

CONTEXT AND STORY SYNOPSIS



CONTEXT

Both in the novel and the film, *David Copperfield* is set in early Victorian England against a backdrop of the Industrial Revolution, a time of great social change. During this time, capitalists and manufacturers amassed huge fortunes – and although the Industrial Revolution increased social mobility, it also increased the gap between rich and poor.

As such, the story touches on themes of poverty, homelessness, child cruelty and poor working conditions, sadly themes still prevalent today, many of which children in the UK are still facing. In the novel, from birth to infancy, from adolescence to adulthood, the good-hearted David Copperfield is surrounded by kindness, wickedness, poverty and wealth, as he meets an array of remarkable characters. As David sets out to be a writer, in his quest for family, friendship, romance and status, the story of his life is the most interesting tale of all. From beginning to end, from rags to riches, this is an incredibly inspiring story that fills us with hope.

STORY SYNOPSIS

Victorian England. Narrating his own life story, DAVID COPPERFIELD begins at the beginning. At The Rookery, he is born to CLARA. Helping with the delivery is the well-meaning housekeeper PEGGOTTY. Not so helpful is his eccentric aunt, BETSEY TROTWOOD, who is convinced David will be a girl.

David's early years are happy and peaceful but that soon changes when his mother marries EDWARD MURDSTONE, a cruel and heartless man, with an equally fearsome sister, JANE. David and Murdstone have a troublesome relationship and David is cruelly beaten by Murdstone. After a fight, David is banished to London and sent to work at Murdstone's bottling factory, where the pay is paltry and the conditions abhorrent. His only consolation is lodging with the kind but poverty-stricken MR. MICAWBER and his family.

One day, Murdstone and Jane arrive at the factory to tell David that his mother has died – but only inform him after her funeral has taken place. Angry and upset, David flees the factory and makes his way to the home of his aunt, Betsey Trotwood. It's been years since he has seen her, and Betsey is now living with a distant cousin, MR. DICK, a man afflicted by thoughts and voices that aren't his own. Betsey agrees to take him in, as long as she can call him 'Trotwood'.

During his time with Betsey, David is introduced to MR. WICKFIELD, who looks after Betsey's finances, and his daughter AGNES. David and Agnes become best friends and he finds happiness living with his aunt and Mr Dick. Betsey soon arranges for David to attend MRS STRONG's school in Canterbury. There he meets fellow student JAMES STEERFORTH, who takes a shine to him, and the obsequious and snakelike URIAH HEEP. David and Steerforth become firm friends, although David does not reveal the true nature of his background.

Despite the odds and hardships that he faced before, David excels at school. Following his graduation, David becomes a lawyer and for a short-time, he enjoys a prosperous life. But his good fortune is short-lived following a visit from Betsey and Mr. Dick who have arrived at his lodgings. She is ruined and they must now both live with David – relying on him for their survival. Without the means to provide for them all, David turns to Mr Wickfield, hoping to obtain a loan, but Uriah – now a partner – denies him the money. With no other option David, Betsey and Mr. Dick all move into a squalid small apartment together.

Back in London, Peggotty visits David and on an outing together they run into the Micawbers, now condemned to living on the streets. Seeing them living in such poverty and hardship, David invites the Micawbers to live with him in the apartment with Betsey and Mr. Dick.

Meanwhile, Agnes has been observing Uriah at work and is convinced he is up to no good. Agnes, together with David, Betsey, Mr Dick, and Mr Wickfield confront Uriah and it's revealed that he has stolen money from Betsey and embezzled funds from Wickfield's company by forging his signature. David, in a rare moment of violence, punches Uriah.

Following Uriah's confrontation, David returns to his apartment where he is encouraged to write by Betsey, Mr Dick and Agnes, working hard to make his dream of becoming a writer come true. Soon we see David overcoming all of the trials and tribulations of his past. The final scene shows David and his friends and family gather at a garden party. With his adventures recorded, he is now a published author with commercial success, with the means to look after his loved ones so they can all lead a happy and contented life.