

Biographical Notes for Charles Dickens

I. Childhood:

- Dickens was born in Portsmouth, England and was one of eight children.
- His father was a clerk and his mother was a teacher. They were not good at managing money so they were often in debt.
- 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.
- 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

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

III. Career as a Writer

- He chose to write novels that criticized the attitudes of the greedy and exposed the abuses of the poor.
- By exposing the suffering of the poor in a vivid and sympathetic manner, Dickens convinced readers that conditions had to be corrected.
- His novels helped bring about reform in England.
- 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.
- Other popular works by Dickens include:
 - *Oliver Twist*
 - *David Copperfield*
 - *A Tale of Two Cities*
 - *Great Expectations*

IV. Additional Tidbits

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

