

CHARLES DICKENS



Life
Year of birth: 1812.
Place of birth: Portsmouth, on the southern coast of England.
Year of death: 1870.

Place of death: London, he was buried in the Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.

Family: married Catherine Hogarth in 1835, they had ten children. In 1855 he separated from his wife.

The Author

He was the second child of eight. He didn't have an easy and happy childhood. His father was imprisoned for debts and, although he was only a child, he was sent to work in a factory for many years. Dickens didn't receive a complete education because of his family's financial problems but he loved reading. He began to study at nighttime when, at the age of fifteen, he found a job as office boy at a lawyer's. He was a writer of Victorian England and tried to involve his readers in the disturbing social reality of the time.

Personality: determined and sensitive, his attention was mainly on the gap between poor and rich people.

Influences: Fielding, Smollett, Miguel de Cervantes. The historical events of his time influenced his life, his works, and his critical thinking. Besides his own sad childhood experience, his many travels also inspired his novels.

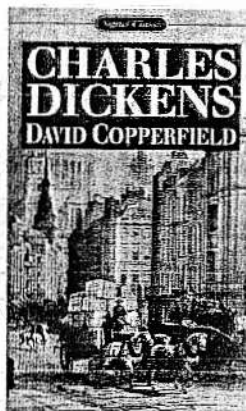
Artist: brilliant carrier as a Parliamentary journalist, great popularity as novelist. He became a reporter of Parliamentary debates in the House of Commons and wrote for the newspaper *Mirror of Parliament*. As a Parliamentary journalist he supported any law that helped solve poor people's problems. He fought hard against the *Poor Law*, a law that forced homeless poor people to live in *workhouses* where women and men lived separately meaning that families couldn't stay together. Workhouses were dirty, squalid places to live in.

Travels: France, Germany, Italy and the USA.

Works

Dickens wrote about his time and children are often the most important characters in his novels. Through them the author describes the criminal life of London during the *Victorian Age* and the child abuse that was the normal custom of the time. However, at the beginning of his career Dickens also wrote some humoristic novels such as *Sketches by Boz* (1836) and *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-37) that were loved by a large number of readers. Among his works, some of his popular novels include: *Oliver Twist* (1837-1838), *A Christmas Carol* (1843), *David Copperfield* (1849-50), *Hard Times* (1854).

Oliver Twist and *David Copperfield* are considered by many literary critics as Dickens's masterpieces. These novels are partly autobiographical because some of the events narrated in the stories are closely related to the author's own life.





ACTIVITIES

1 Match each word with its Italian meaning.

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|---------------|-----------------|
| a. Novelist | 1. Abitudine |
| b. Childhood | 2. Personaggi |
| c. Imprisoned | 3. Sensibile |
| d. Sensitive | 4. Infanzia |
| e. Characters | 5. Imprigionato |
| f. Custom | 6. Romanziere |



2 True or false? Correct the false sentences.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| a. Charles Dickens was born in London | T | F |
| b. He was an only child. | T | F |
| c. He died in Edinburgh. | T | F |
| d. Dickens was a journalist. | T | F |
| e. He lived and wrote a great number of his novels during the reign of Queen Victoria. | T | F |
| f. He was sensitive. | T | F |
| g. Dickens didn't support the problems of poor people. | T | F |
| h. Dickens went to work in factories for many years | T | F |
| i. He didn't travel a lot. | T | F |
| j. <i>Oliver Twist</i> is autobiographical. | T | F |