



Reading another classic novel

Charles Dickens also wrote *David Copperfield*, a novel about a man's life. As a young boy, David is treated harshly by his stepfather and bullied at school. At the age of ten, he is sent to London to work. Being clever and ambitious, he finds the work very boring. Here, the grown-up David Copperfield describes that particular period in his life.



... I became, at ten years old, a little laboring hind in the service of Murdstone and Grinby.

Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse was at the water side. It was down in Blackfriars ... it was the last house at the bottom of a narrow street, curving down hill to the river, with some stairs at the end, where people took boats. It was a crazy old house with a wharf of its own, abutting on the water when the tide was in, and on the mud when the tide was out, and literally over-run with rats. Its panelled rooms, discolored with the dirt and smoke of a hundred years, I dare say; its decaying floors and staircase, the squeaking and scuffling of the old grey rats down in the cellars; and the dirt and rottenness of the place; are things, not of many years ago, in my mind, but of the present instant. They are all before me, just as they were in the evil hour when I went among them for the first time. ...

Murdstone and Grinby's trade was among a good many kinds of people, but an important branch of it was the supply of wines and spirits to certain packet ships. ... I think there were some among them that made voyages both to the East and West Indies. I know that a great many empty bottles were one of the consequences of this traffic, and that certain men and boys were employed to examine them against the light, and reject those that were flawed, and to rinse and wash them. When the empty bottles ran short, there were labels to be pasted on full ones, or corks to be fitted to them, or seals to be put upon the corks, or finished bottles to be packed in casks. All this work was my work, and of the boys employed upon it I was one.

Name the **narrator** of this part of the story.

.....

Explain the difference between a **narrator** and an **author**.

.....

.....

.....

Reading and understanding



Answer these questions about the **second extract** by Charles Dickens in the previous exercise.

The third **paragraph** describes the kind of work that the men and boys did.
Can you explain briefly what it was?

.....

.....

Can you complete these **old words** and **phrases** from the extract? They match the meanings of the **modern words** given below.

Modern word

Old word

next to

ab _____ g

rotting

d _____ g

now

of the p _____ i _____ t

journeys

vo _____ s

a lot of

a gr _____ t m _____ y

results

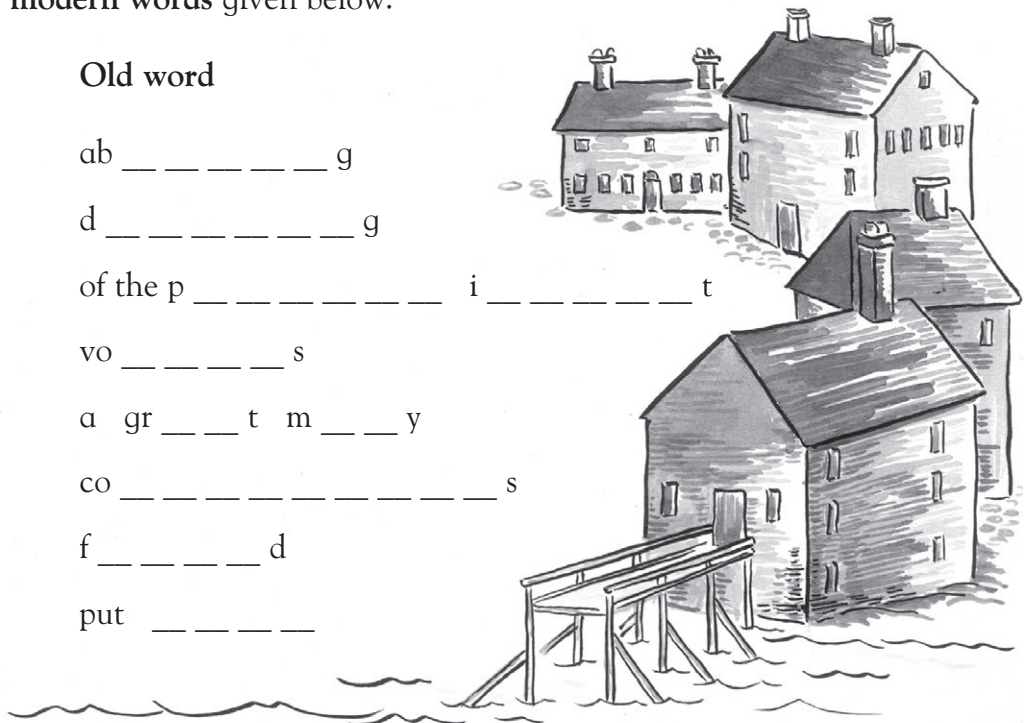
co _____ s

damaged

f _____ d

put on

put _____



A **hind** was a servant who lived in a house belonging to the master or mistress. Why is this word used in the first sentence?

.....

.....

Do you think this **description** gives the reader a good idea of the way David felt? What words can you think of to describe his feelings about his life and work at this time?

.....

.....



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Charles Dickens also wrote *David Copperfield*, a novel about a man's life. As a young boy, David is treated harshly by his stepfather and bullied at school. At the age of ten, he is sent to London to work. Being clever and ambitious, he finds the work very boring. Here, the grown-up David Copperfield describes that particular period in his life.



...I became, at ten years old, a little laboring hind in the service of Murdstone and Grinby.

Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse was at the water side. It was down in Blackfriars ... it was the last house at the bottom of a narrow street, curving down hill to the river, with some stairs at the end, where people took boats. It was a crazy old house with a wharf of its own, abutting on the water when the tide was in, and on the mud when the tide was out, and literally over-run with rats. Its panelled rooms, discolored with the dirt and smoke of a hundred years, I dare say; its decaying floors and staircase, the squeaking and scuffling of the old grey rats down in the cellars; and the dirt and rottenness of the place; are things, not of many years ago, in my mind, but of the present instant. They are all before me, just as they were in the evil hour when I went among them for the first time. ...

Murdstone and Grinby's trade was among a good many kinds of people, but an important branch of it was the supply of wines and spirits to certain packet ships. ... I think there were some among them that made voyages both to the East and West Indies. I know that a great many empty bottles were one of the consequences of this traffic, and that certain men and boys were employed to examine them against the light, and reject those that were flawed, and to rinse and wash them. When the empty bottles ran short, there were labels to be pasted on full ones, or corks to be fitted to them, or seals to be put upon the corks, or finished bottles to be packed in casks. All this work was my work, and of the boys employed upon it I was one.

Name the **narrator** of this part of the story.

David Copperfield

Explain the difference between a **narrator** and an **author**.

The author is the person who writes the book, and the narrator is the character in the book who tells the story.

On this page your child reads a second extract by Charles Dickens. Where necessary, help with the reading of the text and the implications of the questions. Encourage your child to compare David's childhood with his or her own.

Reading and understanding



Answer these questions about the **second extract** by Charles Dickens in the previous exercise.

The third **paragraph** describes the kind of work that the men and boys did.
Can you explain briefly what it was?

*The men and boys inspected bottles, rinsed and washed them. They also
pasted on labels, fitted corks and seals, and packed the bottles.*

Can you complete these **old words** and **phrases** from the extract? They match the meanings of the **modern words** given below.

Modern word

Old word

next to

abutting

rotting

decaying

now

of the present instant

journeys

voyages

a lot of

a great many

results

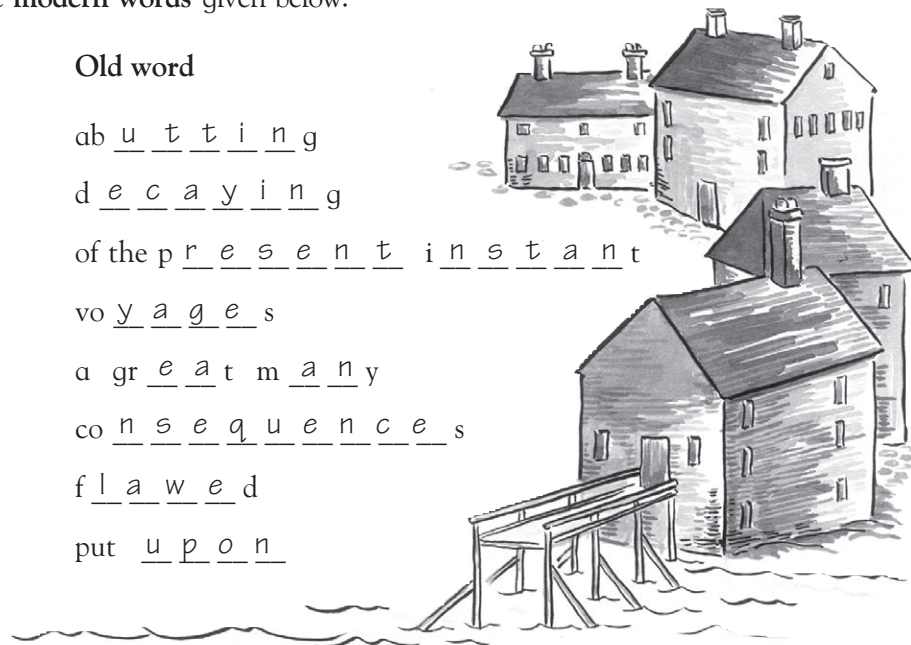
consequences

damaged

flawed

put on

put upon



A **hind** was a servant who lived in a house belonging to the master or mistress. Why is this word used in the first sentence?

The word "hind" was used in the first sentence so that the reader knows

David Copperfield's position in the company.

Do you think this **description** gives the reader a good idea of the way David felt? What words can you think of to describe his feelings about his life and work at this time?

The description gives a good idea of David's feelings. He felt the work was

hard, boring, and depressing.

You may like to tell your child that Dickens' family went through a period of poverty when he was a child. Use this as a starting point to talk about the influence of a writer's personal experience on his or her writing.