



# **Charles Dickens Chronology**

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## 1812

Charles John Huffham Dickens born February 7, Portsmouth, England, oldest son of John Dickens, a Navy Pay Office clerk, and Elizabeth Barrow Dickens.



## 1814–1822

Dickens's father is transferred frequently, moving his family first to London, then to Chatham, and then back to London.

Dickens begins his schooling in Chatham, and becomes an avid reader.

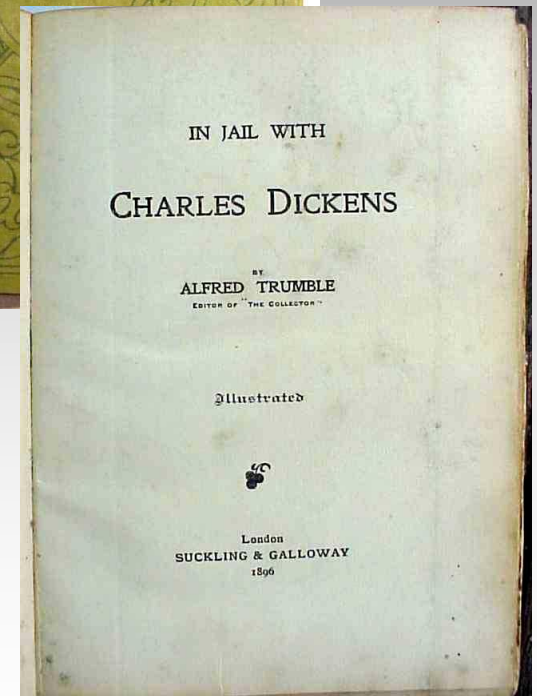
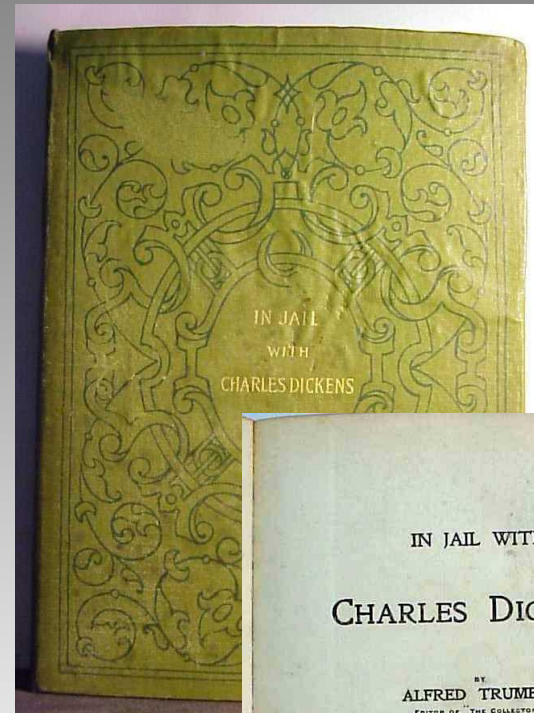
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**1824**

The family's fortunes go into decline. Already forced to leave school at age 10, Dickens begins work at Warren's Blacking Warehouse shortly before his 12th birthday, working 10-hour days, six days a week.

Dickens's father is arrested for debt and sent to London's Marshalsea Prison, where he is joined by his whole family, except for Charles. Even after his father is released from debtor's prison later that year, Dickens continues to work at Warren's because his mother is "warm" for him to stay there. Eventually, his father relents and lets him quit his job and resume school.



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**1827–1833**

At 15, Dickens begins work as an office boy for an attorney.

He studies shorthand at night in order to become a journalist, first as a freelancer at Doctor's Commons courts in 1829, then as a reporter of Parliamentary debates in the House of Commons, and finally as a reporter for the newspapers the True Sun, the Mirror of Parliament, and the Morning Chronicle.

His work as a journalist teaches him to write quickly to meet deadlines, and his excellent observational skills help him to succeed in that profession.

Dickens also briefly considers a career on the stage. Acting, however, is not considered a very respectable profession, and Dickens, who wishes to maintain a reputation as a gentleman, decides to focus on his writing instead.



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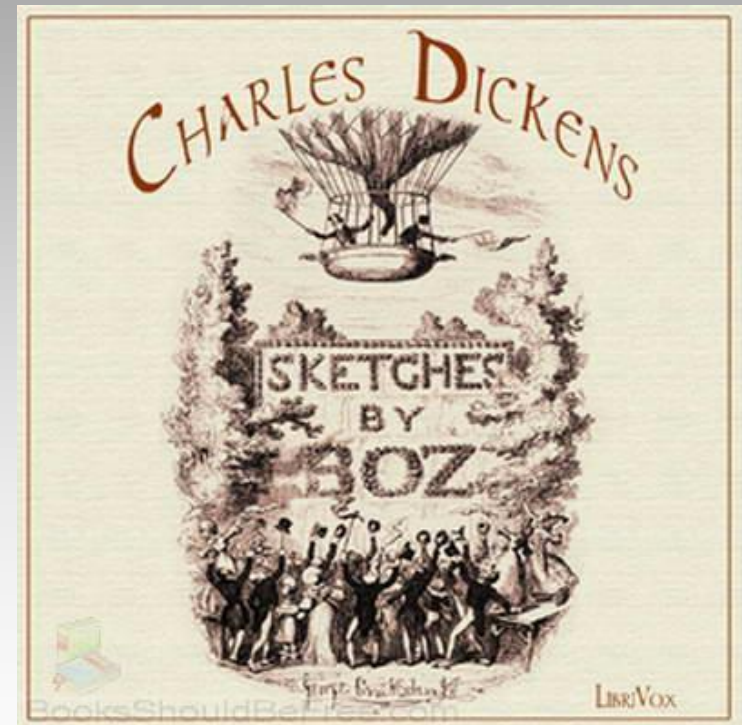
## 1833–1835

Dickens begins publishing his popular "Sketches by Boz," using an alias derived from his younger brother's nickname

## 1835–1836

Dickens meets and becomes engaged to Catherine Hogarth, the cultured and well-read daughter of his Scottish newspaper editor.

They are able to marry in 1836 on the strength of his contract for *Pickwick Papers*, the comic novel that rockets Dickens to stardom.



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**1837**

The first of Charles and Catherine's 10 children, Charles Culliford Boz Dickens, is born.

**1837–1841**

Dickens publishes *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *Barnaby Rudge*, first in serialized installments, and then in book form (a practice he will continue for all of his novels). These works seal his international reputation as the most popular novelist of his era.



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1842

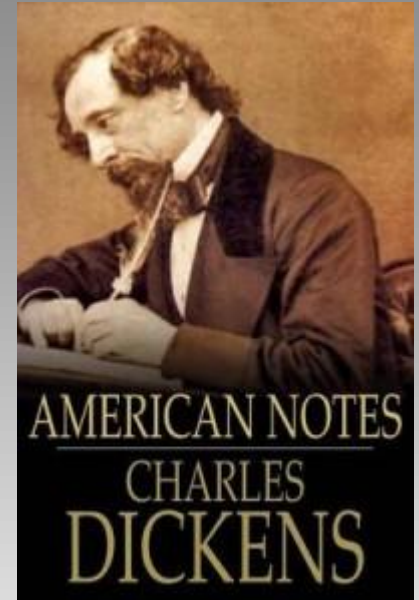
Charles and Catherine Dickens sail to North America for a five-month visit, landing first in Boston, where Charles is greeted like a Victorian-era rock star.

During their time in Massachusetts, they make many lifelong friends, including poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Harvard professor Cornelius Conway Felton.

Feted at fancy dress balls and formal dinners, Dickens also makes a point of touring American prisons, hospitals, mental institutions, orphanages—and, on February 3, the model textile mills that had recently opened in Lowell. They offer a powerful contrast to the harsh conditions found in most English factories. Dickens later calls his day in Lowell "the most pleasant I spent in the country."

Over the course of his travels—to New York, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Richmond, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and St. Louis, among other destinations—Dickens grows increasingly disillusioned, writing to a friend: "This is not the republic I came to see; this is not the republic of my imagination."

After they return to England, Dickens publishes *American Notes*, an often-critical account of American manners and morals, particularly the institution of slavery.



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## 1843

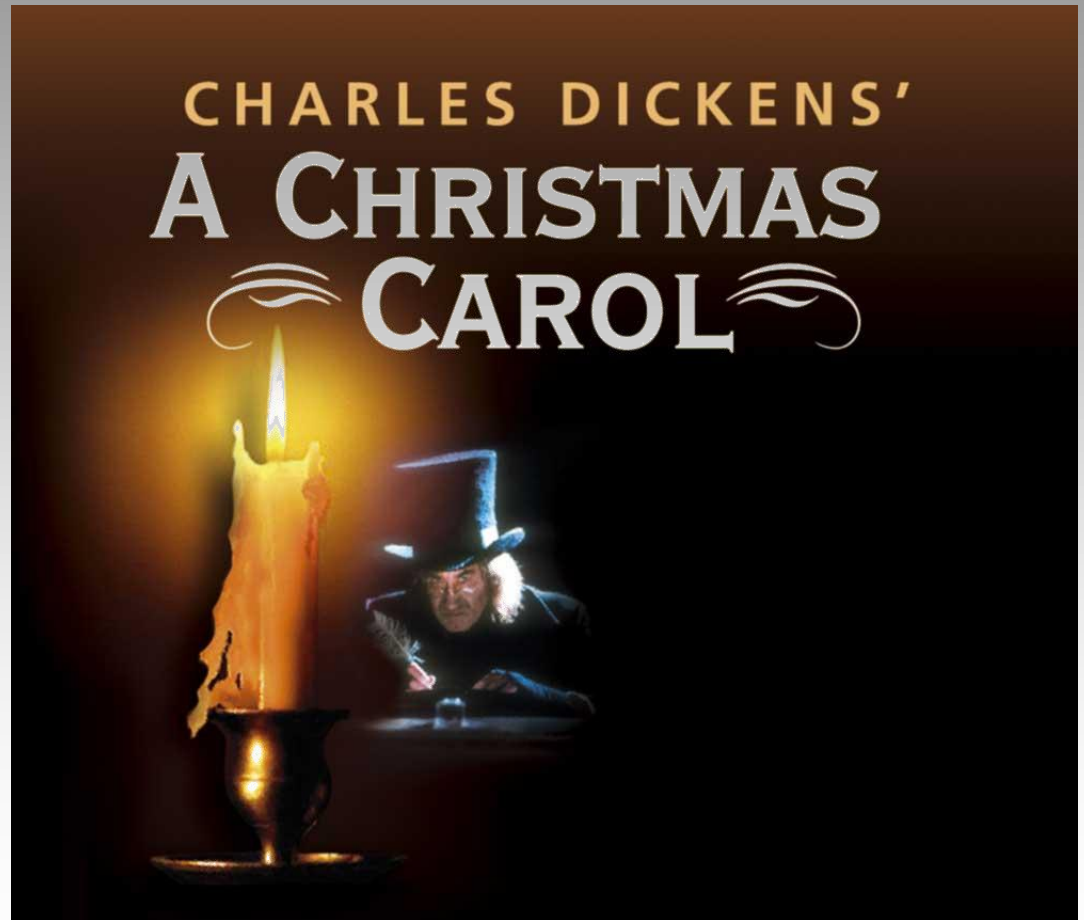
Dickens publishes *A Christmas Carol*, the first of his five Christmas books.

## 1843–1844

Dickens writes and serializes *Martin Chuzzlewit*, which includes sections satirizing America.

## 1844–1846

Dickens and his family travel to Europe. Dickens publishes *Pictures from Italy*; he also writes an account of his early years, the "Autobiographical Fragment," not published until after his death.



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## 1846–1848

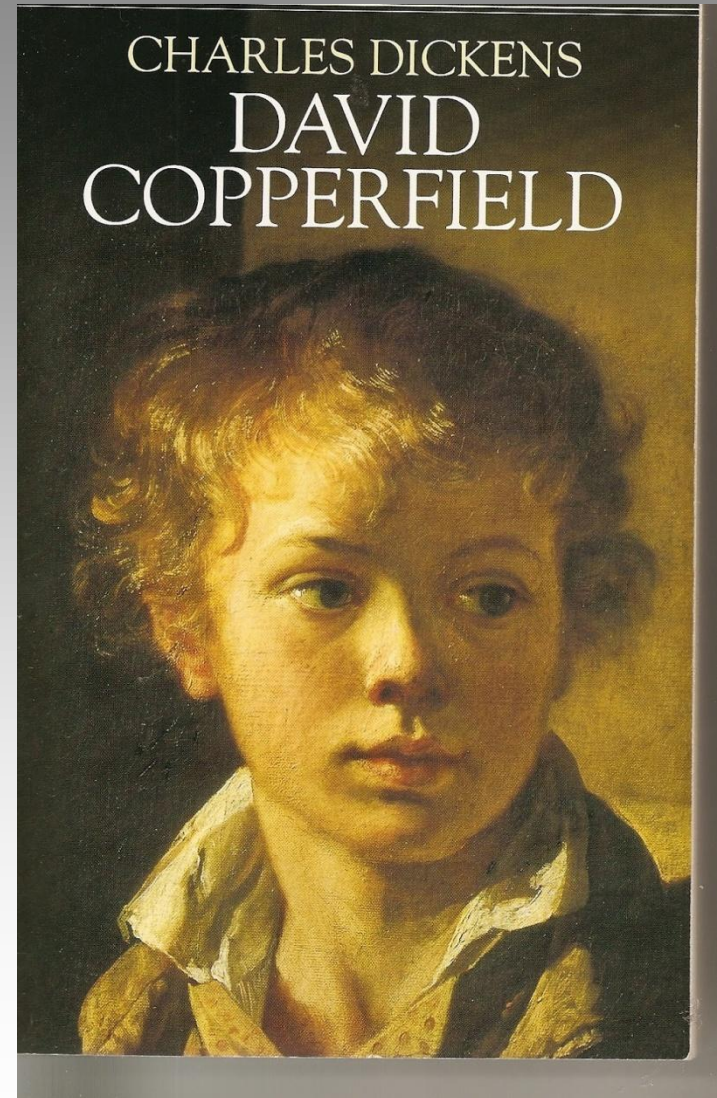
Dickens and family return to London, where he helps co-found a shelter for homeless women. Dickens writes and serializes *Dombey and Son*.

## 1849–1850

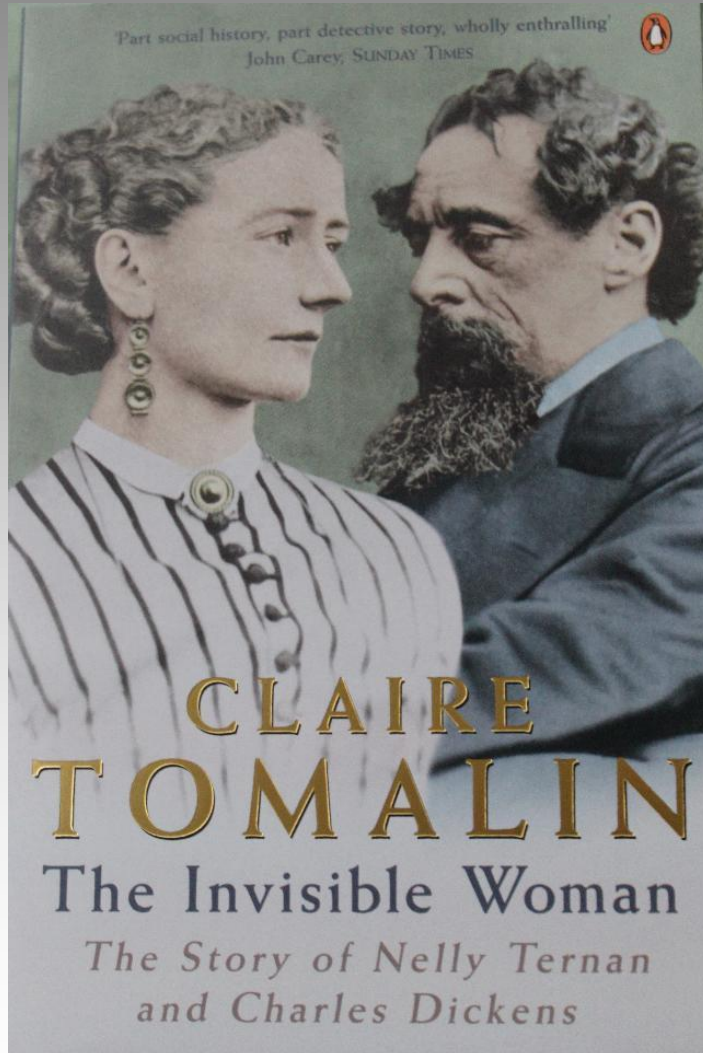
Dickens writes and serializes *David Copperfield*. He also launches a weekly journal, *Household Words*, which continues until 1859.

## 1852–1853

Dickens writes and serializes *Bleak House*. He also begins to give public readings for charity.



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**1854**

Dickens writes and serializes *Hard Times*.

**1855–1857**

Dickens writes and serializes *Little Dorrit*.

While acting in a melodrama written by his friend Wilkie Collins, Dickens meets and falls in love with a young actress, Ellen Ternan.

**1858**

Charles and Catherine Dickens separate after 22 years of marriage. Divorce is not possible at this time, so the Dickensses merely live apart. Dickens begins giving public readings for profit.

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**1859**

Dickens writes and serializes *A Tale of Two Cities*. He also launches a new weekly journal, *All the Year Round*.

**1860–1861**

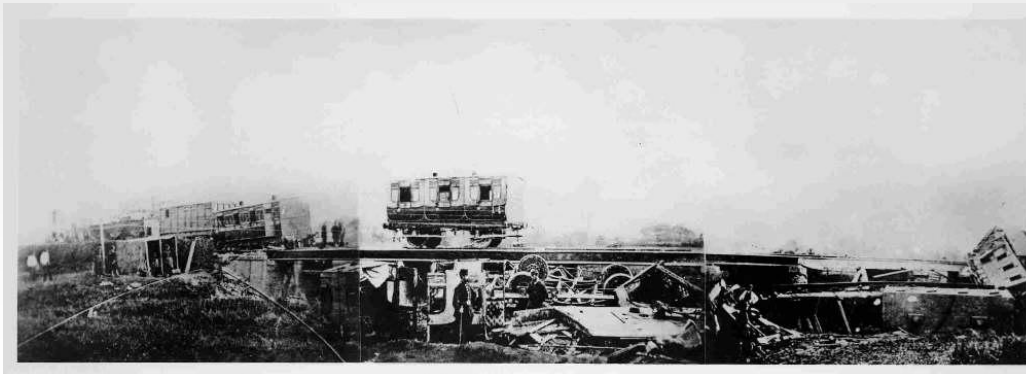
Dickens writes and serializes *Great Expectations*.

**1864–1865**

Dickens writes and serializes *Our Mutual Friend*.

**1865**

While returning from France with Ellen Ternan and her mother, Dickens is nearly killed in a disastrous railway accident in Staplehurst, England. He spends hours assisting victims of the horrific crash, and suffers from shattered nerves for the rest of his life.



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## 1867–1868

Even with his deteriorating health, Dickens continues to maintain a grueling work schedule, writing, editing, and performing public readings.

In November 1867, despite warnings that he is too frail to travel, Dickens returns to America to embark on a triumphal five-month reading tour.



Readings are concentrated in Boston and New York, with shorter stays in Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Buffalo, New Haven, Worcester, and Portland, Maine.

The tour is both a tremendous popular success and a great financial boon for Dickens, who clears over £20,000—securing the fortune he desires for himself and his family.

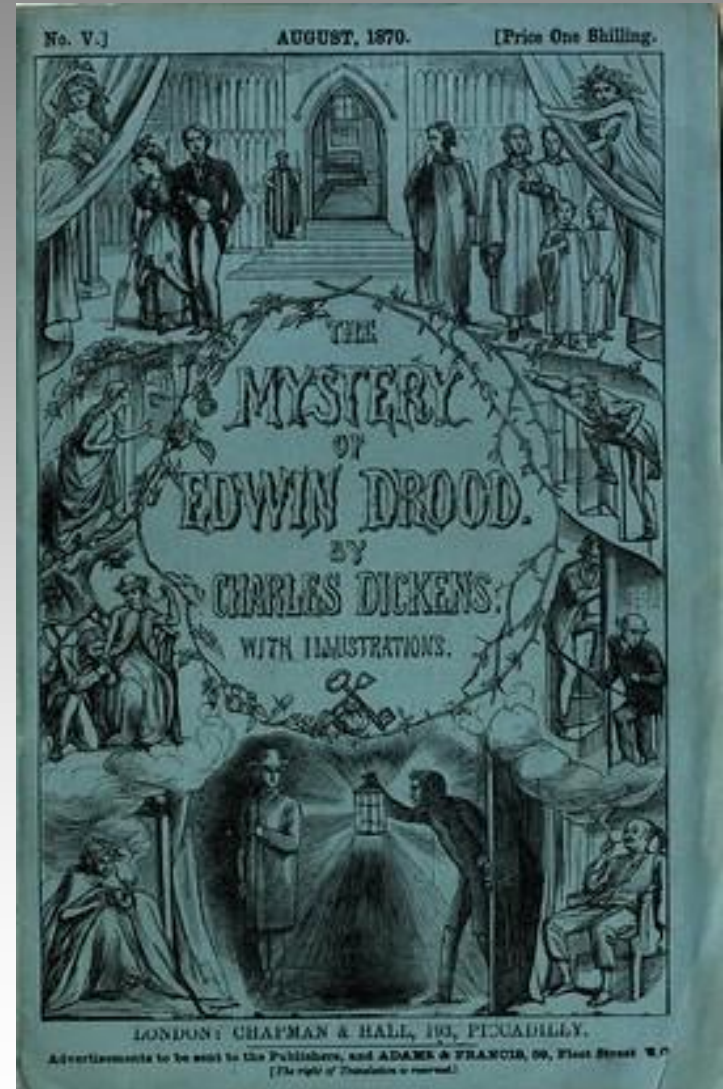
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**1870**

Dickens begins to write and serialize *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

On June 9, exactly five years after the Staplehurst accident, Dickens dies of a stroke at his home. He is just 58 years old.



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Theme from the Disney Motion Picture

A  
Christmas  
Carol

Music Composed by  
ALAN SILVESTRI

Produced and Arranged by  
DOMINIK HAUSER



Music: “A Christmas Carol”  
Alan Silvestri

# THE END