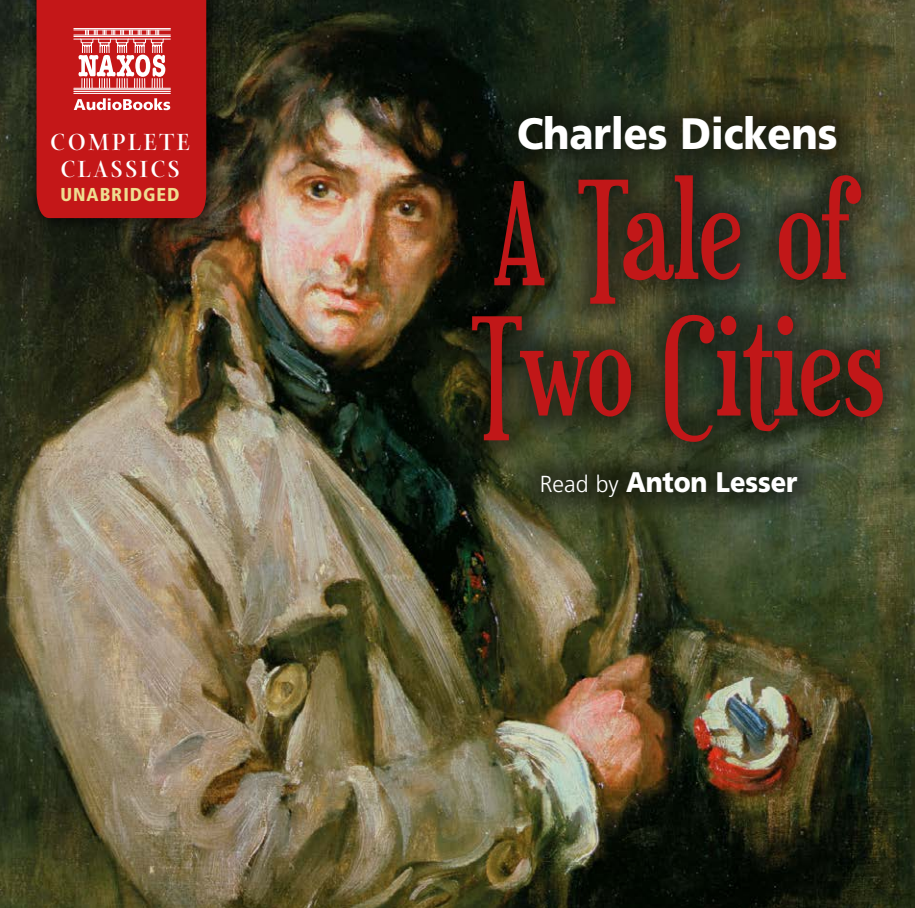




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Charles Dickens

# A Tale of Two Cities

Read by **Anton Lesser**

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## CD 1

1	Book The First – Chapter 1	6:54
2	Chapter 2	6:39
3	The sound of a horse at a gallop...	6:21
4	Chapter 3	4:58
5	Tellson's Bank had a run upon it in the mail.	6:03
6	Chapter 4	5:32
7	Rounding his mouth and both his eyes...	4:40
8	The likeness passed away...	3:26
9	Mr Lorry opened his hands...	4:29
10	After this odd description of his daily routine...	5:18
11	As he said the words he looked down...	6:47
12	Chapter 5	4:57
13	Hunger. It was prevalent everywhere.	5:28

**Total time on CD 1: 71:42**

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## CD 2

1	This wine-shop keeper was a bull-necked...	4:46
2	The three customers pulled off their hats...	5:17
3	There was yet an upper staircase...	7:06
4	Chapter 6	6:36
5	Now that he had no work to hold...	5:20
6	It happened, at length...	6:21
7	She held him closer round the neck...	5:00
8	In the submissive way of one long accustomed...	4:37
9	Book The Second – Chapter 1	5:22
10	Outside Tellson's – never by any means in it...	4:57
11	Here he addressed his wife once more...	4:33
12	Chapter 2	4:52
13	Making his way through the tainted crowd...	5:04
14	'Silence in the court!'	5:08

**Total time on CD 2: 75:07**

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## CD 3

1	Chapter 3	4:31
2	When the Attorney-General ceased...	5:13
3	The blue-flies buzzed again...	4:21
4	In the midst of a profound stillness...	6:08
5	Mr Attorney-General now signified to my Lord...	7:02
6	There was much commiseration for her as she was removed...	4:39
7	Chapter 4	4:41
8	The friends of the acquitted prisoner had dispersed...	5:28
9	'Now your dinner is done,' ...	5:26
10	Chapter 5	6:47
11	Two or three times, the matter in hand...	7:15
12	Chapter 6	5:43
13	There were three rooms on a floor...	5:35
14	'As we happen to be alone for the moment...'	6:00

**Total time on CD 3: 78:57**

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## CD 4

1	Miss Pross was a pleasant sight...	5:48
2	The floor was examined very carefully...	6:35
3	Chapter 7	4:19
4	A sumptuous man was the Farmer-General.	5:43
5	The exquisite gentlemen of the finest breeding...	5:32
6	At last, swooping at a street corner...	6:43
7	Chapter 8	5:55
8	'What was he like?'	6:26
9	Chapter 9	5:49
10	When coffee had been served...	5:36
11	'Repression is the only lasting philosophy...'	5:46
12	The ringing of the bell...	5:17
13	The fountain in the village flowed unseen...	5:19

**Total time on CD 4: 74:56**

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## CD 5

1	Chapter 10	5:08
2	'I have had the happiness, Doctor Manette...'	5:00
3	Her father sat silent...	5:16
4	Her father considered a little before he answered...	5:22
5	Chapter 11	3:35
6	Sydney drank a bumper of the punch he had made...	4:25
7	Chapter 12	4:07
8	'Oh dear me!' cried Mr Lorry...	6:18
9	'Well, Mr Stryver...'	5:34
10	Chapter 13	5:33
11	I wish you to know...	6:24
12	Chapter 14	4:19
13	At length, a person better informed...	4:23

**Total time on CD 5: 65:32**

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## CD 6

1	Mr Cruncher did not assist at the closing sports...	4:59
2	Mr Cruncher beguiled the earlier watches...	5:18
3	From his oppressed slumber, Young Jerry...	4:21
4	Chapter 15	5:15
5	Defarge closed the door carefully...	5:41
6	Defarge and the three glanced darkly at one another.	4:33
7	The mender of roads looked...	4:38
8	Nothing more was said...	5:27
9	Chapter 16	5:36
10	The night was hot...	5:38
11	A figure entering at the door...	5:38
12	As the keeper of the wine-shop entered...	5:09
13	Madame Defarge knitted steadily...	5:02

**Total time on CD 6: 67:22**

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## CD 7

1	Chapter 17	3:49
2	It was the first time...	4:22
3	His collected and calm manner...	3:56
4	Chapter 18	5:07
5	It was a hard parting...	4:22
6	Two things at once impressed themselves on Mr Lorry...	5:29
7	Chapter 19	4:43
8	Mr Lorry saw that they understood one another...	4:17
9	Doctor Manette sat meditating...	6:56
10	The Doctor shaded his forehead with his hand...	4:49
11	Chapter 20	4:55
12	When he was gone...	3:42
13	Chapter 21	4:49
14	Mr Stryver shouldered his way through the law...	3:26

**Total time on CD 7: 64:51**



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## CD 8

1	On a night in mid-July...	5:27
2	With a roar that sounded...	5:12
3	Through gloomy vaults...	4:01
4	In the howling universe of passion...	4:01
5	Chapter 22	4:30
6	The men were terrible...	4:11
7	'Bring him out! Bring him to the lamp!'	4:03
8	Chapter 23	6:33
9	As the road-mender plied his dusty labour...	6:08
10	As the rider rattled down the hill...	4:41
11	Chapter 24	4:44
12	'My dear Charles,' said Mr Lorry	4:56
13	It was too much the way of Monseigneur...	6:20
14	Mr Lorry and Charles Darnay were left alone...	6:28
15	With this uneasiness half stifled...	5:54

**Total time on CD 8: 77:17**

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## CD 9

1	Book the Third – Chapter 1	5:44
2	He stopped in the act of swinging himself out of his saddle...	5:21
3	When he had sat in his saddle some half-hour...	5:16
4	Charles Darnay felt it hopeless to entreat him further...	5:39
5	It struck him motionless.	5:08
6	Chapter 2	4:45
7	Soon afterwards, the bell at the great gate sounded...	4:46
8	The grindstone had a double handle...	5:49
9	Chapter 3	6:07
10	Defarge looked gloomily at his wife...	5:10
11	Chapter 4	5:52
12	This new life of the Doctor's was an anxious life...	7:04
13	Chapter 5	7:39

**Total time on CD 9: 74:27**

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## CD 10

1	These occupations brought her round...	4:46
2	A footstep in the snow.	3:08
3	Chapter 6	4:45
4	'Charles Evremonde, called Darnay!'	5:29
5	All the voices were in the prisoner's favour...	5:25
6	Chapter 7	6:06
7	Mr Cruncher, in an access of loyalty...	5:46
8	Chapter 8	5:15
9	Miss Pross only shook her head...	5:48
10	Carton's negligent recklessness of manner...	3:57
11	Mr Lorry's business eye read in the speaker's face...	4:22
12	It was a poorer hand than he suspected....	3:53
13	While he was at a loss...	4:33
14	Sydney Carton, who, with Mr Lorry...	3:51
15	Chapter 9	5:26
16	Mr Cruncher knuckled his forehead...	4:52

**Total time on CD 10: 77:33**

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## CD 11

1	'Yours is a long life to look back upon, sir?'	5:06
2	As the grinning little man held out the pipe...	5:05
3	Now, that the streets were quiet...	3:55
4	Every eye then turned to the five judges...	5:08
5	Chapter 10	5:27
6	'The patient was a woman of great beauty...'	4:56
7	'On some hay on the ground...'	5:29
8	'Nothing human could have held life in the boy...'	6:17
9	'She lingered for a week.'	5:41
10	'She was a good, compassionate lady...'	5:51
11	Chapter 11	4:06
12	When they arrived at the gateway...	5:01
13	Chapter 12	3:53
14	Carton followed the lines and words of his paper...	4:20
15	Both her hearers derived a horrible enjoyment...	5:06

**Total time on CD 11: 75:30**

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## CD 12

1	Carton stooped to pick up the coat...	6:48
2	Chapter 13	5:17
3	When he lay down on his straw bed...	3:56
4	The door was quickly opened and closed...	4:31
5	As if his memory were impaired...	5:11
6	As he stood by the wall in a dim corner...	4:34
7	It is Jarvis Lorry who has replied...	4:35
8	Chapter 14	5:10
9	The question was addressed to the wood-sawyer...	4:46
10	Now, when the journey of the travelling coach...	5:25
11	Mr Cruncher was so bewildered...	4:51
12	Madame Defarge was not likely to follow...	4:18
13	In the first fright and horror of her situation...	3:15
14	Chapter 15	5:32
15	The clocks are on the stroke of three...	5:37
16	She kisses his lips...	4:37

**Total time on CD 12: 78:32**

**Total time on CDs 1–12: 14:41:46**

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## Charles Dickens

(1812–1870)

# A Tale of Two Cities

'I set myself the little task of making a picturesque story...with characters true to nature, but whom the story should express more than they should express themselves by dialogue...' Thus wrote Charles Dickens in a letter explaining his intentions when he began to write *A Tale of Two Cities*, and describing how it differed from his previous novels.

The second of the eight children of John and Elizabeth Dickens, Charles John Huffham Dickens was born on 7 February 1812 at Portsea near Portsmouth. An intelligent young man, Charles particularly enjoyed reading works such as Smollet's *Roderick Random* and Fielding's *Tom Jones*. These were both at least partly written in the picaresque tradition, which chronicles the travels and adventures of the hero, together with a companion. Not surprisingly then, Dickens adopted a similar

style for his own work and it is evident in many early works such as *The Pickwick Papers* and *Nicholas Nickleby*. However, *A Tale of Two Cities* demonstrated, as Dickens stated, a deliberate departure from that style and became known as the novel which was the least characteristic of Dickens.

Like Dickens's other works, *A Tale of Two Cities* was published in episodes. The opening instalment was timed to attract readers to the first edition of Dickens's own new weekly periodical, *All The Year Round*, published on April 30th 1859, with the final instalment of the story appearing on November 20th that same year. The introduction of *All The Year Round* was one change in Dickens's life and followed the cessation of Dickens's previous periodical, *Household Words*, which he had started in 1850. However, this was

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a time of numerous other upheavals in Dickens's life and may go some way towards accounting for his decision to depart from the style of writing to which his readers had become accustomed.

Another upheaval in his life at this time was his separation from his wife Kate to whom he had been married for twenty-two years and with whom he had ten children. Never a passionate love match, its end was precipitated by Dickens's preoccupation with Ellen Ternan, a well-known actress of the time. However, the affair caused bad publicity for Dickens and also lost him friends.

Change is also evident in the fact that *A Tale of Two Cities*, together with *Barnaby Rudge*, represents Dickens's only attempt at historical novel writing. Since he did not personally possess sufficient background knowledge, he turned to Carlyle's *The French Revolution* for the required information. However, he did not have the nature for further serious research and consequently, with no references to genuine personalities of the time, either English or French, *A Tale of Two Cities* may be viewed more as an

historical romance or melodrama.

Further change in Dickens's life came from his decision, at this time, to give public readings of his works. These proved very popular and provided Dickens with opportunities to indulge his enjoyment of acting, since his performances were very theatrical and dramatic. *A Tale of Two Cities* was the first of Dickens's novels to be published after the readings began and he may well have decided on its melodramatic style and pacy narrative with his performances in mind.

After an education disrupted by a spell working in a shoeblacking factory due to the family's fluctuating finances, young Dickens eventually embarked on a career as a journalist. His journalistic skills are evident in *A Tale of Two Cities* where, although fewer characters and less dialogue are in evidence, the plot speeds the reader through rapidly changing scenes, and with fewer digressions than in Dickens's other novels, to the story's climax. Precise choice of vocabulary and perfectly clear sentence structure paint vivid word pictures for the reader. References to footsteps and shadows

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are significant, and create visions of something dreadful to come. Similarly, the repeated references to the colour red in, for example, the scrawled word 'Blood', and in the descriptions of the spilt wine and the crimson setting sun, are also intended as significant and ominous.

As a reporter Dickens would have frequently travelled by stagecoach and his graphic and atmospheric descriptions of coach journeys undertaken by some of his characters in *A Tale of Two Cities* reflect this. At the start of the novel, Mr Lorry's journey through the mist to Dover, later the journey of the Marquis as his coach careers over the cobbled Paris streets and subsequently labours up the steep hill to the chateau, and the agonising final homeward flight of Lucie with her father and husband, particularly as they pass the barriers, all add to the atmosphere of the story. Courtroom scenes and prisons were also familiar to Dickens from his days as a journalist and these, too, figure strongly in *A Tale of Two Cities*.

The theatre played a prominent part in Dickens's life and for a while he was manager of an amateur theatrical

company. His readings of his own works were always dramatic, with the passages being chosen for greatest effect. Not surprisingly, then, he included many theatrical elements in his novels. In *A Tale of Two Cities* these include the use of contrasts, suspense, mystery, surprise and reversals of fortune.

Contrasts are apparent in the novel's opening sentence where, in order to establish this theme, we are told. 'It was the best of times: it was the worst of times...' Further differences are described in the settings, with hard, turbulent France contrasted with genial, staid England. The personalities of good and gentle Lucie and bloodthirsty, violent Madame Defarge contrast, as do the self-destructive Carton and the upright, hopeful Darnay; contrast between the latter being further increased by the fact of their having such similar physical appearances. Even in death, differences are apparent when we compare the death of Carton – dignified and, as he wished, in public – with that of Madame Defarge, who does not achieve the public death she would have preferred in order to further her cause.



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Melodramatic surprises figure heavily throughout the novel in, for example, the assassination of the Marquis and the explosion of Madame Defarge's pistol. Suspense is also much in evidence, as in Darnay's fifteen months in prison and in the family's passage past the barriers on their escape to England at the conclusion of the story. Although mystery surrounds many incidents in the novel, from its opening in mist and uncertainty, to Darnay's unexplained journeys, all is eventually revealed and unravelled. Reversals of fortune are seen, meanwhile, in Darnay's sudden acquittal from court when his remarkable likeness to Carton renders the witness unable to positively identify him, and also in Dr Manette's return to sanity.

The theme of resurrection features strongly in the novel as the story chronicles the actions of the morally depraved and self-destructive Sydney Carton – 'The Fellow of No Delicacy', who is finally redeemed by his love for a good woman. He himself utters the words 'I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord...' as he plans his final act of

self-sacrifice. The change in Dr Manette from crazed prisoner to happy father and physician, 'Recalled to Life', is yet another example of resurrection, whilst Dickens's only touch of humour in the novel, Jerry Cruncher, the resurrection man, is himself reformed, turning from the dishonesty of robbing graves to the honest occupation of digging them.

Dickens stated that his readers would learn about the characters in *A Tale of Two Cities* from the events of the story itself and this is especially true of Madame Defarge. She is the most memorable of a cast of characters fewer in number than in most of Dickens's other works and, through her, Dickens illustrates the power of revenge, itself another theme of the novel. With her knitting suggestive of the weaving of the threads of Fate, she is also the symbol of Death itself, which is finally defeated by heroic love in the person of Miss Pross.

A man with a social conscience, Dickens often drew the attention of his readers to public wrongs and shames. Perhaps with his own experience of poverty in mind, in *A Tale of Two Cities*

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he particularly highlighted the grinding oppression of the poor, contrasting it vividly with the opulent, luxurious lifestyle of the rich aristocrats.

During his lifetime Dickens was a prolific novelist. Following the publication of *The Pickwick Papers* in 1836-7, *Oliver Twist* in 1837 and *Nicholas Nickleby* in 1838-9 he produced *The Old Curiosity Shop* in 1840-41, *Barnaby Rudge* in 1841, *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, *Martin Chuzzlewit* in 1843-44, *Dombey and Son* in 1846-48, and *David Copperfield* in 1849-50. *Bleak House* followed in 1852-53, *Hard Times* in 1854, *Little Dorrit* in 1855-57 and *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1859. *Great Expectations* was published in 1860-61 and *Our Mutual Friend* in 1864-65, whilst at the time of his death on 9th June 1870, Dickens had been working on *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. His death resulted in much public mourning and he was buried in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.

**Notes by Helen Davies**



**Anton Lesser** is one of Britain's leading classical actors. He has played many of the principal Shakespearean roles for the Royal Shakespeare Company including Petruchio, Romeo and Richard III. His career has also encompassed contemporary drama, notably *The Birthday Party* by Harold Pinter. Appearances in major TV drama productions include *The Oresteia*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Troilus and Cressida* and *The Mill on the Floss*.

## Credits

Produced by Nicolas Soames

Recorded by Rupert Morgan at RNIB Talking Book Studios, London

Edited by Dan King

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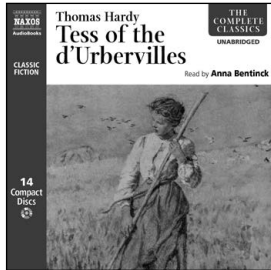
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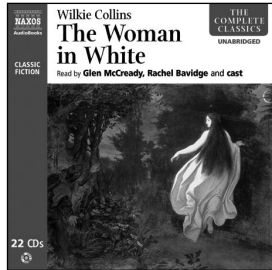
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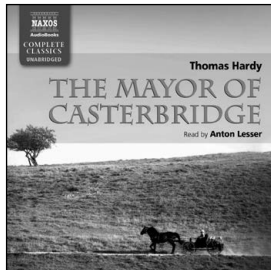
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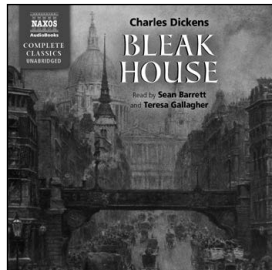
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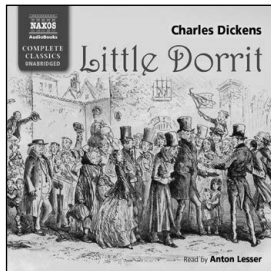
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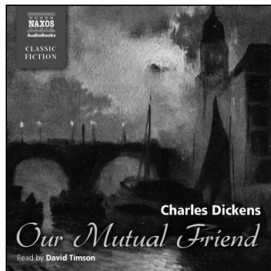
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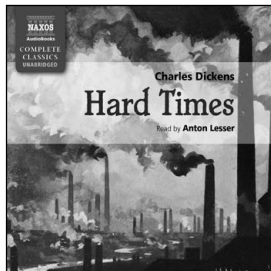
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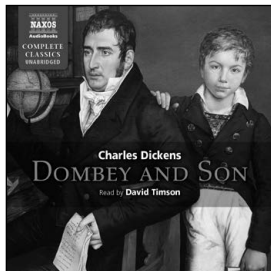
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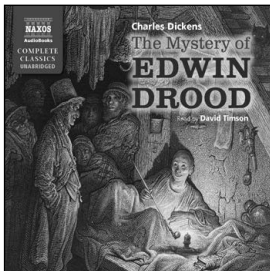


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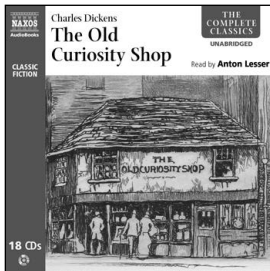
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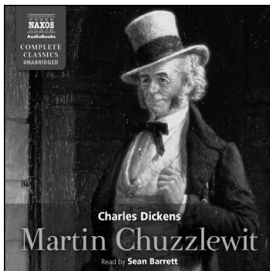
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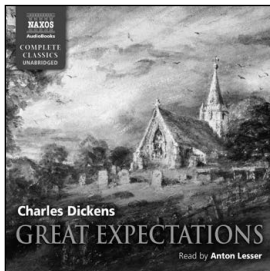
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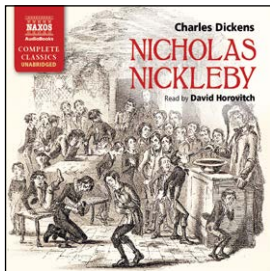
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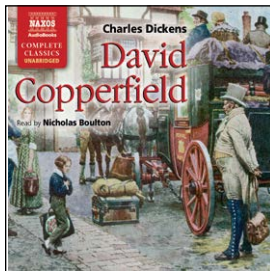
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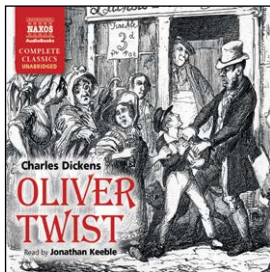
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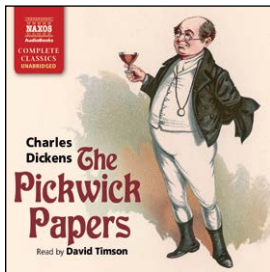
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