

Classic Readers

DAVID COPPERFIELD

Charles Dickens
retold by Jenny Dooley



Express Publishing

separated. Therefore, she seemed to feel that all men were wicked or silly, and that they made women's lives difficult.

When she first came, she knew that my mother was a young widow expecting a baby, and with only one servant, Peggotty. Aunt Betsey had declared that she had come to The Rookery to help my mother look after me.

Unfortunately, the fact that I was born a male was too much of a shock for Aunt Betsey. She couldn't bear it and left the house in a huff immediately after my birth. And so, we were left all alone, just the three of us. Luckily, dear Peggotty was much more than a servant. She was a good friend to my mother, and me as well.

Although it did not seem at all like a good beginning for me, we made the most of our life together and were happy. In the evenings or on cold wet days, my young and beautiful mother would sit with Peggotty in the parlour. They would chat by the fire and would often sing or read to me. Then they would rock me in their arms. When I fell asleep, they would take me to my bed and kiss me warmly on my forehead. On Sundays, we would walk to the nearby church, and visit my father's grave. Knowing that he was close by made me feel safe.

Even though I was very young at the time, I have many tender memories of my early life. Those sweet moments will remain in my heart forever. I think back and sometimes laugh to myself when I remember particular moments from that peaceful and pleasant time. I used to think that Peggotty's plump, red cheeks looked so much like apples that every time she went outdoors, I would tell her to take care. I was sure the birds would think that her cheeks were juicy apples and peck at them!

How things changed when Mr Murdstone entered our lives! I was about five years old the first time we met. He looked down at me and said,

“Give me your hand, boy! A man must have a firm handshake if he wants to get anywhere in the world.”

He began walking my mother home from the church. Then he would visit her at home, and stay a little longer each time. He was a handsome man – tall and slim with dark hair and a beard. Mother would dress up and curl her hair before Mr Murdstone came to see her. She would giggle when he was at the house and sometimes her face would become red. I do admit, I **was** jealous, but this wasn't the reason why I didn't like him.

I didn't trust him because of the look he had in his eyes. They were small and dark, and didn't seem kind at all. Later, I was proved to be correct.

Mr Murdstone wanted to be alone with Mother, so Peggotty was told to take me away for a few weeks to visit her brother in Yarmouth.

“What a treat it'll be, Master Davy! There's the sea, the boats and the fishermen! And young ones to play with!”

I was excited because I was going somewhere new, but I would miss Mother very much.





With My Aunt

Comprehension

Read or listen to Chapter 5 and complete these sentences using one or two words.

- 1 David knew that his Aunt Betsey lived about miles from London, in a place called Dover.
- 2 A young man with a donkey and stole all David's possessions.
- 3 David felt embarrassed when he reached Aunt Betsey's house, because he looked like a
- 4 Aunt Betsey put David on the sofa with a under his head.
- 5 Aunt Betsey said that the Murdstones were
- 6 David thought that Aunt Betsey was very and clapped his hands in delight.

What do you think?

A Discuss the following questions.

- 1 What kind of person do you think Aunt Betsey was?
- 2 Why do you think the Murdstones went to Aunt Betsey's house?
- 3 When Aunt Betsey took David in she said, "All I ask is that you respect us and follow our simple rules." What do you think these rules were?

B Find the following extracts from Chapter 5 and discuss their meanings.

- 1 p. 29: "I (David) took a deep breath when I saw a tall woman (Aunt Betsey) with a straight back walk out of the house."
- 2 p. 30: "I (David) watched her (Aunt Betsey) with my heart in my mouth as she marched back into her garden."
- 3 p. 32: "... she (Betsey) slammed the door behind them."

Language Practice

What was the conversation like when the Murdstones came to visit Aunt Betsey? Here are some suggestions. You may use your own ideas if you prefer.

Yes, of course. You know all about discipline, don't you?

You know, we always did our best for David.

Then I don't know why I came!

I suppose David told you that!

I will take my chances with David.

I insist that you keep quiet!



Aunt Betsey: Well, what are we going to do about David Copperfield?

Miss Murdstone: He always was a wicked and lazy child.

Mr Murdstone: Please, sister. Let me speak. Miss Trotwood, (1).....

Aunt Betsey: By sending him to work in that dreadful factory, you mean?

Mr Murdstone: He needed to learn the discipline of work.

Aunt Betsey: (2).....

Miss Murdstone: His mother did not discipline him at all!

Mr Murdstone: (3).....

Miss Murdstone: (4).....

Aunt Betsey: Neither do I, but I know that you were both very cruel to David and his mother.

Miss Murdstone: (5).....

Aunt Betsey: Yes, and I believe him.

Mr Murdstone: David is an evil boy and you will find that out for yourself, Miss Trotwood!

Aunt Betsey: (6).....

Mr Murdstone: You are making a big mistake!

Aunt Betsey: Now leave my house and I never want to see or hear from either of you again!

JOBS

1 A number of different jobs were mentioned in 'David Copperfield'. See if you can match the jobs to the characters from the story. Some may be used more than once.



DAVID COPPERFIELD

Life is full of changes for young David Copperfield. How will he react to the cruelty, the neglect and loss he experiences as a boy, and will he ever find the love and security he is looking for?



Level 1 Level 2 Level 3 Level 4 Level 5 Level 6

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ISBN 978-1-84466-375-0



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