

About Dickens:

Literary Studies Class: 2nd year students

Charles John Huffam Dickens pen-name "Boz", was the foremost English novelist of the Victorian era, as well as a vigorous social campaigner. Considered one of the English language's greatest writers, he was acclaimed for his rich storytelling and memorable characters, and achieved massive worldwide popularity in his lifetime. Later critics, beginning with George Gissing and G. K. Chesterton, championed his mastery of prose, his endless invention of memorable characters and his powerful social sensibilities. Yet he has also received criticism from writers such as George Henry Lewes, Henry James, and Virginia Woolf, who list sentimentality, implausible occurrence and grotesque characters as faults in his oeuvre. The popularity of Dickens' novels and short stories has meant that none have ever gone out of print. Dickens wrote serialised novels, which was the usual format for fiction at the time, and each new part of his stories would be eagerly anticipated by the reading public.

• A Tale of Two Cities (1859) • Great Expectations (1861) • David Copperfield (1850) • A Christmas Carol (1843) • Oliver Twist (1867) • Little Dorrit (1857) • The Haunted House (1859) • Bleak House (1853) • Our Mutual Friend (1865) • The Pickwick Papers (1832)

Source: Wikipedia

Close reading Activity: Answers

1- *"He lived in a very slippery area; he was a dark sallow man, with a dark beard and rather heavy eye brows. His post was in a solitary and dismal place, and on the other side, a dripping wet wall of jagged stone, excluding all view but a strip of sky."* **What does this descriptive introduction serve?**

- **the author wanted to establish the atmosphere and the entourage of the work; to indicate to the misery that the workers are suffering from in the Victorian England.**

2- *"The monstrous thought came to my mind, as I perused the fixed eyes and the saturnine face that this was a spirit; not a man ... In discharging of his duties; I observed him to be a remarkably exact and vigilant, breaking off his discourse at a syllable, and remaining silent until what he had to do was done ..".* **The writer by purpose described the signal man as such, in your view, why?**

- **he wants to say that this man is reliable and his worthy of trust.**

4- *"Halloa! Below there!"* **what about those two words as the foremost word to read in the story?**

5- *"When he heard a voice thus calling to him, he was standing at the door of his box, with a flag in his hand, furred round its short pole. One would have thought, considering the nature of the ground, that he could not have doubted from what quarter the voice came; but instead of looking up to where I stood on the top of the steep cutting nearly over his head, he turned himself about, and looked down the Line"* (p 3) **when you firstly read the underlined quote, what was the image that you have got?**

6- **The writer seemed to emphasise the description of the working place of the signal man, why? Is it of significance?**

- **the same answer of question one.**

7- **Is the signal man in his total mentally healthy? If yes, justify or quote? If no, why?**

- **he is mentally healthy and the quote of question 2 is an evidence.**

8- *"Regarding those many **long** and **lonely** hours of which I **seemed** to **make** so **much**, he could only say that the routine of his life had shaped itself into that form, and he had grown used to it."*(p 5) **What does he want to say?**

9- *"He had also worked at fractions and decimals, and tried a little algebra..."* **what is the significance of this quote?**

10- **What are the main character traits of the signal man?**

- **clever, intelligent, vigilant, respectful, dutiful.**

11- **What is the major conflict in the story? Natural Vs Supernatural / Humanity Vs Machinery**

12- **Extract words or statements that established the atmosphere and mood of the story. Check the first question**

13- **Extract motifs from the story. The Red Light / the Apparition / the Tunnel.**

14- **What are the major themes of the story? Humanity / Sympathy / Understanding / Pre-judgments.**