

A READING THEATRE ADAPTATION OF
DAVID COPPERFIELD FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Thesis for the Degree of M. A.
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
James Franklin Bradley, Jr.
1960



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FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

By

James Franklin Bradley, Jr.

A THESIS

**Submitted to the College of Communication Arts
of Michigan State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of**

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Speech

1960

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The writer would like to express his sincere gratitude to Dr. Jed Davis for directing this study and for being so generous of his guidance and encouragements.

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AN ABSTRACT

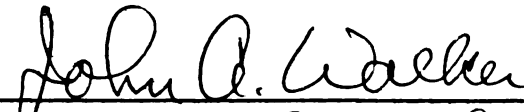
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THESIS ABSTRACT

College preparatory English students throughout the United States are required to read specific classic novels in class. Since reading levels naturally vary even in select classes, it follows that wide levels of understanding of this literature may be present in these classes and thus present a problem to the English teacher in presenting the literature so that all students may enjoy and understand it.

Consequently, the problem in this study was to adapt a required reading classic novel, David Copperfield by Charles Dickens for oral interpretation and to evaluate the effectiveness of the Reading Theatre technique in supplementing the comprehension and enjoyment of the novel by high school students.

First the reading script for David Copperfield was written, based upon the L. W. Singer Co. abridged edition used by the students in college preparatory junior English classes. The adaptation was performed at T. L. Handy High School, Bay City, Michigan. Second, three groups of students were selected to participate in this experiment: Group A, consisting of 21 students, read only the novel and discussed it in class. They then were administered a 50 question objective test based upon the abridged edition of the novel. Group B, consisting of 25 students, read the novel, saw the Reading Theatre

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adaptation of David Copperfield, and then was administered the same 50 question test as Group A. Group C, consisting of 40 students, saw only the Reading Theatre adaptation of the novel and then was administered the same test given Groups A and B. After the performance, Groups B and C were asked to fill out a questionnaire on their reaction to the Reading Theatre production.

The reading script consisted of eighteen scenes which adhered to the story of David Copperfield. The major problems in adapting the novel were first, the uniting of the story line into a strong central plot around David, and second, the selecting of characters which best perpetuated the spirit of the novel. Eighteen characters eventually were written into the adaptation of the novel.

An analysis of the comprehension test scores of each group revealed that the mean score of Group A was 37.33, Group B was 37.76, and Group C was 23.20. Further analysis of these mean scores, using the standard formula for finding small "t", disclosed that the actual error of difference between Groups A and B was .174, between Groups A and C, 4.302, and between Groups B and C, 4.41. From these figures we may draw the following conclusions: There was no significant difference between the mean scores of Groups A and B. Thus, seeing the Reading Theatre production did not increase Group B's comprehension of the novel. This study hoped to find the contrary to be true. The significant difference between the mean scores of

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Groups A and C, and between B and C probably indicates that reading the novel is necessary to increase the comprehension of the students if they are to get the most out of the literature.

The questionnaire returned by the students in Groups B and C led to the following conclusions:

Students do enjoy hearing the novel read aloud.

The students were able to follow the entire story or plot.

The student readers were able to develop satisfactorily the personalities of the characters and project them clearly.

Students were not interested in reading the novel on their own once they had seen the Reading Theatre production. (At least one-third indicated it told too much of the plot.)

Most students feel that the Reading Theatre is a satisfactory technique for introducing the novel before studying it in class or for reviewing it after class study.

Students prefer a ~~production of shorter length.~~ The most satisfactory time limit for this type of reading production would be one hour.

The final conclusions of this study are: Reading Theatre can be successfully used as a supplement to the reading of a novel, either as a review or an introduction. Comprehension may not be improved through seeing a Reading Theatre production. However, it is

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believed that if a Reading Theatre production of the novel could be followed closely by the class reading of the entire novel, comprehension could be improved.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In college preparatory English classes throughout the United States, high school students are required to read specific classic novels during the school year and then discuss the plots and characters during their regular class periods. Examples of the traditional choices by grades are: Ivanhoe, grade 9, A Tale of Two Cities, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and Silas Marner, grade 10, and David Copperfield, grade 11.

Each of these novels requires a high level of reading proficiency on the part of the high school student if he is to obtain an intelligent interpretation of the printed page. Unfortunately, not all college preparatory English students in our public schools come into class with the necessary reading skills which will enable them to enjoy these classics. Those students who are deficient in some reading skills become discouraged with the daily reading assignments. The pages of the text may contain innumerable unfamiliar vocabulary words. The long introductory chapters which set the stage for the complex plot and introduce the novel's main characters tend to bore the unskilled reader and make him unresponsive to class discussion and, consequently, a behavior problem to the teacher.

In addition to the unskilled reader, there are students who lack the keen perception to follow the subtleties of fine descriptive

passages or the development of the complex plot and main characters. Many of these readers can be partially aided by the instructor through drill in vocabulary, mimeographed diagrams of the characters and the plot, and through oral reading in class of the difficult passages from the text.

Past experience has shown that when an English instructor has large class enrollments and his students exhibit a wide range of reading ability, these techniques may prove to be inadequate for the unskilled reader. However, it is thought that the unskilled reader could probably be more effectively stimulated to understand and appreciate the novel if the instructor either introduced it through a Reading Theatre adaptation or concluded the class study of the novel by using a Reading Theatre adaptation.

Consequently, the problem of adapting the required reading classic novel, David Copperfield by Charles Dickens, for oral interpretation was chosen with the intent to evaluate the effectiveness of the Reading Theatre as a technique for supplementing the high school student's comprehension and enjoyment of the novel.

To help clarify the basic terms referred to in the preceding paragraphs and throughout this paper, these definitions follow:

A classical novel is a work of literature of the highest rank and of acknowledged excellence; for example, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and David Copperfield.

Oral interpretation is defined as "the re-creation of the meaning on the printed page by means of voice and body which suggest to an audience the life created by the author...the life is imprisoned in the printing until released by the reader and shared with the audience... Reading aloud appeals wholly to the imagination of the audience, allowing it to picture in the mind's eye the story or idea or emotion."¹

Adaptation is the type-written manuscript obtained by selecting suitable passages of dialogue and narration from a novel that will tell the story in such a manner that oral readers can give life to the printed page and share it with an audience.

Reading Theatre is a dramatic presentation lasting from sixty minutes to ninety minutes in length during which readers use "techniques for presenting the printed page with such skill as to create in the audience the illusion that the story is being enacted before their eyes. This means a manuscript should be used. It may be held in the hand or used on a reading stand. The voice and body suggest, not try to be real. No actual costumes or properties may be used. Everything is suggested."² Lighting effects are used to denote a change of scene and the entrance of characters.

¹Moiree Compere, "High School Interpretation, A Curriculum Guide," Speech 464, Interpretation of Dramatic Literature, Michigan State University, 1958. (Mimeographed.)

²Ibid.

The technique of presenting literature to an audience through Reading Theatre is not a new idea; it dates back to the Greek civilization when a lone actor read all the parts of a play to the audience attending a religious festival. Centuries passed until it was used again. In the 19th century, there was a revival of reading aloud when two literary greats of their day were forced into doing reading performances of their own works as a means of livelihood during financial crises. These two authors, on different continents, who became the early exponents of Reading Theatre were Charles Dickens in England and Mark Twain in America.

In our own 20th century, Charles Laughton is responsible for the Reading Theatre revival on Broadway. In 1951 he created his "First Drama Quartette" which read Don Juan in Hell to audiences throughout the United States. In recent years, two actors have won much critical acclaim for their impersonations of the two aforementioned literary men. Emlyn Williams appeared in 1953 as a one-man Reading Theatre in which he impersonated Charles Dickens reading from his stories just as Dickens performed them in England. Hal Holbrook has for the past few years been playing to packed houses on Broadway, university campuses, and in civic centers up and down the United States. His lively impersonation of Mark Twain lecturing, telling anecdotes, and reading from his best loved novels is a Reading Theatre entitled "Mark Twain Tonight."

The first task to be undertaken in the adaptation of the novel David Copperfield was the reading of the complete Modern Library College Edition and the L. W. Singer Co. abridged edition currently in use in the junior year college preparatory English classes at T. L. Handy High School, Bay City, Michigan. A reading script based upon a cutting from the abridged edition was written and used by the student readers in the Reading Theatre production. The process of adaptation and the working scenario are included in Chapter II, and the finished reading script is included in the appendix.

Test data were obtained from three separate groups of students: Group A, who only read the novel in class, Group B, who read the novel in class and saw the Reading Theatre production, and Group C, who only attended the production. In addition to the test data, questionnaires were obtained from only those students who witnessed the Reading Theatre production of the novel. The details of the testing procedure and analysis of the results will be developed in Chapter III. The recommendations and conclusions of this study will be discussed in Chapter IV. The objective test used may be found in the appendix.

This paper will be limited to a discussion of the problems of script adaptation for the Reading Theatre production of the novel David Copperfield, the test data obtained, the student reactions to the production, and an analysis of the production performances. Finally, recommendations for further studies and conclusions based upon

the analysis of the above mentioned procedures will constitute the scope of this study.

CHAPTER II

MAKING THE ADAPTATION

Selecting a Novel and Developing a Story Line

The selection of a novel for adaptation to Reading Theatre should be based upon the following criteria: novels required to be read in college preparatory English classes, adaptability of the format and prose style of the novel, suitability of the plot and characters in the novel, and limitations imposed in presentation.

Using these criteria as a yardstick, a list of required reading novels was obtained from the English staff at T. L. Handy High School; this list of the most frequently read classics included: Ivanhoe, A Tale of Two Cities, Silas Marner, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and David Copperfield. All of these novels were examined closely with the accepted criteria in mind. A final choice lay between the last two titles. An examination of Speech Monographs, 1955, revealed that a master's thesis had been written on a Reading Theatre production of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.³ Therefore, a decision was made to adapt the novel, David Copperfield.

After reading the complete edition of David Copperfield in the Modern Library College Edition, it became apparent that the novel's

³Thomas Alton Pearson, "An Analysis of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn for Oral Interpretation" (unpublished Master's thesis, Baylor University, 1955),

format lent itself reasonably well to a reading script. From the first chapter to the last, David is the storyteller who relates the events of his life in chronological order. He introduces characters from his past in such a way that they come to life as he participates in the dialogue and action or looks on as an observer. For this reason then, David should be the logical narrator in the reading script.

The novel's plot divides itself into three periods of David's life: his early youth and schooling, his life and friendships in London, and his involvement in the Uriah Heep-Wickfield mystery. There are two subplots skillfully woven throughout the story to prevent the reader from becoming bored with David's own exploits. The first of these subplots takes the reader on an intensive search by Mr. Peggotty for his adopted child, Emily, who has eloped to the continent with David's friend, James Steerforth. The second subplot reveals the family background of Steerforth and the relationship between him and Rosa Dartle, the young woman whom Steerforth disfigured early in his youth by throwing a hammer in her face. These two subplots, then, have little relationship to David and the main plot of his story.

When considering the adaptation of a novel as complex as David Copperfield, one should realize that a strong story line has to be established to give the plot strength and unity. This can be accomplished only by deciding on the main story line of the novel and the characters which best develop it. In the novel, the story begins with

David Copperfield's birth and the reaction of his Aunt Betsy who had planned to christen the baby "Betsy Trotwood," after herself. Aunt Betsy departs abruptly when she is told that the baby is a boy and not a girl as she had hoped. Aunt Betsy later becomes a strong influence in David's life and vital to the main story line. When his widowed mother, Clara Copperfield, marries the stern disciplinarian, Mr. Murdstone, David is sent away from his child-like mother and his nursemaid, Peggotty, to a boarding school for young boys. Mr. Murdstone has already left deep scars on the impressionable young boy, and David, in turn, has left the scars of his own teeth on the hand of Mr. Murdstone. The harsh treatment by Mr. Murdstone creates sympathy in the reader for David.

On the other hand, his nurse, Peggotty, furnishes the motherly love that is necessary in David's life. She comforts him after he is beaten and sent to his room without supper. Peggotty is also attentive to David's questions on the proposed marriage between his mother and Mr. Murdstone.

David's adventures at boarding school introduce us to James Steerforth who acts as David's protector from the taunts of other boys, and he also encourages David's storytelling ability. Also at school, we meet Tommy Traddles, a boy who is always getting "caned" as an example to the other boys. Later in the story, we see him as a young law student who aids in the exposure of the evil Uriah Heep.

The death of David's mother, his acquaintance with

Mr. and Mrs. Micawber while working in London for Murdstone-Grinby, and finally his reuniting with Aunt Betsy bring David Copperfield's story to its first plateau. Now what kind of life will he lead under Aunt Betsy's influence? David's life begins to change under her wise guidance and watchful eyes. A more confident boy emerges. He is sent to school again and strikes up a close friendship with the girl who is destined to become his second wife and the mother of his children.

While working for Murdstone-Grinby in the wine trade, David's close relationship with his landlord, Mr. Micawber, not only adds comedy to David's story but also teaches the impressionable boy what the mismanagement of money can do to one's life. It is Mr. Micawber who plays such a large role in the exposure of Uriah Heep and recovers his lost esteem by this show of forcefulness and clever detective work. More comedy relief is provided by the advice of Mr. Dick, whom we meet at Aunt Betsy's.

Mr. Wickfield, David's landlord in Canterbury and Aunt Betsy's legal adviser, is vital to our story. His steady drinking and his turning more and more business responsibility over to Uriah Heep causes great concern to his daughter, Agnes. It is Mr. Wickfield's poor handling of Aunt Betsy's investments that results in her coming to David for support during her financial crisis.

Agnes Wickfield, child housekeeper for her father, becomes David's confidential adviser during his first love affairs and

early marriage to child-like Dora Spenlow. But it is Agnes who must come to David for advice and assistance to help free her father from the villainy of the "'umble" Uriah Heep.

Several minor characters are necessary to the main plot line since their action helps to complete the chain of events in David's life: Dr. Chillip is the family doctor who delivers David and then breaks the news to Aunt Betsy which results in her sudden departure. Mr. Quinion, manager of the counting house which first employs David, introduces Mr. Micawber to David in the story, and thus serves as a vital link in the plot. Completing the masculine influence in David's story is Mr. Sharp, a teacher, who calls David in from the playground to hear an announcement which will alter the course of his life. This announcement is delivered by Mrs. Creakle, the headmaster's wife, who informs David that his mother has passed away. The remaining character is Mrs. Heep, Uriah's "'umble" mother. She is the dominant influence over Uriah Heep, and her honest actions help to expose him and clear up the financial mysteries of Mr. Wickfield. Her pleadings to her son, Uriah, assist in breaking down his confidence and returning him to the "'umble" station in life he once experienced before greed took possession of him.

Since the novel David Copperfield contains scores of characters, it became necessary to omit many of the memorable minor characters who played a small part in the main story line and also all but

one, J. Steerforth, of the secondary characters featured in the two subplots of this lengthy work of fiction. Those secondary characters regretfully omitted were: Emily, Mr. Daniel Peggotty, Ham Peggotty, Mrs. Gummidge, Martha, Mr. Omer, Mr. Barkis, Doctor Strong, Mrs. Murdstone, Rosa Dartle, Mrs. Steerforth, Littimer, and Dora Spenlow who became David's first wife.

Writing the Scenario and the Reading Script

Before the scenario was written, a second reading of the novel was undertaken. The L. W. Singer Co. abridged edition was read because it is the paperback edition used by the students at T. L. Handy High School. Much extraneous material in the original plot of the novel is omitted and the numerous colorful characters not essential to the plot have also been cut out in this edition. It was from this edition that the scenario was finally written and the reading cuttings were made.

The scenario is the scene by scene outline of the story from its introduction to its conclusion. The action within each scene is linked together by a series of conjunctions: and, but, consequently, therefore. The page numbers from the text where these scenes may be found should be listed beside each scene.

As was stated in the first half of this chapter, the novel David Copperfield has two strong subplots in the story. The problem in writing the scenario was to eliminate these subplots and concentrate on building a strong continuity of thought. This task was accomplished

by using David as the narrator. In this role, he could relate only those scenes of his life which helped to develop the central plot line and introduce only the major characters who contributed in perpetuating this plot line. This device resulted in producing a scenario which contained only eighteen short scenes and introduced eighteen characters.

Some limit on the length of the reading script had to be set. This problem was attacked with the aid of mathematics. The abridged edition of David Copperfield was found to contain an average of 39.8 lines per page and an average of 13.3 words per line. This averages out to 520 words per page of text. Since an oral reader can read distinctly at about 140 to 150 words per minute, he could read a page of this text in approximately three minutes and forty-six seconds. At that rate, he could read about twenty-six pages in a ninety minute period. Ninety minutes was considered the maximum amount of time that the attention of high school students could be held in this program. Using these figures as a guide, the reading script was begun.

The reading script was written so that David would introduce each scene, participate in as much of the dialogue as necessary, and narrate the transitions from scene to scene by briefly telling what had transpired in the intervening years. The story is told in three acts: Act I, David's early youth and schooling, Act II, David as a young man in London and Canterbury, and Act III, the Heep-Wickfield mystery.

It is in Act I that David's family background is established.

Some of his close friendships are formed while attending his first school at Salem House and while working for Murdstone-Grinby in London. It is at the conclusion to this act that David is brought to Canterbury where he meets his future wife and is introduced to the story's villain, Uriah Heep. We have the interest carry over of Uriah Heep in Act II. David becomes involved in problems of finance indirectly caused by Heep. Aunt Betsy's financial condition forces David to find a job to support the two of them. Gradually, more importance is given to the mystery surrounding the affairs of Mr. Wickfield and his clerk, Uriah Heep. In Act III, after Uriah Heep succeeds in becoming Wickfield's partner, David is instrumental in helping to dissolve the mystery of the Wickfield-heep partnership. Mr. Micawber receives a new lease on life for his major part of investigator and prosecutor of Uriah Heep, and David Copperfield emerges from the affair with the maturity that helps him to later become a successful writer and family man.

Scenario For Reading Script Of
The Novel David Copperfield

Act I, Scene One - "I am Born" (pages 1 through 4, 6, and 7).

David relates the circumstances of his mother's widowhood and Aunt Betsy's marriage separation.

and

Aunt Betsy Trotwood appears to comfort the expectant Mrs. Copperfield and disappears in discontent when a boy is born.

Scene Two - David is Sent Away to School by his Stepfather, Mr. Murdstone (pages 34, 35, and 37, and 57).

He meets J. Steerforth and Tommy Traddles who became his close friends (pages 53, 54, and 57).

and

David tells Steerforth Stories.

Scene Three - (pages 97 through 99) (pages 101 through 107)

Since David's mother died, David is told by his stepfather, Mr. Murdstone, that he will have to begin working for his living.

and

David starts work at Murdstone and Grinby warehouse and is introduced to his landlord, Mr. Micawber.

Scene Four - David is taken to meet Mrs. Micawber and family (pages 110 and 111).

David discovers Micawber's drastic financial condition. Micawber

is to be put into jail, and then offers David some advice on life.

Scene Five - David decides to run away from Murdstone's and Grinby's and to go to Aunt Betsy.

consequently

David is reunited with his aunt who is bewildered at first,

but

She quickly takes command of the situation and seeks the advice of Mr. Dick.

and

David is given the new name of Trotwood, "Trot."

Scene Six - David is taken to Mr. Wickfield's and left to board and room while at school.

David first meets Agnes, Mr. Wickfield's daughter.

and

David also meets Uriah Heep, the "humble" person and law clerk of Mr. Wickfield.

End of Act I

Act II, Scene One - (pages 158 - 160)

Aunt Betsy decides David should now make up his mind about a vocation.

and

David chooses the profession of proctor at Doctor's Commons (pages 199, 200 at top).

consequently

David and Aunt Betsy choose a set of rooms for his bachelor quarters .

Scene Two - (pages 216 - 217)

David relates meeting Tommy Traddles again at a dinner given by Mr. Wickfield. They exchanged addresses and plan to meet when Traddles is in London again.

and

David visits with Agnes and she tells him of her father's poor physical condition and excess drinking (pages 163 - 165 and 214 - 216; pages 263 - 264).

Scene Three - (page 223)

David visits Traddles and learns he is "reading for the bar." He also discovers Traddles' landlord is Mr. Micawber (pages 225 - 226).

and

Mr. Micawber does not recognize David at first. Mrs. Micawber faints at seeing David again.

and

David invites Traddles and the Micawbers to supper at a future date.

Scene Four - (pages 227 - 240)

David has his three old friends over for the promised supper.

Mr. Micawber makes a bowl of punch, and they feast upon a leg of mutton.

and

Micawber reveals that he is out of work again. Mrs. Micawber suggests

he advertise for a job.

but

Micawbers leave before Traddles departs (page 231).

consequently

David warns Traddles not to lend Micawber any money,

but

Traddles has already lent him money on another bill,

Scene Five - (page 258)

David is visited by his Aunt Betsy, and she tells him she is ruined financially,

and

She plans to live with David for a short time.

consequently

Aunt Betsy gives David words of encouragement:

"We must meet reverses boldly, and not suffer them to frighten us, my dear."

and then

Agnes visits them, and relates that Heep and his mother moved into the Wickfield house (page 264).

and

They talk of Aunt Betsy's losses. Aunt Betsy reveals how poorly Mr. Wickfield handled her investments, and she now has only the cottage to rent for an income.

consequently

David decides to take up shorthand and report the debates in Parliament to earn money (page 271).

Scene Six - (pages 272, 273, 274)

David receives a letter from Mr. Micawber stating he has found a job,

and

David goes to see Micawber at his home to learn more about the new job,

consequently

Micawber tells David that he has taken a position as confidential clerk to Uriah Heep.

End of Act II

Act III, Scene One - (page 283)

David visits the Wickfield home

and

Finds Micawber happily working for Heep

but

David and Mr. Wickfield are told by Heep of his intention to marry Agnes Wickfield (pages 287 - 288).

consequently

Mr. Wickfield is greatly upset by Heep's intention, and he reveals his weaknesses and regrets to David.

Scene Two - (pages 346, 347, 348)

David receives an urgent letter from Micawber calling for a meeting outside King's Prison,

and

David visits Traddles and discovers that he has received a letter from Mrs. Micawber.

Scene Three - (page 349)

David and Traddles meet Micawber, and when the name "Uriah Heep" is mentioned, Micawber explodes in reviling Heep,

and

Micawber is invited to visit Aunt Betsy with them to help him relieve his troubled mind (page 350).

Mr. Micawber unburdens himself and discloses that Uriah Heep is at the bottom of all his trouble.

consequently

Micawber unleashes a vehement attack upon Heep "the immortal hypocrite and perjurer" and he vows revenge,

and

Micawber informs them that he plans a disclosure of an "important nature" and leaves for the Wickfield-Heep office to arrange the meeting (page 370).

Scene Four - (page 371)

David, his aunt, and Traddles, and Mr. Dick meet at the Wickfield-Heep office, and Uriah Heep suspects this is more than a social call.

and

Micawber enters and begins his exposure of Heep by reading the charges against him (pages 376, 377, 379).

and

Uriah protests the accusations.

consequently

Heep is threatened with Maidstone Jail if he refuses to cooperate in releasing the account books and the deed of relinquishment to all property.

and so

Heep is a broken man forced to give up his ill-gotten gains. He breaks down and brings in the deed and box of legal papers and accounts (page 381).

but

As Heep leaves, he pauses and confesses to David: "Copperfield, I have always hated you. You've always been an upstart, and you've always been against me." (page 383)

Scene Five - Aunt Betsy suggests to Micawber that he emigrate to Australia, and she offers to finance the adventure with a loan.

and then in closing

David brings the story up-to-date relating the good fortune of the emigrants, Micawber and family, and his own marriage to Agnes.

CHAPTER III

STUDENT COMPREHENSION AND REACTION

Test Groups and Procedure

Three groups of students participated in this study at T. L. Handy High School, Bay City, Michigan. All of the students were juniors enrolled in college preparatory English classes during the school year of 1959 - 1960. The student groups were divided and followed this procedure: Group A, consisting of 21 students, only read the abridged edition of the novel in class and were administered a 50 question test in class after they had completed reading and discussing David Copperfield. Group B, consisting of 25 students, read the novel in class and later in the school year attended the Reading Theatre production. Group C, consisted of 40 students from two classes who had not read the novel in class and they attended the Reading Theatre production only. Both Groups B and C were administered the same 50 question test given Group A.

The testing of student comprehension over David Copperfield was considered a requirement in this study. It was thought that the Reading Theatre production would have some value as a teaching technique in improving the comprehension of students who had read the novel. In order to test this thesis, a 50 question objective test was prepared based upon the adaptation of the L. W. Singer

abridged edition of David Copperfield. The test consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions; 15 true-false statements and 15 matching vocabulary words. Table 1 shows the distribution of the test scores.

TABLE 1

DISTRIBUTION OF TEST SCORES

<u>Group A</u>		<u>Group B</u>		<u>Group C</u>	
Score	Frequency	Score	Frequency	Score	Frequency
50	0	50	0	50-40	0
49	0	49	0	39	0
48	0	48	0	38	0
47	1	47	0	37	2
46	0	46	1	36	3
45	0	45	0	35	1
44	1	44	4	34	1
43	1	43	0	33	2
42	0	42	2	32	0
41	1	41	1	31	1
40	4	40	2	30	0
39	4	39	2	29	0
38	1	38	0	28	1
37	1	37	5	27	2
36	1	36	0	26	1
35	1	35	1	25	1
34	0	34	1	24	2
33	0	33	3	23	1
32	1	32	0	22	1
31	0	31	0	21	3
30	1	30	2	20	4
29	2	29	0	19	1
28	0	28	0	18	4
27	1	27	0	17	2
	<u>21</u>	26	1	16	1
			<u>25</u>	15	0
37.333		37.76		14	2
mean score		mean score		13	1
				12	0
				11	0
				10	0
				9	0
				8	1
					<u>40</u>
				23.20	
				mean score	

An analysis of the test scores of the three groups revealed that the mean score of Group A was 37.33, Group B was 37.76, and Group C was 23.20. It was believed that Group B would have a higher mean score on the test than it made. A time lapse of over six months prevailed from the time the novel was read in class to the time the Reading Theatre production was seen. It was not until late in the school year that the reading script was completed and student readers were available for rehearsals for the Reading Theatre production. This time lapse may account for the absence of a significant difference between the scores of Groups A and B.

A more detailed statistical analysis of the standard error of difference between the mean scores of Groups A, B, and C was obtained by using the statistical formula for finding small "t."³ The actual error of difference between the means of Groups A and B was .174. From this we may conclude that there is no significant difference between the means of A and B. Therefore, it may reasonably be concluded that seeing the Reading Theatre production did not add to the test scores of Group B. The actual error of difference between the mean scores of Groups A and C was 4.302 which shows a significant difference between the scores of A and C. The actual error of difference between the means of Groups B and C was 4.41, and this

³Quinn McNeman, Psychological Statistics (New York: John Wiles and Sons, Inc., 1955), pp. 104-105.

likewise reveals a significant difference between the scores of B and C. The actual error of difference in the mean scores of A vs C and B vs C, according to the small "t" formula, prove that in less than 1 per cent of the time would you get a difference of this size by chance.

Student Reaction to the Performances

Two performances of the Reading Theatre production of David Copperfield were given: the first was held on May 26, 1960, and the second on June 2, 1960. The two performances, a week apart, were necessary due to the scheduling of extra-curricular events which would not allow all the students in Groups B and C to attend the first performance.

The production was staged in the Studio Theatre of T. L. Handy High School. The room is a multi-purpose radio-drama, speech, and English area equipped with sliding sound-absorbing doors. It has a seating capacity of approximately 125 movable student-arm desks which can be turned toward the raised stage for dramatic performances.

The student readers for the performance were dressed in black trousers or skirts and white shirts or blouses. They read from manuscripts resting on three reading stands and a podium. This podium was used by the narrator throughout the performance. Musical background accompanied the beginning and conclusion of each act, and spotlighting was used on the narrator and each reader when he appeared during each scene. The performance lasted approximately ninety minutes

including two intermissions after Acts I and II.

Students from Groups B and C were given a questionnaire by their instructors which was filled out either right after the performance or the next day in class. Of the 65 students in Groups B and C, 62 of them turned in questionnaires on the performance.

There were six questions asked the students in the questionnaire: 1. Did you enjoy hearing the novel read aloud? 2. Were you able to follow the story line or plot? 3. Were the characters developed clearly by the readers? 4. Would you consider this type of program a satisfactory technique to: a. interest you in reading the novel on your own? b. introduce the novel to you before studying it in the classroom? and 5. Was the Reading Theatre production too long?

The questionnaire left choices for both a "yes" and "no" answer plus room for written comments under each question.

Taking each question in turn, the reactions and comments were divided into four classifications: highly positive, qualified positive (yes answer with some negative comment), negative, and no response.

In response to question 1. Did you enjoy hearing the novel read aloud?, there were 55 highly positive answers given. Some of the comments were very favorable and showed a definite need was being filled by the Reading Theatre production. The comments ran as follows: "I think the novel seemed more realistic, hearing it read aloud with the

TABLE 2

TABULATED RESPONSES FROM QUESTIONNAIRES

Questions	Responses			
	Highly Positive	Qualified Positive	Negative	NR*
1. Did you enjoy hearing the novel read aloud?	55	1	6	
2. Were you able to follow the story or plot?	48	10	4	
3. Were the characters developed clearly by the readers?	58	4	0	
4. Would you consider this type of program a satisfactory technique:				
a. to interest you in reading the novel on your own?	40	1	20	1
b. To introduce the novel to you before studying it in the classroom?	55	2	3	2
5. Was the Reading Theatre program too long?	31	4	25	2

* No response given to the question.

different voice variations." "I enjoyed the expressions that were put in. I understood more of what the characters were like due to their expression." "It helped me to understand the book better than when I read it." "The reading was helpful in bringing out the important characters more clearly. Also the more important details were brought out while the minor ones were passed over." and finally, "I can get a lot more out of it when it is read aloud. If I read it myself, I can't concentrate on the story." Analyzed as a group, these and other highly positive responses to question "1." clearly indicate the students enjoyed the reading presentation.

The one qualified answer to question "1." stated, "I would have enjoyed it more if you had included the other parts. Having read the book, the story seemed like it wasn't complete. However, I tried looking at it from the other side and it seemed like a good story."

Some of the typical negative comments to question "1." indicated that the length of the program affected their enjoyment: "It was monotonous after the first act. The readers should have had some simple costumes on." "Being of considerable length, the program became quite boring. And the two short intermissions seemed to be of little compensation." and finally, "I do not like plays read aloud."

After question "2." Were you able to follow the story line or plot?, there were 48 highly positive responses. The comments seemed

to indicate that the story line could be followed easily. Some of them stated: "It was very easy to follow. They put it in such a way that I think anyone could follow it." "The narrator put the plot across with good reading." "The plot of the story was outlined good, and there was a lot more to the plot in hearing it read than I can remember in reading it myself." and "The points of the story were in logical order, and it ran smoothly from one point to the next. The narration did a lot to hold both the plot and story line together."

The 10 qualified answers to question "2." indicated a variety of reasons why some of the plot was missed or misunderstood: "Too many characters to follow each one very well." "At times I could follow all the people but other times their reading seemed as though they were reading a dictionary." (indicating Mr. Micawber). The remainder of the comments mentioned that they could follow the story because they had read the novel in class.

Of the 4 negative comments to question "2." two students indicated that the cast read too fast, one had to leave before the end of Act III, and one student thought the plot "seemed to skip around a lot."

In response to question "3." Were the characters clearly developed by the readers?, 58 students gave highly positive answers: "I thought that the persons who read were very much like the people in the book. They did a very good job." "The character of Aunt Betsy,

to me, was very vividly portrayed." "The characters were developed very well and portrayed excellently by the readers. Aunt Betsy's personality was developed very well for example." "Yes, especially Uriah Heep. He acted so hateful just like in the story."

Of the 4 qualified answers to question "3." two of them singled out the narrator as needing improvement: "David's voice became dull after a while; he should have had more expression. This was partly the cause of it seeming so long." and "It seems as though it would have been easier to understand David's character if he did not have to do all the narration also. However, David did an excellent job, as did the others." The two remaining comments stated in effect **that** some of the readers were very good, and some left much to be **desired**. There were no negative responses, so we may assume that **the** readers did develop their characters clearly so that the personalities **stood** out clearly.

Question "4." Would you consider this type of program **a** satisfactory technique to: a. interest you in reading the novel on **your** own? and b. introduce the novel to you before studying it in the **classroom**? There were 40 highly positive responses to part a. Some **comments** stated: "I would want to know more about the book after **seeing** this reading." "It arouses your interest with just a few facts, **enough** to make you want to read it." "Such a technique would act as **a** review for the reading of fine literature." and finally, "After hearing

parts of the novel read, a person becomes curious to read the whole novel to see what else it tells about."

The one qualified response to question "4a." was that:
 "The portrayal is so well done that I would read it at some later date."

However, on the negative side, 20 comments seemed to be of the opinion that the program would not interest them in reading the novel on their own. Typical examples were: "This type of story doesn't interest me." "I don't like to read that well, and if I do, I like a story more up to date." "After hearing it, I see no reason for reading it again." and finally "Reading the book would not be as interesting after hearing the reading because it would not hold my interest in the book. I would already know the plot and climax."

Analysis of responses to question "4b." indicated 55 highly positive answers. Many indicated that the Reading Theatre could be best used as a preview or review of the novel: "In a novel with as many plots as David Copperfield, a clear presentation like this one to fix the characters in mind is very helpful prior to reading the entire novel." "I feel any preliminary introduction to a section of study in any class is a good idea." "The student would know what to expect. Also, many of the chapters were not clear, but this preview would explain a great deal." "I feel it would give a splendid background material for class reading and discussion." "When this type of program is used to introduce you to this novel, it makes the novel much easier

to read because the language in the book is difficult." and finally, "It gave a good description of the characters. It would probably interest people more than just starting out to read it and not knowing anything about it."

Two qualified positive responses wrote, "If the reading were as extensive as this one, I feel as if a discussion would be sufficient after it, rather than a complete reading of the book." and "However, I think it would spoil the story for the English student to learn the main plot of the story and then have to learn the smaller plots and details later. It's more fun to read a story when you don't know what's going to happen next." Two students did not respond.

The three negative responses to question "4b." gave a variety of reasons: "After hearing this, you would hear too much of the story, and it would seem to be a waste of time to do the story just to learn more about the plot." "Our teacher introduced us to the story before we read it." and "I think it would mean more to a student who has read the book, because then he could see the full picture and summarize the plot."

To the last question, number 5, Was the Reading Theatre Program too long?, there were 31 highly positive answers of "yes," 4 qualified "yes" and 25 negative "no." Two students did not respond to the question. The suitable time lengths suggested for a program of this nature were: one and one-half hours, one hour, two hours, and

the remainder varied from one hundred nineteen minutes to forty-five minutes. One qualified response stated, "It seemed long, but it also would be difficult to cut without losing the main idea of the story."

Interpretation of Results

The comprehension test scores of Groups A, B, and C did not substantiate the hypothesis of this writer. Group A achieved a mean score of 37.33 which was higher than anticipated. This may be accounted for by the fact that this group was administered the 50 point test just after they had completed reading and discussing the novel. While Group B achieved a mean score of 37.76, it was several points lower than the score anticipated. The fact is that this group was not tested until several months after they had read the novel and had seen the Reading Theatre production. This was due to the length of time needed to write the reading script and the delay in securing a cast of student readers. This time lapse of some six months undoubtedly led to some forgetting on the part of students in Group B. Consequently, seeing the Reading Theatre production did not sufficiently refresh their memories, as it was surmised, to enable them to make higher scores on the objective test. Even Group C did not score as high as anticipated, making a mean score of only 23.20. One would think that the law of averages would enable them to attain a higher score out of 50 possible points. However, on further analysis of the objective test used, it was found that the 15 matching questions (adjectives to corresponding

characters) caused Group C the most trouble. Since the students had not read the novel, it is logical to believe that many of them could not successfully match the adjectives to the characters they described. These questions were included to test the understanding of Groups A and B who had read the novel.

Also one should take into account the time factor of Group C's exposure to the plot of the novel. They witnessed a Reading Theatre production lasting approximately ninety minutes, while Groups A and B studied the same novel in class for a period of six weeks. In addition, the effort extended by Group C in merely attending the Reading Theatre production and then filling out a questionnaire was very slight in comparison to A and B Groups. Groups A and B read daily assignments, participated in class discussion, and took weekly quizzes over the plot, characters, and vocabulary in order to earn a grade for the six-week marking period. On the other hand, Group C's test scores were not included in scholastic averages for the marking period. It is surprising, in view of these facts, that the students in Group C did as well on the test as they did.

In final analysis of the questionnaire responses, one may say that the Reading Theatre production of David Copperfield was successful in stimulating the students to enjoy oral reading of the novel, in enabling them to follow the story line, and in helping them to analyze and understand the characters and their problems. This

technique would be welcomed by students as a means of introducing them to the novel before they read it in class or as a review after reading it. On the other end of our evaluation scales, this technique of Reading Theatre would not interest all students to read the novel on their own. At least one-third of the students professed the opinion that they would have no interest in reading the novel after they had seen a Reading Theatre production of it. It is also the majority opinion of students that the time limit for this type of program should be not more than sixty minutes with two adequate intermissions.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Analysis of the test data and the student questionnaires based upon the Reading Theatre production of David Copperfield will enable one to draw the following conclusions:

Students enjoy listening to good interpretive reading of classic novels, and this Reading Theatre adaptation of the novel could be most helpful to the students if it introduced them to the novel prior to their studying it in class. However, the Reading Theatre adaptation could be used as well as a review at conclusion of class study.

Reading Theatre could be helpful to the student in clarifying the novel's story line and personalities of the characters, but if too many characters are introduced, students may become confused and lose interest in the plot of the story. The reading script should be written around a strong central plot and contain as few minor characters as are necessary to support the story line.

Students who see the Reading Theatre production of the novel may not be motivated to read the novel on their own. Too much of the novel's plot may be revealed to them, and thus spoil their interest in independent reading of the novel. However, some students' curiosity may be aroused in characters they see, and they may wish to

explore the novel further on their own.

The time limit of Reading Theatre adaptations should not be more than sixty minutes as a rule. A production running longer than this may tend to bore high school students. Long speeches and difficult vocabulary words cause students to lose interest if they persist throughout the production. The action of the story should move rapidly and the speeches kept to not more than one minute in length for any one character in a scene. Students tend to be poor judges of time at a performance; a slow moving production may seem longer to them than it actually is.

Students who have read a novel and then have seen a Reading Theatre production of it appreciate the characterizations more and have a deeper understanding of the plot than those students who ~~have only~~ read the novel. This enrichment may be due to the fact that more time and effort has been expended in their study of the novel than those who simply have read and discussed the novel in class. However, they may not achieve a higher comprehension than the students who only read and discuss the novel, and the difference between their mean scores may be insignificant. On the other end of the scale, students who only see a Reading Theatre production of the novel may not achieve mean test scores which are as high as students who have read the novel or those students who have both read the novel and seen the Reading Theatre production of it. This lack of comprehension may be due both to the factors of lack of time devoted to discussion of the plot and characters and the

lack of effort expended in seeing the Reading Theatre production.

Also the factor of compulsory attendance may have prejudiced the students against seeing the production. Students who attend willingly may make a more attentive audience and thus comprehend more from seeing the Reading Theatre production.

It is the conclusion of this writer that a Reading Theatre production may be used successfully to supplement the comprehension and enjoyment of a classic novel if it is used either as an introduction to the novel or as a review after reading the novel in class. It is thought that more comprehension may be achieved if the Reading Theatre production and the class study of the novel follow more closely upon one another, and also that discussion follow the attendance of the production.

Recommendations for future studies in the use of Reading Theatre productions include the following novels and topics:

Silas Marner: This novel has interest and colorful characters. The first few chapters giving the background of the miser and describing the English country life prior to the industrial revolution may be a problem to the adaptor. The story is a very heartwarming one, and it appeals to students once they get through the introductory chapters.

The Canterbury Tales include some interesting stories told in narrative style. The tales are too numerous to include them all, but several of the most interesting could well be adapted to Reading Theatre.

The Red Badge of Courage has been recorded by Edmond O'Brien for "Epic" Records, a subsidiary of Columbia Records. The story is written in excellent narrative style. The hero and his brothers-in-arms supply the necessary dialogue. Seeing the facial expressions and gestures in a Reading Theatre production would add much to the understanding of the horror of war and its effects upon men.

Another natural work of literature that appeals to high school students and which would lend itself well to Reading Theatre is The Diary of a Young Girl by Anne Frank. In her autobiography Anne is the narrator of her experiences in living in the loft of a warehouse in Holland during the Nazi invasion and occupation of her country. The plot is told in flashbacks from the time the family is forced into hiding until they are discovered by the Nazi police two years later. An adaptor may have some problem with the conclusion of the story when the family cat makes a disturbance which alerts the police and with the sound of footsteps from the searching men. The stage and motion picture versions were well done, but, if the reader of Anne Frank is well cast and can read with intelligence and feeling for the character, the audience can visualize the setting and physical aspects of the situation.

This writer would recommend that further studies in Reading Theatre should include the comparative effectiveness of a classic novel adapted for radio, stage, motion pictures, or television

with that for Reading Theatre.

A second study may be made to determine if a closer follow-up between reading a novel and seeing a Reading Theatre production would produce higher mean scores than those obtained from only reading the novel and discussing it in class.

APPENDIX

- A. The Reading Script for the Reading
 Theatre Production of
 David Copperfield
- B. Objective Test on David Copperfield
- C. Illustrations

Act II.

Scene One: The stage is bare except for three reading stands, one near stage right and two stage center. The stage remains dark until a single spot comes up on stage right stand. The narrator, David Copperfield, begins to read:

DAVID

Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show. To begin my life with the beginning, I record that I was born on a Friday, at twelve o'clock at night. It was remarked that the clock began to strike, and I began to cry, simultaneously. I was born at Blunderstone, in Suffolk, or "thereby," as they say in Scotland. I was a posthumous child. My father's eyes had closed upon the light of this world six months when mine opened on it. An aunt of my father's, and consequently a great aunt of mine, of whom I have more to relate by and by, was the principal magnate of our family. My poor mother always called her Miss Trotwood or Miss Betsy when she sufficiently overcame dread of this formidable personage to mention her at all (which was seldom). Aunt Betsy lived in a cottage in a hamlet on the seacoast a long way off with one servant, and was understood to live secluded in an inflexible retirement. My father had once been a favorite of hers, I believe, but she was mortally affronted by his marriage on the ground that my mother was a "wax doll." She had never seen my mother, but she knew her to be not yet twenty. This was the state of matters on the afternoon of that eventful and important

Friday. Mother was sitting by the fire, that bright and windy March afternoon, very timid and sad, when, lifting her eyes as she dried them, to the window opposite, she saw a strange lady coming up the garden. My mother had a sure foreboding at the second glance that it was Aunt Betsy. When she reached the house, she gave proof of her identity. My father had often hinted that she seldom conducted herself like any ordinary Christian: and now, instead of ringing the bell, she came and looked in at that identical window, pressing the end of her nose against the glass to that extent that my poor dear mother used to say it became perfectly flat and white in a moment. My mother had left her chair in agitation, and gone behind it in a corner. Miss Betsy, looking around the room, slowly and inquiringly began on the other side and carried her eyes on until they reached my mother. Then she made a frown and a gesture to my mother like one who was accustomed to being obeyed, to come and open the door. My mother went. (spots up on center actors' reading stands)

MISS BETSY

Mrs. David Copperfield, I think.

CLARA

Yes

MISS BETSY

Miss Trotwood. You have heard of her, I dare say? Now you see her.

Well, when do you expect . . . ?

CLARA

I am all in a tremble. I don't know what's the matter. I shall die,
I am sure!

MISS BETSY

No, no,, no. Have some tea.

CLARA

Oh, dear me, dear me. Do you think it will do me any good?

MISS BETSY

Of course it will. It's nothing but fancy. What do you call your
servant?

CLARA

Peggotty.

MISS BETSY

Peggotty! Do you mean to say, child, that any human being has gone
into a Christian church and got herself named Peggotty?

CLARA

It's her surname. Mr. Copperfield called her by it, because her Christian
name was the same as mine.

MISS BETSY

(turning to off stage left to unseen Peggotty) Here Peggotty! Tea.

Your mistress is a little unwell. Don't dawdle.

PEGGOTTY

Yes, Mum.

(The center spots fade out to black and the right stage spot comes up on David narrating)

DAVID

The word was appropriate to the moment. My mother was so much worse that Peggotty conveyed her upstairs to her own room with all speed; and immediately fetched the nurse and doctor. Those allied powers were considerably astonished, when they arrived within a few minutes of each other, to find an unknown lady of portentous appearance sitting before the fire, with her bonnet tied over her left arm, stopping her ears with jewelers' cotton. Peggotty knowing nothing about her, and my mother saying nothing about her, she was quite a mystery in the parlor. The doctor, having been upstairs and come down again, looked mildly at my aunt with his head on one side, and making her a little bow, said in allusion to the jewelers' cotton, as he softly touched his left ear: (spots up on center stage for Miss Betsy and Doctor Chillip)

DOCTOR

Some local irritation ma'am?

MISS BETSY

What! (pulling out the cotton from one ear like a cork)

DOCTOR

Some local irritation, ma'am?

MISS BETSY

Nonsense! (corking up ear again)

DOCTOR

(after a long pause) Well, ma'am, I am happy to congratulate you.

MISS BETSY

How is she?

DOCTOR

Well, ma'am, she will soon be quite comfortable, I hope. Quite as comfortable as we can expect a young mother to be, under these melancholy domestic circumstances. There cannot be any objection to your seeing her presently, ma'am. It may do her good.

MISS BETSY

And she. How is she? The baby. How is she?

DOCTOR

Ma'am, I apprehended you had known. It's a boy. (center spots go to black)

DAVID

My aunt never said a word, but took her bonnet by the strings, in the manner of a sling, aimed a blow at Mr. Chillip's head with it, walked out, and never came back. She vanished like a discontented fairy, and never came back anymore.

Scene Two:

DAVID

The years between my birth and the beginning of my schooling were spent happily with my widowed mother and my nurse, Peggotty, at Rookery, our home. The first objects that assume a distinct presence before me, as I look back into the blank of my infancy, are my mother with her pretty hair and youthful shape, and Peggotty, with no shape at all and cheeks and arms so hard and red that I wondered the birds didn't peck her in preference to apples. What else do I remember? Let me see. --- Peggotty, and I were sitting one night by the parlor fire, alone. I had been reading to Peggotty about crocodiles, but I was tired of reading, and dead sleepy; I had reached that stage of sleepiness when Peggotty seemed to swell and grow immensely large. I propped my eyelids open with my two forefingers, and looked perseveringly at her as she sat at work: "Peggotty, were you ever married?"

PEGGOTTY

Lord, Master Davy, what's put marriage in your head?

DAVID

But were you ever married, Peggotty? You are a very handsome woman, an't you?

PEGGOTTY

Me handsome, Davy? Lawk, no, my dear! But what put marriage in **y**our head?

DAVID

I don't know! --- You mustn't marry more than one person at a time, may you, Peggotty?

PEGGOTTY

Certainly not!

DAVID

But if you marry a person, and the person dies, why then you may marry another person, mayn't you, Peggotty?

PEGGOTTY

You may if you choose, my dear. That's a matter of opinion.

DAVID

But what is your opinion, Peggotty?

PEGGOTTY

My opinion is that I never was married myself, Master Davy, and that I don't expect to be. That's all I know about the subject.

DAVID

You an't cross, I suppose, Peggotty, are you?

I really thought she was, she had been so short with me; but I was quite mistaken for she laid aside her work and opening her arms wide took my curly head within them and gave it a good squeeze. I know it was a good squeeze, because being very plump, whenever she made any exertion after she dressed, some of the buttons on the back of the gown flew off. And I recollect two bursting to the opposite side of the parlor while she was hugging me.

PEGGOTTY

Now let me hear some more about the Crorkindills for I ain't heard half enough.

DAVID

Narrates: We had exhausted the crocodiles, and begun with the alligators, when the garden-bell rang. We went out to the door and there was my mother, looking unusually pretty, I thought, and with her a gentleman with beautiful black hair and whiskers. His name was Mr. Murdstone and he wanted to shake my hand. My right hand was in my mother's left, so I gave him the other. My mother drew my right hand forward, but I was resolved, for my former reason, not to give him it, and I did not. I gave him the other, and he shook it heartily, and said: "You are a brave fellow" and went away. Gradually I became used to seeing the gentleman with the black whiskers, but I liked him no better than at first, and had the same uneasy jealousy of him. Weeks later, after returning from a visit to Peggotty's family in Yarmouth, I was told by Peggotty:

PEGGOTTY

You got a new Pa!

DAVID

Narrates: Changes gradually took place in our household. My old dear bedroom was changed, and I was to lie a long way off. I was severely disciplined by my new father for having a dirty face or not being quick

enough with my recitations on history, geography, or grammar and my sums in arithmetic. I pour over these lessons without any result or enlightenment until dinnertime when, having made a mulatto of myself by getting the dirt of the slate into the pores of my skin, I have a slice of bread to help me out with the lessons, and am considered in disgrace for the rest of the evening. The natural result of this treatment was to make me sullen, dull, and dogged. I was not made the less so by my sense of being daily more and more shut out and alienated from my mother. I believe that I should have been almost stupefied but for one circumstance. It was this: My father had left a small collection of books in my little room upstairs, to which I had access and which nobody else in our house ever troubled. From that blessed little room, Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Tom Jones, the Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, and Robinson Crusoe came out a glorious host to keep me company. They kept alive my fancy, and my hope of something beyond that place and time. This was my only and my constant comfort. My attempts at learning at home under the direction of Mr. Murdstone went from bad to worse. I would come in with an idea of distinguishing myself, conceiving that I was very well prepared, but it would turn out to be quite a mistake. Book after book was added to the heap of failures. One particularly trying day, Mr. Murdstone became impatient with my poor scholarship and he announced to me:

MURDSTONE

David, you and I are going upstairs, boy!

DAVID

He walked me up to me room slowly and gravely--I am certain he had a delight in that formal parade of executing justice--and when we got there, he suddenly twisted my head under his arm. "Mr. Murdstone! Sir! Don't! Pray don't beat me! I have tried to learn, sir, but I can't learn while you and Miss Murdstone are by. I can't indeed!"

MURDSTONE

Can't you, indeed, David? We'll try that.

DAVID

He had my head in a vice; but I twined round him somehow, and stopped him for a moment, entreating him not to beat me. It was only for a moment that I stopped him, for he cut me heavily an instant afterwards; and in the same instant I caught his hand in my mouth, between my teeth, and bit him through. It sets my teeth on edge to think of it. He beat me then as if he would have beaten me to death, and I spent the next few days locked in my room. Finally Mr. Murdstone decided to send me away to school near London at a place called Salem House. It was holiday time at Salem House when I arrived, and all the boys were at their several homes. That was fortunate for me because it gave me time to become adjusted to my new surroundings and also to get used to wearing my placard.. Mr. Murdstone gave instructions to the head master, Mr. Creakle, that I should wear upon my back a pasteboard placard which bore the words, "Take care of him. He bites." What I

suffered from that placard nobody can imagine. Whether it was possible for people to see me or not, I fancied that somebody was reading it.

Tommy Traddles was the first boy who returned to school, and it was a happy circumstance for me. He enjoyed my placard so much that he saved me from the embarrassment of either disclosure or concealment by presenting me to every boy who came back, great or small, immediately upon his arrival in this form:

TRADDLES

Look here! Here's a game!

DAVID

Happily for me, the greater part of the boys came back low-spirited, and were not so boisterous at my expense as I had expected. Some of them certainly did dance about me like wild Indians, and the greater part could not resist the temptation of pretending that I was a dog, and patting and soothing me, lest I should bite, and saying, "lie down, sir!" and calling me Towzer. I was not considered as being formally received into the school, however, until J. Steerforth arrived. Before this boy, who was reputed to be a great scholar, and was very good looking, and at least half a dozen years my senior, I was carried as before a magistrate. He inquired into the particulars of my punishment, and was pleased to express his opinion that it was a "jolly shame" for which I became bound to him afterwards. Walking aside with me, he further inquired:

STEERFORTH

What money have you got, Copperfield?

DAVID

Seven shillings.

STEERFORTH

Perhaps you'd like to spend a couple of shillings or so, in a bottle of currant wine by-and-by, up in the bedroom? You belong to my bedroom, I find.

DAVID

Yes, I should like that.

STEERFORTH

Well! We must make it stretch as far as we can; that's all. I'll do the best in my power for you. I can go out when I like, and I'll smuggle the prog in. Now don't make yourself uneasy; I'll take care it should be alright.

DAVID

He was as good as his word. When he went upstairs to bed, he produced the whole seven shillings' worth, and laid it out on my bed in the moonlight saying:

STEERFORTH

There you are young Copperfield, and a royal spread you've got.

DAVID

Narrates: As we were eating and drinking the currant wine, I heard all

kinds of things about the school and all belonging to it. The greatest wonder that I heard was there being one boy in school on whom the head master never ventured to lay a hand, that boy being J. Steerforth. Steerforth confirmed this when it was stated, and said that he should like to begin to see him do it. On being asked by Traddles how he should proceed if the master would begin to do it, he dipped a match into his phosphorus box on purpose to shed a glare over his reply and said:

STEERFORTH

I would commence by knocking him down with a blow on the forehead from the seven and sixpenny inkbottle that is always on the mantelpiece

DAVID

Narrates: We sat in the dark for some time, breathless at this daring. Traddles, the most unfortunate boy in the world, was always being caned--I think he was caned every day that half year, except one holiday Monday when he was only ruler'd on both hands--and was always going to write his uncle about it, and never did. After laying his head on the desk for a little while, he would cheer up somehow, begin to laugh again, and draw skeletons all over his slate, before his eyes were dry. An accidental circumstance cemented the intimacy between Steerforth and me, in a manner that inspired me with great pride and satisfaction, though it sometimes led to inconvenience. It happened on one occasion, when he was doing me the honor of talking

to me on the playground, that I hazarded the observation that something or somebody--I forget what now--was like somebody or something in Peregrine Pickle. He said nothing at the time; but when I was going to bed at night, asked me if I had got that book? I told him no, and explained how it was that I had read it, and all those other books of which I had made mention.

STEERFORTH

And do you recollect them?

DAVID

Oh, yes, I have a good memory and I recollect them very well.

STEERFORTH

Then I tell you what, young Copperfield. You shall tell'em to me.

I can't get to sleep very early at night, and I generally wake rather early in the morning. We'll go over 'em one after another. We'll make some regular Arabian Nights of it.

DAVID

Narrates: I felt extremely flattered by this arrangement, and we commenced carrying it into execution that very evening. What ravages I committed on my favorite authors in the course of my interpretation of them, I am not in the condition to say, and should be very unwilling to know. But I had profound faith in them, and I had a simple earnest manner of narrating them, and those qualities went a long way. I now pass over all that happened at school, until the anniversary

of my birthday came around in March. Except that Steerforth was more to be admired than ever, I remember nothing. How well I recollect the kind of day it was! I smell the fog that hung about the place and I see the hoarfrost, ghostly through it. It was after breakfast, and we boys had been summoned in from the playground, when Mr. Sharp, my teacher, entered and said:

SHARP

David Copperfield is to go into the parlourDon't hurry, David. There's time enough; my boy, don't hurry.

DAVID

Narrates: I might have been surprised by the feeling tone in which he spoke if I had given it any thought. I gave it none until afterwards. I hurried away to the parlour; and there I found the head master's wife, Mrs. Creakle, sitting at her breakfast, with an open letter in her hand.

MRS. CREAKLE

David, I want to speak to you very particularly. I have something to tell you, my child. You are too young to know how the world changes every day, and how the people in it pass away. But we all have to learn. When you came away from home at the end of vacation, were they all well? Because I grieve to tell you that I hear this morning your mother is very ill.

DAVID

Narrates: A mist rose between Mrs. Creakle and me, and her figure seemed to move in it for an instant. Then I felt the burning tears run down my face, and then I was steady again.

MRS. CREAKLE

She is very dangerously ill She is dead.

DAVID

Narrates: There was no need to tell me so. I had already broken out in a desolate cry, and felt an orphan in the wide world. She was very kind to me, She kept me there all day, and left me alone sometimes; and I cried, and wore myself to sleep, and awoke and cried again. When I could cry no longer, I began to think, and then the oppression on my breast was heaviest, and my grief a dull pain that there was no ease for. I left Salem House upon the morrow afternoon stage. I little thought then that I left it never to return. I now approach the period in my life which I can never lose the remembrance of, while I remember anything; and the recollection of which has often, without invocation, come before me like a ghost, and haunted happier times. Back home at Rookery, I had been out one day, loitering somewhere, when turning the corner of a lane near our house, I came upon my step-father, Mr. Murdstone, walking with a gentleman named Mr. Quinion. Mr. Quinion slept at our house that night. It was after breakfast the next morning, I had put my chair away, and was going

to my room, when Mr. Murdstone called me back.

MURDSTONE

David, to the young, this is a world for action; not for moping and droning in. It is especially so for a young boy of your disposition, which requires a great deal of correcting; and to which no greater service can be done than to force it to conform to the ways of the working world, and to bend it and break it. For stubbornness won't do here. What it wants is to be crushed. And crushed it must be. I suppose you know, David, that I am not rich. At any rate you know it now. You have received some considerable education already. Education is costly, and I am of opinion that it would not be at all advantageous to you to be kept at school. What is before you is a fight with the world; and the sooner you begin it, the better. You have heard the counting-house mentioned sometimes?

DAVID

The counting-house, sir?

MURDSTONE

Of Murdstone and Grinby, in the wine trade. You have heard mentioned the business or the cellars, or the wharf, or something about it?

DAVID

I think I have heard the business mentioned, sir, but I don't know when.

MURDSTONE

It does not matter when. Mr. Quinion manages that business. Mr. Quinion

suggests that it gives employment to some other boys, and that he sees no reason why it shouldn't, on the same terms, give employment to you. Those terms are, that you earn enough for yourself to provide for your eating and drinking, and pocket money. Your lodging will be paid by me. So will your washing. Your clothes will be looked after for you, too, as you will not be able, for awhile, to get them for yourself. So you are now going to London, David, with Mr. Quinion, to begin the world on your own account. In short, you are provided for, and will please to do your duty.

DAVID

Narrates: Though I quite understood that the purpose of this announcement was to get rid of me, I have no distinct remembrance whether it pleased me or frightened me. Nor had I much time for the clearing of my thoughts as Mr. Quinion was to go upon the morrow. Murdstone and Grinby's warehouse was at the waterside. Their 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 know that a great many empty bottles were one of the consequences of the traffic, and that certain men and boys were employed to examine them against the light, and of the boys employed upon it, I was one.

One day when the counting-house clock was at half-past twelve, and there was general preparation for going to dinner, Mr. Quinion tapped at the counting-house window and beckoned me to come into his office.

I went in, and found there a stoutish, middle aged person in a brown overcoat and black tights and shoes with no more hair on his head than there is upon an egg and with a very extensive face which he turned full upon me. His clothes were shabby, but he had an imposing shirt-collar on. He carried a jaunty sort of stick with a large pair of rusty tassels to it, and a quizzing glass hung outside his coat--for ornament, I afterwards found, as he very seldom looked through it, and couldn't see anything when he did, Mr. Quinion introduced me to the stranger.

QUINION

This is he.

MICAWBER

This is Master Copperfield. I hope I see you well, sir?

DAVID

I am very well sir, and I hope you are the same.

MICAWBER

I am, thank Heaven, quite well. I have received a letter from Mr. Murdstone, in which he mentions that he would desire me to receive into an apartment in the rear of my house, which at present is unoccupied--and is, in short, to be let as a--in short, as a bedroom--the young beginner whom I have now the pleasure to (The stranger waved his hand, and settled his chin in his shirt-collar.)

QUINION

This is Mr. Micawber. He is known to Mr. Murdstone. He takes orders

for us on commission, when he can find any. He has been written to by Mr. Murdstone on the subject of your lodgings, and he will receive you as a lodge.

MICAWBER

My address is Windsor Terrace, City Road. I--in short, I live there. Under the impression that your peregrinations in this metropolis have not as yet been extensive, and that you might have some difficulty in penetrating the arcana of the Modern Babylon in direction of the City Road--in short, that you might lose yourself--I shall be happy to call this evening, and install you in the knowledge of the nearest way. At what hour shall I . . . ?

QUINION

At about eight.

MICAWBER

At about eight. I beg to wish you good day, Mr. Quinion. I will intrude no longer.

DAVID

Narrates: So he put on his hat, and went out with his cane under his arm. At the appointed time in the evening, Mr. Micawber reappeared, and we walked to our house, as I suppose I must now call it, together. Arriving at his house in Windsor Terrace (which I noticed was shabby like himself, but also, like himself, made all the show it could) he presented me to Mrs. Micawber, a thin and faded lady, not at all young,

who was sitting in the parlor holding a baby, one of twins. She came up to show me the apartment, and sat down to take breath.

MRS. MICAWBER

I never thought before I married, when I lived with my papa and mama, that I should ever find it necessary to take a lodger. But Mr. Micawber being in difficulties, all considerations of private feeling must give way.

DAVID

Yes, ma'am.

MRS. MICAWBER

Mr. Micawber's difficulties are almost overwhelming just at present, and whether it is possible to bring him through them, I don't know. When I lived at home with papa and mama, I really should have hardly understood what the word meant, in the sense in which I now employ it, but *experientia* does it--as papa used to say.

DAVID

Narrates: Poor Mrs. Micawber! She said that she had tried to exert herself; and so, I have no doubt, she had. The center of the street-door was so perfectly covered with a great brass plate, on which was engraved "Mrs. Micawber's Boarding Establishment for Young Ladies." The only visitors I ever saw or heard of were the creditors. In this house and with this family, I passed my leisure time. Mr. Micawber's difficulties were an addition to the distressed state of my mind. I have known him to come home to supper with a flood of tears, and a declaration

that nothing was now left but a jail; and go to bed making a calculation of the expense of putting bow-windows in the house, "in case anything turned up," which was his favorite expression. And Mrs. Micawber was just the same. At last Mr. Micawber's difficulties came to a crisis, and he was arrested early one morning, and carried over to the King's Bench Prison in the Borough. He told me, as he went out of the house, that the God of day had now come upon him. The furniture was sold for the family benefit, and at last Mrs. Micawber resolved to move into the prison, where Mr. Micawber had now secured a room to himself. Mr. Micawber applied for his release under the Insolvent Debtor's Act, and was discharged in about six weeks. Mrs. Micawber's family was of the opinion that Mr. Micawber should quit London and exert his talents in the country. Something might be done for a man of his ability in the Custom House in Plymouth. On the last Sunday before their departure, they invited me to dinner. We had a loin of pork and apple sauce, and a pudding. We had a very pleasant day, though we were all in a tender state about our approaching separation.

MRS. MICAWBER

I shall never, Master Copperfield, revert to the period when Mr. Micawber was in difficulties, without thinking of you. Your conduct has always been of the most delicate and obliging description. You have never been a lodger. You have been a friend.

MICAWBER

My dear young friend, I am older than you; a man of some experience in life, and of some difficulties, generally speaking. At present, and until something turns up (which I am, I may say, hourly expecting) I have nothing to bestow but advice. Still my advice is so far worth taking that--in short, that I have never taken it myself, and am the miserable wretch you behold.

MRS. MICAWBER

My dear Micawber!

MICAWBER

I say the miserable wretch you behold. My advice is, never do tomorrow what you can do today. Procrastination is the thief of time. Collar him.

MRS. MICAWBER

My poor papa's maxim.

MICAWBER

My other piece of advice, Copperfield, you know. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen nineteen and six, result--happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty ought and six, result--misery. The blossom is blighted, the leaf is withered, the God of day goes down upon the dreary scene, and--and in short, you are ever floored. As I am!

DAVID

Narrates: I did not fail to assure him that I would store these precepts in my mind, though indeed I had no need to do so, for, at the time, they affected me visibly. Next morning I met the whole family at the coach office, and saw them, with a desolate heart, take their places outside at the back.

MRS. MICAWBER

Master Copperfield, God bless you! I never can forget all that, you know, and I never would if I could.

MICAWBER

Copperfield, farewell! Every happiness and prosperity! In case of anything turning up (of which I am rather confident) I shall be extremely happy if it should be in my power to improve your prospects.

DAVID

Narrates: I think, as Mrs. Micawber sat at the back of the coach, with the children, and I stood in the road looking wistfully at them, a mist cleared from her eyes, and she saw what a little creature I really was. I think so, because she beckoned me to climb up, with quite a new motherly expression in her face, and put her arm round my neck, and gave me just such a kiss as she might have given to her own boy. I had barely time to get down again before the coach started, and I could hardly see the family for the handkerchiefs they waved. It was gone in a minute.

As I went to begin my weary day at Murdstone and Grinby's, I had no intention of passing many more weary days there. No. I had resolved to run away--to go, by some means or other, down into the country, to the only relation I had in the world, and tell my story to my aunt, Miss Betsy. As I did not know where Miss Betsy lived, I wrote a long letter to Peggotty, and asked her if she remembered. Peggotty's answer came soon. She told me that Miss Betsy lived near Dover, but whether at Dover itself, at Hythe, Sandgate, or Folkstone, she could not say. I deemed this enough for my objects, and resolved to set out at the end of that week. I set out on fact on the Kent Road in the direction of Dover, a six-day journey. When I arrived in Dover with my ragged shoes, and my dusty, sunburnt, half-clothed figure, I inquired about my aunt among the boatmen first, and received various answers. The shopkeepers, not liking my appearance, generally replied without hearing what I had to say, that they had got nothing for me. I felt more miserable and destitute than I had at any period of my running away. My money from selling my wesket and jacket was all gone. I had nothing left to dispose of; I was hungry, thirsty, and worn out; and seemed as distant from the end as if I had remained in London. At length I walked until I came to a little general shop where I again inquired. There I had the good fortune to meet my aunt's handmaid who bade me follow her to Aunt Betsy's cottage, where she left me standing at the garden gate. From head to foot I was powdered almost as white with chalk

and dust, as if I had come out of a lime kiln. In this plight, and with a strong consciousness of it, I waited to introduce myself to, and to make my first impression on, my formidable aunt. I was on the point of slinking off when there came out of the house a lady with her handkerchief tied over her, and a pair of gardening gloves on her hands, and carrying a great knife. I immediately knew her to be my Aunt Betsy, for she came stalking out of the house exactly as my poor mother had so often described her stalking up to our garden at Bunderstone Rookery.

MISS BETSY

Go away! Go along! No boys here!

DAVID

If you please, Ma'am. If you please aunt.

MISS BETSY

Eh?

DAVID

If you please, aunt, I am your nephew.

MISS BETSY

Oh, Lord!

DAVID

I am David Copperfield, of Blunderstone, in Suffolk, where you came on the night when I was born, and saw my dear mama. I have been very unhappy since she died. I have been slighted, and taught nothing, and thrown upon myself, and put to work not fit for me. It made me run away

to you. I was robbed at first setting out, and have walked all the way and have never slept in a bed since I began the journey.

MISS BETSY

Oh, you poor child.

DAVID

Narrates: Here my self-support gave way all at once and with a movement of my hands, intended to show her my ragged state, and call it to witness that I had suffered something, I broke into a passion of crying, which I suppose had been pent up within me all the week. My aunt collared me and took me into the parlor. Her first proceeding there was to unlock a tall press, bring out several bottles, and pour some of the contents of each into my mouth. When she had administered these restoratives, she put me on the sofa, with a shawl under my head, and the handkerchief from her own head under my feet, lest I should sully the cover. Then sitting down behind a screen so that I could not see her face, she exclaimed at intervals, "Mercy on us!" letting those exclamations off like minute guns. After a time, she rang the bell.

MISS BETSY

Janet, go upstairs, give my compliments to Mr. Dick, and say I wish to speak to him.

DAVID

Narrates: My aunt, with her hands behind her walked up and down the room, until a florid, pleasant looking gentleman, with a gray head, who

shut one eye in a grotesque manner, came in laughing.

MISS BETSY

Mr. Dick, don't be a fool, because nobody can be more discreet than you can, when you choose. We all know that. So don't be a fool, whatever you are. Mr. Dick, you have heard me mention David Copperfield? Now don't pretend not to have a memory, because you and I know better.

MR. DICK

David Copperfield? David Copperfield? Oh yes, to be sure. David, certainly.

MISS BETSY

Well, this is his boy, his son. He would be as like his father as it's possible to be; he was not so like his mother, too.

MR. DICK

His son? David's son? Indeed!

MISS BETSY

Yes, and has done a pretty business. He has run away. Ah! His sister, Betsy Trotwood, would never have run away. Now the question I put to you is, what shall we do with him?

MR. DICK

What shall you do with him? (feebly scratching his head) Oh! Do with him?

MISS BETSY

Yes, Come! I want some very sound advice.

MR. DICK

Why, if I was you, I should--I should wash him!

MISS BETSY

Janet, Mr. Dick sets us all right. Heat the bath! Mr. Dick, you'll consider yourself guardian, jointly with me, of this child.

MR. DICK

I shall be delighted to be guardian of David's son.

MISS BETSY

Very good. That's settled. I have been thinking, do you know, Mr. Dick, that I might call him Trotwood?

MR. DICK

Certainly, certainly, call him Trotwood, certainly. David's son, Trotwood.

MISS BETSY

Trotwood Copperfield, you mean?

MR. DICK

Yes, to be sure. Yes. Trotwood Copperfield.

DAVID

Narrates: Thus I began my new life, in a new name, and with everything new about me. I never thought that I had a curious couple of guardians in my aunt and Mr. Dick. The two things clearest in my mind were that a remoteness had come upon the old Blunderstone life; and that a curtain had forever fallen on my life at Murdstone. And while

I advanced in friendship and intimacy with Mr. Dick, I did not go backward in the favor of his staunch friend, my aunt. She took so kindly to me, that, in the course of a few weeks, she shortened my adopted name of Trotwood into "Trot," and even encouraged me to hope, that if I went on as I had begun, I might take equal rank in her affections with my sister, Betsy Trotwood, who was never born. One evening when the backgammon board was placed as usual for herself and Mr. Dick, my aunt proclaimed.

MISS BETSY

Trot, we must not forget your education. Should you like to go to school at Canterbury?

DAVID

I should like that very much. It is so near here.

MISS BETSY

Good. Should you like to go tomorrow?

DAVID

Oh, yes, aunt!

MISS BETSY

Good. Janet, hire the gray pony and chaise tomorrow morning at ten o'clock, and pack up Master Trotwood's clothes tonight.

DAVID

Narrates: The next morning, my aunt, who was perfectly indifferent to public opinion, drove the gray pony through Dover in a masterly

manner. When we came into the country road, she permitted him to relax a little, however, and looking at me down in a valley of cushion by her, asked me:

MISS BETSY

Are you happy, Trot?

DAVID

Very happy indeed, thank you, aunt. Is it a large school, aunt?

MISS BETSY

Why, I don't know. We are going to Mr. Wickfield's first.

DAVID

Does he keep a school?

MISS BETSY

No, Trot, he keeps an office.

DAVID

Narrates: At length we stopped before a very old house bulging out over the road. When the pony chaise stopped at the door, and my eyes were intent upon the house, I saw a cadaverous face appear at a small window on the ground floor and quickly disappear. The low arched door then opened, and the face came out. It belonged to a red-haired person--a youth of fifteen, as I take it now, but looking much older--whose hair was cropped as close as the closest stubble; who had hardly any eyebrows, and no eyelashes, and eyes of red-brown, so unsheltered and unshaded that I remember wondering how he

went to sleep. He was high shouldered and bony; dressed in decent black and a white wisp of a neck cloth; buttoned up to the throat; and had a long, lank skeleton hand, which particularly attracted my attention, as he stood at the pony's head, rubbing his chin with it, and looking up at us in the chaise.

MISS BETSY

Is Mr. Wickfield at home, Uriah Heep?

URIAH

Mr. Wickfield's home, ma'am. If you'll please to walk into the parlor.

MR. WICKFIELD

Miss Betsy Trotwood, pray come in. You'll excuse my being busy. I was engaged for a moment. You know my motive. I have but one in life. Well, Miss Trotwood, what wind blows you here? Not an ill wind I hope?

MISS BETSY

No, I have not come for any law. That is my nephew, Trotwood Copperfield. My grand-nephew.

MR. WICKFIELD

Wasn't aware you had a grand-nephew, I give you my word.

MISS BETSY

I have adopted him, and I have brought him here, to put him to a school where he may be thoroughly well taught, and well treated. Now

tell me where that school is, and what it is, and all about it.

MR. WICKFIELD

At the best we have, your nephew couldn't board just now.

MISS BETSY

It's very unfortunate. I don't know what to do, Trot.

MR. WICKFIELD

It does happen unfortunately. But I'll tell you what you can do. Leave your nephew here, for the present. He's a quiet fellow. He won't distrub me at all. It's a capital house for study, as quiet as a **monastery**, and almost as roomy. Leave him here.

MISS BETSY

I am very much obliged to you, and so it be, I see; but

MR. WICKFIELD

Come! I know what you mean. You shall not be oppressed by the receipt of favors, Miss Trotwood. You may pay for him, if you like. We won't be hard about terms, but you shall pay if you will.

MISS BETSY

On the understanding, though, it doesn't lessen the real obligation. I shall be very glad to leave him.

MR. WICKFIELD

Then come and see my little housekeeper.

DAVID

Narrates: Mr. Wickfield tapped at a door in a corner of the paneled wall, and a girl of about my age came quickly out and kissed him.

AGNES

Yes, Papa?

DAVID

Narrates: This was his little housekeeper, his daughter Agnes. When I heard how he said it, and saw how he held her hand, I guessed what the one motive of his life was. My aunt was as happy as I was in the arrangement made for me, and we were left to take leave of one another without any restraint. She told me that everything would be arranged for me by Mr. Wickfield, and that I should want for nothing and gave me the kindest words and the best advice.

MISS BETSY

Trot, be a credit to yourself, to me and Mr. Dick, and Heaven be with you! Never be mean in anything; never be false; never be cruel. Avoid those three vices, Trot, and I can always be hopeful of you. The pony's at the door, and I am off! Stay here.

DAVID

Narrates: With these words she embraced me hastily, and went out of the room, shutting the door after me. In the course of the evening, I had rambled down to the outside door and a little way along the street, that I might have another peep at the old houses, and the gray

Cathedral; and might think of my coming through that old city on my journey, and of my passing the very house I lived in without knowing it. As I came back, I saw Uriah Heep shutting up the office; and feeling friendly towards everybody, went in and spoke to him, and at parting gave him my hand. But oh, what a clammy hand his was! It was as ghostly to the touch as to the sight! I rubbed mine afterwards, to warm it, and to rub his off. It was such an uncomfortable hand that when I went to my room, it was still cold and wet upon my memory. Leaning out of my window, and seeing one of the faces on the beam-ends looking at me sideways, I fancied it was Uriah Heep got up there somehow, and shut him out in a hurry.

End of Act I.

Act II.

David As A Young Man

DAVID

Narrates: My school days! The silent glidings on of my existence-- the unseen, unfelt progress of my life--from childhood up to youth! I am doubtful whether I was at heart glad or sorry, when my school days drew to an end. I had been very happy there; I was eminent and distinguished in that little world. For these reasons I was sorry to go; but for other reasons, unsubstantial enough, I was glad. Misty ideas of being a young man at my own disposal, of wonderful things to be seen and done, and the wonderful effects I could not fail to make upon society, lured me away.

My aunt and I had held many grave deliberations on the calling to which I should be devoted. For a year or more I had endeavored to find a satisfactory answer to her often repeated question of what I would like to be. But I had no particular liking, that I could discover, for anything. My desire was to apply myself to some pursuit that would not lie too heavily upon her purse; and to do my duty in it whatever it might be. My aunt suggested to me that I take a little journey to Suffolk to visit Peggotty for a month or so. Her object was that I should look about me and should think a little. It was on returning home from this journey that I drove to Lincoln's Inn Fields, where I found my aunt up, and waiting supper. After supper my aunt began.

MISS BETSY

Well, Trot. What do you think of the proctor plan? Or have you not begun to think about it yet?

DAVID

I have thought a good deal about it, my dear aunt, and have talked a good deal about it. I like it very much indeed. I like it exceedingly.

MISS BETSY

Come, that's cheering.

DAVID

I have only one difficulty, aunt. I want to ask you, as this seems to be a limited profession, whether my entrance into it would not be very expensive?

MISS BETSY

It will cost to article you, just a thousand pounds.

DAVID

Now, my dear aunt. I am uneasy in my mind about that. It's a large sum of money. You have expended a great deal on my education, and have always been as liberal to me in all things as it was possible to be. You have been the soul of generosity. Are you certain that you can afford to part with so much money, and that it is right that it should be so expended? I only ask you, my second mother, to consider. Are you certain?

MISS BETSY

Trot, my child, if I have any object in life, it is to provide for your being a good, a sensible, and a happy man. I am bent upon it--so is Dick. When you came to me, a little runaway boy, all dusty and way-worn, perhaps, I thought, perhaps, I might have been better friends with your poor child of a mother. From that day until now, Trot, you have ever been a credit to me and a pride and a pleasure. I have no other claim upon my means, and you are my adopted child. Only be a loving child to me in my age, and bear with my whims and fancies; and you will do more for an old woman whose prime of life was not so happy or conciliating as it might have been, than ever that old woman did for you. All is agreed and understood between us now, Trot. We need talk no more of this. Give me a kiss, and we'll go to the Commons after breakfast tomorrow.

DAVID

Narrates: At about mid-day we set out for the office of Messrs. Spenlow and Jorkins, in Doctors' Commons. I was introduced to Mr. Spenlow, terms were agreed upon, and it was settled that I should begin my month's probation as soon as I pleased, and that my aunt need neither remain in town or return at its expiration, as the articles of agreement of which I was to be the subject could easily be sent to her at home for signature. As I had no lodgings as yet, my aunt had investigated and found a furnished set of chambers suitable

for a young bachelor. We inquired of the landlady, Mrs. Crupp, and she showed up upstairs. My aunt saw how enraptured I was with the premises, and took them for a month, with leave to remain for twelve months when that time was out. Mrs. Crupp was to find linen, and to cook; every other necessary was already provided; and Mrs. Crupp expressly intimated that she should always yearn towards me as a son, and she said thank Heaven she had now found "summun" she could care for!

Scene Two:

DAVID

Narrates: I had been in London only a few days when I was invited to a dinner party by a Mrs. Waterbrook, a friend of Mr. Wickfield's whom I had met at the theatre the night before. When I went to dinner next day, I divined that I was not the only guest. I found Uriah Heep among the company, in a suit of black, and in deep humility. There were other guests--all iced for the occasion, as it struck me, like the wine. But there was one who attracted my attention before he came in, on account of my hearing him announced as Mr. Traddles! My mind flew back to Salem House; and could it be Tommy Traddles, I thought, who used to draw skeletons? I looked for Mr. Traddles with unusual interest. He was a sober, steady looking young man of retiring manners, with a comic head of hair, and eyes that were rather wide open; and he got himself into an obscure corner so soon, that I had some

difficulty in making him out. At length I had a good view of him, and either my vision deceived me, or it was the old unfortunate Tommy. My reflections were still in progress when dinner was announced. On my way up the stairs, I made myself known to Traddles, who greeted me with great fervor. After dinner I was very glad to talk to Agnes and to introduce Traddles to her. As he was obliged to leave early, I had not nearly so much conversation with him as I could have wished; but we exchanged addresses, and promised ourselves the pleasure of another meeting when he should come back to town. After Traddles left, Agnes and I had a long talk about her father and his business.

AGNES

Trotwood, there is something that I want to ask you, and that I may not have another opportunity of asking you for a long time, perhaps. Something I would ask, I think, of no one else. Have you observed any gradual change in Papa?

DAVID

Yes, Agnes, I have observed it, and have wondered if you had too.

AGNES

Tell me what it is.

DAVID

I think--I'll be quite plain, Agnes, liking him so much.

AGNES

Yes.

DAVID

I think he does himself no good by his habit of drinking that has increased upon him since I first came here. He is often very nervous, or I fancy so.

AGNES

It is not fancy.

DAVID

His hand trembles, his speech is not plain, and his eyes look wild. I have seen that at those times, and when he is least like himself, he is most certain to be wanted on some business.

AGNES

By Uriah Heep.

DAVID

Yes, and the sense of being unfit for it, or of not having understood it, or of having shown his condition in spite of himself, seems to make him so uneasy, that next day he becomes jaded and haggard. Do not be alarmed by what I say, Agnes, but in this state I saw him, only the other evening, lay down his head upon his desk, and shed tears like a child.

AGNES

Uriah Heep was in London a week before me. I am afraid on disagreeable business, Trotwood. I believe he is going to enter into partnership with Papa.

DAVID

What? Uriah? That mean, fawning fellow, worm himself into such promotion! Have you made no remonstrance about it, Agnes? Consider what a connection it is likely to be. You must speak out. You must not allow your father to take such a step. You must prevent it while there is time.

AGNES

It was not long ago that he gave me the first intimation of what I tell you. It was sad to see father struggling between his desire to represent it to me as a matter of choice on his part, and his inability to conceal that it was forced upon him. I felt very sorry.

DAVID

Forced upon him, Agnes! Who forced it upon him?

AGNES

Uriah. He had made himself indispensable to Papa. He is subtle and watchful. He has mastered Papa's weaknesses, fostered them, and taken advantage of them until Papa is afraid of him. His ascendancy over Papa is very great. He professes humility and gratitude--with truth, perhaps; I hope so but his position is really one of power, and I fear he makes a hard use of his power.

DAVID

That hound of a Heep!

AGNES

At the time I speak of, Uriah had told Papa that he was going away; that he was very sorry and unwilling to leave, but that he had better prospects. Papa was very much depressed then, and more bowed down by care than ever you or I have ever seen him; but he seemed relieved by this expedient of the partnership, though at the same time he seemed hurt by it and ashamed of it.

DAVID

And how did you receive it, Agnes?

AGNES

I did, Trotwood, what I hope was right. Feeling sure that it was necessary for Papa's peace that the sacrifice should be made, I entreated him to make it. I said it would lighten the load of his life-- I hope it will; and that it would give me increased opportunities of being his companion. Oh, Trotwood! I feel almost as if I had been Papa's enemy, instead of his loving child. (She begins to sob softly)

DAVID

Pray, Agnes, don't! Don't, my dear sister.

AGNES

We are not likely to remain alone much longer, and while I have an opportunity, let me . . . in any case, think first of Papa and me!

Scene Three:

DAVID

Narrates: It came into my head next day to go and look after Traddles, and I set out to visit my old school fellow. I found that the street was not as desirable as one as I could have wished it to be, for the sake of Traddles. When I got to the top of the stairs, Traddles was on the landing to meet me. He was delighted to see me, and gave me welcome, with great heartiness, to his little room.

DAVID

Traddles, I am delighted to see you.

TRADDLES

I am delighted to see you, Copperfield. It was because I was thoroughly glad to see you when we met at Mrs. Waterbrook's that I gave you this address instead of my address at chambers.

DAVID

Oh, you have chambers?

TRADDLES

Why, I have the fourth of a room and a passage, and the fourth of a clerk. Three others and myself unite to have a set of chambers--to look businesslike--and we quarter the clerk too. Half a crown a week he costs me.

DAVID

You are reading for the bar, Mr. Waterbrook informed me?

TRADDLES

Why, yes. I am reading for the bar. The fact is, I have just begun to keep my terms, after rather a long delay. It's some time since I was articulated, but the payment of that hundred pounds was a great pull. A great pull! Now then, this is the end of my prosing about myself. I get on as well as I can. I don't make much but I don't spend much. In general, I board with the people downstairs, who are very agreeable people indeed. Both Mr. and Mrs. Micawber have seen a good deal of life, and are excellent company.

DAVID

My dear Traddles, what are you talking about? Mr. and Mrs. Micawber! Why, I am intimately acquainted with them!

TRADDLES

Narrates: An opportune knock at the door, which I knew well from old experience in Windsor Terrace, and since nobody but Mr. Micawber could ever have knocked at that door, resolved any doubt in my mind as to their being my old friends. I begged Traddles to ask him landlord to walk up. Traddles accordingly did so, over the banister; and Mr. Micawber, not changed a bit--his tights, his stick, his shirt-collar, and his eyeglass, all the same as ever--came into the room with a gentle and youthful air.

MICAWBER

I was not aware that there was any individual, alien to this tenement,

in your sanctum.

DAVID

How do you do, Mr. Micawber?

MICAWBER

Sir, you are exceedingly obliging. I am in statu quo.

DAVID

And the Mrs. Micawber?

MICAWBER

Sir, she is also, thank God, in statu quo.

DAVID

And the children?

MICAWBER

Sir, I rejoice to reply that they are, likewise, in the enjoyment of salubrity. Ah, is it possible? Have I the pleasure of again beholding Copperfield? Good heaven, Mr. Traddles, to think that I should find you acquainted with the friends of my youth, the companion of earlier days! My dear! (calls off stage) Here is a gentleman in Mr. Traddles' apartment, whom he wishes to have the pleasure of presenting to you, my love! You find us, Copperfield, at present established, on what may be designated as a small and unassuming scale. It has been necessary that I should fall back, before making what I trust I shall not be accused of presumption in terming--a spring. The present is one of those momentous stages of life of man. You find me, fallen back, for a spring;

and I have every reason to believe that a vigorous leap will shortly be the result. My dear, here is a gentleman of the name of Copperfield, who wishes to renew his acquaintance with you.

DAVID

Narrates: It would have been better, as it turned out, to have led gently into this announcement, for Mrs. Micawber, being in delicate state of health, was overcome by it, and was taken so unwell, that Mr. Micawber was obliged, in great trepidation, to run down to the waterbutt in the backyard, and draw a basinfull to lave her brow with. She presently revived and was really pleased to see me. We had half-an-hour's talk, all together. Mr. Micawber was very anxious that I should stay to dinner, but I imagined I detected trouble, and calculation relative to the extent of the cold meat, in Mrs. Micawber's eye. I therefore pleaded another engagement; and seeing that Mrs. Micawber's spirits were immediately lightened, I resisted all persuasion to forego it. But I told Traddles and Mr. and Mrs. Micawber that before I could think of leaving, they must appoint a day when they would come and dine with me. An appointment was made for the purpose. I left. On the occasion of this domestic visit and party for my newly found friends, I merely provided a pair of soles, a small leg of mutton, and pigeon pie. Mrs. Crupp, my landlady, consented to cook the fish and the joint of mutton on the condition that I dined from home for a fortnight afterwards. Having laid in the materials for a bowl of punch,

to be compounded by Mr. Micawber, and having laid the tablecloth with my own hands, I awaited the result with composure. At the appointed time, my three visitors arrived together. Mr. Micawber with more shirt-collar than usual, and a new ribbon to his eye-glass; Mrs. Micawber with her cap in a whity-brown paper parcel; Traddles carrying the parcel, and supporting Mrs. Micawber on his arm. They were all delighted with my residence.

MICAWBER

My dear Copperfield, this is luxurious. This is the way of life which reminds me of the period when I was myself in a state of celibacy, and Mrs. Micawber had not yet been solicited to plight her faith at the Hymnal altar.

MRS. MICAWBER

He means, solicited by him, Mr. Copperfield. He cannot answer for others.

DAVID

Narrates: I then informed Mr. Micawber that I relied upon him for a bowl of punch, and led him to the lemons.. I never saw a man so thoroughly enjoy himself amid the fragrance of lemon peel and sugar, the odor of burning rum, and the steam of boiling water as Mr. Micawber did that afternoon. When he had finished preparing the refreshment, he said:

MICAWBER

Punch, my dear Copperfield, like time and tide, waits for no man. Ah! It is at the present moment in high flavor. My love, will you give me your opinion?

MRS. MICAWBER

Hum it is excellent!

MICAWBER

Then I will drink it, if my friend Copperfield will permit me to take the social liberty, to the days when my friend Copperfield and myself were younger, and fought our way in the world side by side. In the words we have sung together before now, that "We twa run about the braes and pu'd the gowans fine." I am not exactly aware what "gowans" may be, but I have no doubts that Copperfield and myself would frequently have taken a pull at them if it had been feasible.

DAVID

Narrates: Mr. Micawber then took a pull at his punch. So we all did. We then sat down to our feast. I suppose that Mrs. Crupp, after frying the soles, was taken ill, because we broke down at that point. The leg of mutton came up very red within and very pale without; besides having a foreign substance of gritty nature sprinkled over it, as if it had fallen into the ashes of that remarkable kitchen fireplace. The pigeon pie was not bad, but it was a delusive pie; the crust being like a disappointing head, full of lumps and bumps, with nothing particular

underneath. In short, the banquet was such a failure that I should have been quite unhappy if I had not been relieved by the good humor of my company, and by the bright suggestion of Mr. Micawber:

MICAWBER

My dear Copperfield, accidents will occur in the best regulated families, and in families not regulated by that pervading influence which sanctifies while it enhances the--a--I would say, in short, by the influence of woman, in the lofty character of wife, they may be expected with confidence, and must be borne with philosophy. If you will allow me to take the liberty of remarking that there are few comestibles better, in their way, than a devil, and that I believe with a little division of labor, we could accomplish a good one if the young persons attending could produce a gridiron, I would put it to you that this little misfortune may be easily repaired.

DAVID

Narrates: There was a gridiron in the pantry, on which my morning rasher of bacon was cooked. We had it out in a twinkling and immediately applied ourselves to carrying Mr. Micawber's idea into effect. Traddles cut the mutton into slices. Mr. Micawber covered them with pepper, mustard, salt, and cayenne, and I put them on the gridiron. Mrs. Micawber heated and continually stirred, some mushroom ketchup in a little saucepan. When we had slices enough done to begin upon, we fell to, with our sleeves still tucked up at the wrists, more slices

sputtering on the fire and our attention divided between the mutton on our plates and the mutton then preparing. My own appetite came back miraculously. I am satisfied that Mr. and Mrs. Micawber could not have enjoyed the feast more if they had sold a bed to provide it. We were sipping punch, when Mrs. Micawber stated:

MRS. MICAWBER

As we are quite confidential here, Mr. Copperfield, Mr. Traddles being part of our domesticity, I should like to have your opinion on Mr. Micawber's prospects. The fact is that we cannot live without something widely different from existing circumstances shortly turning up. Now I am convinced, myself, and this I have pointed out to Mr. Micawber several times of late, that things cannot be expected to turn up of themselves. We must, in a measure assist to turn them up. I may be wrong, but I have formed that opinion. Then what do I recommend? Here is Mr. Micawber with a variety of qualifications--with great talent--and here is Mr. Micawber without any suitable position or employment. Where does the responsibility rest? Clearly on society. Then I would make a fact so disgraceful known and boldly challenge society to set it right. It appears to me, that what Mr. Micawber has to do is to throw down the gauntlet to society, and say, in effect, "Show me who will take that up. Let the party immediately step forward."

MICAWBER

And how is this to be done?

MRS. MICAWBER

By advertising in all the papers; to describe himself plainly as so-and-so, with such and such qualifications, and to put it thus: "Now employ me, on remunerative terms, and address, postpaid, to W. M., Post Office, Camdent Town."

MICAWBER

This idea of Mrs. Micawber's, my dear Copperfield, is in fact the leap to which I alluded when last had the pleasure of seeing you.

DAVID

Advertising is rather expensive.

MRS. MICAWBER

Exactly so! Quite true, my dear Mr. Copperfield. It is for that reason especially that I think Mr. Micawber ought to raise a certain sum of money on a bill. If no member of my family is possessed of sufficient natural feeling to negotiate that bill, I believe there is a better business term to express what I mean . . .

MICAWBER

Discount!

MRS. MICAWBER

Discount that bill, then my opinion is, that Mr. Micawber should go to the city, should take that bill into the Money Market, and should

dispose of it for what he can get. If the individuals in the Money Market oblige Mr. Micawber to sustain a great sacrifice, that is between themselves and their consciences. I view it, steadily, as an investment. I recommend Mr. Micawber to do the same; to regard it as an investment which is sure of return, and to make up his mind to any sacrifice.

DAVID

Narrates: It was between ten and eleven o'clock when Mrs. Micawber rose to replace her cap in the whity-brown paper parcel, and to put on her bonnet. Mr. Micawber took the opportunity of Traddles putting on his great coat, to slip a letter into my hand, with a whispered request that I would read it at my leisure. I also took the opportunity of my holding a candle over the banister to light them down, when Mr. Micawber was going first, leading Mrs. Micawber, and Traddles was following with the cap, to detain Traddles for a moment on the top of the stairs.

DAVID

Traddles, Mr. Micawber don't mean any harm, poor fellow, but if I were you, I wouldn't lend him anything.

TRADDLES

My dear Copperfield, I haven't got anything to lend.

DAVID

You have got your name, you know.

TRADDLES

Oh, you call that something to lend?

DAVID

Certainly.

TRADDLES

Oh, yes, to be sure! I am very much obliged to you, Copperfield but I am afraid I have lent him that already.

DAVID

For the bill that is to be a certain investment?

TRADDLES

No, not for that one. This is the first I have heard of that one. I have been thinking that he will propose that one on the way home. Mine's another.

DAVID

I hope there will be nothing wrong about it.

TRADDLES

I hope not. I should think not, though, because he told me, only the other day, that it was provided for. That was Mr. Micawber's expression, "Provided for."

DAVID

Narrates: Mr. Micawber looking up at this juncture to where we were standing, I had only time to repeat my caution. Traddles thanked me, and descended. But I was much afraid, when I observed the good-natured

manner in which he went down with the cap in his hand, and gave Mrs. Micawber his arm, that he would be carried into the Money Market neck and heels. I was undressing in my room, when Mr. Micawber's letter tumbled on the floor. Thus reminded of it, I broke the seal. It was dated an hour and a half before dinner, and when Mr. Micawber was in any particularly desperate crisis, he used a sort of legal phraseology, which he seemed to think equivalent to winding up his affairs; it read thus:

MICAWEBER (reads)

Sir, for I dare not say my dear Copperfield, it is expedient that I should inform you that the undersigned is crushed. Some flickering efforts to spare you the premature knowledge of his calamitous position you may observe in him this day, but hope has sunk beneath the horizon, and the undersigned is crushed. The present communication is penned within the personal range of an individual, in a state closely bordering on intoxication, employed by a broker. That individual is in legal possession of the premises, under a distress for rent. His inventory includes, not only the chattels and effects of every description belonging to the undersigned, as yearly tenant of his habitation, but also those appertaining to Mr. Thomas Traddles, lodger, a member of the Honourable Society of the Inner Temple, If any drop of gloom were wanting in the overflowing cup, it would be found in the fact that a friendly acceptance granted to the undersigned by

the aforementioned Mr. Thomas Traddles, for the sum of 23 4^s . 9 1/2d. is overdue, and is not provided for. After premising thus much, it would be a work of supererogation to add, that dust and ashes are forever scattered on the head of Wilkins Micawber.

Scene Five:

DAVID

Narrates: I was returning from a walk on a certain afternoon, and on my way upstairs when I was surprised to find my outer door standing open (which I had shut), and to hear voices inside. I did not know what to make of this, and went into the sitting room. What was my amazement to find, of all people on earth, my aunt there, and Mr. Dick! My aunt was sitting on a quantity of luggage, with her two birds before her, and her cat on her knee, like a female Robinson Crusoe, drinking tea. Mr. Dick was leaning thoughtfully on a great kite, such as we had often been out together flying, with more luggage piled about him. "My dear aunt! What an unexpected pleasure!" We cordially embraced, and Mr. Dick and I cordially shook hands, and Mrs. Crupp, who could not be too attentive, was busily making tea. After aunt had finished her tea and carefully smoothed down her dress, and wiped her lips, she asked:

MISS BETSY

Trot, have you got to be firm and self-reliant?

DAVID

I hope so, aunt.

MISS BETSY

What do you think?

DAVID

I think so, aunt.

MISS BETSY

Then why, my love, why do you think I prefer to sit upon this property of mine tonight? Because, it's all I have. Because I'm ruined, my dear! Dick knows it. I am ruined, my dear Trot! All I have in the world is in this room, except the cottage; and that I have left my maid, Janet, to let. Trot, I want to get a bed for Mr. Dick tonight, to save expense, perhaps you can make up something here for myself. Anything will do. It's only for tonight. We'll talk about this, more tomorrow. We must meet reverses boldly, and not suffer them to frighten us, my dear. We must learn to act the play out. We must live misfortune down, Trot!

DAVID

Narrates: Agnes came to London to visit my aunt, between whom and herself there had come a mutual liking these many years; indeed, it dated from the time of my taking up residence in Mr. Wickfield's house. She was not alone, she said. Her papa was with her--and Uriah Heep.

DAVID

And now they are partners. Confound him!

AGNES

Yes, they have some business here, and I took advantage of their coming, to come too. You must not think my visit all friendly and disinterested, Trotwood, for--I am afraid I may be cruelly prejudiced--I do not like to let Papa go away alone, with him.

DAVID

Does he exercise the same influence over Mr. Wickfield still, Agnes?

AGNES

There is such a change at home that you would scarcely know the dear old house. They live with us now.

DAVID

They?

AGNES

Mr. Heep and his mother. He sleeps in your old room.

DAVID

I wish I had the ordering of his dreams. He wouldn't sleep there long.

DAVID

Narrates: We began to talk about my aunt's losses; I observed Agnes turn pale, as she looked very attentively at my aunt. My aunt, patting her cat, looked very attentively at Agnes.

MISS BETSY

Betsy Trotwood--I don't mean your sister, Trot, my dear, but myself--had a certain property. It don't matter how much, enough to live on.

More, for she had saved a little, and added to it. Betsy funded her property for some time, and then, by the advice of her man of business, laid it out on landed security. That did very well, and returned very good interest, till Betsy was paid off. I am talking of Betsy as if she was a man-of-war. Well, then Betsy had to look about her, for a new investment. She thought she was wiser now than her man of business, who was not such a good man of business by this time, as he used to be--I'm alluding to your father, Agnes--and she took it into her head to lay it out for herself. So she took her pigs "to a foreign market," and a very bad market it turned out to be. First she lost in the mining way, and she lost in the diving--fishing up treasure, or some such Tom Tidler nonsense, and then she lost in the mining way again, and last of all, to set the thing entirely to rights, she lost in the banking way. The bank was at the other end of the world, and tumbled into space, for what I know, and never will and never can pay sixpence; and Betsy's sixpences were all there, and there's an end of them. Least said, soonest mended.

AGNES

Dear Miss Trotwood, is that all the history?

MISS BETSY

I hope it's enough child. If there had been more money to lose, it wouldn't have been all I dare say. Betsy would have contrived to throw that after the rest, and make another chapter, I have little doubt.

But there was no more money, and there's no more story. Now Agnes, you have a wise head. So have you, Trot, in some things, though I can't compliment you always. What's to be done? Here's the cottage, taking one time with another, will produce say seventy pounds a year. I think we may safely put it down at that. Well! That's all we've got!

DAVID

Narrates: In an effort to earn money to support Aunt Betsy and myself, I sought out my old, retiring teacher at Highgate, Dr. Strong, and undertook secretarial duties for him while he worked on his dictionary. Not satisfied with all these proceedings, but burning with impatience to do something more, I went to see Traddles. The first subject on which I had to consult Traddles was this--I had heard that many men distinguished in various pursuits had begun life by reporting the debates in Parliament. I told Traddles that I wished to know how I could qualify myself for this pursuit. He informed me that the mere mechanical acquisition necessary for thorough excellence in it, that is to say a perfect and entire command of the mystery of shorthand writing and reading, was about equal in difficulty to the mastery of six languages; and that it might perhaps be attained, by dint of perseverance in the course of a few years. Traddles reasonably supposed that this would settle the business; I was undaunted.

DAVID

I am very much obliged to you, my dear Traddles. I'll begin tomorrow.

I'll buy a book with a good scheme of this art in it; I'll work at it at the Commons where I haven't half enough to do; I'll take down speeches in our court for practice. Traddles, my dear fellow, I'll master it.

TRADDLES

Dear me, I had no idea you were such a determined character, Copperfield. You have really put Mr. Micawber quite out of my head. Here is a letter to you from him he asked me to deliver.

MICAWBER (reads)

My Dear Copperfield:

You may possibly not be prepared to receive the intimation that something has turned up. I may have mentioned to you on a former occasion that I was in expectation of such an event. I am about to establish myself in one of the provincial towns of our favored island in immediate connection with one of the learned professions. Mrs. Micawber and our offspring will accompany me. In bidding adieu to the modern Babylon, where we have undergone many vicissitudes, I trust not ignobly, Mrs. Micawber and myself cannot disguise from our minds that we part, it may be years and it may be forever, with an individual linked by strong associations to the altar of our domestic life. If, on the eve of such a departure, you will accompany our mutual friend, Mr. Thomas Traddles, to our present abode, and there reciprocate the wishes natural to the occasion, you will confer a boon on one who is ever yours, Wilkins Micawber.

DAVID

Narrates: I was glad to find that something really had turned up at last. Learning from Traddles that the invitation referred to the evening then wearing away, I expressed my readiness to do honor to it; and we went off together to the lodging which Mr. Micawber occupied.

MICAWBER

My dear Copperfield, yourself and Mr. Traddles find us on the brink of migration, and will excuse any little discomforts incidental to that position.

DAVID

I congratulate you, Mrs. Micawber, on the approaching change.

MRS. MICAWBER

It may be a sacrifice to immure one's self in a Cathedral town; but surely if it is a sacrifice in me, it is much more a sacrifice in a man of Mr. Micawber's abilities.

DAVID

Oh! You are going to Cathedral town?

MICAWBER

To Canterbury. In fact, my dear Copperfield, I have entered into arrangements, by virtue of which I stand pledged and contracted to our friend Heep, to assist and serve him in the capacity of--and to be--his confidential clerk. I am bound to state to you that the business habits and the prudent suggestions of Mrs. Micawber have in a great

measure conduced to this result. The gauntlet, to which Mrs. Micawber referred upon a former occasion, being thrown down in the form of an advertisement, was taken up by my friend Heep, and led to a mutual recognition, of my friend Heep who is a man of remarkable shrewdness, I desire to speak with all possible respect. My friend Heep has not fixed the positive remuneration at too high a figure, but he has made a great deal, in the way of extrication from the pressure of pecuniary difficulties, contingent on the value of my services; and on the value of those services I pin my faith. Such address and intelligence as I chance to possess will be devoted to my friend Heep's service. To leave this metropolis and my friend Mr. Thomas Traddles, without acquitting myself of the pecuniary part of this obligation of eighteen, six, and two would weigh upon my mind to an insupportable extent. I have, therefore, prepared for my friend Mr. Thomas Traddles, and I now hold in my hand a document, which accomplishes the desired object. I beg to hand to my friend my I.O.U. for forty-one, ten, and eleven and one-half, and I am happy to recover my moral dignity, and to know that I can once more walk erect before my fellow man!

DAVID

Narrates: Mr. Micawber walked so erect before his fellow man, on the strength of his virtuous action, that his chest looked half as broad again when he lighted us downstairs. We parted with great heartiness on both sides; and when I had seen Traddles to his own door, and was

going home alone, I thought, among the other odd and contradictory things I mused upon, that, slippery as Mr. Micawber was, I was probably indebted to some compassionate recollection he retained of me as his boy-lodger, for never having been asked by him for money.

End of Act II.

Act III

The Wickfield-Heep Mystery

DAVID

Narrates: One day my aunt suggested that I should go to Dover to see that all was working well at the cottage, which was let, and to conclude an agreement with the same tenant for a longer term of occupation. I fell rather willingly into my aunt's pretense, as a means of enabling me to pass a few tranquil hours with Agnes. I found everything in a satisfactory state at the cottage and slept there one night after having settled the little business I had to transact there. I then walked on to Canterbury early the next day. Arriving at Mr. Wickfield's house, I found, in the little lower room on the ground floor, where Uriah Heep has been of old accustomed to sit, Mr. Micawber plying his pen with great assiduity. He was dressed in a legal looking suit of black, and loomed burly and large in the small office. Mr. Micawber was extremely glad to see me, but a little confused too. He would have conducted me immediately into the presence of Uriah, but I declined.

DAVID

I know this house of old, you recollect, and will find my way upstairs. How do you like the law, Mr. Micawber?

MICAUBER

My dear Copperfield, to a man possessed of the higher imaginative powers, the objection to legal studies is the amount of detail which they evolve.

Even in our professional corespondence, the mind is not at liberty to soar to any exalted form of expression. Still, it is a great pursuit. A great pursuit.

DAVID

Do you have reason, so far, to be satisfied with your friend Heep's treatment of you?

MICAWBER

(Looking to see that the door was closed and answering in a lower voice)
My dear Copperfield, a man who labors under the pressure of pecuniary embarrassments, is, with the generality of people, at a disadvantage. That disadvantage is not diminished, when that pressure necessitates the drawing of stripendiary emoluments, before those emoluments are strictly due and payable. All I can say is, that my friend Heep has responded to appeals to which I need not more particularly refer, in a manner calculated to redound equally to the honor of his head and of his heart.

DAVID

I am glad your experience is so favorable.

DAVID

Narrates: I took my leave of Mr. Micawber, for the time, charging him with my best remembrances to all at home. As I left him, I clearly perceived that there was something interposed between him and me, since he had come into his new functions, which prevented our getting at each

other as we used to do, and quite altered the character of our intercourse. I observed all through the day that Uriah tried to entice Mr. Wickfield to drink; and interpreting the look which Agnes had given me as she went out after dinner, had limited myself to one glass, and then proposed that we should follow her. I would have done so again the next evening when we three males were alone after dinner, but Uriah was too quick for me.

URIAH

We seldom see our present visitor, sir, and I should propose to give him welcome in another glass or two of wine, if you have no objections. Mr. Copperfield, your 'elth and 'appiness! Come, fellow-partner! I'll give you another one, and I 'umbly ask for bumpers, seeing I intend to make it to the divinst of her sex. I'm an 'umble individual to give you her 'elth, but I admire--adore her. Agnes--Agnes Wickfield is, I am safe to say, the divinst of her sex. May I speak out, among friends? To be her father is a proud distinction, but to be her husband (Mr. Wickfield utters a cry of horror). What's the matter? You are not gone mad, after all, Mr. Wickfield, I hope? If I say I've an ambition to make your Agnes my Agnes, I have as good a right to it as another man. I have a better right to it than any other man!

WICKFIELD

Look at my torturer. Before him I have step by step abandoned name and reputation, peace and quiet, house and home.

URIAH

I have kept your name and reputation for you, and peace and quiet, and your house and home, too. Don't be foolish, Mr, Wickfield. If I have gone a little beyond what you were prepared for, I can go back, I suppose. There's no harm done.

WICKFIELD

I look for single motives in everyone, and I was satisfied I had bound him to me by motives of interest. But I see what he is--oh, see what he is!

URIAH

You had better stop him, Copperfield, if you can. He'll say something presently--mind you! He'll be sorry to have said it afterwards, and you'll be sorry to have heard.

WICKFIELD

I'll say anything! Why should I not be in all the world's power if I am in yours? Oh, Trotwood! What I have come down to be since I first saw you in this house! I was on my downward way then, but the dreary, dreary road I have traversed since! Weak indulgence has ruined me. Indulgence in remembrance, and indulgence in forgetfulness. My natural grief for my child's mother turned to disease; my natural love for my child turned to disease. I have infected everything I touched. Thus the lessons of my life have been perverted! I have preyed on my own morbid coward heart, and it has preyed on me. Sordid in my

grief, sordid in my love, sordid in my miserable escape from the darker side of both, oh see the ruin I am, and hate me, shun me! (sobbing weakly, the excitement into which he had been aroused is leaving him) I don't know all I have done, in my fatuity. He knows best (pointing to Uriah) for he has always been at my elbow, whispering to me. You see the milstone that he has been around my neck. You find him in my house, you find him in my business. You heard him but a little time ago. What need have I to say more!

AGNES

(enters suddenly) Papa, you are not well. Come with me!

DAVID

Narrates: He laid his head upon her shoulder, as if he were oppressed with heavy shame, and went out with her. Her eyes met mine for but an instant, yet, I saw how much she knew what had passed.

URIAH

I didn't expect he'd cut up so rough, Master Copperfield, but it's nothing. I'll be friends with him tomorrow. It's for his good. I'm 'umbly anxious for his good.

DAVID

Narrates: I gave him no answer and went upstairs into the quiet room where Agnes had so often sat beside me at my books and tried to read. I heard the clocks strike twelve, and was still reading when Agnes touched me.

AGNES

You will be going early in the morning, Trotwood. Let us say goodbye now. Heaven bless you.

DAVID

(She had been crying, but her face was calm and beautiful. She gave me her hand.) Dearest Agnes! I see you ask me not to speak of tonight--but is there nothing to be done?

AGNES

There is God to trust in!

DAVID

Can I do nothing--I, who come to you with my poor sorrows?

AGNES

And make mine so much lighter. Dear Trotwood, no!

DAVID

Dear Agnes, it is presumptuous for me, who am so poor in all in which you are so rich--goodness, resolution, all noble qualities--to doubt or direct you, but you know how much I love you, and how much I owe you. You will never sacrifice yourself to a mistaken sense of duty. Say you have no such thought, dear Agnes! Think of the priceless gift of such a heart as yours, of such a love as yours!

DAVID

Narrates: I saw the face rise up before me, with its momentary look, not wondering, not accusing, not regretting. I saw the look subside into

a lovely smile.

AGNES

I have no fear for myself. You need not have any for me.

DAVID

Narrates: She parted from me by the name of Brother, and was gone!

Scene Two:

DAVID

Narrates: I received one morning by the post the following letter, dated Canterbury, and addressed to me at Doctor's Commons, which I read with some surprise.

MICAWBER (reads)

My Dear Sir:

If your more important avocations should admit of your ever tracing these imperfect characters, you will naturally inquire by what object am I influenced then in inditing the present missive. My brightest visions are forever dispelled--my peace is shattered and my power of enjoyment destroyed and I no more can walk erect before my fellow man. The canker is in the flower. The cup is bitter to the brim. The worm is at his work, and will soon dispose of his victim. The sooner the better. It is my intention to fly for a short period, and devote a respite of eight and forty hours to revisiting some metropolitan scenes of past enjoyment. Among other havens of domestic tranquillity and peace of mind, my feet will naturally tend towards the King's Bench

Prison. In stating that I shall be on the outside of the south wall of that place of incarceration on civil process, the day after tomorrow, at seven in the evening, precisely, my object in this communication is accomplished. I do not feel warranted in soliciting my former friend, Mr. Copperfield, or my former friend Mr. Thomas Traddles of the Inner Temple, if that gentleman is still existent and forthcoming, to condescend to meet me, and renew our past relations of the olden time. I confine myself to throwing out the observation that at the hour and place I have indicated may be found such ruined vestiges as yet remain of a fallen tower, Wilkins Micawber. P.S. It may be advisable to superadd to the above, the statement that Mrs. Micawber is not in confidential possession of my intentions.

DAVID

Narrates: I read the letter over several times. Making due allowance for Mr. Micawber's lofty style of composition, I still believe that something important lay hidden at the bottom of this roundabout communication. I put it down to think about it and then took it up again, to read it once more; and I was still pursuing it when Traddles found me in the height of perplexity:

DAVID

My dear fellow, I never was so pleased to see you. You come to give me the benefit of your sober judgment at a most opportune time. I have received a singular letter, Traddles, from Mr. Micawber.

TRADDLES

No! You don't say so! And I have received one from Mrs. Micawber.

DAVID

Narrates: With that, Traddles, produced his letter and made an exchange with me. Mrs. Micawber was alarmed at the change in the conduct of her husband; his great secrecy, short temper, and sudden departure for London. She asked Traddles to see her misguided husband and to reason with him and to restore him to his good senses.

TRADDLES

What do you think of that letter?

DAVID

What do you think of the other?

TRADDLES

I think that the two together, Copperfield, mean more than Mr. and Mrs. Micawber usually mean in their correspondence, but I don't know what. They are both written in good faith, I have no doubt, and without any collusion. Poor thing! It is a charity to write to her, at all events, and tell her that we will not fail to see Mr. Micawber.

DAVID

Narrates: I now wrote a comforting letter to Mrs. Micawber, in our joint names, and we both signed it. As we walked into town to post it, Traddles and I had a long conference; but we only decided that we would be very punctual in keeping Mr. Micawber's appointment.

Although we appeared at the stipulated place a quarter of an hour before the time, we found Mr. Micawber already there. When we accosted him, his manner was something more confused, and something less genteel than of yore. He had relinquished his legal suit of black for the purposes of this excursion, and wore the old surtout and tights, but not with the old air.

Scene Three:

MICAWBER

Gentlemen. You are friends in need, and friends indeed. Your cordiality overpowers me. This reception of a shattered fragment of the Temple once called Man bespeaks a heart that is an honor to our common nature. I was about to observe that I again behold the serene spot where some of the happiest hours of my existence fled by.

DAVID

Made so, I am sure, by Mrs. Micawber. I hope she is well?

MICAWBER

Thank you. She is so-so. When I was an inmate of King Bench Prison, I could look my fellow man in the face, and punch his head if he offended me. My fellow man and myself are no longer on those glorious terms.

TRADDLES

Oh, you are in low spirits, Mr. Micawber. I hope it is not because you have conceived dislike to the law--for I am a lawyer myself, you know.

DAVID

How is our friend Heep, Mr. Micawber?

MICAWBER

My dear Copperfield, if you ask after my employer as your friend, I am sorry for it; if you ask after him as my friend, I sardonically smile at it. In whatever capacity you ask after my employer, I beg, without offense to you, to limit my reply to this--that whatever his state of health may be, his appearance is foxy, not to say diabolical. You will allow me, as a private individual, to decline pursuing a subject which has lashed me to the utmost verge of desperation in my professional capacity.

DAVID

I regret for having touched innocently upon a theme that roused you so much. May I ask without any hazard of repeating the mistake how my old friends Mr. and Miss Wickfield are?

MICAWBER

Miss Wickfield is, as she always is, a pattern, and a bright example. She is the only starry spot in a miserable existence.

DAVID

Mr. Micawber, it would give me great pleasure to introduce you to my aunt, if you would ride out to Highgate where a bed is at your service. You shall make us a glass of your own punch, and forget whatever you have on your mind, in pleasanter reminiscence.

TRADDLES

Or, if confiding anything to friends will be more likely to relieve you, you shall import it to us, Mr. Micawber.

MICAWBER

Gentlemen, do with me as you will! I am a straw upon the surface of the deep, and am tossed in all directions by the elephants--I beg your pardon; I should have said the elements.

DAVID

Narrates: We went to my aunt's house, and my aunt presented herself and welcomed Mr. Micawber with gracious cordiality.

MISS BETSY

You are a very old friend of my nephew's, Mr. Micawber, and I wish I had had the pleasure of seeing you before.

MICAWBER

Madam, I wish I had the honor of knowing you at an earlier period. I was not always the wreck you at present behold.

MISS BETSY

I **hope** Mrs. Micawber and your family are well, sir.

MICAWBER

They are as well, ma'am as aliens and outcasts can ever hope to be.

MISS BETSY

Lord bless you, sir! What are you talking about?

MICAWBBER

The subsistence of my family, ma'am, trembles in the balance. My employer--my employer, ma'am, Mr. Heep, once did me the favor to observe to me that if I were not in the receipt of the stipendiary emoluments appertaining to my engagement with him, I should probably be a mountebank about the country, swallowing a sword blade and eating the devouring element. For anything that I can perceive to the contrary, it is still probable that my children may be reduced to seek a livelihood by personal contortion while Mrs. Micawber abets their unnatural feats by playing the barrel organ.

DAVID

Mr. Micawber, what is the matter? Pray speak out. You are among friends.

MICAWBBER

Among friends, sir! Good heavens, it is principally because I am among friends that my state of mind is what it is. What is the matter, gentlemen? What is not the matter? Villany is the matter; deception, fraud, conspiracy, are the matter; and the name of the atrocious mass is--Heep! The struggle is over! I will lead this life no longer. I have been under a taboo in that infernal scoundrel's service. I'll put my hand in no man's until I have --blown to fragments--the, a--detestable--serpent--Heep! Refreshment--underneath this roof--particularly punch--would--a--choke me--unless--I had--previously

choked the eyes--out of the head--a--of--interminable cheat, and liar--Heep! I'll know nobody--and--say nothing--and--a--live nowhere--until I have crushed--to--a--undiscoverable atom--the--transcendent and immortal hypocrite and perjurer--Heep!

No communication until--Miss Wickfield--a--redress from wrongs inflicted by consummate scoundrel--Heep! Inviolable secret--from the whole world--a--no exceptions--this day week--at breakfast time--a--everybody present--including aunt--and extremely friendly gentleman--to be at hotel at Canterbury--where Mrs. Micawber and myself--will expose intolerable ruffian--Heep! No more to say--or listen to persuasion--go immediately--upon the track of devoted and doomed traitor--Heep!

DAVID

Narrates: With this last repetition of the magic word that had kept him going at all, Mr. Micawber rushed out of the house leaving us in a state of excitement, hope, and wonder, that reduced us to a condition little better than his own. But even then his passion for writing letters was too strong to be resisted, for while we were at the height of our excitement, hope, and wonder, the following note was brought to me from a neighboring tavern, at which he had called to write; in part it read:

MICAWBER (reads)

My Dear Sir:

I beg to be allowed to convey, through you, my apologies to your excellent aunt for my late excitement. An explosion of a smouldering volcano long suppressed, was the result of an internal contest more easily conceived than described. I trust I rendered tolerably intelligible my appointment for the morning of this day week, at the house of public entertainment at Canterbury, where Mrs. Micawber and myself had once the honor of uniting our voices to yours. Wilkins Micawber.

Scene Four:

DAVID

Narrates: When the time Mr. Micawber had appointed so mysteriously, was within four and twenty hours of being come, my aunt and I consulted how we should proceed. We decided that the four of us, that is to say my aunt, Mr. Dick, Traddles, and I would go down to Canterbury by the Dover mail that night. We made the journey without incident. At the hotel where Mr. Micawber had requested us to await him, which we got into with some trouble in the middle of the night, I found a letter, importing that he would appear in the morning punctually at half-past nine. When we sat down at breakfast next morning, we all became very anxious and impatient. As it approached nearer and nearer to half-past nine o'clock, our restless expectation of Mr. Micawber increased. I looked out the window to give early notice of Mr. Micawber's

coming. Nor had I long to watch, for, at the first chime of the half-hour, he appeared.

MICAWBER

Gentlemen, and madam, good morning. My dear sir, you look extremely well.

MR. DICK

Have you breakfasted? Have a chop.

MICAWBER

Not for the world, my good sir! Appetite and myself, Mr. Dixon, have long been strangers.

MISS BETSY

Now, sir, we are ready for Mount Vesuvius, or anything else, as soon as you please.

MICAWBER

Madam, I trust you will shortly witness an eruption. Mr. Traddles, I have your permission, I believe, to mention here that we have been in communication together?

TRADDLES

It is undoubtedly the fact, Copperfield. Mr. Micawber has consulted me, in reference to what he has in contemplation; and I have advised him to the best of my judgment.

MICAWBER

Unless I deceive myself, Mr. Traddles, what I contemplate is a

disclosure or an important nature.

TRADDLES

Highly so!

MICAWBER

Mr. Copperfield, I would beg to be allowed a start of five minutes by the clock; and then to receive the present company, inquiring for Miss Wickfield, at the office of Wickfield and Heep, whose stipendiary I am. I have no more to say at present.

DAVID

Narrates: With which, to my infinite surprise, he included us all in a comprehensive bow, and disappeared. I took out my watch, and, as a last resource, counted off the five minutes. My aunt, with her own watch in her hand, did the like. When the time had expired, Traddles gave her his arm, and we all went out together to the old house without saying one word on the way. We found Mr. Micawber at his desk, wither writing, or pretending to write, hard. The large office ruler was stuck into his waistcoat, and was not so well concealed but that a foot or more of that instrument protruded from his bosom, like a new kind of shirt-frill. As it appeared to me that I was expected to speak, I said, "How do you do, Mr. Micawber?"

MICAWBER

Mr. Copperfield, I hope I see you well?

DAVID

Is Mr. Wickfield at home?

MICAWBER

Mr. Wickfield is unwell in bed, sir, of rheumatic fever; but Miss Wickfield, I have no doubt, will be happy to see old friends. Will you walk in, sir?

DAVID

Narrates: He preceded us to the dining room and flinging open the door of Mr. Wickfield's former office, said, in a sonorous voice:

MICAWBER

Miss Trotwood, Mr. David Copperfield, Mr. Thomas Traddles, and Mr. Dixon.

DAVID

Narrates: I had not seen Uriah Heep for some time. Our visit astonished him, evidently; not the less, I dare say, because it astonished ourselves.

URIAH

Well, I am sure, this is indeed an unexpected pleasure! To have, as I may say, all friends round Saint Paul's at once, is a treat unlooked for! Mr. Copperfield, I hope to see you well, and--if I may humbly express myself so--friendly towards them as is ever your friends, whether or not. Micawber, tell 'em to let Miss Agnes know and mother. Mother will be in quite a state, when she sees the present company!

DAVID

Narrates: When Agnes entered, she was not quite so self-possessed as usual, I thought, and she had evidently undergone anxiety and fatigue. But her earnest cordiality and her quiet beauty shone with the gentler luster for it. I saw Uriah watch her while she greeted us; and he reminded me of an ugly and rebellious genie watching a good spirit. In the meanwhile, some slight sign passed between Mr. Micawber and Traddles; and Traddles, unobserved except by me, went out.

URIAH

Don't wait, Micawber what are you waiting for? Micawber!
Did you hear me tell you not to wait?

MICAWBER

Yes!

URIAH

Then why do you wait?

MICAWBER

Because I--in short, choose!

URIAH

You are a dissipated fellow, as all the world knows, and I am afraid you'll oblige me to get rid of you. Go along! I'll talk to you presently.

MICAWBER

If there is a scoundrel on earth with whom I have already talked too much,

that scoundrel's name is--Heep!

URIAH

Oh, ho! This is a conspiracy! You have met here by appointment! You are playing Booty with me clerk; are you, Copperfield? Now, take care. You'll make nothing of this. We understand each other, you and me. There's no love between us. You were always a puppy with a proud stomach, from your first coming here and you envy me my rise, do you? None of your plots against me; I'll counterplot you. Micawber, you be off. I'll talk to you presently.

DAVID

Mr. Micawber, deal with him as he deserves!

URIAH

You are a precious set of people, ain't you? To buy over my clerk, who is the very scum of society--as you yourself were, Copperfield you know it, before anyone had charity on you--to defame me with lies? Miss Wickfield, if you have any love for your father, you had better not join that gang. I'll ruin him if you do. Now, come, I have got some of you under the harrow. Think twice before it goes over you. Think twice, you, Micawber, if you don't want to be crushed. I recommend you to take yourself off, and be talked to presently, you fool, while there's time to retreat! Where's mother?

TRADDLES

Mrs. Heep is here, sir. I have taken the liberty of making myself known

to her.

URIAH

Who are you to make yourself known? What do you want here?

TRADDLES

I am the agent and friend of Mr. Wickfield, sir, and I have a power of attorney from him in my pocket, to act for him in all matters.

URIAH

Then it has been got from him by fraud!

TRADDLES

Something has been got from him by fraud, I know, and so do you, Mr. Heep. We will refer that question, if you please, to Mr. Micawber.

MICAWBER

My charges against Heep are as follows: First, when Mr. Wickfield's faculties and memory for business became weakened and confused, Heep designedly perplexed and complicated the whole of the official transactions. When Mr. Wickfield was least fit to enter on business, Heep was always at hand to force him to enter on it. He obtained Mr. Wickfield's signature under such circumstances to documents of importance, representing them to be other documents of no importance. He induced Mr. Wickfield to empower him to draw out one particular sum of trust money and employed it to most pretended business charges and deficiencies which were either already provided for, or had never really existed. He gave this proceeding, throughout, the appearance of having been accomplished by

Mr. Wickfield's own dishonest act; and has used it, ever since to torture and restrain him.

URIAH

You shall prove this, Copperfield! All in good time.

MICAWBER

Ask Heep if he ever kept a pocketbook in that house, will you? Or ask him if he ever burnt one there. If he says yes and asks you where the ashes are, refer him to Wilkins Micawber, and he will hear of something not at all to his advantage. Now to proceed: Second, Heep has, on several occasions, to the best of my knowledge, information and belief, systematically forged, to various entries, books, and documents, the signature of Mr. Wickfield, and has done distinctly so in one instance capable of proof by me. Mr. Wickfield, being infirm, and it being within the bounds of probability that his descease might lead to some discoveries, and to the downfall of Heep's power over the Wickfield family. The said Heep deemed it expedient to have a bond ready by him, as from Mr. Wickfield for the before mentioned sum of trust money with interest, to save Mr. Wickfield from dishonor; though really the sum was never advanced by him, and has long been replaced. The signatures to this instrument purporting to be executed by Mr. Wickfield and attested by Wilkins Micawber are forgeries by Heep. I have, in my possession, in his hand and pocketbook, several similar imitations of Mr. Wickfield's signature here and there defaced by fire, but legible

to anyone. I never attested to any such document. And I have the document itself in my possession.

MRS. HEEP

Ury, Ury! Be 'umble and make terms. I know my son will be 'umble, gentlemen, if you'll give him time to think. Mr. Copperfield, I'm sure that you know that he was always very humble, sir!

URIAH

Mother, you had better take and fire a loaded gun at me.

MRS. HEEP

But I love you, Ury, and I can't bear to hear you provoking the gentlemen and endangering of yourself more. I told the gentleman at first when he told me upstairs it was come to light, that I would answer for your being 'umble, and making amends. Oh, see how 'umble I am, gentlemen, and don't mind him!

URIAH

Whey, there's Copperfield, mother. There's Copperfield would have given you a hundred pound to say less than you've blurted out!

MRS. HEEP

I can't help it, Ury. I can't see you running into danger, through carrying your head so high. Better be 'umble, as you always was.

URIAH

What more have you got to bring forward? If anything, go on with it.

MICAWBER

Third, and last: I am now in condition to show, by Heep's false books, and Heep's real memoranda, beginning with the partially destroyed pocket-book, that Mr. Wickfield has been for years deluded and plundered by the false and grasping Heep. That the engrossing object of Heep was, next to gain, to subdue Mr. and Miss Wickfield (of his ulterior views in reference to the latter I say nothing) entirely to himself. That his last act, completed but a few months since, was to induce Mr. Wickfield to execute a relinquishment of his share in the partnership, and even a bill of sale on the very furniture of his house, in consideration of a certain annuity, to be well and truly paid by Heep on the four common quarter days in each and every year. These meshes gradually thickened, until the unhappy Mr. Wickfield could see no world beyond. Bankrupt, as he believed, his sole reliance was upon the monster in the garb of the man, Heep, who by making himself necessary to him, had achieved his destruction. All this I undertake to show. Probably much more! I have concluded. It merely remains for me to substantiate these accusations, and then with my ill-starred family, to disappear from the landscape on which we appear to be an incumbrance. I remain always, Wilkins Micawber.

DAVID

Narrates: There was, as I had noticed on my first visit long ago, an iron safe in the room. The key was in it. A hasty suspicion seemed to strike

Uriah, and with a glance at Mr. Micawber, he went to it and threw the doors clanking open. It was empty..

URIAH

Where are the books? Some thief has stolen the books!

MICAWBER

(tapping himself with the ruler) I did, when I got the key from you as usual--but a little earlier--and opened it this morning.

TRADDLES

Don't be uneasy. They have come into my possession. I will take care of them under the authority I mentioned.

URIAH

You received stolen goods, did you?

TRADDLES

Under the circumstances, yes.

DAVID

Narrates: What was my astonishment when I beheld my aunt, who had been profoundly quiet and attentive, make a dart at Uriah Heep, and seize him by the collar with both hands!

MISS BETSY

You know what I want?

URIAH

A strait-waistcoat.

MISS BETSY

No. My property! Agnes, my dear, as long as I believe it had been really made away with by your father, I wouldn't breathe a syllable of its having been placed here for investment. But now I know this fellow's answerable for it, and I'll have it! Trot, come and take it away from him!

URIAH

What do you want done?

DAVID

What must be done is this. First, the deed of relinquishment, that we have heard of, must be given over to me now--here.

URIAH

Suppose I haven't got it.

TRADDLES

But you have, and, therefore, we won't suppose so. Then you must prepare to disgorge all that your rapacity has become possessed of, and to make restoration to the last farthing. All the partnership books and papers must remain in our possession; all your books and papers; all money accounts and securities, of both kinds. In short, everything here.

URIAH

Must it? I don't know that I must have time to think about that.

TRADDLES

Certainly, but, in the meanwhile, and until everything is done to our

satisfaction, we shall maintain possession of these things; and beg you, in short, compel you, to keep to your own room, and hold no communications with anyone.

URIAH

I won't do it!

TRADDLES

Maldstone Jail is a safer place of detention, and though the law may be longer in righting us, and may not be able to right us so completely as you can, there is no doubt of its punishing you. Copperfield, will you go round to the Guildhouse, and bring a couple of officers?

MRS. HEEP

(crys loudly) Oh Ury, Ury!

URIAH

Stop, Copperfield! Mother, hold your nose. Well! Let 'em have that deed. Go and fetch it!

TRADDLES

Do you help her, Mr. Dick, if you please.

DAVID

Narrates: Proud of his commission, and understanding it, Mr. Dick accompanied her as a shepherd's dog might accompany a sheep. But Mrs. Heep gave him little trouble; for she not only returned with the deed, but with the box in which it was, where we found a banker's book and some other papers that were afterwards serviceable.

TRADDLES

Good! Now, Mr. Heep, you can retire to think.

URIAH

Copperfield, I have always hated you. You've always been an upstart, and you've always been against me.

DAVID

As I think I told you once before, it is you who have been, in your greed and cunning, against all the world. It may be profitable to you to reflect, in future, that there never was greed and cunning in the world yet, that did not do too much and overreach itself. It is as certain as death.

MICAWBER

My friends, please come to my house and be witnesses to the re-establishment of mutual confidence between myself and Mrs. Micawber.

DAVID

Narrates: As we were all very grateful to him and all desirous to show that we were, I dare say we all should have gone, but that the necessity for Agnes to return to her father, as yet unable to bear more than the dawn of hope; and for someone to hold Uriah in safe keeping. So Traddles remained for the purpose, to be relieved later by Mr. Dick. And then Mr. Dick, my aunt, and I went home with Mr. Micawber.

Scene Five:

DAVID

Narrates: Mr. Micawber's house was not far off; and as the street

door opened into the sitting room, he bolted in with a precipitation quite his own. We found ourselves at once in the bosom of the family.

MICAWBER

Emma! My life!

DAVID

Narrates: Mrs. Micawber shrieked, rushed into his arms and folded Mr. Micawber into her embrace, and then fainted away. My aunt and Mr. Micawber recovered her and introductions were made. Then Mrs. Micawber recognized me.

MRS. MICAWBER

Excuse me, dear Mr. Copperfield, but I am not strong, and the removal of the late misunderstanding between Mr. Micawber and myself was at first too much for me.

MISS BETSY

Mr. Micawber, I wonder you have never turned your thoughts to emigration.

MICAWBER

Madam, it was the dream of my youth, and the fallacious aspiration of my riper years.

MISS BETSY

Aye? Why, what a thing it would be for yourself and your family if you were to emigrate now.

MICAWBER

(gloomily) Capital, madam, capital.

MRS. MICAWBER

That is the principal, I may say, the only difficulty, my dear Miss Trotwood.

MISS BETSY

Capital? But you are doing us a great service--have done us a great service, I may say, for surely much will come out of the fire--and what could we do for you, that would be half so good as to find the capital?

MICAWBER

I could not receive it as a gift, but if a sufficient sum could be advanced, say at five per cent interest per annum, upon my personal liability--say my notes of hand, at twelve, eighteen, and twenty-four months, respectively, to allow time for something to turn up

MISS BETSY

Could be? Can be and shall be, on your own terms, if you say the word. Think of this now, both of you. There are some people David knows who are going out to Australia shortly. If you decide to go, why shouldn't you go in the same ship? Take your time and weight it well.

MRS. MICAWBER

There is but one question, my dear ma'am, I could wish to ask.

The climate, I believe, is healthy?

MISS BETSY

The finest in the world!

MRS. MICAWBER

Just so. Then my question arises. Now are the circumstances of the country such that a man of Mr. Micawber's abilities would have a fair chance of rising in the social scale?

MISS BETSY

No better opening anywhere for a man who conducts himself well, and is industrious.

MRS. MICAWBER

For a man who conducts himself well, and is industrious, precisely. It is evident to me that Australia is the legitimate sphere of action for Mr. Micawber.

MICAWBER

My dear madam, perhaps I cannot better express the conclusion at which Mrs. Micawber has arrived, than by borrowing the language of an illustrious poet to reply that our Boat is on the shore, and our Bark is on the sea.

(end of scene, all lights out except the one upon David)

Conclusion:

DAVID

Narrates: What I have purposed to record is nearly finished. I have

advanced in fame and fortune as a writer, and my domestic joy is perfect for having married Agnes Wickfield after the Micawbers left for Australia. Mr. Micawber has paid off every obligation he incurred here--even to Traddles's bill, and he is doing well as the Magistrate of Port Middlebay, Australia, and signs his letters, Wilkins Micawber, Esquire. And now my written story ends. I look back once more--for the last--before I close these leaves. I see myself, with Agnes at my side, journeying along the road of life. I see our children and our friends around us; and I hear the roar of many voices, not indifferent to me as I travel on. What faces are the most distinct to me in the fleeting crowd? Lo, these; all turning to me as I ask my thoughts the question!

Here is my aunt, in stronger spectacles, an old woman of four score years and more, but upright yet, and a steady walker of six miles at a stretch in winter weather. My aunt's disappointment is set right now. She is godmother to a real living Betsy Trotwood. Among my boys, this summer holiday time, I see an old man making kites, and gazing at them in the air, with a delight for which there are no words. Mr. Dick greets me rapturously, and whispers, with many nods and winks:

MR. DICK

Trotwood, you will be glad to hear that aunt of yours is the most extraordinary woman in the world, sir! Yes, most extraordinary!

DAVID

Narrates: Uriah Heep has not been heard of since he left with his mother by one

of the London night coaches shortly after his exposure, and I know no more about him.

Always with my aunt, comes Peggotty, my good old nurse, likewise in spectacles, accustomed to do needlework at night very close to the lamp, but never sitting down to it without a bit of wax candle, a yard of measure in a little house, and a work-box with a picture of St. Paul's on the lid.

Working at his chambers in the Temple, with a busy aspect and his hair (where he is not bald) made more rebellious than ever by the constant friction of his lawyer's wig, is Traddles, married now and with bright prospects of becoming a judge.

And now, as I close my task, subduing my desire to linger yet, these faces fade away. But the one face, shining on me like a heavenly light by which I see all other objects is above them and beyond them all. And that remains. I turn my head, and see it, in its beautiful serenity, beside me. Ah, Agnes, thy dear presence, without which I were nothing, bears me company. So may thy face be by me when I close my life indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me like shadows which I now dismiss, still find thee near me, pointing upward!

End of Act III

TEST

DAVID COPPERFIELD

(Covering only scenes presented in the Reading Theatre Production)

- I. Identifications: Match these characters in the story to the statements that will best identify them. Please letters on answer sheets only.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| A. Mr. David Copperfield | H. Uriah Heep |
| B. Mrs. Clara Copperfield | I. James Steerforth |
| C. Mr. Dick | J. Tommy Traddles |
| D. Mr. Micawber | K. Betsy Trotwood |
| E. Mrs. Micawber | L. Mr. Quinion |
| F. Mr. Murdstone | M. Mr. Wickfield |
| G. Peggotty | N. Agnes Wickfield |

Statements:

1. This woman was separated from her husband after an unhappy marriage.
2. This next woman gave birth to a child after her husband had been dead six months.
3. As a child, he read a story about crocodiles.
4. This man became David Copperfield's step-father.
5. This boy stood up and defended David against abuse at school.
6. This boy drew skeletons on paper during classes.
7. This man was a partner in a wine trade business.
8. This man first gave lodging to David at Windsor Terrace, City Road.
9. He was freed from debt by Aunt Betsy.
10. He managed a counting-house in London.
11. We identify him with the line, "In case anything turns up."
12. To a relative and close friend he was known as "Trot."
13. Flying kites and writing a memorial were his greatest achievements.
14. His one motive in life was to provide for his daughter.
15. This man considered himself to be a very "umble" clerk.
16. She took over the housekeeping when her mother died.
17. He wanted to become a proctor in Doctor's Common.
18. This conniving fellow had ambitions of marrying his employer's daughter.

19. By learning shorthand, he earned extra money by recording speeches in Parliament.
20. This dear friend of David's was primarily responsible for Uriah Heep's exposure.

II. True and False Statements: In the blank space, place a "+" if the statement is completely true, and an "O" if it is false in any way.

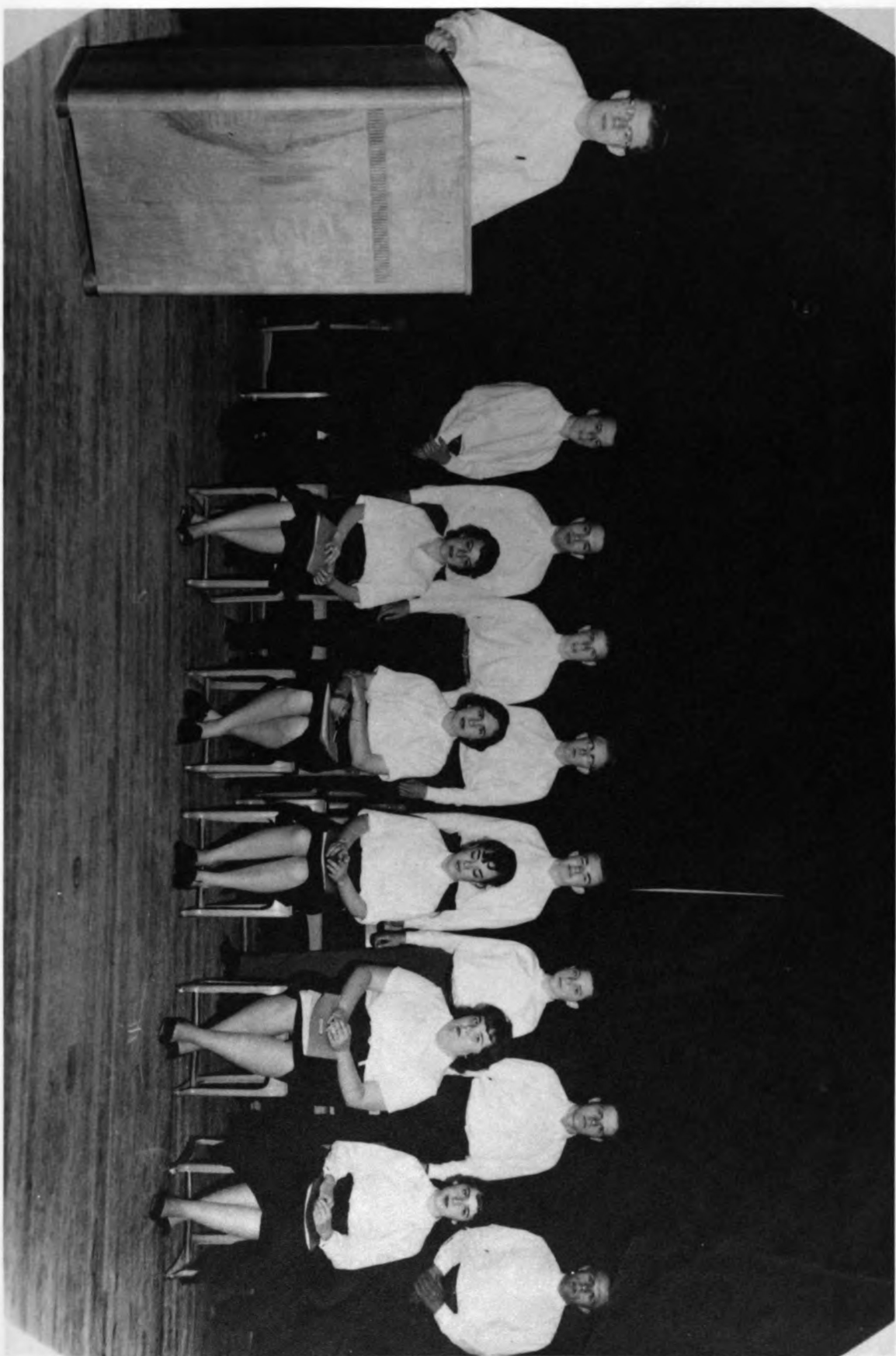
21. David Copperfield was an "only child."
22. David's real father and mother died after he was born.
23. David was well treated and cared for by Mr. Murdstone.
24. Aunt Betsy Trotwood always wanted a boy like David Copperfield.
25. Mr. Micawber was a man of great wealth who was always expecting something to turn up.
26. Mr. Dick was a wise old scholar who looked after Aunt Betsy.
27. Uriah Heep was exposed by Mr. Dick and Traddles alone.
28. Mr. Wickfield is sent to prison for fraud and forgery.
29. Uriah Heep always hated David since their first meeting.
30. Agnes Wickfield was David's greatest source of strength and comfort during his moments of indecision.
31. Agnes also was in love with Uriah Heep and planned to marry him.
32. Aunt Betsy recovered her property and sent Mr. Micawber and his family to Austria.
33. Tommy Traddles is a serious and sensitive student when David first meets him at school.
34. Micawber is later employed as a confidential clerk by Uriah Heep.
35. Uriah Heep is threatened with Maidstone Jail if he refuses to co-operate in releasing Mr. Wickfield's account books.

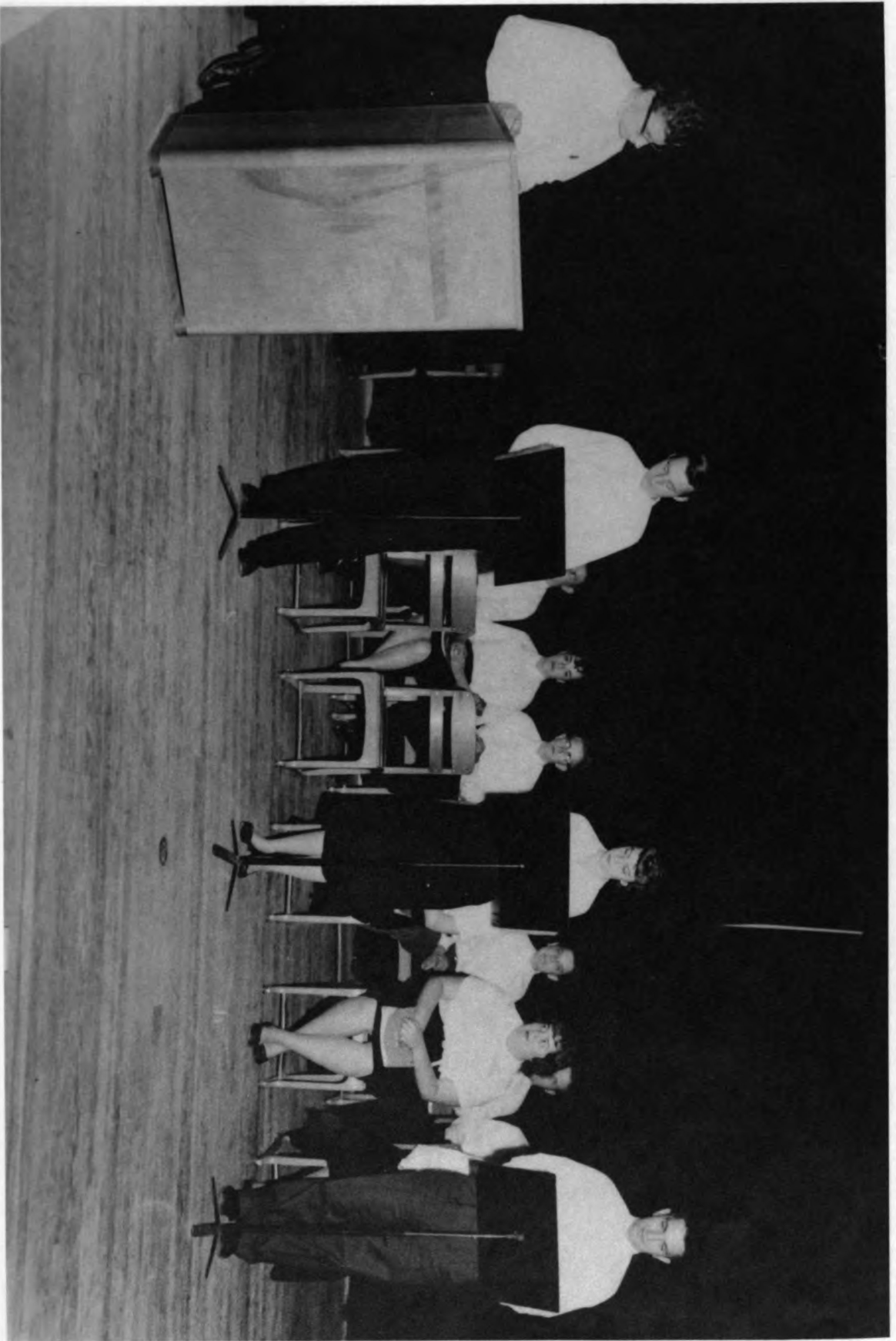
III. Matching: From the following list of words in Column II, match the quality that best fits the character in Column I.

<u>COLUMN I</u>	<u>COLUMN II</u>
36. Clara Copperfield	A. Abrupt
37. David Copperfield, Young Boy	B. Abused
38. David Copperfield, Young Man	C. Boastful
39. Mr. Dick	D. Clownish

COLUMN I

40.	Uriah Heep, Young Man	E.	Devoted
41.	Uriah Heep, later years	F.	Drunken
42.	Mr. Micawber	G.	Earnest
43.	Mrs. Micawber	H.	Healthy
44.	Mr. Murdstone	I.	Humble
45.	Peggotty	J.	Maternal
46.	James Steerforth	K.	Motherly
47.	Tommy Traddles	L.	Simple-minded
48.	Aunt Betsy Trotwood	M.	Sinister
49.	Agnes Wickfield	N.	Stern
50.	Mr. Wickfield	O.	Verbose
		P.	"Wax-doll"
		Q.	Spoiled







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VITA

The obscure Cumberland Plateau town of Sunbright, Tennessee was the birthplace of James Franklin Bradley, Jr. on June 22, 1930. His early childhood and adolescent years were spent in the industrial city of Saginaw, Michigan where his father was employed at General Motors. While attending Saginaw High School from 1945 to 1948, he competed in football and track and participated in all speech and dramatics activities. After graduation from Michigan State University in 1952 with a Bachelor of Arts degree, he taught speech and English at Fenton High School, Fenton, Michigan for one year. Marriage to Lois E. Newell on August 15, 1953, initiated a trip to California where Mr. Bradley taught junior high social studies and English for two years in the desert crossroads town of Barstow. Returning to Michigan, he began teaching English and speech at T. L. Handy High School, Bay City, Michigan, where he is currently employed. His work on a Master's degree was begun during the summer of 1955 and has continued each summer to the present session when the M.A. was granted during August, 1960.

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