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Quicklet on Charles Dickens' David Copperfield (CliffNotes-like Summary)

April Short

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Quicklets: Your Reading Sidekick!

ABOUT THE BOOK

Until the summer after my second year of college, I despised Charles Dickens. I couldn't stomach his outdated witticisms and had no patience for his Gothic writing style. In high school, when my AP English teacher assigned A Tale of Two Cities, I read Chapters 1-10 and gave up. I could stand to fail an English test since it was my best subject. I couldn't stand to spend one more second trudging through the doldrums of Charles Darnay's self-righteousness and Sydney Carton's unrequited sob-fest.

Everything changed when I signed up for an annual week-long educational program called "Dickens Universe". I was a literature major at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) and the completion of Dickens Universe, part of UCSC's world-renowned Dickens Project, meant I'd receive a full quarter's course credits in just one week. The incentive was greater than my distaste for Dickens, so I enrolled and bought a copy of that year's featured novel: David Copperfield.

My preconceptions about Charles Dickens began to melt away within minutes of my arrival on the first day. Dickens experts from 35 of the world's top universities gathered beneath the redwood groves of the UCSC campus for lectures, study groups, and Victorian-style tea each day.

MEET THE AUTHOR

April graduated from University of California, Santa Cruz in 2011 with a BA degree in English literature and a minor in history focused on the Islamic world. A lifelong storyteller and working journalist based in Santa Cruz, CA, she is currently the senior contributing writer for Good Times Weekly, Santa Cruz County's largest print and online publication. April also works as a freelance writer/editor. Her topics of interest range from arts and music to political and environmental pieces. She has always lived near the ocean and grew up surfing with her dad on the Central Coast of California. Her favorite outdoor hobbies include backpacking in the Sierra Nevadas, bicycling in the Bay Area, hiking through the redwoods of Northern CA, and she has recently taken up rock climbing. In addition to journalism and informational pieces, April writes creative prose and poetry that can be viewed, alongside a portfolio of her journalistic work, on her website: AprilMichelleShort.com. Among her favorite authors is Anais Nin, who said, "We write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospect."

EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK

The Personal History, Adventures, Experience and Observation of David Copperfield the Younger of Blunderstone Rookery (Which He Never Meant to Publish on Any Account), or more commonly, David Copperfield, is Dickens' eighth and perhaps most intimate novel.

Originally published in 1850, the novel first appeared in serial form, or segments in the above-described

“penny dreadfuls” a year previous to its compilation. David Copperfield closely follows events from Dickens’ own life, and many Dickens analysts believe the novel’s title character, David Copperfield, represents Charles Dickens himself. This would make David Copperfield a fictional biography of sorts.

David Copperfield was Dickens’ first novel to be written in first-person point of view narration, and whether or not Copperfield is based on Dickens, the novel is certainly the most autobiographical of Dickens’ collection.

The novel’s 1867 edition includes a preface by the author, in which he writes, “...like many fond parents, I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child. And his name is David Copperfield.”

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CHAPTER OUTLINE

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