, who dies at age seventeen. Writes three more novels: *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *Barnaby Rudge*.

- 1842 Tours America for five months. Loses his original high hopes for democracy. Disillusionment with United States evident in his *American Notes* and in his novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*.
- 1843 *A Christmas Carol*.
- 1844-49 Pays long visits to Italy, Switzerland, and France with his large family. Helps found *Daily News*. Publishes only one novel, *Dombey and Son*, but also four more Christmas books.
- 1850 Finds his popular weekly magazine, *Household Words*, featuring installments of novels, and also articles dealing with social issues. Publishes a novel, *David Copperfield*, told in first person.
- 1851-57 Publishes the first three of his so-called "Dark Period Novels": *Bleak House* (1853), *Hard Times* (1854), and *Little Dorrit* (1857). Takes increasing pleasure in directing and acting in amateur play productions.
- 1858-61 Buys Gad's Hill Place, a beautiful house near Rochester. Separates from his wife and establishes a relationship with a young actress. His sister-in-law, Georgina Hogarth, stays with him and the children. Begins paid performances of readings from his own works. Publishes, in weekly form, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) and *Great Expectations* (1861).
- 1861-68 Continues public reading tours in England and, for five months in 1867-68, in the northeastern states of America. The American readings are stunningly successful and profitable. In 1865 appears his last completed novel, *Our Mutual Friend*.
- 1869-70 Continues his public readings, despite failing health, until March 1870. In April begins publishing *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, of which he finishes six of twelve projected parts. After working on that novel he is overwhelmed by a stroke and dies the following day, on June 9, at Gad's Hill. He is later buried in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.

Selected Bibliography

I

The Dickens section of *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* (1969), compiled by Philip Collins, offers a comprehensive list of writings about Dickens. This list may be supplemented by *The Cumulated Dickens Checklist 1970-1979*, by Alan M. Cohn and K. K. Collins (1982). For later studies see "The Dickens Checklist" in *Dickens Quarterly* (formerly *Dickens Studies Newsletter*), the Dickens section of the annual PMLA and *Victorian Studies* bibliographies, and the annual review in *Dickens Studies Annual*. For judicious assessments of such studies, see Ada Nisbet's survey in *Victorian Fiction: A Guide to Research* (ed. Lionel Stevenson, 1964, pp. 44-153); and also Philip Collins in *Victorian Fiction: A Second Guide to Research* (ed. George H. Ford, 1978, pp. 34-113).

II

Two classic full-length biographies are John Forster's *The Life of Charles Dickens* (1872-74, with annotations by J. W. T. Ley, 1928), and Edgar Johnson's *Charles Dickens* (1952). Later biographies include Angus Wilson's *The World of Charles Dickens* (with illustrations, 1970); Fred Kaplan's *Dickens* (1988), which provides a perceptive presentation of Dickens's later years, Peter Ackroyd's *Dickens* (1990). On special aspects of his life and career, see Robert Patten, *Charles Dickens and His Publishers* (1978); Michael Slater, *Dickens and Women* (1983); Michael Allen, *Charles Dickens's Childhood* (1988); and Claire Tomalin, *The Invisible Woman: The Story of Nelly Ternan and Charles Dickens* (1990). Also informative are *The Speeches of Charles Dickens* (ed. K. J. Fielding, 1960); *Uncollected Writings from 'Household Words'* (ed. Harry Stone, 2 vols., 1968); *Dickens' Working Notes for His Novels*, 2 vols. (ed. Harry Stone, 1987); *Charles Dickens: The Public Readings* (ed. Philip Collins, 1975); and *Charles Dickens' Book of Memoranda* (ed. Fred Kaplan, 1981). The Pilgrim Edition of Dickens's letters (eds. Madeline House, Graham Storey, and Kathleen Tillotson) will eventually comprise twelve volumes, of which eleven have been published between 1965 and 1999. The *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens* (ed. Paul Schlicke, 1999) is useful.

III

From the large store of general critical studies of Dickens's novels, the following chronological listing represents only a selective sampling.

George Gissing, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* (1898); Louis Cazamian, *The Social Novel in England, 1830-1850*—translated from the French of 1903 (1973); G. K. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens* (1906) and *Appreciations and Criticisms of the Work of Charles Dickens* (1911); Edmund Wilson, "The Two Scrooges," *The Wound and the Bow* (1941); George H. Ford, *Dickens and His Readers* (1955, 1965); John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson, *Dickens at Work* (1957); J. Hillis Miller, *Charles Dickens: The World of His Novels* (1964); K. J. Fielding, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Introduction* (1958); Monroe Engels, *The Maturity of Dickens* (1959); A. O. J. Cockshut, *The Imagination of Dickens* (1961); George H. Ford and Lauriat Lane, Jr., eds., *The Dickens Critics* (collection of critical essays, 1961); Philip Collins, *Dickens and Education* (1963); Mark Spilka, *Dickens and Kafka* (1963); Robert Garis, *The Dickens Theatre* (1965); Sylvère Monod, *Dickens the Novelist* (1968); Barbara Hardy, *The Moral Art of Dickens* (1970); F. R. Leavis, *Dickens the Novelist* (1970); Alexander Welsh, *The City of Dickens* (1971); Robert Barnard, *Imagery and Theme in the Novels of Dickens* (1974); Garrett Stewart, *Dickens and the Trials of Imagination* (1974); Juliet McMaster, *Dickens the Designer* (1983); Paul Schlicke, *Dickens and Popular Entertainment* (1985); Janet L. Larson, *Dickens and the Broken Scripture* (1985); Harry Stone, *Dickens' Working*

Notes for His Novels (1987); Alexander Welsh, *From Copyright to Copperfield: The Identity of Dickens* (1987); Andrew Sanders, *Dickens and the Spirit of the Age* (1990); Anny Sadrin, *Parentage and Inheritance in the Novels of Charles Dickens* (1994); Malcolm Andrews, *Dickens and the Grown-Up Child* (1994); Harry Stone, *The Night Side of Dickens: Cannibalism, Passion, Necessity* (1994); William J. Palmer, *Dickens and New Historicism* (1988); and John Bowen, *Other Dickens, Pickwick to Chuzzlewit* (2000).

IV

For studies of various aspects of the Victorian age, the following books are useful: Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement* (1959, 1979); Jerome Buckley, *The Victorian Temper* (1951, 1964); Philip Collins, *Dickens and Crime* (1962); and *Dickens and Education* (1963); R. J. Cruikshank, *Charles Dickens and Early Victorian England* (1949); H. J. Dyos and Michael Wolff, *The Victorian City*, 2 vols. (1973); Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* (1845, translation 1958); Humphry House, *The Dickens World* (1941); F. D. Klingender, *Art and the Industrial Revolution* (revised by Arthur Elton, 1968); Steven Marcus, *Engels, Manchester, and the Working Class* (1974); Mary Poovey, *Uneven Developments: The Ideological Work of Gender in Mid-Victorian England* (1988); John R. Reed, *Victorian Will* (1939); Herbert Sussman, *Victorians and the Machine* (1968); E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963); H. A. Turner, *Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy* (1962); Sidney and Beatrice Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism* (1911); G. M. Young, *Early Victorian England* (1936, 1960).

V

For a review of studies of *Hard Times* itself, see Sylvia Manning's excellent *Hard Times: An Annotated Bibliography* (1984). For individual critical or historical studies, see: Harold Bloom, ed., *Hard Times*, essays by Raymond Williams and others (1987); Patrick Brantlinger, "Dickens and the Factories, *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 22 (1971): 270-85; Geoffrey Carnall, "Dickens, Mrs. Gaskell, and the Preston Strike," *Victorian Studies* 8 (1964): 31-48; Philip Collins, "Queen Mab's Chariot Among the Steam Engines: Dickens and 'Fancy'" *English Studies* 42 (1961): 78-90; Daniel P. Deneau, "The Brother-Sister Relationship in *Hard Times*," *The Dickensian* 60 (1964): 173-77; Terry Eagleton, introduction to *Hard Times* (1987); Richard Fabrizio, "Wonderful No-Meaning: Language and the Psychopathology of the Family in Dickens' *Hard Times*," *Dickens Studies Annual* 16 (1987): 61-94; K. J. Fielding, "The Battle for Preston," *The Dickensian* 54 (1954): 159-62; and "Mill and Gradgrind," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 11 (1956): 148-51; and with Ann Smith, "*Hard Times* and the Factory Controversy: Dickens vs Harriet Martineau," *Dickens Centennial Essays*, ed. Ada Nisbet and Blake Nevius (1971) 22-45; George Ford, "Dickens' *Hard Times* on Television: Problems of Adaptation," *Papers on Language and Literature* 23 (1987); Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Discourse and Narrative Form* (1985); Robert Giddings, ed., *The Changing World of Dickens*, essays by Roger Fowler and others (1983); Robin Gilmour, *The Victorians and Social Protest* (1973) 71-101; Paul Edward Gray, ed., *Hard Times: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1969); Janet Larsen, "Identity's Fictions—Naming and Renaming in *Hard Times*," *Dickens Studies Newsletter* (March 1979): 14-19; David Lodge, *Working with Structuralism* (1981); Robert Lougy, "Dickens's *Hard Times*: The Romance as Radical Literature," *Dickens Studies Annual* (1980) 237-54; Jerome Meckier, *Hidden Rivalries of Victorian Fiction* (1987) 46-92; Paul Schlicke, *Dickens and Popular Entertainment* (1985); Bernard Shaw, *Introduction to Hard Times* (1912); Frank Edmund Smith, "Perverted Balance: Expressive Form in *Hard Times*," *Dickens Studies Annual* (1977) 102-18; David Sonstroem, "Fettered Fancy in *Hard Times*," *PMLA* (May 1969): 520-29; Deborah A. Thomas, "*Hard Times*," *A Fable of Fragmentation and Wholeness* (1997); Margaret Simpson, *The Companion to "Hard Times"* (1999); Nicholas Coles, "The Politics of *Hard Times*: Dickens the Novelist versus Dickens the Reformer," *Dickens Studies Annual* (1986); Patricia E. Johnson, "*Hard Times* and the Structure of Industrialism: The Novel as Factory," *Studies in the Novel* 21.2 (1989): 128-37; Jean Ferguson Carr, "Writing as a Woman: Dickens, *Hard Times* and Feminine Discourse," *Dickens Studies Annual* (1989); Paul Schacht, "Dickens and the Uses of Nature," *Victorian Studies* 34.1 (1990): 77-102; Cynthia Northcutt Malone, "The Fixed Eye and the Rolling Eye: Surveillance and Discipline in *Hard Times*," *Studies in the Novel* 21.1 (1989): 14-26; Martha C. Nussbaum, "The Literary Imagination in Public Life," *New Literary History* 22.4 (1991): 877-910; Eric P. Levy, "Dickens' Pathology of Time in *Hard Times*," *Philological Quarterly* 74.2 (1995): 189-207; and Alexander Welsh, *Dickens Redressed: The Art of Bleak House and Hard Times* (2000).