

Year 8 'David Copperfield' Knowledge Organiser

Key Themes:

Gender: Rights and privileges of Victorian women were limited, and women had to live with hardships and disadvantages. Gender roles strongly influenced people's behavior and identities, and women endured condescending attitudes about a woman's place, intelligence, and voice. There were sharp distinctions between men's and women's rights during this era; men were allotted more stability, financial status and power over their homes and women. Women did not have the right to vote, sue, or own property.

Class: Victorian Britain was a society dominated by class distinction. With an elite dedicated to leisure while many in the working class struggled to eat, the gap between rich and poor seemed insurmountable.

Religion: The people of England were very religious. There were many who regularly visited the church. People were not only very religious but also were god fearing.

KEY CHARACTERS

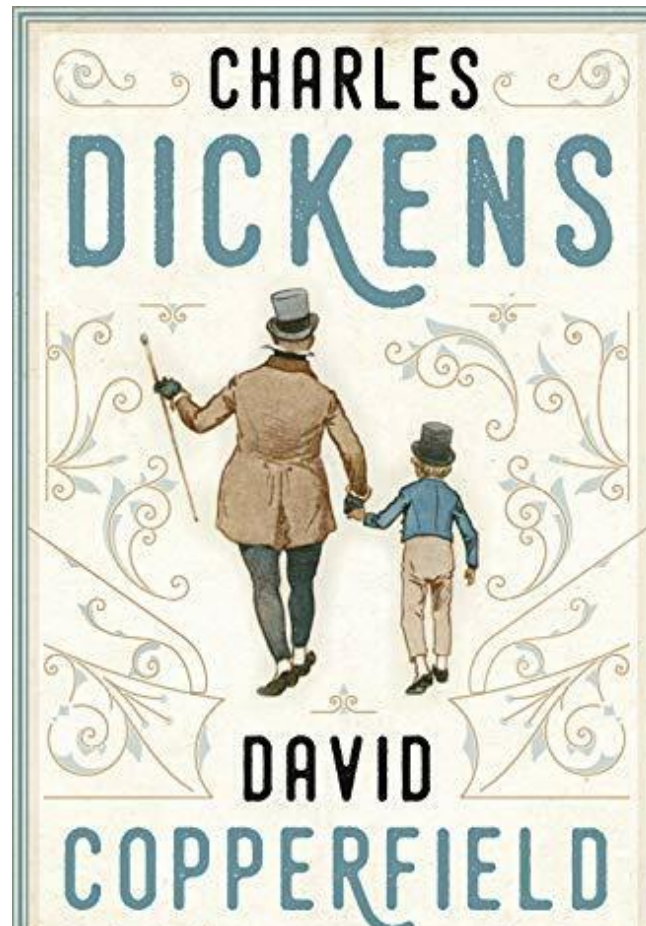
David Copperfield - The protagonist and narrator of the novel. David is innocent, trusting, and naïve even though he suffers abuse as a child

Agnes Wickfield - David's true love and second wife.

James Steerforth - A condescending, self-centered villain.

Key Quote

My meaning simply is, that whatever I have tried to do in life, I have tried with all my heart to do well; that whatever I have devoted myself to, I have devoted myself to completely; that in great aims and in small, I have always been thoroughly in earnest. ~ David Copperfield



HISTORIC CONTEXT

David Copperfield—The novel David Copperfield, written initially in serial form in the years 1849-1850, is Dickens's most autobiographical work. It has been observed that the initials DC, for David Copperfield, are the reverse of Dickens's own initials (though this wasn't intentional), and there are many other similarities to Dickens's own life: the Micawbers' financial difficulties and their house in Camden; their stint in debtors' prison; young Davy's experience as a factory worker; David's less than satisfying first marriage; his travels to Europe; his charitable feelings toward the poor and oppressed; his job as a stenographer and his ultimate success as a novelist. Conditions of the times—Most of Dickens's career took place during Queen Victoria's reign, which began in 1837, when Dickens was in his mid-twenties. Contemporary circumstances in England included severe working conditions, child labor, underemployment, and industrialisation, which produced significant changes in the economy and labor conditions. Dickens's work as a newspaper, court, and Parliamentary reporter would have thoroughly familiarised him with contemporary events and, coupled with his detailed knowledge of London, provided food for his stories.