

NAXOS
AudioBooks

Charles Dickens
David Copperfield

Read by **Anton Lesser**

**CLASSIC
FICTION**



NA415112D

1	I Am Born	6:13
2	I Observe	5:15
3	I Have a Change	13:27
4	I Fall into Disgrace	8:30
5	I Am Sent Away	10:01
6	I Enlarge My Circle of Acquaintance	4:20
7	My 'First Half' at Salem House	7:54
8	My Holidays	6:07
9	I Have a Memorable Birthday	2:55
10	I Become Neglected, and Am Provided For	7:48
11	I Begin Life on My Own Account, and Don't Like It	5:39
12	Liking Life on My Own Account No Better	1:31
13	Liking Life on My Own Account (cont.)	4:33
14	The Sequel of My Resolution	4:26
15	My Aunt Makes up Her Mind About Me	8:41
16	I Make Another Beginning	6:57
17	I Am a New Boy in More Senses Than One	5:56
18	Somebody Turns Up	5:28
19	I Look About Me and Make a Discovery	6:21
20	Steerforth's Home	6:05

21	Little Em'ly	7:58
22	Some Old Scenes, and Some New People	6:28
23	I Corroborate Mr Dick, and Choose a Profession	5:19
24	Good and Bad Angels	5:54
25	I Fall into Captivity	4:41
26	I Fall into Captivity (cont.)	2:11
27	Tommy Traddles	2:44
28	Mr Micawber's Gauntlet	3:13
29	A Loss	2:54
30	A Greater Loss	10:11
31	The Beginning of a Long Journey	4:06
32	Blissful	6:04
33	My Aunt Astonishes Me	4:26
34	Depression	7:12
35	Enthusiasm	5:49
36	A Little Cold Water	1:45
37	A Dissolution of Partnership	7:38
38	Wickfield and Heep	7:35
39	The Wanderer	4:56
40	Dora's Aunts	4:03

41	Mischief	0:42
42	Another Retrospect	2:46
43	Intelligence	7:07
44	Martha	3:20
45	Domestic	2:02
46	I Am Involved in Mystery	6:53
47	Mr Peggotty's Dream Comes True	6:34
48	The Beginning of a Longer Journey	6:09
49	I Assist at an Explosion	16:55
50	Another Retrospect	2:48
51	Mr Micawber's Transactions	2:56
52	Tempest	9:13
53	The New Wound, and the Old	0:19
54	The Emigrants	2:43
55	Absence	2:26
56	Return	1:12
57	Agnes	2:05
58	A Light Shines on My Way	3:58
59	A Visitor	2:58

Total time: 5:16:32

Charles Dickens

The Personal History, Adventures, Experience and Observation of DAVID COPPERFIELD The Younger of Blunderstone Rookery

(the full title as it originally appeared)

In David Copperfield (1850) Dickens wrote the most nearly autobiographical of his novels, pouring into it an intensity of personal feeling that is matched only by the later Great Expectations which, if it is in any sense autobiographical, is so only in a far more subtle and elusive way. In a preface to the 1869 edition of David Copperfield, Dickens frankly avows his personal interest: 'Of all my books, I like this the best. It will be easily believed that I am a fond parent to every child of my fancy, and that no one can ever love that family as dearly as I love them. But, like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is DAVID COPPERFIELD.' This almost passionate statement gives a vital clue to what is perhaps the dominant theme of the book: the search for a family and a home which occupies the hero almost throughout the narrative, at least from that moment when his blissful Eden is turned into hell by

the advent of the cruel Murdstones.

Cast out, first to the brutal school Salem House and thereafter to the warehouse of Murdstone and Grinby, the young David must fight to discover love and security. His journey to Dover represents the story of the novel in miniature: as elsewhere, the effort, the act of faith, is rewarded. But Dickens enriches and intensifies the essential theme by artful repetition in other forms: the amiably insane Mr Dick, for example, had himself been rescued many years ago by the intrepid Betsey Trotwood from an unsympathetic brother, while (in what is perhaps the most glowingly rendered picture of domesticity in the novel) Mr Peggotty cares for two orphans and a widow.

Put simply, then, the tension in the novel is between those who exploit or torment – Steerforth the charming seducer, Creakle the bullying headmaster – and those whose

capacity to give is boundless and unconditional – Mr Peggotty and his sister. If generosity triumphs ultimately over selfishness, it is not without grievous loss, the tragedy of Little Emily colouring much of the later narrative. And Dickens is not interested here in simple villainy or simple goodness alone: Steerforth is perhaps the most brilliantly drawn character in the novel, a man who is aware of his own faults, conscious that (ironically, in view of his name) he lacks, or crucially has lacked, guidance.

Yet this is not a Dickens novel dominated by the strong social themes we find in so many of his later works: generations of readers have loved this novel in much the same way, perhaps, as its creator did, for its warmth of characterisation, broad scope of human sympathy, and strong vein of humour. Typically, he uses both caricatures and naturalistic figures; equally typical is the alternation between melodrama and deeply felt, entirely credible situations. And probably the best part of the novel is the first half – in other words, the evocation of childhood, which is quite simply unmatched in literature – although, of course, Dickens's narrative skill and the sympathetic nature of his hero compel our attention to the end, helped by the unforgettably repulsive Uriah

Heep and the splendidly comic Micawbers for whom something, in the end, does 'turn up'.

Charles Dickens was born in 1812 in Portsmouth. His father was imprisoned for debt and the twelve-year-old Charles sent to work in a blacking factory; these experiences influenced (for example) David Copperfield and Little Dorrit. Having learnt shorthand, he became a Parliamentary reporter and began to submit magazine pieces. In 1837 *The Pickwick Papers* brought Dickens fame, and the rest of his literary career was almost uninterruptedly successful. His personal life was less happy: eventually he separated from his wife, Catherine, partly as a result of his growing intimacy with Ellen Ternan, the actress, and he died relatively young in 1870, his last novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, unfinished.

Notes by Perry Keenlyside

The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS and MARCO POLO catalogues

MENDELSSOHN STRING SYMPHONIES VOLUME 2 Northern Chamber Orchestra, Nicholas Ward	8.553162
MENDELSSOHN STRING SYMPHONIES VOLUME 3 Northern Chamber Orchestra, Nicholas Ward	8.553163
LISZT TONE POEMS New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Michael Halász	8.553355
ARENSKY STRING QUARTETS Lajtha Quartet	8.223811

Music programming by Nicolas Soames

Cover picture: 'David Copperfield & Mr Micawber' illustration by Harold Copping,
reproduced by courtesy of The Dickens House Museum, London.

Charles Dickens
David Copperfield

Read by **Anton Lesser**

This much-loved novel was, by Dickens's own admission, his 'favourite child'. It is easy to see why, with its colourful characters ranging from the repulsive Uriah Heep to the endlessly improvident Micawbers, and dominated throughout by the moving story of David's search for a family and a home.



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 Petruccio, Romeo and Richard III. Appearances in major TV drama productions include *The Cherry Orchard*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *The Mill on the Floss* and *The Politician's Wife*. He also reads Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Homer's *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad* and Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Hard Times*, *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *A Christmas Carol* and *Great Expectations* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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Total time
5:16:32