



Queens College of Arts and Science for Women Punalkulam , Near Thanjaur.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Subject : Fiction

Topic : David Copperfield

(UNIT-I)

Sub Code :16ACCEN4

STAFF NAME: Mrs .Meenakshi Ammal.S

**Assistant Professor of
English**

DAVID COPPERFIELD

CHARLES DICKENS

David Copperfield was originally published in twenty monthly installments under the title the personal history, adventures, experienced and observations of David Copperfield. It is the most favorite Navel of dickens

Characters

David Copperfield – The narrator and protagonist of the novel

Clara Copperfield – David's affectionate and beautiful mother, described as being innocently

Clara Peggotty – The faithful servant of the Copperfield family and a lifelong companion to David - she is called by her surname Peggotty within David's family, as her given name is Clara, the same as David's mother

Betsey Trotwood – David's eccentric and temperamental yet kind-hearted great-aunt; she becomes his guardian after he runs away from the Murdstone and Grinby warehouse in **Blackfriars, London**

Mr Chillip – A shy doctor who assists at David's birth and faces the wrath and anger of Betsey Trotwood after he informs her that Clara's baby is a boy instead of a girl.

Mr Barkis – An aloof carter who declares his intention to marry Peggotty. He says to David: "Tell her, 'Barkis is willin'! Just so." Peggotty marries him after Clara Copperfield's death

Edward Murdstone – The main antagonist of the first half of the novel, he is Young David's cruel stepfather who beats him for falling behind in his studies.

Jane Murdstone – Mr Murdstone's equally cruel **spinster** sister, who moves into the Copperfield house shortly after Mr Murdstone marries Clara Copperfield, taking over the housekeeping

Daniel Peggotty – Peggotty's brother; a humble but generous Yarmouth fisherman who takes his nephew Ham and niece Emily into his custody after each of them has been orphaned.

Outline of the story

- ❖ The story follows the life of **David Copperfield** from childhood to maturity. David was born in **Blunderstone**,
- ❖ Suffolk, England, six months after the death of his father.
- ❖ David spends his early years in relative happiness with his loving, childish mother and their kindly housekeeper, **Clara Peggotty**

- ❖ . They call him Davy. When he is seven years old his mother marries **Edward Murdstone**. To get him out of the way, David is sent to lodge with Peggotty's family in **Yarmouth**
- ❖ . Her brother, fisherman **Mr Peggotty**, lives in a house built in an upturned boat on the beach, with his adopted relatives Emily and **Ham**, and an elderly widow, Mrs Gummidge.
- ❖ "Little Em'ly" is somewhat spoiled by her fond foster father, and David is in love with her. They call him Master Copperfield.
- ❖ On his return, David is given good reason to dislike his stepfather, who believes exclusively in firmness, and has similar feelings for Murdstone's sister Jane, who moves into the house soon afterwards.
- ❖ Between them they tyrannize his poor mother, making her and David's lives miserable, and when, in consequence,
- ❖ David falls behind in his studies, Murdstone attempts to thrash him – partly to further pain his mother. David bites him and soon afterwards is sent away to Salem House, a boarding school, under a ruthless headmaster named Mr Creakle
- ❖ There he befriends an older boy, **James Steerforth**, and **Tommy Traddles**. He develops an impassioned admiration for Steerforth, perceiving him as someone noble, who could do great things if he would, and one who pays attention to him.
- ❖ David goes home for the holidays to learn that his mother has given birth to a baby boy. Shortly after David returns to Salem House, his mother and her baby die, and David returns home immediately.
- ❖ Peggotty marries the local carrier, Mr Barkis. Murdstone sends David to work for a wine merchant in London – a business of which Murdstone is a joint owner.

- ❖ . David's landlord, [Wilkins Micawber](#), is arrested for debt and sent to the [King's Bench Prison](#), where he remains for several months, before being released and

moving to **Plymouth**. No one remains to care for David in London, so he decides to run away, with Micawber advising him to head to **Dover**, to find his only known remaining relative, his eccentric and kind-hearted great-aunt **Betsey Trotwood**

- ❖ She had come to Blunderstone at his birth, only to depart in ire upon learning that he was not a girl. However, she takes pity on him and agrees to raise him, despite Murdstone's attempt to regain custody of David,
- ❖ On condition that he always try to 'be as like his sister, Betsey Trotwood' as he can be, meaning that he is to endeavour to emulate the prospective namesake she was disappointed not to have.
- ❖ David's great-aunt renames him "Trotwood Copperfield" and addresses him as "Trot", one of several names David is called by in the novel.
- ❖ David's aunt sends him to a better school than the last he attended. It is run by Dr Strong, whose methods inculcate honour and self-reliance in his pupils.
- ❖ During term, David lodges with the lawyer Mr Wickfield, and his daughter **Agnes**, who becomes David's friend and confidante. Wickfield's clerk, **Uriah Heep**, also lives at the house.
- ❖ By *devious* means, Uriah Heep gradually gains a complete ascendancy over the aging and alcoholic Wickfield, to Agnes's great sorrow.
- ❖ Heep hopes, and maliciously confides to David, that he aspires to marry Agnes.
- ❖ Ultimately with the aid of Micawber, who has been employed by Heep as a secretary, his fraudulent behaviour is revealed
- ❖ . At the end of the book, David encounters him in prison, convicted of attempting to defraud the **Bank of England**.
- ❖ After completing school, David apprentices to be a **proctor**. During this time, due to Heep's fraudulent activities, his aunt's fortune has diminished.

David

- ❖ David toils to make a living. He works mornings and evenings for his former teacher Doctor Strong as a secretary, and also starts to learn [shorthand](#), with the

help of his old school-friend Traddles, upon completion reporting parliamentary debate for a newspaper.

- ❖ With considerable moral support from Agnes and his own great diligence and hardwork, David ultimately finds fame and fortune as an author, writing fiction.
- ❖ David's romantic but self-serving school friend, Steerforth, also re-acquaints himself with David, but then goes on to seduce and dishonour Emily, offering to marry her off to his manservant Littimer before deserting her in Europe.
- ❖ Her uncle Mr Peggotty manages to find her with the help of Martha, who had grown up in their part of England, and then settled in London.
- ❖ Ham, who had been engaged to marry Emily before the tragedy, dies in a fierce storm off the coast in attempting to succour a ship.
- ❖ Steerforth was aboard the ship and also died. Mr Peggotty takes Emily to a new life in [Australia](#), accompanied by Mrs Gummidge and the Micawbers, where all eventually find security and happiness.
- ❖ David, meanwhile, has fallen completely in love with Dora Spenlow, and then marries her.
- ❖ Their marriage proves troublesome for David in the sense of everyday practical affairs, but he never stops loving her. Dora dies early in their marriage after a miscarriage.
- ❖ After Dora's death, Agnes encourages David to return to normal life and his profession of writing. While living in [Switzerland](#) to dispel his grief over so many losses, David realises that he loves Agnes. Upon returning to [England](#), after a failed attempt to conceal his feelings.
- ❖ , David finds that Agnes loves him too. They quickly marry and in this marriage, he finds true happiness. David and
- ❖ Agnes then have at least five children, including a daughter named after his great-aunt, Betsey Trotwood.