

NAXOS

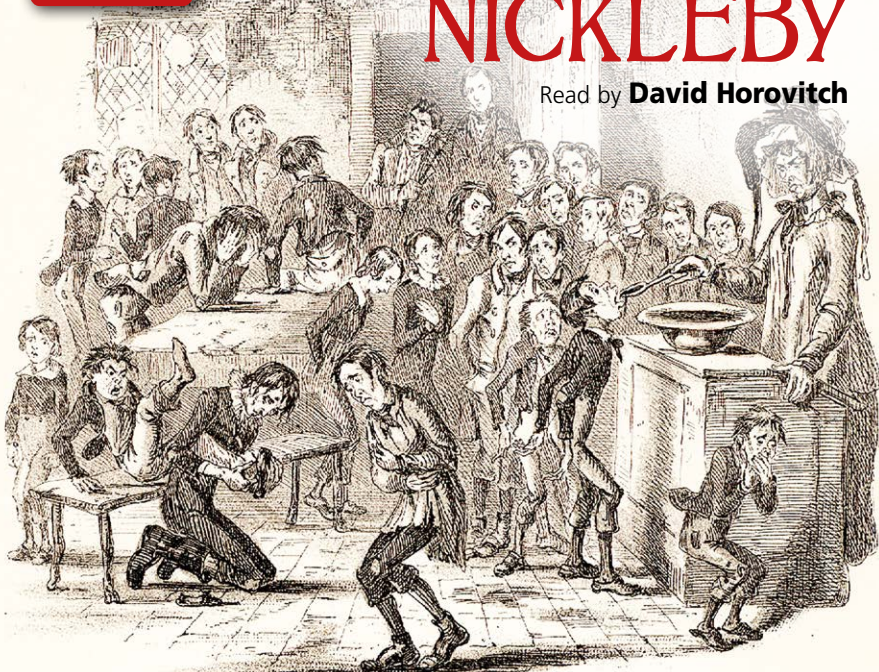
AudioBooks

COMPLETE  
CLASSICS  
UNABRIDGED

Charles Dickens

# NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

Read by **David Horovitch**



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## CD 1

1	The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby...	4:38
2	With a portion of this property...	4:33
3	From what we have said of this young gentleman...	4:57
4	<b>Chapter 2:</b> Of Mr Ralph Nickleby, and his Establishments...	5:33
5	Mr Nickleby closed an account-book...	5:31
6	Noggs gave vent to his usual grunt...	7:06
7	Meanwhile, and pending the arrangement...	6:27
8	Mr Ralph Nickleby seconded the resolution...	6:44
9	<b>Chapter 3:</b> Mr Ralph Nickleby receives Sad Tidings...	6:00
10	Mr Nickleby looked very indignant...	6:21
11	Climbing up another perpendicular flight...	4:37
12	The mutual inspection was at length...	6:15
13	'There!' said Ralph...	5:44
14	<b>Chapter 4:</b> Nicholas and his Uncle...	4:41

**Total Time on CD 1: 79:16**

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## CD 2

1	When you walk up this yard...	6:56
2	The stranger continued.	7:20
3	Having entered Mr Snawley's address...	6:54
4	His father is dead...	7:17
5	<b>Chapter 5:</b> Nicholas starts for Yorkshire.	7:12
6	He found that learned gentleman sitting at breakfast...	7:26
7	If the proprietor of Dotheboys Hall...	7:11
8	When the guard...	5:53
9	<b>Chapter 6:</b> In which the Occurrence of the Accident...	5:20
10	Expressing himself to this effect...	4:53
11	THE FIVE SISTERS OF YORK	6:38
12	Still wasting the precious hours...	6:26

**Total Time on CD 2: 79:31**

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### CD 3

1	The holy man, who had often urged the same point before...	5:41
2	With the indifference or abstraction of one...	5:01
3	They sent abroad, to artists...	4:49
4	THE BARON OF GROGZWIG	6:10
5	What a pleasant thing filial piety is...	6:13
6	The poor baron bore it all as long as he could...	7:00
7	The baron took another look at his new friend...	6:25
8	<b>Chapter 7:</b> Mr and Mrs Squeers at Home	6:55
9	Pending these little endearments...	7:32
10	This part of the conversation was rather unintelligible...	7:24
11	<b>Chapter 8:</b> Of the Internal Economy of Dotheboys Hall	5:34
12	Nicholas sighed involuntarily...	5:07
13	And yet this scene, painful as it was...	4:28

**Total Time on CD 3: 78:26**

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## CD 4

1	After some half-hour's delay...	6:34
2	According to half-yearly custom...	4:23
3	Another boy stood up...	5:26
4	But, for the present, his resolve was taken...	5:41
5	<b>Chapter 9:</b> Of Miss Squeers, Mrs Squeers, Master Squeers...	6:22
6	Now, a proud usher in a Yorkshire school...	5:40
7	Miss Squeers glanced at the door...	6:49
8	It so fell out, that Mrs Squeers's journey...	7:00
9	Mr Browdie was not a gentleman of great conversational powers...	6:55
10	'I never had such luck, really,' exclaimed coquettish Miss Price...	7:20
11	<b>Chapter 10:</b> How Mr Ralph Nickleby provided...	6:18
12	'It is only his manner, I believe,' observed Kate...	4:25
13	With an assumption of kindness...	6:23

**Total Time on CD 4: 79:24**

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## CD 5

1	'The lady's name,' said Ralph...	6:29
2	A liveried footman opened the door...	5:44
3	'Now, ma'am,' said Ralph...	6:42
4	<b>Chapter 11:</b> Newman Noggs inducts Mrs and Miss Nickleby...	6:48
5	It was no very easy matter to mistake Newman Noggs...	7:13
6	<b>Chapter 12:</b> Whereby the Reader will be enabled...	5:57
7	'What a situation!' cried Miss Squeers...	7:11
8	It is needless to say, that, by this time...	5:34
9	Here he raised up the brown bonnet...	6:59
10	The wretched creature, Smike...	6:14
11	<b>Chapter 13:</b> Nicholas varies the Monotony...	7:21
12	There was, of course, a profound silence...	6:33

**Total Time on CD 5: 78:51**

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## CD 6

1	'No news of the scamp!' said the schoolmaster...	4:57
2	The news that Smike had been caught...	4:27
3	Mrs Squeers, being out of breath...	5:02
4	After a brief consideration...	5:51
5	Nicholas could by no means be prevailed...	5:01
6	<b>Chapter 14:</b> Having the Misfortune to treat...	5:59
7	Newman Noggs pointed to the bottom of a cupboard...	6:14
8	'My dear,' said Mr Kenwigs...	6:33
9	After a great deal of trouble...	5:42
10	A gentle murmur seemed to say...	7:29
11	<b>Chapter 15:</b> Acquaints the Reader with the Cause and Origin...	7:17
12	With this gentle allusion to the absent Mr Squeers...	7:22
13	Newman, who had stood during...	6:47

**Total Time on CD 6: 78:48**

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## CD 7

1	The worthy gentleman then became...	7:32
2	This brief explanation over...	7:20
3	<b>Chapter 16:</b> Nicholas seeks to employ himself in a New Capacity...	5:27
4	'Cook,' said Tom, turning over...	5:37
5	Tom made no other reply...	6:01
6	Into Manchester Buildings Nicholas turned...	5:53
7	The time had been, when this burst of enthusiasm...	6:14
8	To this, Mr Gregsby read the following reply...	6:09
9	Mr Gregsby looked fixedly at Nicholas...	6:38
10	With this handsome offer...	6:47
11	Newman hastened, with joyful steps...	6:56
12	<b>Chapter 17:</b> Follows the Fortunes of Miss Nickleby	3:59
13	'If you will be odiously, demnebly, outrageously jealous...'	4:40

**Total Time on CD 7: 79:20**



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## CD 8

1	Madame Mantalini's prudence...	5:41
2	Here Miss Knag paused to take breath...	5:34
3	There had existed not a little desire in the room...	5:01
4	<b>Chapter 18:</b> Miss Knag, after doting on Kate Nickleby...	5:59
5	Of such a highly disinterested quality...	5:53
6	As Miss Knag had never yet known...	6:34
7	With another sigh Mr Knag...	5:53
8	At this high point, Miss Knag's friendship remained...	6:28
9	The circumstances of the little kingdom...	5:36
10	<b>Chapter 19:</b> Descriptive of a Dinner at Mr Ralph Nickleby's...	6:17
11	The blessing seemed to stick in Mr Ralph Nickleby's throat...	6:00
12	The coachman gave a tremendous double knock...	6:47
13	When Ralph had completed the ceremonial of introduction...	7:24

**Total Time on CD 8: 79:13**

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## CD 9

1	All this while, Kate had sat as silently as she could...	6:01
2	The book fell from her hand...	5:17
3	Although this hurried dialogue...	7:29
4	<b>Chapter 20:</b> Wherein Nicholas at length encounters his Uncle...	6:44
5	'I need look somewhat changed,' he said...	6:16
6	Kate very well understood...	6:34
7	There really was no necessity for the good lady...	6:24
8	The grasp which had detained him relaxed...	6:40
9	<b>Chapter 21:</b> Madam Mantalini finds herself in a Situation...	6:40
10	Kate busied herself...	7:09
11	With these remarks, combining great pleasantry...	6:53
12	Kate was too sick at heart...	7:12

**Total time on CD 9: 79:26**

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## CD 10

1	'You are a good temper?' asked Mrs Witterly...	4:05
2	Here, both Mr and Mrs Witterly...	3:54
3	<b>Chapter 22:</b> Nicholas, accompanied by Smike...	6:31
4	'I don't know much of these matters,' resumed Nicholas...	5:54
5	'No,' rejoined the youth...	5:58
6	By degrees, the prospect receded...	6:15
7	The two combatants went to work afresh...	5:46
8	While he was thus engaged...	6:55
9	There was a pause.	5:17
10	<b>Chapter 23:</b> Treats of the Company...	7:17
11	As Mrs Vincent Crummles...	7:07
12	'Mr Folair,' said the manager...	6:46
13	The ladies were gathered in a little knot...	7:40

**Total Time on CD 10: 79:32**

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## CD 11

1	Mr Crummles lived in St Thomas's Street...	5:56
2	<b>Chapter 24:</b> Of the Great Bespeak for Miss Snevellicci...	7:11
3	Nicholas was standing with his back to the curtain...	6:34
4	'What did you think of that?' asked Mr Crummles...	5:49
5	At the stipulated hour next morning...	6:34
6	The conversation was here interrupted...	6:12
7	Mrs Curdle had sat listening to this lucid explanation...	5:09
8	It was a trying morning...	6:12
9	<b>Chapter 25:</b> Concerning a young Lady from London...	5:49
10	The arrival of the gifted subject...	5:56
11	Nicholas had much ado to prevent himself from laughing...	7:10
12	With these words, Mr Lillyvick...	5:29
13	With such expressions of sorrow...	4:23

**Total time on CD 11: 78:32**

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## CD 12

1	'It's very soon done, sir, isn't it?' inquired Mr Folair...	4:31
2	This desperate threat effectually broke up the party.	3:59
3	<b>Chapter 26:</b> Is fraught with some Danger...	6:14
4	'Well,' replied Sir Mulberry...	6:38
5	Ralph ran over this brief summary...	5:41
6	Mrs Nickleby was too much flurried...	5:30
7	What a delight, what a comfort...	6:17
8	<b>Chapter 27:</b> Mrs Nickleby becomes acquainted...	7:11
9	Mr Pluck, after feigning to be in a condition...	6:36
10	By degrees these raptures subsided...	5:58
11	Mrs Nickleby had scarcely been put away...	6:48
12	But Sir Mulberry Hawk was not to be...	6:56
13	The evening came to an end at last...	6:03

**Total time on CD 12: 78:29**

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## CD 13

1	<b>Chapter 28:</b> Miss Nickleby, rendered desperate by the Persecution...	6:53
2	At this instant, while the Lady Flabella...	7:20
3	To judge from the glow...	7:00
4	That they came at all times and seasons...	6:55
5	I have always considered you a particularly well-behaved...	7:10
6	Newman, with a grim smile at this manoeuvre...	6:25
7	We are connected in business...	7:11
8	<b>Chapter 29:</b> Of the Proceedings of Nicholas...	5:51
9	Nicholas, in a state of much amazement...	7:17
10	As Mr Folair was pretty well known...	6:40
11	The profoundest deference was paid to Nicholas that night...	5:28
12	<b>Chapter 30:</b> Festivities are held in honour of Nicholas...	4:39

**Total time on CD 13: 78:57**

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## CD 14

1	'Heigho!' sighed Nicholas...	6:07
2	So these are some of the stories they invent...	6:09
3	To these good people Nicholas was presented...	6:18
4	Most public characters have their failings...	6:04
5	Miss Snevellicci's papa being greatly exalted...	6:25
6	All this was the occasion of much amusement...	7:07
7	<b>Chapter 31:</b> Of Ralph Nickleby and Newman Noggs...	6:46
8	He executed his commission...	6:45
9	'Damn him!' cried Newman...	6:44
10	<b>Chapter 32:</b> Relating chiefly to some remarkable Conversation...	6:54
11	With his heart beating violently...	7:35
12	Nicholas was in a perfect agony...	6:17

**Total time on CD 14: 79:19**

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## CD 15

1	It was evident from the tone...	6:40
2	<b>Chapter 33:</b> In which Mr Ralph Nickleby is relieved...	5:56
3	The plated buttons disappeared...	6:50
4	As Nicholas and his sister were by this time compelled...	5:56
5	<b>Chapter 34:</b> Wherein Mr Ralph Nickleby is visited...	7:46
6	And notwithstanding various blandishments...	6:08
7	On this repetition of Mr Mantalini's fatal threat...	5:39
8	'And what said he?' asked Ralph...	6:27
9	'He looks well, indeed,' returned Ralph...	7:06
10	'Are you stopping at your old quarters?' asked Ralph.	6:37
11	'We will both cry quits with him before long,'...	5:30
12	<b>Chapter 35:</b> Smike becomes known to Mrs Nickleby and Kate...	7:13

**Total Time on CD 15: 77:55**



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## CD 16

1	At length the door opened again...	6:53
2	Mr Crummles occurred to him more than once...	6:55
3	He moved away as he said this...	5:49
4	Passing through a warehouse...	7:22
5	'But hear this first – hear this first, brother Ned,'...	6:16
6	'We must. We certainly must have a quarrel...'	5:25
7	<b>Chapter 36:</b> Private and confidential; relating to Family Matters...	6:49
8	In the midst of this general hubbub...	7:49
9	Hearing this mention of their old friend's name...	7:18
10	<b>Chapter 37:</b> Nicholas finds further Favour in the Eyes...	7:20
11	Nor was this all.	5:37
12	With this casting down of his gauntlet...	4:22

**Total time on CD 16: 78:05**

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## CD 17

1	At a quarter past five o'clock...	6:32
2	But there was no time to moralise...	6:17
3	By this time it was past eleven o'clock...	6:43
4	This was undoubtedly the case...	6:40
5	'Every time I go to the window,'...	4:35
6	<b>Chapter 38:</b> Comprises certain Particulars...	6:53
7	Leaving it to pursue its journey...	7:33
8	Ralph shrugged his shoulders...	6:53
9	Ralph, who was no common observer...	6:55
10	The man looked from Squeers to Smike...	6:34
11	Obedient to this direction...	6:27
12	<b>Chapter 39:</b> In which another old Friend...	6:12

**Total time on CD 17: 78:22**

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## CD 18

1	To have seen Miss Squeers now...	6:05
2	'What do you think?' said that gentleman...	5:07
3	Now, the fact was, that at that particular moment...	5:57
4	<b>Chapter 40:</b> In which Nicholas falls in Love...	7:17
5	He was going on, in his enthusiasm...	6:58
6	'Is there nobody in the house to cheer or help him?'...	6:31
7	He had abundance of time to ruminate...	7:14
8	These repeated visits inflamed the curiosity...	7:22
9	It appeared, on further questioning...	6:16
10	'Well!' said Nicholas...	5:33
11	<b>Chapter 41:</b> Containing some Romantic Passages...	6:52
12	'Well, I will say,' observed Mrs Nickleby...	7:39

**Total time on CD 18: 78:58**

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## CD 19

1	As Kate rose from her seat...	6:35
2	Here he broke off to look round...	5:25
3	Repeating these last words with great rapture...	5:12
4	One of the hands being then cautiously unclasped...	4:45
5	<b>Chapter 42:</b> Illustrative of the convivial Sentiment...	7:03
6	'I dinnot know whether thou'd ever dreamt of it...'	6:01
7	'He's a bad 'un,' said John...	5:14
8	'This is the hend, is it?'	6:48
9	While the foregoing conversation was proceeding...	6:42
10	<b>Chapter 43:</b> Officiates as a kind of Gentleman Usher...	6:40
11	Here a waiter who had been rubbing his hands...	6:58
12	Nicholas responded to these compliments...	5:55
13	Notwithstanding all that has been said...	5:02

**Total time on CD 19: 78:27**

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## CD 20

1	'Mr Nickleby,' said brother Charles...	7:22
2	There was a mighty bustle that night...	6:33
3	<b>Chapter 44:</b> Mr Ralph Nickleby cuts an old Acquaintance...	6:37
4	'This Hawk will come back, however,'...	6:05
5	The sky had been lowering and dark...	6:47
6	'I am a most miserable and wretched outcast...'	7:07
7	'I neither revile nor threaten,'...	6:52
8	'What is the matter here?' said Ralph...	6:39
9	However, notwithstanding her firmness...	6:03
10	<b>Chapter 45:</b> Containing Matter of a surprising Kind	6:28
11	'Mr Browdie,' said Kate...	7:07
12	'There's more to say and hear...'	5:11

**Total time on CD 20: 78:57**

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## CD 21

1	This being purely a labour of love...	6:46
2	'The school was Mr Squeers's,'...	6:06
3	'Now,' said Nicholas to the other two...	6:05
4	<b>Chapter 46:</b> Throws some Light upon Nicholas's Love...	6:23
5	By this time brother Charles was in such a very warm state...	6:50
6	Pursuing this encomium upon the poor follower...	6:14
7	Then it came out by little and little...	7:49
8	To the row of houses indicated to him...	7:23
9	'Ring the bell, ring the bell,' said the sick man...	6:46
10	<b>Chapter 47:</b> Mr Ralph Nickleby has some confidential Intercourse...	5:41
11	Such was old Arthur Gride...	6:09
12	'I wouldn't deceive YOU, you know,'...	6:45

**Total time on CD 21: 79:05**

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## CD 22

1	There was enough acerbity and sarcasm...	6:50
2	'There's something more to be told,' said Ralph...	6:21
3	Having delivered this observation...	6:22
4	'Still,' rejoined Ralph...	5:22
5	It might have moved a very hard...	6:36
6	<b>Chapter 48:</b> Being for the Benefit of Mr Vincent Crummles...	7:08
7	Mr Crummles was unfeignedly glad to see him...	6:57
8	Nicholas responded to this confidence...	6:37
9	With this hasty apology...	6:37
10	The conversation threatened...	6:14
11	<b>Chapter 49:</b> Chronicles the further Proceedings of the Nickleby Family...	6:15
12	But there were other persons associated...	7:28

**Total time on CD 22: 78:54**

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## CD 23

1	As the hearers did not echo this sentiment...	7:30
2	The good lady's surprise...	5:57
3	Frank Cheeryble and Tim Linkinwater...	6:10
4	It happened that Miss La Creevy...	6:01
5	Frank was not at all confident of his power...	7:21
6	<b>Chapter 50:</b> Involves a serious Catastrophe	5:48
7	Fitted up with three tables...	6:58
8	This officer was busily plying his vocation...	6:36
9	Such was the ascendancy he had acquired...	7:08
10	Here, they encountered another party...	7:14
11	What a contrast, when they reached the street...	7:17
12	<b>Chapter 51:</b> The Project of Mr Ralph Nickleby and his Friend...	4:54

**Total time on CD 23: 79:02**



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## CD 24

1	'The bottle-green,' said old Arthur...	7:14
2	Mrs Sliderskew appeared to approve highly...	7:10
3	In good fellowship...	6:50
4	'He is an idle ruffian,' said Ralph...	6:34
5	<b>Chapter 52:</b> Nicholas despairs of rescuing Madeline Bray...	5:57
6	You read me a good lesson, Newman...	6:30
7	Deploing the evil-mindedness...	5:43
8	The features of Mr Lillyvick...	6:01
9	Immediately upon the utterance...	6:13
10	Newman had been a silent spectator...	6:39
11	<b>Chapter 53:</b> Containing the further Progress of the Plot...	7:20
12	Bray and his daughter were sitting there alone.	7:10

**Total time on CD 24: 79:27**

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## CD 25

1	The father was too much absorbed...	7:33
2	Long before Nicholas ceased to speak...	7:06
3	'Well-a-day!' he chuckled...	7:20
4	'Thieves! Thieves!' shrieked the usurer...	6:41
5	Long habit of weighing and noting well...	6:00
6	<b>Chapter 54:</b> The Crisis of the Project and its Result	7:06
7	'What a man it is!' cried Arthur Gride...	7:06
8	You see what a dry, shrivelled...	6:45
9	As the brother and sister stood side by side...	7:17
10	They all stood still...	7:23
11	<b>Chapter 55:</b> Of Family Matters, Cares, Hopes...	4:09
12	To this, Mrs Nickleby only replied...	3:56

**Total time on CD 25: 78:28**

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## CD 26

1	Who, slowly recovering from a disorder so severe...	6:27
2	At other times, when Nicholas came home at night...	6:33
3	'I think it my duty, Nicholas...'	6:22
4	Mrs Nickleby shook her head...	7:33
5	<b>Chapter 56:</b> Ralph Nickleby, baffled by his Nephew...	5:52
6	On their way, Ralph sat in the furthest corner...	6:15
7	'There is something missing...'	6:01
8	Striving, as it would seem...	7:24
9	'How often have I told you,' said Ralph...	7:14
10	Mr Squeers, after following with his eye...	6:16
11	<b>Chapter 57:</b> How Ralph Nickleby's Auxiliary...	6:13
12	'The pigs is well,' said Mr Squeers...	6:54

**Total time on CD 26: 79:12**

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## CD 27

1	'Do you see this? This is a bottle.'	7:17
2	'He's a treacherous old goat,' said Peg...	7:03
3	If the old woman had not been very deaf...	7:04
4	<b>Chapter 58:</b> In which one Scene...	6:37
5	In a fortnight's time, he became too ill...	6:33
6	On a fine, mild autumn day...	5:33
7	<b>Chapter 59:</b> The Plots begin to fail...	5:52
8	Of all men alive...	6:07
9	With these words, uttered with great emphasis...	6:36
10	At length he felt it was hopeless to remain...	7:19
11	'As nobody bids me to a seat,' said Ralph...	5:40
12	Ralph had put a great command upon himself...	7:09

**Total time on CD 27: 78:57**

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## CD 28

1	The robbery, partly owing to the inquisitiveness...	5:39
2	<b>Chapter 60:</b> The Dangers thicken...	6:43
3	'What document was it that you had?' asked Ralph...	6:56
4	He went home, and was glad...	6:03
5	The brothers conferred apart for a short time...	6:00
6	In the midst of a dead silence...	5:47
7	He went on, from this point...	6:48
8	<b>Chapter 61:</b> Wherein Nicholas and his Sister forfeit...	6:09
9	Nicholas coloured again...	7:03
10	I have thought of this for weeks...	6:03
11	Here, Tim stopped and glanced anxiously...	5:38
12	'Mr Nickleby,' said brother Charles...	6:48
13	<b>Chapter 62:</b> Ralph makes one last Appointment...	3:03

**Total time on CD 28: 78:48**

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## CD 29

1	While he was thus engaged...	5:24
2	But one tender thought...	5:29
3	He listened to the man's retreating footsteps...	4:34
4	<b>Chapter 63:</b> The Brothers Cheeryble...	5:49
5	The old butler received them...	6:35
6	'I hardly dared to hope –'	5:58
7	Tim sat down beside Miss La Creevy...	5:50
8	By this time, the apoplectic butler was nearly in fits...	5:46
9	<b>Chapter 64:</b> An old Acquaintance is recognised...	7:28
10	Mr Mantalini turned round...	6:30
11	The entrance of Mrs Browdie...	6:04
12	Before that estimable lady could recover herself...	6:07
13	<b>Chapter 65:</b> Conclusion	7:50

**Total time on CD 29: 79:32**

**Total time on CDs 1–29: 38:09:22**

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## Charles Dickens

(1812–1870)

# NICHOLAS NICKLEBY

Dickens started writing *Nicholas Nickleby* while he was still finishing *Oliver Twist*, a book he had begun while still finishing *The Pickwick Papers*. While this demonstrates his exceptional energy and invention, it also highlights the speed of his development. His first book – rather than novel – was *Sketches by Boz*, a collection of articles about people and places. *The Pickwick Papers* is an episodic single narrative, which gave Dickens greater scope to display his comedic and observational gifts. *Oliver Twist* is a dark fable raging against social injustice while following a hero who is essentially a symbol. In *Nicholas Nickleby* Dickens marries the emerging strengths of these formative works into something more coherent and greater than all the contributing elements. Here is a hero who, while hardly a complex character, is

at least active in determining his own fate; here is a cause (the gruesome conditions at certain schools) that is not only to be attacked with satire but to serve as a means to move the story forward; here is opportunity for characters and situations of exuberant comedy. The writer and critic G.K. Chesterton suggested that it is Dickens's first real novel. It is certainly the one in which the novelist seems to recognise fully the profound potential of his gifts.

Dickens took up writing as it appeared to be the only way he could avoid being a lawyer, or a subordinate in a lawyer's office. His family had moved to London after a happy childhood around Portsmouth and then Chatham, where his father was a clerk in the Navy. But a combination of misfortune and improvidence left them in debt and his father in prison,

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meaning that the 12-year-old Charles had to live on his own, walk four miles to and from work through central London, and do hard, menial work in a blacking factory. The sense of abandonment that this provoked never fully left him. He had always been ambitious, imaginative, quick-witted and fond of performing, but these skills and aspirations seemed to dissolve as he felt abandoned. He had had some schooling, and once his father's finances were more satisfactory he had some more, but his prospects were hardly bright when he was eventually given a post with a solicitor. However, he had a fierce determination, and, inspired by his father's new job with a newspaper, he decided to become a journalist. He learnt shorthand in remarkably quick time, and began reporting on parliamentary matters, becoming well known for his speed and accuracy as a reporter. He was also following a yearning for the stage, performing in many amateur dramatics (as he would continue to do throughout his life), watching as many plays as he could, and beginning to write the vivid sketches and caricatures that would lead to the

publication of *Sketches by Boz* in 1836.

Almost as soon as this was published, he was producing the first instalment of *The Pickwick Papers*, a book that was enormously successful extremely quickly; and within a few days of that initial instalment, he was married to Catherine Hogarth. He was also editing magazines. By the age of 25 he was a celebrity, a father and the foremost interpreter of an emerging middle class. The power of his position between Queen Victoria's accession in 1837 and his death in 1870 has led to his being characterised as Victorian, but in many ways he was a part of an earlier world, and it might be truer to say that the Victorians he portrayed or caricatured behaved in a Dickensian fashion. His observation was astute, penetrating and imaginatively true; that is, while it may not always have been completely accurate in terms of the assumptions made about the individual, it was precise about how that facial tic, or vocal mannerism, or curious gait, would display aspects of a character in his fiction. This imaginative power became almost overwhelming: his sense of the truth of



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his stories overrode pure fact because that was how it appeared to him. So he created a recognisable world where fiction was the servant of a broader truth, and where he could appeal more directly to the readers' own imagination. Wackford Squeers is a case in point.

Dickens went to a school in Yorkshire to see for himself the conditions that were rumoured to exist in these places; schools where bastards or otherwise unwanted children were sent, to all intents and purposes, to rot. Wackford Squeers is not a replica of William Shaw, the head teacher at the school he visited; he is a creature of Dickens's imagination, but one who served to typify and personify a system that was, in its brutality and viciousness, even worse than the admittedly horrific one he presents in *Nicholas Nickleby*. In the book, the children are beaten, ignored and malnourished; in reality, they went blind, got frostbite and died. The portrayal of the school in the book, for all its fictions, perhaps because such fictions appeal more directly to a reader than tabulations and reports, led directly to most such establishments closing, and changes to

the way people were educated throughout the country. Nicholas's reaction in the book is that of any humane observer, and the comic grotesque of Squeers is intended to bring about that reaction in the reader, while always allowing the comic side of such excesses to be the weapon of satire, rather than reportage. This is largely true of many of Dickens's villains. They are hideous but gargoyle-ish, believable but one-dimensionally so. What makes them so strong is the vividness of their depiction, the glorious linguistic delight in their description, the precision of their characteristics and the certainty that right will prevail. Similarly the comic characters – the outrageous Mr Mantalini, the wonderful Mrs Nickleby – are neither pure observations nor deep insights: they are inflated types. But they, too, are described with an infectious effervescence that makes them come alive as almost hyper-real, rather than perfectly fictional.

Dickens's own life did not follow such a happy path as those of his fictional heroes. His wife bore 10 children, but her self-effacing nature and the terrible struggles against post-natal depression

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wore her down in the face of her husband's seemingly endless reserves of energy and activity. They eventually separated in 1858, and Dickens continued a complex relationship with a much younger actress called Ellen Ternan. By the time of his death, he had written almost ceaselessly – novels, stories, travel literature, sketches, articles; he had travelled widely and often; and he had performed enormously popular readings of his works in Britain and America. His invention continued to develop into many darker areas of his recollection and imagination as he grew older and wearier, but he never lost his popularity nor his capacity for brilliantly telling characterisation. He created works that will still be read in another 200 years, with the same truths resonating in their fiction.

**Notes by Roy McMillan**



**David Horovitch** has had a long and distinguished career. His appearances in the theatre include many in the West End, the National Theatre and the RSC. Most recently he has appeared in Mike Leigh's *Grief* at the National Theatre. On television he is best remembered for his performance as Inspector Slack in *Miss Marple* and his films include *Max* and the Oscar nominated *Solomon and Gaenor*. For Naxos AudioBooks his readings include *The Leopard*, *The Good Soldier Švejk* and *Alice in Wonderland*.

## Credits

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Cover Image: *Mrs Squeers administering a compulsory dose of brimstone and treacle to the starving pupils of Dotheboys Hall*. Illustration by 'Phiz' (Hablot Knight Browne) for Charles Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby*, London, 1838–1839; courtesy of AKG images.

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