

BIOGRAPHY



Charles Dickens was born February 7, 1812 into a family so riddled with debt that by age twelve, his father was in a debtor's prison and the young Dickens was forced to take work in a blacking factory. Dickens, like a great many of the world's illustrious writers, never had benefit of a university education. Instead, he learned shorthand and embarked on a career as a courtroom reporter. It was during this time, Dickens, under the pseudonym 'Boz,' released some 'sketches' which led in turn to opportunities blossoming into his creation, Mr. Pickwick, and 'The Pickwick Papers.'

Pickwick proved enormously successful and launched Dickens' fame. He went on to pen 15 novels, several of which are widely considered to be among the best in the western canon including, *Great Expectations*, *Bleak House*, *Oliver Twist*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *David Copperfield*, and the novella, *A Christmas Carol*.

The factory stint traumatized the young Dickens, and a keen concern for the plight of the poor figures prominently throughout his work.

In addition to his position as a novelist, Dickens was a magazine publisher and editor, amateur thespian and even an amateur magician, billing himself in private performances as "The Unparalleled Necromancer Rhia Rhama Rhooos, educated cabalistically in the orange groves of Salamanca and the ocean caves of Alum Bay."

He died June 9, 1870 from a stroke suffered while working on *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*. He is buried in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey.