











Abuse of power

-  What is David Copperfield's family situation as a child? (This is a review question from last week.)
He has a loving relationship with his mother, but this is replaced by the cruel authority of his stepfather, Mr. Murdstone, upon her death.
-  Why does David have to work in a factory? (This is a review question from last week.)
After the death of his mother, Mr. Murdstone declares that it is too expensive for David to continue in school, and thus he must work even though he is only ten years old.
-  How does Uriah Heep show an abuse of power?
 - *Under the pretense of helping Mr. Wickfield, he becomes a partner and, instead of providing needed assistance, exercises more and more power over him and his finances (63).*
 - *He hires Mr. Micawber as an assistant, even though Micawber is well-known for the lack of ability in managing money (65-66). This demonstrates Uriah's ill-intent regarding proper management of Mr. Wickfield's accounts.*
 - *Uriah goes as far as declaring his love for and desire to marry Agnes, although it is out of ill intent against David as well as the desire for more dishonest gain (73).*
-  Is David able to escape the abuse of power? Describe.
 - *As a youngster, part of his escape is through his building of friendships that continue into adulthood.*
 - *He also relies on the generosity and goodness of his Aunt Betsey Trotwood, which takes him out of any reliance upon Mr. Murdstone.*
 - *Through his expression of love to Dora, and later to Agnes, the reader sees that David is no longer a weak child, incapable of protecting himself.*
-  Now, put it all together and try to figure out what message Charles Dickens is telling the reader about the abuse of power. Come up with a couple of sentences that explain about this abuse, not just as it pertains to Victorian England, but also as it relates to nearly any time or place.
 - *Those with more wealth and social power than others may have a lack of compassion toward those less fortunate. This lack of compassion can lead to abuse when the weak and helpless have no recourse.*
 - Read what the Bible has to say about who is called "great" and how they should live. See Matthew 23:11-12 and Matthew 25:40.

Discipline

-  How would you characterize the discipline that David receives as a child? (This is a review question from last week.)
 - *The word "harsh" would characterize the discipline that David received from his stepfather, Mr. Murdstone, and the school teacher, Mr. Mell.*
-  Whom does he observe that shows a self-disciplined character? Describe. (In part, this is a review question from last week.)
 - *Early on in the book, David's mother showed a degree of self-discipline regarding her desire to encourage David, especially after she observes Mr. Murdstone's ill-treatment of him (6).*
 - *Dr. Strong, the headmaster at the new school, shows self-discipline through his teaching and patient spirit (32).*
 - *Although he has ill-intent, Uriah Heep shows self-discipline evidenced by not giving up on his desire to take advantage of others.*
 - *Over time, Mr. Micawber shows self-discipline by keeping copies of documents that prove that Uriah Heep has been dishonest (80).*
-  Give examples of David's self-discipline.
 - *Because Aunt Betsey Trotwood is in dire financial need, David works as hard as he can to provide for her and in order to provide for his future marriage with Dora (63-65).*
 - *Dora proves to be rather immature (David calls her his "child-wife"). Yet, David continues to show his love and provision for her (75-76). Even in the face of her illness and death, he remains faithful (82).*
 - *Sometime after her death, he realizes that he loves Agnes, whom he desires to love until the end of his lifetime (87-88).*
-  What message do you think Charles Dickens is trying to send to the reader regarding discipline?
 - *Self-discipline in regard to honest dealings often leads to rewards, even if they are intangible.*
 - Read Proverbs 10:17 and Proverbs 16:20-32 to understand more about the biblical view of self-discipline.
-  Notice that our other two topics, kindness and abuse of power, show two extremes. Kindness might be described as self-discipline towards others—putting their needs and desires first. It can lead to positive transformation in others. Abuse of power, on the other hand, takes discipline to a negative extreme, and usually has a damaging effect on others.

Review terminology regarding characters that students learned last week.

1. Who is the protagonist?

David Copperfield

2. Who is the antagonist in the second half of the novel?

Uriah Heep (63, 73, 79-80)

3. Identify another archetype.

- Universally, what do people think of when they hear the word “orphan”?

They think of someone poor and destitute, without family support.

- Would you say that David Copperfield himself is an archetype?

Yes, although he does not remain as an archetypal orphan. In the end, he is neither destitute nor without family support.

Students have been asked to answer questions about Charles Dickens. Some of this information is from the back of their book, but some is found from the Internet or an encyclopedia. Not all questions below were presented to the student in his worksheet. However, part of the purpose in asking these questions orally is to see what your student remembers and how well he paid attention during his short research time.

1. When and where was Dickens born?

He was born on February 7, 1812, in Landport, a suburb of Portsmouth, England.

- What was his father's occupation?

He served as a pay clerk for the British navy and later became a reporter for the London press.

- Do you think that his father's life as a journalist encouraged Dickens to be a writer? Why or why not?

Answers will vary. It is possible that Dickens had pleasant memories of the time before his father was imprisoned and thus had good impressions about this occupation.

2. When he was 12 years old, where did his father go, and why?

His father went to Marshalsea Prison because he couldn't pay his debts.

- Meanwhile, where did Charles work as a young child?

Warren's Blacking Factory

- In *David Copperfield*, what part of the story seems to mirror Dickens's experience?

At ten years of age, David is forced to work at a warehouse washing bottles and is paid only six shillings a week. The working conditions are dirty, and David is ashamed of his job (18-19).

- Do you think that his job in the factory influenced his later writing? Explain your answer.

Yes, it is obvious that Dickens had a passion for writing about social injustice as a result of being a poor factory worker. Through his writing, he showed the disparity between the rich and the poor, and the truth about the greedy and the generous.

3. What type of journalist was Dickens in 1834? What did he write about?

He wrote for a newspaper as a political journalist and covered election campaigns in Britain.

4. What was the name of his first novel?

- The Pickwick Papers*

- Many of Dickens's writings were serials, as was *The Pickwick Papers*. Look up the word “serial” in a dictionary and find out what makes it unique in literature.

A serial is a story that is told in installments (frequently printed in magazines) and oftentimes reprinted later in book form. Because the story's episodes are told incrementally, the author is afforded the opportunity to end with a cliff-hanger one week, which leads to great anticipation by the readers. The author also can receive reader feedback, which thus can influence the development of the story from one installment to another.

5. Name three other novels that Charles Dickens wrote.

- Oliver Twist, The Old Curiosity Shop, Great Expectations, A Tale of Two Cities, and A Christmas Carol are the ones your student will most likely recognize.*

- It is often said that Dickens acknowledged that his favorite work was *David Copperfield*.