

## **AI-Generated Graded Readers**

Masaru Uchida, Gifu University

Publication webpage:

[https://www1.gifu-u.ac.jp/~masaru/a1/ai-generated\\_graded\\_readers.html](https://www1.gifu-u.ac.jp/~masaru/a1/ai-generated_graded_readers.html)

Publication date: March 2, 2026

### **About This Edition**

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.

The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

### **Source Text**

Original work: David Copperfield

Author: Charles Dickens

Source: Project Gutenberg

<https://www.gutenberg.org/>

Full text available at:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/766/pg766.txt>

The original text is in the public domain.

### **Copyright and Use**

This simplified edition is intended for educational and non-commercial use only.

The source text is provided by Project Gutenberg under its public domain policy.

Users should refer to the Project Gutenberg License for full terms:

<https://www.gutenberg.org/policy/license.html>

This adaptation was generated with the assistance of artificial intelligence and edited for readability and educational purposes.

### **Disclaimer**

This edition is an educational adaptation and is not affiliated with or endorsed by Project Gutenberg.

Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

## Part 1

Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, I cannot say. I only know that I must begin at the beginning and tell my story as clearly as I remember it. I was born on a Friday at midnight. The clock had just begun to strike when I began to cry, and people later said this was a sign that my life would not be simple.

The nurse who attended my birth believed strongly in signs. She whispered to the neighbors, "This child will see strange things. Mark my words." Another woman replied, "And born on a Friday too! He will have troubles." I knew none of this then, of course, but I heard the story many times afterward, and it stayed with me.

I was born with a caul, a thin covering sometimes found on a baby's head. People believed such a thing protected sailors from drowning. Years later, I learned that my caul had been sold in a small neighborhood raffle. An old woman won it and proudly said, "I shall never drown now." She lived to a great age and avoided the sea entirely, which seemed to me both amusing and strange.

My father had died six months before I was born. Because of this, I never saw him, and he never held me. As a child I often stood beside his grave in the churchyard and wondered what he might have been like. I imagined him kind and gentle, though I had no memory to prove it. The grave seemed lonely to me, lying outside in wind and rain while our house stood warm nearby.

My mother was very young and very pretty. Her name was Clara Copperfield, and she possessed a soft voice and a gentle manner. Living with us was Peggotty, our faithful servant, who loved me dearly and ruled the household with quiet strength. She had bright eyes, red cheeks, and a firm way of speaking that made everyone listen.

The day I was born, my mother sat alone by the fire, nervous and uncertain about the future. The wind moved loudly outside. Suddenly she saw a lady

walking toward the house through the garden.

The lady did not knock. Instead, she looked through the window directly at my mother. Startled, my mother hurried to open the door.

“I believe you are Mrs. David Copperfield,” the lady said.

“Yes, ma’am,” my mother answered softly.

“I am Miss Betsey Trotwood,” the visitor announced. “You have heard of me.”

My mother nodded nervously. Everyone in the family feared Miss Betsey, my father’s aunt, who was known for strong opinions and sudden actions.

Miss Betsey entered the room and looked around carefully. “Sit down,” she said. “You must not excite yourself.”

My mother tried to smile but soon began to cry.

“Tut, tut!” said Miss Betsey. “Do not cry. I cannot bear tears.”

After a moment she studied my mother closely and said, “Take off your cap. Let me see you properly.”

My mother obeyed. Her long hair fell over her shoulders.

“Why,” cried Miss Betsey, “you are only a child!”

“I am afraid I am a childish widow,” my mother said gently.

Miss Betsey turned toward the fire and remained silent for a while. Then she spoke firmly. “The baby will be a girl.”

“It may be a boy,” my mother said.

“No,” replied Miss Betsey. “A girl. She shall be named Betsey Trotwood Copperfield, and I shall see that she is raised sensibly.”

My mother smiled weakly, unsure how to answer.

Soon her pains began, and Peggotty hurried her upstairs. The doctor arrived, followed by the nurse. Miss Betsey waited downstairs with cotton in her ears so she would not hear the noise.

The doctor tried to speak politely. “Is your ear troubling you, madam?”

“No,” she answered sharply. “I dislike disturbance.”

Hours passed. Each time the doctor came down, she demanded, “Well? Is it done?”

“Not yet,” he answered again and again.

At last he returned smiling. "Mother and child are safe."

Miss Betsey stood quickly. "And the child?"

"A boy," said the doctor.

She stared at him without speaking. Then she put on her bonnet and walked out of the house without another word. She did not even look at me.

Thus I entered the world, already a disappointment to my great-aunt.

My earliest memories are of my mother and Peggotty together. My mother seemed gentle and bright like sunlight, while Peggotty felt strong and safe like a wall protecting us. I remember holding Peggotty's finger as she guided my steps across the floor.

Our house in Blunderstone appeared enormous to my childish eyes. Chickens walked proudly through the yard, and one large rooster frightened me by staring directly at me through the window.

Inside, a long dark passage led past a store-room filled with jars and boxes. I always ran past it quickly, certain that something lived inside. The best parlour, used only on Sundays, made me uneasy because Peggotty once told me my father's funeral had taken place there.

One evening my mother read aloud a story about a man rising from the dead. I became so frightened that they had to carry me from bed and show me the peaceful churchyard outside.

"See, Davy," my mother whispered, "all is quiet. No one will trouble you."

I believed her because her voice always made fear disappear.

On Sundays we went to church together. Peggotty watched me closely and whispered, "Sit still now," whenever my attention wandered. Still, I often stared at sunlight through the windows or fell asleep during the sermon.

At home we were happy in simple ways. My mother danced with me in the evening while Peggotty laughed and clapped her hands.

One night, while waiting for my mother to return from visiting a neighbor, I sat beside Peggotty reading about crocodiles.

"Peggotty," I asked suddenly, "were you ever married?"

She laughed. "What a question! No, Master Davy."

“But you could marry if you wished?”

“I suppose I could,” she said, smiling.

“Then why not?”

She hugged me tightly. “Because I have you and your mama, and that is enough.”

Just then the door opened. My mother entered with a dark gentleman whom I had seen once before. He spoke kindly, yet I disliked him immediately without knowing why.

“And this is little David,” he said. “We must be friends.”

I gave him my left hand instead of my right.

“The right hand, Davy,” my mother whispered.

“I prefer this one,” I said stubbornly.

The gentleman laughed, but his eyes watched me carefully. His name was Mr. Murdstone.

After he left, I noticed my mother behaving differently. She seemed nervous and thoughtful. Later that night I heard Peggotty say quietly, “I do not like him.”

My mother answered, “You must not say so.”

Though I did not understand their meaning, uneasiness settled in my heart. I felt that change was coming, though I could not yet see its shape.

## Part 2

After Mr. Murdstone’s first visit, life at home continued outwardly as before, yet something quiet had changed. My mother often sat thinking instead of laughing and singing as she once had. Sometimes she would begin to speak, then stop suddenly, as if uncertain whether her words were right. Even as a child I sensed that our peaceful world was becoming fragile.

Mr. Murdstone soon began visiting regularly. Each time he arrived, my mother grew both pleased and nervous. She arranged her hair carefully and asked Peggotty again and again whether everything looked proper.

“Do I appear foolish?” she asked one afternoon.

“No, ma’am,” Peggotty answered, though her voice sounded doubtful.

I watched these preparations with jealousy I did not understand. When Mr. Murdstone spoke to my mother, I felt pushed aside, as if my place beside her had been taken.

One morning he invited me to ride with him on horseback. The idea excited me, and I quickly agreed. While I prepared, I saw him walking slowly beside my mother in the garden. They spoke quietly. My mother smiled and lowered her eyes, and Peggotty, watching from the window, shook her head strongly.

Riding before him on the horse, I studied his face. He appeared handsome, yet something cold lived behind his smile. At an inn by the sea we met two gentlemen who greeted him loudly.

“So this is the young Copperfield!” one cried. “A fine boy!”

They laughed and spoke freely, praising my mother’s beauty. When I repeated these compliments later, my mother blushed and laughed softly.

“You must not repeat everything you hear,” she told me, though she seemed pleased.

Not long after this visit, Peggotty announced that I should travel with her to see her brother in Yarmouth.

“You will enjoy the sea, Master Davy,” she said.

I felt thrilled by the idea of adventure, though leaving my mother made me uneasy. On the morning of departure she hugged me tightly.

“Be a good boy,” she whispered. “And come back soon.”

As the cart began to move, she ran after us for one more kiss. I watched her grow smaller behind us, waving until she disappeared from sight.

The journey felt long but exciting. Peggotty pointed out villages and fields along the road, telling stories about people she knew. Late in the day I smelled something sharp and fresh in the air.

“That is the sea,” Peggotty said proudly.

Soon I heard its deep sound and saw wide water stretching farther than I could imagine. Awe filled me. The waves moved endlessly, shining under the evening sky.

Peggotty led me along the shore to what appeared to be an overturned boat. To

my surprise, it was a house. Light shone warmly from its windows.

The door opened, and a large cheerful man cried, “Why, Peggotty! You have come home!”

This was Mr. Peggotty. He welcomed me kindly, shaking my hand with great warmth.

Inside the boat-house everything felt cozy and bright. The curved wooden walls surrounded us like protective arms. There I met Ham, strong and friendly, and little Em’ly, whose quick smile immediately delighted me. Mrs. Gummidge, dressed in black, sighed sadly while greeting us.

Supper was lively and joyful.

“You shall be one of us while you stay,” Mr. Peggotty said.

“Thank you, sir,” I replied, feeling already at home.

Days at Yarmouth passed happily. Ham showed me fishing boats and taught me how to walk safely along the shore. Em’ly and I played together, building castles in the sand and watching waves break against the beach.

One evening we sat watching the sunset.

“I want to be a lady someday,” Em’ly said suddenly.

“Why?” I asked.

“Because ladies see the world,” she answered. “They go far away from places like this.”

I could not imagine wishing to leave such happiness, yet her dream fascinated me.

Evenings in the boat-house were filled with stories and songs. Mr. Peggotty’s deep voice made the room feel safe, while Peggotty laughed freely in a way I had never seen at home.

During a stormy night, the wind shook the house, and I felt afraid. Mr. Peggotty placed a hand on my shoulder.

“The sea sounds fierce,” he said, “but she knows her own ways.”

His calmness made fear disappear.

At last Peggotty received a letter. After reading it, she grew quiet.

“We must soon go home,” she told me gently.

I felt both glad and sad. Leaving Yarmouth seemed like leaving a dream.

On the morning of departure everyone gathered to say goodbye. Em'ly looked unhappy.

“You will come back?” she asked.

“Yes,” I promised.

As the cart carried us away, I watched them standing together beside the sea. I believed nothing could change the happiness I had known there.

I did not yet understand that while I had been away, my life at home had already changed forever.

### Part 3

During the journey home from Yarmouth, I spoke constantly about the sea and the friends I had made there. Peggotty listened kindly, though she seemed distracted. Several times she opened her mouth as if to speak, then stopped. Her silence made me uneasy, but I could not guess the reason.

As we approached our house, I noticed at once that something felt different. The windows appeared closed more tightly than before, and the garden seemed strangely quiet. My excitement faded, replaced by nervous expectation.

Peggotty held my hand firmly as we entered.

In the parlour sat my mother—and beside her was Mr. Murdstone.

My mother rose quickly and embraced me, but her manner felt timid rather than joyful. Mr. Murdstone smiled calmly.

“Welcome home, David,” he said. “You have been missed.”

I looked from one to the other in confusion. My mother avoided my eyes.

After a moment she said softly, “Davy, I have something to tell you. I am married now.”

The words confused me at first. Then their meaning struck suddenly. I felt as though the room had changed shape around me.

“Married?” I repeated.

“Yes,” she said gently. “Mr. Murdstone is now your father.”

I could not answer. A heavy feeling settled in my chest. Mr. Murdstone placed his hand on my shoulder.

“We must begin as friends,” he said. “You will learn obedience and firmness. Those are good qualities for a boy.”

His voice sounded pleasant, yet it made me uncomfortable.

Soon another visitor arrived—his sister, Miss Murdstone. She was tall, dark, and severe, carrying a bag filled with heavy keys that made a sharp sound whenever she moved. Her eyes examined everything critically.

“So this is the child,” she said. “He must be properly trained.”

From that day the atmosphere of our home changed completely. Laughter disappeared. Rules replaced freedom. My mother, once cheerful, became nervous and uncertain, always trying to please her new husband and his sister.

Lessons began immediately. Mr. Murdstone insisted that I study for long hours under strict supervision. When I hesitated or made mistakes, he spoke coldly.

“Control yourself,” he said. “You must learn firmness.”

I tried desperately to succeed, hoping to regain my mother’s smile. But fear made learning difficult. My hands shook as I read aloud, and small errors brought sharp criticism.

One morning, overwhelmed by anxiety, I stumbled repeatedly during a lesson. Mr. Murdstone’s face hardened.

“You are careless,” he said.

“I am trying,” I whispered.

“Trying is not enough.”

He seized my arm roughly. Terrified and desperate, I bit his hand. The moment passed quickly, but its consequences were severe.

Miss Murdstone cried, “The boy is violent!”

My mother wept helplessly while I was locked alone in my room as punishment. For several days I remained there, seeing no one except Peggotty, who secretly brought me food and comfort.

“Be brave, Master Davy,” she whispered. “Things will change someday.”

Yet I felt abandoned and ashamed.

After my punishment ended, Mr. Murdstone announced a decision.

“The boy must leave home,” he said. “He will attend school.”

My mother cried softly but did not oppose him. I realized then how powerless she had become.

Before my departure she held me tightly.

“You must try to love him,” she whispered through tears.

I promised, though I did not understand how.

Peggotty prepared my belongings while wiping her eyes. On the morning I left, she hugged me strongly.

“Remember you are loved,” she said.

As the cart carried me away, I looked back at the house. My mother stood at the door, waving weakly. Mr. and Miss Murdstone watched from behind her like dark shadows.

Thus began a new chapter of my life—one filled with uncertainty and fear, as I traveled toward a school I had never seen, leaving behind the happiness of childhood.

#### Part 4

The journey to my new school felt long and lonely. I traveled in a coach with strangers who paid little attention to me. Outside the window, fields and villages passed slowly, yet I scarcely noticed them. My thoughts remained fixed on home and on my mother’s tearful face as I had left her behind.

At night we stopped at inns where travelers ate and spoke loudly. I sat quietly, afraid to speak unless addressed. One gentleman asked, “Where are you going, young fellow?”

“To school, sir,” I answered.

“Ah,” he said, smiling. “Then learn well and grow strong.”

His kindness comforted me briefly, though sadness soon returned.

After many hours the coach stopped before a large building surrounded by high walls. A sign announced the name of Salem House. The place appeared cold and

silent. A thin boy opened the gate and led me inside.

The schoolmaster, Mr. Creakle, soon appeared. He walked with a stiff movement and spoke in a harsh voice that frightened me at once.

“This is the new boy?” he asked.

“Yes, sir,” the servant replied.

Mr. Creakle examined me closely. “He must be watched,” he said. “We do not tolerate disobedience here.”

I trembled, remembering my recent punishment at home.

A label was hung around my neck bearing the words: TAKE CARE OF HIM. HE BITES. The humiliation burned deeply. Older boys stared and laughed as I passed through the hall.

One kind voice finally spoke behind me.

“Do not mind them,” said a tall boy with a confident smile. “They laugh at everyone.”

This was James Steerforth. His manner was easy and self-assured, and I immediately admired him. He guided me through the school, explaining rules and introducing me to others.

“You must not appear afraid,” he advised. “That only encourages trouble.”

His friendship brought me relief, and I followed his example closely.

Life at Salem House proved strict and often cruel. Mr. Creakle believed punishment produced learning. Mistakes resulted in harsh discipline, and fear filled the classroom. Even small errors caused anxiety among the boys.

Yet Steerforth protected me when he could. He spoke kindly and shared stories that made evenings more bearable.

“You will grow used to it,” he told me. “School is never pleasant at first.”

Another student, Tommy Traddles, became my friend as well. He possessed a cheerful spirit despite frequent punishment. Whenever he was scolded, he returned smiling, drawing little skeletons on his slate to amuse himself.

“One must keep cheerful,” he said. “Otherwise life becomes too heavy.”

I admired his resilience.

Weeks passed slowly. I studied hard, hoping success might ease my situation.

Letters from Peggotty arrived occasionally, filled with affection and encouragement. My mother wrote less often, and her letters sounded nervous, as though she feared being watched.

One cold morning news arrived that changed everything. I was called into the school office, where a messenger waited with a letter. The master handed it to me without expression.

My hands shook as I read.

My mother was ill—very ill—and I must return home immediately.

Fear overwhelmed me. Memories of her gentle voice filled my mind as I hurried to prepare for departure. Steerforth shook my hand warmly.

“Write to me,” he said. “We shall meet again.”

I promised that I would.

The journey home felt longer than before. Every mile increased my anxiety. When I finally reached the house, silence greeted me. Curtains were drawn, and the air felt heavy.

Peggotty opened the door and embraced me, weeping.

“Oh, my dear boy,” she said softly.

I understood before she spoke further.

My mother was dead.

Grief filled me completely. The house seemed empty of warmth, and childhood itself felt finished. I stood silently, unable to believe that the gentle presence that had protected me was gone forever.

From that moment, my life entered a darker period, one in which loneliness and hardship would test me more severely than ever before.

## Part 5

After my mother’s death, the house no longer felt like home. Every room reminded me of her gentle voice and kind smile, yet she was nowhere to be found. Silence filled the spaces where laughter had once lived. I moved carefully, as if afraid to disturb memories that still seemed present.

Peggotty remained my greatest comfort. She stayed close to me whenever possible, speaking softly and guiding me through the difficult days that followed. One evening she said, “Your mama loved you dearly, Master Davy. Never forget that.” I promised her I would remember always.

Mr. and Miss Murdstone, however, showed little sympathy. Their manner remained strict and controlled. Mourning, to them, appeared something to be managed quietly without emotion.

“You must learn firmness,” Mr. Murdstone said when he saw me crying. “Life does not reward weakness.”

His words hurt me deeply, yet I tried to obey.

Soon I learned that I would not return to school immediately. Instead, Mr. Murdstone announced a new plan.

“You are old enough to work,” he said. “Idleness is harmful.”

I did not understand what he meant until Peggotty explained gently that I was to be sent to London to work in a warehouse belonging to Mr. Murdstone’s business.

“But I want to learn,” I said desperately.

Peggotty’s eyes filled with tears. “I know, my dear boy,” she answered. “I know.”

The decision could not be changed. Within days my belongings were packed, and I prepared once more to leave everything familiar behind.

Before my departure Peggotty gave me a small purse containing money she had saved secretly.

“Keep this safe,” she whispered. “Use it only when you truly need it.”

I thanked her with all my heart.

The journey to London felt frightening. The city appeared enormous and noisy, filled with strangers moving quickly through crowded streets. Smoke covered the sky, and the sound of wheels and voices never stopped.

I was taken to the warehouse where I would work. The building stood near the river, dark and damp. Inside, boys and men labored among boxes and barrels. My task was simple but tiring: washing bottles and preparing them for shipment.

The work felt humiliating. I remembered my studies and dreams of learning,

and shame filled me as I stood among rough workers performing endless repetition.

One boy asked, "Are you new here?"

"Yes," I answered quietly.

"You will grow used to it," he said. "Everyone does."

Yet I never truly did.

After work I returned to lodgings arranged for me in a poor neighborhood. There I rented a small room and tried to care for myself alone. Cooking, cleaning, and managing money proved difficult, and many evenings I went hungry to save coins.

Loneliness weighed heavily upon me. I walked the streets watching families together and wondered how my life had changed so completely. At night I sometimes cried quietly, missing Peggotty and the safety of childhood.

During this period I met again Mr. Micawber, a cheerful gentleman who rented rooms in the same house. Though constantly troubled by debt, he spoke with grand confidence.

"My dear young Copperfield," he said one evening, "something will certainly turn up!"

His hopeful spirit amused and comforted me. Mrs. Micawber treated me kindly as well, and their friendship eased my isolation.

Still, hardship continued. Money remained scarce, and work offered no future. I began to feel trapped, uncertain how to escape my situation.

One night, after counting my remaining coins and realizing how little remained, I made an important decision. I would leave London and seek help from my aunt Betsey Trotwood, whom I had never met since my birth.

"She is my last hope," I said aloud.

With determination stronger than fear, I prepared to walk the long road toward her home. Though I did not know whether she would welcome me, I felt certain that remaining where I was would destroy all possibility of a better life.

Thus, with small belongings and uncertain courage, I began the journey that would change my fate once again.

## Part 6

Early one morning, before the streets grew busy, I left London on foot. I carried a small bundle of clothes and the little money Peggotty had given me. The city slowly disappeared behind me as I walked along the road, uncertain how long the journey would take or whether I would succeed.

At first I felt hopeful. The air outside the city seemed cleaner, and the open fields comforted me after the crowded streets. Yet walking soon became difficult. My shoes wore thin, and hunger returned whenever I tried to save money.

Along the road I met many strangers. Some ignored me completely, while others asked questions.

“Where are you going alone, boy?” one farmer asked.

“To Dover, sir,” I replied. “To see my aunt.”

He nodded but offered nothing more, and I continued walking.

One afternoon a man tricked me into showing my money and then stole most of it. I stood helpless beside the road, shocked by my own foolishness. For a moment despair nearly overcame me.

“I must not give up,” I told myself. “I have come too far.”

Hungry and tired, I continued walking. Sometimes kind people offered bread or allowed me to rest briefly. At night I slept wherever I could find shelter—under trees, beside barns, or in quiet corners of villages.

Days passed slowly. My clothes became dusty, and my feet ached with every step. Still, the thought of reaching my aunt kept me moving forward.

At last I saw the sea again. The sight filled me with renewed strength. Soon afterward I reached Dover, exhausted but determined. Asking for directions, I finally stood before a small cottage surrounded by a neat garden.

With trembling hands I knocked.

The door opened, and a strong-looking lady with sharp eyes appeared. Though older, she stood straight and confident.

“Well?” she said firmly. “What do you want?”

“If you please, ma’am,” I said nervously, “I am David Copperfield.”

She stared at me in surprise.

“David Copperfield?” she repeated. “The boy who was not a girl?”

“Yes, ma’am,” I answered.

For a moment she said nothing. Then she called loudly, “Janet! Come here!”

A servant appeared, and my aunt declared, “This boy says he is my nephew.”

She turned back to me. “Why are you here?”

Overcome with emotion, I began to cry. Between tears I told my story—my mother’s death, my work in London, and my journey on foot to find her.

She listened without interruption, though her expression softened gradually.

At last she said, “Come inside.”

I entered the cottage, hardly believing my good fortune.

“You are hungry,” she said. “Sit down.”

Food was brought, and I ate eagerly while she watched carefully. Afterward she asked many questions about my treatment and my life.

“Your stepfather sent you to work?” she asked sharply.

“Yes, ma’am.”

She struck the table with her hand. “A child forced into labor! Shameful!”

Her anger frightened me at first, but I soon realized it was directed not at me but at those who had treated me badly.

Later that evening a gentle man entered carrying papers covered with writing. This was Mr. Dick, who lived with my aunt. He greeted me kindly and listened with interest to my story.

“A sensible boy,” he said warmly. “We must take care of him.”

My aunt nodded. “We shall see.”

That night I slept in a clean bed, safe and warm for the first time in many months. Before leaving the room, my aunt said firmly, “You may stay here for now. We will decide what is best.”

Relief filled me completely. For the first time since my mother’s death, I felt protected.

The long journey had ended, but a new chapter of my life—one filled with

guidance, education, and unexpected kindness—was just beginning.

## Part 7

The next morning I woke slowly, almost unable to believe where I was. Sunlight entered through the window, and the quiet sound of the sea reached the room. For a moment I feared the comfort might disappear like a dream, but when I came downstairs, my aunt sat at the table exactly as she had the evening before, reading a newspaper with serious attention.

She looked up. “Well, boy,” she said, “you appear healthier already.”

“Yes, ma’am,” I answered gratefully.

Mr. Dick greeted me cheerfully. “Good morning, David! We were just discussing the weather and other important matters.”

My aunt shook her head slightly but allowed him to continue speaking. I soon understood that Mr. Dick possessed a gentle mind and a kind heart. Though others might have considered him strange, my aunt treated him with respect and protection.

After breakfast she questioned me carefully about my education.

“Can you read properly?” she asked.

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Write?”

“A little.”

She nodded. “Then we must repair what has been neglected.”

That same day she wrote letters demanding explanations from Mr. Murdstone. When replies arrived, she read them with growing anger.

“He speaks of discipline,” she said sharply. “I speak of cruelty.”

Soon afterward Mr. Murdstone himself came to Dover, accompanied by his sister. Their arrival filled me with anxiety, but my aunt stood firm.

“You have treated this child badly,” she declared before they could speak much. “He will not return with you.”

Mr. Murdstone attempted to argue calmly. “The boy requires firmness.”

“The boy requires kindness,” my aunt replied. “And he shall have it here.”

Miss Murdstone protested loudly, but my aunt refused to listen.

“Good day to you both,” she said at last, opening the door. “This discussion is finished.”

When they left, relief flooded me so strongly that I could hardly speak.

“You are safe now,” my aunt said simply.

From that moment she became my true guardian. She arranged new clothes for me and established a regular routine. Each morning I studied reading, writing, and numbers under her supervision.

“Education,” she declared, “is the foundation of independence.”

Mr. Dick often joined my lessons, offering cheerful encouragement even when he misunderstood the subject.

Life in the cottage followed peaceful patterns. My aunt walked daily along the shore, watching carefully for donkeys that might enter her garden, which she guarded fiercely. Mr. Dick worked patiently on a large kite covered with writing, explaining that it helped organize his thoughts.

I soon felt deep affection for both of them. Their home provided stability I had not known since early childhood.

One evening my aunt spoke thoughtfully.

“You must attend a proper school,” she said. “A boy cannot grow wisely without discipline balanced by kindness.”

I listened eagerly, grateful for the chance to learn again.

Before school arrangements were completed, Peggotty came to visit me. Seeing her again filled me with joy. She embraced me tightly.

“Oh, my dear boy,” she said, “how thin you have grown!”

We spoke long about the past and about Yarmouth. She told me that everyone there remembered me warmly.

“You have found a good home,” she said at last, smiling toward my aunt.

My aunt pretended not to hear but seemed pleased.

When Peggotty departed, I felt both sadness and gratitude. The people who loved me remained connected to my life, even as new beginnings formed.

Soon preparations were finished for my education at a new school. Unlike my earlier departure, this journey felt hopeful rather than frightening.

Standing beside my aunt before leaving, I promised, “I will work hard and make you proud.”

She placed her hand briefly on my shoulder. “See that you do,” she said, though her eyes showed warmth.

With renewed courage and the support of those who cared for me, I set out once more—this time not toward hardship, but toward opportunity and growth.

## Part 8

My journey to the new school felt entirely different from the fearful trip that had taken me to Salem House. This time I traveled with confidence, knowing that someone cared about my future. My aunt had spoken firmly before my departure.

“Remember,” she said, “honesty and effort matter more than talent. Apply yourself.”

I promised I would.

The school stood in a pleasant town surrounded by trees and open fields. Boys walked freely in the yard, talking and laughing without fear. The sight alone eased my mind. When I entered the building, I noticed light rooms and calm voices instead of harsh commands.

Doctor Strong, the headmaster, welcomed me kindly. He was a gentle man with thoughtful eyes and a quiet manner.

“You are welcome here, David,” he said. “We value diligence and good character above all.”

His words reassured me immediately.

After speaking with my aunt, he turned to me again. “You will find learning easier when you are not afraid,” he added.

I felt certain he understood more about children than my previous teachers.

Life at the school soon became happy and orderly. Lessons were explained patiently, and questions were encouraged rather than punished. For the first time

I discovered real pleasure in study. Reading opened new worlds, and writing allowed me to express thoughts I had long kept silent.

Among the students I quickly made friends. Conversation and laughter filled our free hours. The fear that had once followed me disappeared little by little.

Doctor Strong's young wife, Annie, added warmth to the school. She spoke kindly to students and often walked in the garden, listening when someone felt troubled.

One afternoon she asked gently, "Do you like it here, David?"

"Very much, ma'am," I replied.

"Then you will do well," she said with a smile.

Her kindness reminded me faintly of my mother and brought quiet comfort.

During these years I worked diligently, determined not to disappoint my aunt. Praise from teachers filled me with pride, and I began to believe that my future might truly hold promise.

Letters arrived regularly from home. My aunt wrote briefly but encouragingly. Mr. Dick added cheerful notes describing his latest kite experiments.

"The wind is excellent today," one letter said. "I believe ideas travel better through the air."

His words always made me smile.

During holidays I returned to the cottage by the sea. Each visit strengthened my affection for my aunt and Mr. Dick. Walking along the shore beside her, I felt safe and guided.

As I grew older, I became more aware of the world beyond childhood. Conversations among students turned toward future careers and ambitions. Some planned to enter business, others the church or law. I felt uncertain but hopeful, believing education would reveal my path.

Among my companions, one friendship became especially important—my renewed connection with James Steerforth. Older and confident, he attracted admiration from everyone. His easy manner and lively conversation impressed me deeply.

"Copperfield," he said one evening, "the world is much larger than school. We

must be ready for it.”

I listened eagerly, admiring his confidence.

We walked often together after lessons, discussing life and future dreams. He treated me kindly, and I felt proud to be considered his friend.

As time passed, I invited him to visit Yarmouth during the holidays.

“You must see the sea where I spent my happiest days,” I told him.

“Then I shall come,” he answered with enthusiasm.

I looked forward to the visit with excitement, believing it would unite two happy parts of my life—my past friendships and my present success.

I did not yet realize that this journey would bring consequences that would change many lives, including my own.

## Part 9

When the holidays arrived, Steerforth and I traveled together toward Yarmouth. I felt great excitement as familiar places appeared along the road. Memories returned clearly—the wide sky above the sea, the sound of waves, and the warmth of the boat-house where I had once been so happy.

Peggotty welcomed us with joy when we arrived. She embraced me tightly and then turned to Steerforth with polite curiosity.

“You are very welcome, sir,” she said. “Any friend of Master Davy is welcome here.”

Steerforth smiled easily. “Thank you. I have heard much about this place.”

Soon we walked to the boat-house. Mr. Peggotty greeted me warmly, shaking my hand with strong affection.

“My dear boy!” he cried. “You have grown tall!”

Ham appeared cheerful and strong as ever, and little Em’ly, now older and more graceful, greeted me with shy happiness. Mrs. Gummidge sighed as usual but soon smiled at our arrival.

I felt proud introducing Steerforth to them all. He spoke kindly and confidently, winning their admiration at once. Mr. Peggotty welcomed him openly, pleased by

his friendly manner.

During the first days everything seemed joyful. We walked along the beach, watched fishing boats return, and spent evenings talking beside the fire. Steerforth listened closely to stories of the sea and praised the simple honesty of village life.

Em'ly especially seemed interested in his attention. She spoke eagerly about dreams beyond Yarmouth.

"I wish to see the world," she said one evening. "I do not want to remain here forever."

Steerforth answered gently, "You deserve to see many places. The world is larger than you imagine."

She blushed slightly at his words. I felt only happiness seeing them speak together, never suspecting danger.

Ham, who loved Em'ly deeply, watched with trusting admiration. He respected Steerforth and believed him honorable. Mr. Peggotty also treated him as a welcome guest, never imagining harm could come from such friendship.

Days passed peacefully, yet small moments began to trouble me without clear reason. Sometimes I noticed Steerforth walking alone along the shore, deep in thought. At other times Em'ly grew quiet after speaking with him.

Still, I dismissed these feelings. My admiration for Steerforth remained strong, and I believed completely in his goodness.

One evening we watched the sunset together. The sky glowed red and gold above the sea.

"Do you ever wish to leave all this behind?" Steerforth asked Em'ly.

"Yes," she answered softly. "I want a different life."

"Perhaps someday you shall have it," he said.

Their conversation seemed harmless, yet something in his tone made me uneasy for a moment. The feeling soon passed, replaced by enjoyment of the peaceful scene.

When the time came to leave Yarmouth, farewells were warm. Em'ly smiled, though her expression appeared thoughtful as she watched Steerforth.

"You will return?" she asked.

“Certainly,” he replied.

As we traveled back toward school, I felt grateful for the happiness of the visit. I believed my worlds had joined perfectly—friendship, childhood memories, and hopeful youth.

I could not know that this meeting had already begun a chain of events that would soon bring sorrow to those I loved most.

## Part 10

After our return from Yarmouth, school life continued as before, yet I noticed a quiet change in Steerforth. Though he remained friendly, he often appeared distracted. During walks he sometimes fell silent, staring ahead as if thinking deeply about something he did not wish to share.

One evening I asked, “Are you unwell?”

He smiled lightly. “No, Copperfield. Only thinking about the future.”

His answer satisfied me at the time, though I sensed hidden thoughts behind it.

My studies advanced steadily, and I began to feel confident in my abilities. Doctor Strong praised my diligence, and success in learning brought genuine happiness. Letters from my aunt encouraged me to continue working hard.

“Remember,” she wrote, “character matters more than cleverness.”

I kept her words carefully in mind.

Not long afterward Steerforth announced that he would soon leave school.

“The world waits,” he said with excitement. “School cannot hold us forever.”

I felt sad to lose his daily companionship but admired his confidence.

Soon after his departure, I completed my own studies. My aunt decided that I should prepare for a profession and arranged for me to begin training in law in London. The thought of returning to the city frightened me slightly, yet I now traveled with purpose rather than helplessness.

London appeared different through older eyes. Though still crowded and noisy, it no longer seemed overwhelming. I took lodgings with a cheerful family whose lively conversation filled the house with warmth.

My work in a legal office required patience. I copied documents, carried papers, and observed the serious business of law. Though the tasks were sometimes dull, I felt proud to be learning a respectable profession.

During this time I renewed acquaintance with Mr. Micawber, whom I had known during my earlier unhappy stay in London. He greeted me with enthusiasm.

“My dear Copperfield!” he exclaimed. “Fortune surely approaches!”

Though still troubled by money problems, his hopeful spirit remained unchanged. Mrs. Micawber welcomed me kindly, and their friendship eased my transition into adult life.

Through my work I also met a young woman named Dora. From the first moment I saw her, I felt deeply moved. She possessed bright eyes and a gentle, cheerful manner that filled me with happiness.

Our conversations were light and pleasant.

“Do you enjoy music?” she asked one afternoon.

“Very much,” I replied, though my attention rested more on her smile than her question.

Dora laughed easily and spoke with innocent charm. I soon found myself thinking about her constantly, eager for every meeting. My affection grew quickly into love, and I believed that happiness had finally arrived.

At the same time my friendship with Agnes Wickfield deepened. Agnes possessed calm wisdom and quiet kindness. Whenever I felt uncertain, I visited her for advice.

“You must think carefully about the future,” she told me gently.

I listened respectfully, though my thoughts remained filled with Dora.

Meanwhile troubling signs appeared in Mr. Wickfield’s business. His clerk, Uriah Heep, behaved with exaggerated humility, always speaking of his low position while slowly gaining influence. His manner made me uncomfortable, though I could not yet explain why.

As my life in London expanded—with work, friendship, and growing love—I felt certain that adulthood would bring only happiness. I did not yet understand how closely joy and sorrow walk together, nor how quickly life can change

direction.

## Part 11

My affection for Dora soon became the center of my thoughts. I looked forward to every visit and counted the hours until I might see her again. Her laughter seemed to remove all worries, and when she spoke, I listened as if nothing else mattered.

One afternoon, gathering my courage, I said, “Miss Dora, I must tell you something important.”

She looked at me with surprise. “Something serious?”

“Yes,” I answered, my voice trembling. “I care for you very deeply.”

She blushed and lowered her eyes. After a moment she said softly, “I think... I care for you too.”

Happiness filled me completely. From that day we considered ourselves secretly engaged, though her father believed I was too young to marry.

“You must first establish yourself,” he told me firmly. “Love alone is not enough.”

Though disappointed, I understood his meaning and worked harder than ever, determined to prove myself worthy.

During this period I often visited Agnes. She listened patiently as I spoke about Dora with excitement.

“She is perfect,” I said once.

Agnes smiled gently. “If she makes you happy, then I am glad.”

Her calm tone comforted me, though I did not notice the quiet sadness behind her kindness.

Meanwhile Mr. Wickfield’s condition worried me more each day. He appeared tired and troubled, while Uriah Heep gained increasing control over business matters. Heep spoke constantly of humility.

“I am only a very humble person,” he said repeatedly, bowing his head.

Yet his eyes watched everything carefully, and his influence grew stronger.

My uneasiness increased, but I lacked proof of wrongdoing.

Soon afterward Dora's father died suddenly. The event shocked us all. Though grief surrounded her, it also removed the obstacle to our marriage. After a period of mourning, we prepared for the wedding.

I entered marriage with great joy, believing all difficulties lay behind me. Dora looked beautiful and happy, and I felt certain our love would overcome every challenge.

Married life began pleasantly. Dora filled our home with warmth and affection. She greeted me each day with smiles and cheerful conversation. Yet practical problems soon appeared. She disliked managing money or organizing household tasks.

"I cannot understand accounts," she said, laughing nervously. "They make my head ache."

At first I found this charming. I believed patience would solve everything. I tried gently to guide her, explaining expenses and responsibilities.

"We must learn together," I told her kindly.

But my advice often made her unhappy. She would cry and say, "I am a foolish little wife."

Seeing her distress filled me with regret, and I stopped correcting her, choosing harmony over improvement.

Though our love remained sincere, I began slowly to understand that affection alone could not replace maturity. Marriage required shared responsibility as well as emotion.

At the same time news arrived from Yarmouth. Mr. Peggotty had begun searching for Em'ly after her sudden disappearance. When I learned that she had run away with Steerforth, shock and sorrow overwhelmed me.

I struggled to accept that the friend I admired had caused such pain. Memories of our conversations returned with new meaning, and I felt deep guilt for bringing him into their lives.

As my marriage faced quiet challenges and the world revealed unexpected truths, I sensed that adulthood demanded deeper understanding than I had ever

imagined.

## Part 12

News from Yarmouth troubled me deeply. Letters described Mr. Peggotty's long journey in search of Em'ly. He refused to rest, traveling from town to town with patient determination.

"I will find her," he had said before leaving. "No matter where she has gone."

His devotion moved me greatly. I often imagined him walking alone through distant places, guided only by love.

Meanwhile my own life continued in London. Though Dora and I remained affectionate, daily responsibilities grew more difficult. Bills arrived faster than I expected, and managing expenses required care neither of us fully possessed.

One evening I tried again to explain household accounts.

"We must keep careful records," I said gently.

Dora covered her ears playfully. "Please do not speak of numbers," she laughed. "Let us be happy instead."

Her innocence touched me, yet I began to feel the weight of responsibility alone.

Agnes visited us often and helped quietly without criticism. Dora trusted her completely.

"Agnes understands everything," Dora once said. "She makes me feel safe."

I agreed, grateful for Agnes's steady presence.

At the same time the situation involving Uriah Heep reached a serious point. Mr. Wickfield appeared increasingly anxious, while Heep controlled more of the business. His false humility became difficult to endure.

"I am only a humble man," he repeated, bowing constantly.

Yet his words felt insincere, and I sensed hidden ambition behind them.

With the help of Mr. Micawber, who had become involved in the business, the truth slowly emerged. Though often troubled by debts, Mr. Micawber possessed strong honesty and courage.

One evening he spoke to me privately.

“My dear Copperfield,” he said solemnly, “important revelations approach.”

Soon afterward a meeting was arranged. In the presence of witnesses, Mr. Micawber presented evidence showing that Uriah Heep had manipulated accounts and taken control through deceit.

Heep’s humble manner vanished instantly.

“You all looked down on me!” he cried angrily. “I only took what I deserved!”

His words shocked everyone. The deception ended, and Mr. Wickfield regained control of his affairs. Agnes thanked Mr. Micawber warmly, her relief clear.

Justice brought comfort, yet sorrow soon entered my own home. Dora’s health began to fail. At first she complained only of tiredness, but weakness increased steadily. Doctors visited and spoke carefully, avoiding direct answers.

I watched her anxiously.

“You will soon be well,” I told her.

She smiled gently but did not reply.

Days grew quieter as she rested more often. The lively laughter that once filled our home faded into soft conversation. I remained beside her whenever possible, fearful of leaving even briefly.

Agnes visited frequently, offering calm assistance. Dora often held her hand and spoke softly with her when I stepped away.

Gradually I understood that illness had changed everything. Happiness, which once seemed secure, now felt fragile.

One evening Dora looked at me with peaceful seriousness.

“You have always been patient with me,” she said.

“You have always made me happy,” I answered quickly.

She smiled faintly, and though no more was said, I sensed that she understood more about her condition than she wished to reveal.

As winter approached, her strength declined further, and I realized with growing fear that another great loss might soon come into my life.

Dora's illness grew steadily worse as winter passed. She tired easily and spent most of her time resting near the window, watching the light change through the day. Though she tried to smile whenever I entered the room, I could see that even speaking required effort.

Doctors continued to visit, speaking quietly with concerned expressions. Their careful words gave little comfort. I began to understand what they did not say openly—that recovery was unlikely.

One evening Dora called me to sit beside her.

"Davy," she said softly, "do you remember when we first met?"

"I remember every moment," I answered.

She smiled gently. "You were always so kind to me."

I tried to reassure her. "You will soon grow stronger."

She shook her head slightly. "I was never good at serious things. I could not become the wife you hoped for."

Her words filled me with sorrow.

"You gave me happiness," I said. "That is all that matters."

She seemed comforted by this and closed her eyes peacefully.

Agnes visited often during these days, helping quietly with care. Dora trusted her deeply and once asked to speak with her alone. When Agnes returned, her eyes were filled with emotion, though she spoke calmly.

"She wishes only for your happiness," Agnes told me gently.

I did not fully understand her meaning then, but her words remained with me.

As weeks passed, Dora's strength faded rapidly. Conversations became shorter, filled more with silence than speech. I sat beside her for long hours, holding her hand and remembering the joyful days when laughter had filled our home.

One calm evening, as soft light entered the room, she spoke again.

"You will not forget me?" she asked.

"Never," I promised.

She smiled peacefully. "That is enough."

Soon afterward she grew weaker still. Friends visited quietly, and the house became still and solemn. Every sound seemed softened by expectation.

At last her suffering ended. She passed away gently, leaving behind a silence that felt impossible to accept. I remained beside her, unable to move, struggling to understand how life could continue without her presence.

Grief overwhelmed me. The house felt empty, every object reminding me of her voice and laughter. The future I had imagined disappeared completely.

Agnes stayed near, offering comfort without forcing conversation. Her quiet support helped me endure when sorrow felt unbearable.

After some weeks I realized that remaining surrounded by memories made recovery impossible. With my aunt's encouragement, I decided to travel abroad for a time, hoping distance might ease my grief.

Leaving England again, I carried both love and sorrow with me. The journey marked another turning point in my life—a period of reflection that would slowly change my understanding of loss, love, and the meaning of experience.

#### Part 14

My travels abroad began in deep sorrow. I moved from city to city without clear purpose, hoping that distance might quiet the memories that followed me everywhere. New places surrounded me—wide rivers, busy streets, and distant mountains—yet none could immediately ease my grief.

At first I walked for long hours alone, thinking constantly of Dora. Small things reminded me of her laughter: music heard through an open window, flowers arranged in a market, or the sight of couples walking together. Each memory brought both warmth and pain.

Gradually, however, solitude allowed reflection. Away from familiar surroundings, I began to consider my life more carefully. I thought about childhood hardships, friendships gained and lost, and the lessons hidden within suffering. Writing became my greatest comfort. Each day I recorded thoughts and memories, discovering that putting feelings into words gave shape to emotions that once felt overwhelming.

Through writing I slowly regained strength. I realized that even painful

experiences had formed part of my growth. Instead of wishing to forget the past, I began to understand it.

Letters from home reached me regularly. My aunt wrote practical messages encouraging patience.

“Time and work restore balance,” she reminded me.

Agnes’s letters were gentle and thoughtful. She never pressed me to return quickly but expressed quiet confidence that I would find peace again.

Months passed, and sorrow softened into remembrance. I could think of Dora without despair, remembering her kindness rather than only loss. This change came slowly, almost without my noticing.

During this period I received important news from England. Mr. Peggotty had finally found Em’ly after his long search. She had suffered greatly and felt deep shame for leaving home, yet her uncle welcomed her with forgiveness.

“We shall begin again,” he told her.

They planned to travel far away, where she could live without judgment and build a new life. Hearing this filled me with relief and admiration for his unwavering love.

Soon afterward more news arrived—news far more tragic. During a violent storm at sea, a ship had been wrecked near Yarmouth. Steerforth had been aboard and lost his life in the disaster. Ham, attempting bravely to rescue sailors from the wreck, had also died.

I read the letter again and again, unable to believe it. Memories of Steerforth’s charm and friendship returned alongside knowledge of the pain he had caused. I mourned him despite everything. Ham’s courage filled me with deep respect and sorrow.

These events reminded me how fragile life could be. Happiness and tragedy existed side by side, shaping lives without warning.

As time passed, I felt ready at last to return home. Grief no longer controlled me completely. I wished to rebuild my life rather than escape from it.

When I arrived in England, my aunt welcomed me warmly.

“You look stronger,” she said with approval.

Mr. Dick celebrated my return with cheerful excitement, convinced that all difficulties had passed.

Seeing Agnes again affected me most deeply. Her calm presence brought immediate peace. We spoke openly about the past, sharing memories and understanding shaped by experience.

Slowly I became aware that my feelings toward her had changed. The affection I felt was steady and reassuring, different from the passionate excitement I had once known. Being near her felt like coming home after a long journey.

I did not yet speak these thoughts aloud, but I sensed that my life was moving quietly toward a new beginning.

## Part 15

After my return to England, life settled into a calm and steady rhythm. I spent many days at my aunt's cottage beside the sea, where familiar sounds and quiet routines restored my sense of peace. The waves moved endlessly against the shore, and their steady motion seemed to match the slow healing within my heart.

My aunt observed me carefully, though she rarely spoke directly about feelings.

"You must work again," she said one morning. "Idleness encourages sadness."

I agreed, knowing she was right. I returned seriously to writing, using both memory and experience as inspiration. Words came more easily than before, shaped by everything I had lived through. Writing no longer felt like escape but like purpose.

Mr. Dick supported my efforts enthusiastically.

"Your thoughts fly like my kite," he said one afternoon. "Only they travel farther."

His simple encouragement pleased me greatly.

During this period I saw Agnes often. Our conversations felt natural and peaceful. We spoke of many things—books, memories, and hopes for the future. There was no excitement or uncertainty, only quiet understanding.

One evening we walked together along the shore as the sun set over the water.

The air felt calm, and the world seemed still.

“You have changed,” Agnes said gently.

“I think sorrow teaches change,” I replied.

She nodded. “Yes, but it also teaches kindness.”

Her words stayed with me long afterward.

Gradually I became aware of how constant her support had been throughout my life. From childhood through every hardship, she had remained steady and patient. I realized that whenever I felt lost, I had turned to her for guidance without fully understanding why.

These thoughts grew stronger until I could no longer ignore them. One evening, gathering courage, I spoke honestly.

“Agnes,” I said, “I do not know how my life would have continued without you. You have always been my greatest comfort.”

She listened quietly, her expression calm but emotional.

“I feared I had mistaken my feelings before,” I continued. “But now I understand. My happiness has always been connected to you.”

For a moment she said nothing. Then she answered softly, “I have always wished for your happiness, even when it seemed to lead you away from me.”

Her words revealed affection long hidden by patience. Understanding filled me suddenly and completely. The love between us had grown slowly over years of friendship and trust.

“Then we have both waited a long time,” I said.

She smiled gently. “Yes.”

Our understanding brought not excitement but deep peace. I felt as though my life had reached its natural direction at last.

My aunt received the news with strong approval.

“I expected this outcome,” she declared firmly. “It shows good sense.”

Mr. Dick celebrated with great joy, convinced that everything had turned out exactly as it should.

Agnes and I soon married. Our union differed greatly from my earlier marriage. It rested on shared understanding, mutual respect, and calm affection. Together

we built a home filled with balance and kindness.

She encouraged my writing and supported my ambitions, while I valued her wisdom and strength. Happiness no longer felt fragile or uncertain but steady and enduring.

As years passed, my work achieved success beyond what I had once imagined possible. My aunt lived long enough to witness this success and expressed pride in her own practical way.

Looking back upon my life, I understood that every hardship had shaped my character. Childhood suffering taught compassion, loss taught patience, and friendship revealed the true nature of love.

Surrounded by family and peace, I reflected upon the long journey from fear to understanding. The story of my life, once filled with uncertainty, had reached harmony at last.