

Classic Readers

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# DAVID COPPERFIELD

Charles Dickens  
retold by Jenny Dooley



Express Publishing

## *School Days*

On the morning I left for school, my mother said goodbye quickly, and then I was on my way to London. When I first saw the city, I thought it was an amazing place. There were tall chimneys and a large bridge that I later found out was called London Bridge. But, I was very disappointed when I saw my school.

Salem House was in an old building that looked like it was ready to fall down. The boys there were loud and noisy but they were friendly, except when the Headmaster, Mr Creakle, was present. He walked up and down and stared at us with a look of disgust on his face. He shouted at us and then chose a few of us to beat with his cane. We were all very scared of Mr Creakle.

The only pupil who Mr Creakle did not beat was Steerforth. I considered him to be the bravest and most handsome boy at the school. Steerforth and I became friends. He liked me because I would tell stories at night from books that I used to read at home.

I also had many unpleasant memories of Salem house. On cold, frosty mornings when the bell rang, we dragged ourselves out of bed into the dark and damp classrooms. We ate meals of boiled beef and stale bread before we returned to the classrooms, where we worked until it was time to go to bed.

At last holiday time came and I returned home for a break. I walked into the parlour where I had spent many happy days when I was very young. I was surprised when I saw my mother holding a baby! Mother seemed pale and weak. I ran to her. When I hugged my dear mother, the baby in her arms put its tiny fingers to my lips.

"Davy, my dear child, this is your brother!"

From the very first moment I loved my little half-brother. I spent as much time as I could, holding him and patting him gently –

except when Mr Murdstone's sister, Miss Murdstone, was about. Her dislike of me was very obvious. Once, when she saw me holding my baby brother, she told me never to touch him again. My mother and I were shocked, but of course Mother said nothing. She seemed even more afraid of the Murdstones than ever.

On another occasion during those same school holidays, my mother compared the baby's eyes to mine. She said proudly that they were similar in shape and colour. Miss Murdstone told her never to compare her brother's baby to me and said that the baby and I were not alike in any way.

Mr Murdstone, too, was cruel to me and said that I was evil and lazy. I was almost looking forward to going back to school, where I wasn't always made to feel unwelcome and where at least I had friends and enjoyed my schoolwork.

I returned to Salem House and everything seemed to be satisfactory. At the time, I thought the most terrible thing was to be hit by Mr Creakle's cane.

But soon, something happened that was much worse, and it affected my life in the most terrible way. One day, Mr Creakle called me into his office and gave me the most dreadful news.

"Copperfield, your mother is dead and you're to go home immediately. Pack your bags!"

When I arrived home, Peggotty told me that Mother had become weaker and more ill after I had left. A day after my mother died, my little brother passed away as well. I was very sad, shocked and lonely. I was only ten, and all alone in the world. I was an orphan.

I went to the funeral and Mother was buried in the same churchyard near my home where my Father was buried. That day, even the light outdoors seemed sad and more gloomy than usual.



CLARA  
MURDSTONE  
1812-1839  
EDWARD  
MURDSTONE  
1839

DAVID  
COPPERFIELD  
1807-1829

## School Days

### Comprehension

Read or listen to Chapter 3 and circle the correct answer.

- David saw ..... Bridge when he first arrived in the city.  
a Tower                      b Salem                      c London
- Mr Creakle was the ..... at Salem House.  
a headmaster              b teacher                      c boy
- When David first went home, his mother had a new .....  
a husband                      b baby                      c servant
- David was glad to go back to school because he liked the .....  
a headmaster              b food                      c schoolwork
- One day Mr Creakle gave David the most terrible .....  
a news                      b beating                      c schoolwork
- When David went back home the second time, he was a/n .....  
a half-brother              b man                      c orphan

### What do you think?

**A** Discuss the following questions.

- Why do you think Mr Creakle did not beat Steerforth?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of boarding schools?
- Do you have a favourite storybook? Talk about it with your partner.

**B** Find the following extracts from Chapter 3 and discuss their meanings.

- p. 20: "He (Creakle) walked up and down and stared at us with a look of disgust on his face."
- p. 22: "Miss Murdstone told me (David) never to compare her brother's baby to me and said that the baby and I were not alike in any way."

## Language Practice

1 Find the opposites and draw a line to join them.

1 weak

a be born

2 die

b good

3 evil

c strong

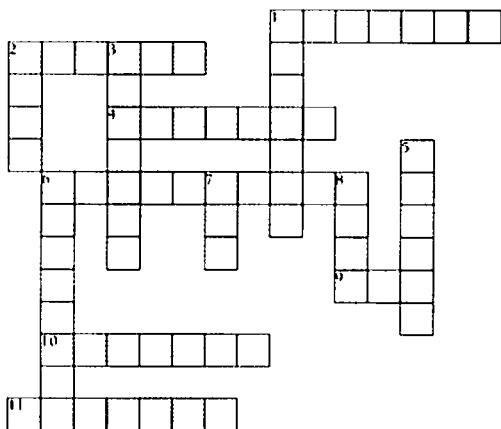
4 dreadful

d peaceful

5 noisy

e pleasant

11 Fill in the crossword.



## Across

- 1 You have five of these on each hand.  
 2 You can cross a river over a .....  
 4 Another word for surprised.  
 6 The area outside a church.  
 9 To touch something gently.  
 10 A feeling of not liking sb.  
 11 If you are in a place, you are .....

## Down

- 1 When someone is dead, we go to their .....  
 2 The meat from a cow.  
 3 A feeling of strong dislike.  
 5 Very cold.  
 6 To think about.  
 7 To hold someone close.  
 8 Slightly wet.