Biographical Notes for Charles Dickens

I. Childhood:
   o Dickens was born in Portsmouth, England and was one of eight children.
   o His father was a clerk and his mother was a teacher. They were not good at managing money so they were often in debt.
   o At the age of twelve, Dickens had to quit school and take a job at a warehouse, where he worked for twelve hours a day pasting labels on bottles.
   o This experience made Dickens aware of the misery of the poor, especially children. As a result of this experience he was determined to fight poverty and social injustice.

II. Adulthood
   o Dickens later worked as an office boy for an attorney. During this experience, he realized the injustices of the law.
   o He also worked as a court reporter, actor, and a reporter for two newspapers.
   o Later he began to write stories. He was a slow writer, but he worked hard.

III. Career as a Writer
   o He chose to write novels that criticized the attitudes of the greedy and exposed the abuses of the poor.
   o By exposing the suffering of the poor in a vivid and sympathetic manner, Dickens convinced readers that conditions had to be corrected.
   o His novels helped bring about reform in England.
   o Dickens published A Christmas Carol himself because his publishers doubted that it would sell. A Christmas Carol is a shortened version of the novel prepared by Dickens for public readings of his writings.
   o Other popular works by Dickens include:
      Oliver Twist
      David Copperfield
      A Tale of Two Cities
      Great Expectations

IV. Additional Tidbits
   o Besides writing, Dickens devoted time, energy, and money to several charities.
   o He also enjoyed long walks, horseback riding, charades, magic and traveling.
   o Dickens’ demanding work schedule affected his health. He died of a stroke at the age of 58.
   o His greatest strength was his ability to create colorful pictures of London’s people and life.