

Chapter 1 : Editions of Bleak House by Charles Dickens

Bleak House Questions and Answers. The Question and Answer section for Bleak House is a great resource to ask questions, find answers, and discuss the novel.

Plot[edit] The longstanding estate battle of Jarndyce v Jarndyce hangs over the heads of many conflicting heirs, confused by multiple wills. Possible beneficiary John Jarndyce of Bleak House welcomes orphaned cousins Ada Clare and Richard Carstone—also potential heirs—as his wards, and has hired Esther Summerson as a housekeeper and companion for Ada. Lady Honoria Dedlock, married to the imperious baronet Sir Leicester, is also a possible beneficiary of the estate. Meanwhile, Richard and Ada are falling in love. Richard keeps changing his mind on which career to pursue—first a physician, then a lawyer and then a soldier—but the prospect of his inheritance from the ongoing litigation begins to consume him, despite warnings from John, now his formal guardian. Esther and the young doctor Allan Woodcourt are attracted to each other, but Esther feels unworthy and Allan accepts a commission as a navy physician. The law clerk Mr. Guppy, enamoured of Esther, hopes to win her affection by helping her discover the identity of her parents. He finds connections to both Lady Dedlock and the deceased Nemo, who has been identified as Captain James Hawdon, and is eventually alerted to the existence of letters left behind by Hawdon but kept by his drunken landlord, Krook. Realizing that Esther is her daughter whom she was told had died—fathered by Hawdon before her current marriage—Lady Dedlock confesses to Esther but swears her to secrecy. Esther is stricken by smallpox and nearly dies; she recovers but is terribly scarred. John proposes marriage to Esther, but though she accepts, he convinces her to keep it secret until she is sure it is what she wants. Tulkinghorn is murdered, with no shortage of suspects. Lady Dedlock is implicated, but Inspector Bucket reveals that her former maid Hortense is the murderess and had tried to frame Lady Dedlock. As a result, Richard is penniless and his health is failing. Guilty over her deception and not wanting to bring ruin to her husband, Lady Dedlock flees into a storm before Sir Leicester is able to tell her he does not care about her past. He has a stroke but sends Bucket after her. Bucket eventually realizes where she must be—the graveyard where Hawdon is buried—but Esther arrives to find her mother dead from exposure. A final Jarndyce will is found that closes the case in favour of Richard and Ada, but the estate has been consumed by years of legal fees. Richard collapses, overcome by tuberculosis, and soon dies. Allan professes his love for Esther, who rebuffs him out of obligation to John, and a pregnant Ada returns to Bleak House. John releases Esther from their engagement, knowing that she really loves Allan. Esther and Allan marry, with all in attendance. Adaptation[edit] The adaptation is eight hours in length and covers most of the characters and storylines in the novel. The exceptions to this are in large part consequent to the aforementioned cull of minor characters. Bagnet in the book. The storyline concerning Mrs. An hour-long episode started the series on Thursday 27 October. Afterwards, episodes were shown twice weekly and were thirty minutes in length. The serial was designed to air in the format of a soap opera; this was somewhat experimental for the television drama genre, where conventionally they would be an hour long. In the United States, the eight hours were broadcast on PBS on Masterpiece Theatre, where they were compressed and slightly edited into six instalments. The opening and closing episodes were two hours in length, and the middle four episodes were each a single hour. Bleak House was rebroadcast on Masterpiece Theatre in . The programme is also notable for being one of the first British drama series to be shot and produced in the High Definition Television format, which required the make-up and set design to be much more detailed than previous productions. It was filmed on location in Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, and Kent from February through to July.

A summary of Chapters in Charles Dickens's Bleak House. Learn exactly what happened in this chapter, scene, or section of Bleak House and what it means. Perfect for acing essays, tests, and quizzes, as well as for writing lesson plans.

She too studies something at her leisure. She is not the first to speak, appearing indeed so unlikely to be so, though he stood there until midnight, that even he is driven upon breaking silence. Our agreement is broken. A lady of your sense and strength of character will be prepared for my now declaring it void and taking my own course. Tulkinghorn inclines his head. I wish not to misapprehend you. But virtually the same, virtually the same. Tulkinghorn with a slight smile and cautiously shaking his head at the shaded face. It may be to-morrow. I would rather say no more. You are prepared, and I hold out no expectations which circumstances might fail to justify. I wish you good evening. I heard you were writing in the library. Are you going to return there? I am going home. Clear of the room he looks at his watch but is inclined to doubt it by a minute or thereabouts. There is a splendid clock upon the staircase, famous, as splendid clocks not often are, for its accuracy. Tulkinghorn inquires, referring to it. Tulkinghorn, muttering reproof to his watch. He is in the confidence of the very bricks and mortar. The high chimney-stacks telegraph family secrets to him. The stars are shining as they shone above the turret-leads at Chesney Wold. This woman, as he has of late been so accustomed to call her, looks out upon them. Her soul is turbulent within her; she is sick at heart and restless. The large rooms are too cramped and close. She cannot endure their restraint and will walk alone in a neighbouring garden. Too capricious and imperious in all she does to be the cause of much surprise in those about her as to anything she does, this woman, loosely muffled, goes out into the moonlight. Mercury attends with the key. She will walk there some time to ease her aching head. She may be an hour, she may be more. She needs no further escort. The gate shuts upon its spring with a clash, and he leaves her passing on into the dark shade of some trees. A fine night, and a bright large moon, and multitudes of stars. Tulkinghorn, in repairing to his cellar and in opening and shutting those resounding doors, has to cross a little prison-like yard. He looks up casually, thinking what a fine night, what a bright large moon, what multitudes of stars! A quiet night, too. A very quiet night. When the moon shines very brilliantly, a solitude and stillness seem to proceed from her that influence even crowded places full of life. Its steeples and towers and its one great dome grow more ethereal; its smoky house-tops lose their grossness in the pale effulgence; the noises that arise from the streets are fewer and are softened, and the footsteps on the pavements pass more tranquilly away. In these fields of Mr. Who fired a gun or pistol? The few foot-passengers start, stop, and stare about them. Some windows and doors are opened, and people come out to look. It was a loud report and echoed and rattled heavily. It shook one house, or so a man says who was passing. It has aroused all the dogs in the neighbourhood, who bark vehemently. Terrified cats scamper across the road. While the dogs are yet barking and howlingâ€”there is one dog howling like a demonâ€”the church-clocks, as if they were startled too, begin to strike. The hum from the streets, likewise, seems to swell into a shout. But it is soon over. Before the last clock begins to strike ten, there is a lull. When it has ceased, the fine night, the bright large moon, and multitudes of stars, are left at peace again. His windows are dark and quiet, and his door is shut. It must be something unusual indeed to bring him out of his shell. Nothing is heard of him, nothing is seen of him. What power of cannon might it take to shake that rusty old man out of his immovable composure? For many years the persistent Roman has been pointing, with no particular meaning, from that ceiling. It is not likely that he has any new meaning in him to-night. Once pointing, always pointingâ€”like any Roman, or even Briton, with a single idea. There he is, no doubt, in his impossible attitude, pointing, unavailingly, all night long. Moonlight, darkness, dawn, sunrise, day. There he is still, eagerly pointing, and no one minds him. But a little after the coming of the day come people to clean the rooms. And either the Roman has some new meaning in him, not expressed before, or the foremost of them goes wild, for looking up at his outstretched hand and looking down at what is below it, that person shrieks and flies. The others, looking in as the first one looked, shriek and fly too, and there is an alarm in the street. What does it mean? No light is admitted into the

darkened chamber, and people unaccustomed to it enter, and treading softly but heavily, carry a weight into the bedroom and lay it down. There is whispering and wondering all day, strict search of every corner, careful tracing of steps, and careful noting of the disposition of every article of furniture. All eyes look up at the Roman, and all voices murmur, "If he could only tell what he saw! He is pointing at an empty chair and at a stain upon the ground before it that might be almost covered with a hand. These objects lie directly within his range. An excited imagination might suppose that there was something in them so terrific as to drive the rest of the composition, not only the attendant big-legged boys, but the clouds and flowers and pillars too" in short, the very body and soul of Allegory, and all the brains it has "stark mad. It happens surely that every one who comes into the darkened room and looks at these things looks up at the Roman and that he is invested in all eyes with mystery and awe, as if he were a paralysed dumb witness. So it shall happen surely, through many years to come, that ghostly stories shall be told of the stain upon the floor, so easy to be covered, so hard to be got out, and that the Roman, pointing from the ceiling shall point, so long as dust and damp and spiders spare him, with far greater significance than he ever had in Mr. Matthew Bagnet, otherwise *Lignum Vitae*, ex-artilleryman and present bassoon-player. An occasion of feasting and festival. The celebration of a birthday in the family. It is not Mr. Bagnet merely distinguishes that epoch in the musical instrument business by kissing the children with an extra smack before breakfast, smoking an additional pipe after dinner, and wondering towards evening what his poor old mother is thinking about it—a subject of infinite speculation, and rendered so by his mother having departed this life twenty years. Bagnet is one of these. Perhaps his exalted appreciation of the merits of the old girl causes him usually to make the noun-substantive "goodness" of the feminine gender. It is not the birthday of one of the three children. Those occasions are kept with some marks of distinction, but they rarely overleap the bounds of happy returns and a pudding. Bagnet certainly did, after observing on his growth and general advancement, proceed, in a moment of profound reflection on the changes wrought by time, to examine him in the catechism, accomplishing with extreme accuracy the questions number one and two, "What is your name? This, however, was a speciality on that particular birthday, and not a general solemnity. The auspicious event is always commemorated according to certain forms settled and prescribed by Mr. Bagnet some years since. Bagnet, being deeply convinced that to have a pair of fowls for dinner is to attain the highest pitch of imperial luxury, invariably goes forth himself very early in the morning of this day to buy a pair; he is, as invariably, taken in by the vendor and installed in the possession of the oldest inhabitants of any coop in Europe. Returning with these triumphs of toughness tied up in a clean blue and white cotton handkerchief essential to the arrangements, he in a casual manner invites Mrs. Bagnet to declare at breakfast what she would like for dinner. Bagnet, by a coincidence never known to fail, replying fowls, Mr. Bagnet instantly produces his bundle from a place of concealment amidst general amazement and rejoicing. He further requires that the old girl shall do nothing all day long but sit in her very best gown and be served by himself and the young people. On this present birthday, Mr. Bagnet has accomplished the usual preliminaries. He has bought two specimens of poultry, which, if there be any truth in adages, were certainly not caught with chaff, to be prepared for the spit; he has amazed and rejoiced the family by their unlooked-for production; he is himself directing the roasting of the poultry; and Mrs. Bagnet, with her wholesome brown fingers itching to prevent what she sees going wrong, sits in her gown of ceremony, an honoured guest. Quebec and Malta lay the cloth for dinner, while Woolwich, serving, as beseems him, under his father, keeps the fowls revolving. To these young scullions Mrs.

Chapter 3 : SparkNotes: Bleak House: Chapters 16–20, page 3

Bleak House, Dickens's most daring experiment in the narration of a complex plot, challenges the reader to make connections - between the fashionable and the outcast, the beautiful and the ugly, the powerful and the victims.

Lady Dedlock believes her daughter is dead. Esther does not know Miss Barbary is her aunt. After attending school for six years, Esther moves in with him at Bleak House. They are beneficiaries in one of the wills at issue in Jarndyce and Jarndyce ; their guardian is a beneficiary under another will, and the two wills conflict. Richard and Ada soon fall in love, but though Mr Jarndyce does not oppose the match, he stipulates that Richard must first choose a profession. When Richard mentions the prospect of gaining from the resolution of Jarndyce and Jarndyce, John Jarndyce beseeches him never to put faith in what he calls "the family curse". Meanwhile, Lady Dedlock is also a beneficiary under one of the wills. Early in the book, while listening to the reading of an affidavit by the family solicitor, Mr Tulkinghorn, she recognises the handwriting on the copy. The sight affects her so much she almost faints, which Tulkinghorn notices and investigates. He traces the copyist, a pauper known only as "Nemo", in London. Consecrated ground Lady Dedlock is also investigating, disguised as her maid, Mademoiselle Hortense. He also enlists Inspector Bucket to run Jo out of town, to eliminate any loose ends that might connect Nemo to the Dedlocks. Esther sees Lady Dedlock at church and talks with her later at Chesney Wold – though neither woman recognises their connection. Later, Lady Dedlock does discover that Esther is her child. However, Esther has become sick possibly with smallpox , since it severely disfigures her after nursing the homeless boy Jo. Lady Dedlock waits until Esther has recovered before telling her the truth. Though Esther and Lady Dedlock are happy to be reunited, Lady Dedlock tells Esther they must never acknowledge their connection again. In the process, Richard loses all his money and declines in health. He and Ada have secretly married, and Ada is pregnant. Esther has her own romance when Mr Woodcourt returns to England, having survived a shipwreck, and continues to seek her company despite her disfigurement. Unfortunately, Esther has already agreed to marry her guardian, John Jarndyce. After a confrontation with Tulkinghorn, Lady Dedlock flees her home, leaving a note apologising for her conduct. Tulkinghorn dismisses Hortense, who is no longer of any use to him. Feeling abandoned and betrayed, Hortense kills Tulkinghorn and seeks to frame Lady Dedlock for his murder. Esther and Bucket find her there. Progress in Jarndyce and Jarndyce seems to take a turn for the better when a later will is found, which revokes all previous wills and leaves the bulk of the estate to Richard and Ada. They go to Chancery to find Richard. On their arrival, they learn that the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce is finally over, but the costs of litigation have entirely consumed the estate. Richard collapses, and Mr Woodcourt diagnoses him as being in the last stages of tuberculosis. Richard apologises to John Jarndyce and dies. John Jarndyce takes in Ada and her child, a boy whom she names Richard. Esther and Woodcourt marry and live in a Yorkshire house which Jarndyce gives to them. The couple later raise two daughters. One such subplot is the hard life and happy, though difficult, marriage of Caddy Jellyby and Prince Turveydrop. Characters in Bleak House[edit] As usual, Dickens drew upon many real people and places but imaginatively transformed them in his novel see character list below for the supposed inspiration of individual characters. Although not a character, the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case is a vital part of the novel. Esther is raised as an orphan by Miss Barbary who is in fact her aunt. The discovery of her true identity provides much of the drama in the book. Finally it is revealed that she is the illegitimate daughter of Lady Dedlock and Nemo Captain Hawdon. Honoria, Lady Dedlock is the haughty mistress of Chesney Wold. The revelation of her past drives much of the plot. Before her marriage, Lady Dedlock had an affair with another man and bore his child. At the end of the novel, Lady Dedlock dies, disgraced in her own mind and convinced that her husband can never forgive her moral failings. Vladimir Nabokov called him "one of the best and kindest human beings ever described in a novel". He falls in love with Esther and wishes to marry her, but gives her up because she is in love with Mr Woodcourt. Richard Carstone is a ward of Chancery in Jarndyce and Jarndyce. Straightforward and likeable but irresponsible and inconstant, Richard falls under the spell of Jarndyce and Jarndyce. At the end of the book, just after Jarndyce and Jarndyce is finally settled, he dies, tormented by his imprudence in trusting to the

outcome of a Chancery suit. She falls in love with Richard Carstone, a distant cousin. Harold Skimpole is a friend of Jarndyce "in the habit of sponging his friends" Nuttall. He is irresponsible, selfish, amoral, and without remorse. He often refers to himself as "a child" and claims not to understand human relationships, circumstances, and society "but actually understands them very well, as he demonstrates when he enlists Richard and Esther to pay off the bailiff who has arrested him on a writ of debt. He believes that Richard and Ada will be able to acquire credit based on their expectations in Jarndyce and Jarndyce and declares his intention to start "honoring" them by letting them pay some of his debts. This character is commonly regarded as a portrait of Leigh Hunt. It is an absolute reproduction of a real man. Boythorn was once engaged to and very much in love with a woman who later left him without giving him any reason. That woman was in fact, Miss Barbary, who abandoned her former life including Boythorn when she took Esther from her sister. He is thought to be based on the writer Walter Savage Landor. Dedlock is an unthinking conservative who regards the Jarndyce and Jarndyce lawsuit as a mark of distinction worthy of a man of his family lineage. On the other hand, he is shown as a loving and devoted husband towards Lady Dedlock, even after he learns about her secret. Scheming and manipulative, he seems to defer to his clients but relishes the power his control of their secrets gives him. He is murdered, and his murder gives Dickens the chance to weave a detective plot into the closing chapters of the book. He tends to give half-crowns to those he feels sorry for. Miss Flite is an elderly eccentric. Her family has been destroyed by a long-running Chancery case similar to Jarndyce and Jarndyce, and her obsessive fascination with Chancery veers between comedy and tragedy. She owns a large number of little birds which she says will be released "on the day of judgement. He becomes smitten with Esther and makes an offer of marriage which she refuses. Later, after Esther learns that Lady Dedlock is her mother, she asks to meet Mr Guppy to tell him to stop investigating her past. He fears the meeting is to accept his offer of marriage which he does not want to pursue now she is disfigured. He is so overcome with relief when she explains her true purpose that he agrees to do everything in his power to protect her privacy in the future. Inspector Bucket is a detective who undertakes several investigations throughout the novel, most notably the investigation of the murder of Mr Tulkinghorn. He is notable in being one of the first detectives in English fiction. The prime suspect in the murder of Mr Tulkinghorn, he is exonerated and his true identity is revealed, against his wishes. He ends the book as body-servant to the stricken Sir Leicester Dedlock. Caddy falls in love with Prince Turveydrop, marries him, and has a baby. Krook is a rag and bottle merchant and collector of papers. He is the landlord of the house where Nemo and Miss Flite live and where Nemo dies. He seems to subsist on a diet of gin. Krook dies from a case of spontaneous combustion, something that Dickens believed could happen, but which some critics such as the English essayist George Henry Lewes denounced as outlandish. Jo is a young boy who lives on the streets and tries to make a living as a crossing sweeper. Jo was the only person with whom Nemo had any real connection. Nemo expressed a paternal sort of interest in Jo something that no human had ever done. Nemo would share his meagre money with Jo, and would sometimes remark, "Well, Jo, today I am as poor as you," when he had nothing to share. Despite this, Mr Tulkinghorn pays Mr Bucket to harry Jo and force him to keep "moving along" [leave town] because Tulkinghorn fears Jo might have some knowledge of the connection between Nemo and the Dedlocks. Jo ultimately dies from a disease pneumonia, a complication from an earlier bout with smallpox which Esther also catches and from which she almost dies. Allan Woodcourt is a surgeon and a kind, caring man who loves Esther deeply. She in turn loves him but feels unable to respond, not only because of her prior commitment to John Jarndyce, but also because she fears her illegitimacy will cause his mother to object to their connection. Grandfather Smallweed is a moneylender, a mean, bad-tempered man who shows no mercy to people who owe him money and who enjoys inflicting emotional pain on others. It has been suggested that his description together with his grandchildren fits that of a person with progeria, [12] although people with progeria only have a life expectancy of 14 years, while Grandfather Smallweed is very old. Conversation Kenge is a Chancery lawyer who represents John Jarndyce. His chief foible is his love of grand, portentous, and empty rhetoric. He threatens Mr Tulkinghorn and then is put under arrest by Inspector Bucket, but dies, his health broken by his Chancery ordeal. Neckett is a debt collector "called "Coavinses" by debtor Harold Skimpole because he works for that business firm. Called "Little Coavinses" by Skimpole. Prince Turveydrop is a dancing master

and proprietor of a dance studio. She is mistreated by her husband and her baby dies. She then helps her friend look after her own child. Lady Dedlock questions the girl closely regarding her wish to leave, and promises to look after her instead. Her character is based on the Swiss maid and murderer Maria Manning.

Chapter 4 : Bleak House (TV Series) - IMDb

Free summary and analysis of Chapter 16 in Charles Dickens's Bleak House that won't make you snore. We promise.

Jarndyce are back at Bleak House, and Richard goes to work for Mr. Jarndyce finds lodging for Richard in London, and Richard spends money wildly. Skimpole go to visit Mr. Boythorn, who lives in Lincolnshire. Esther says that Chesney Wold appears beautiful and peaceful. In the village, Mr. Boythorn greets a young man who he explains is Mrs. Boythorn has put up several signs threatening trespassers, namely Sir Leicester. The day after they arrive, the group explores the park. In a church, they see several pretty young women, including the woman Mr. Boythorn had commented on. She is standing with the housekeeper. Near her is a Frenchwoman, who is glaring at her. Esther has a violent reaction. But Esther knows she has never seen this woman before. She figures out that this woman is Lady Dedlock. Esther is incredibly agitated. A week later, Mr. Jarndyce, Ada, and Esther are walking in the park when it begins raining. Someone asks if it is dangerous. Ada thinks Esther has spoken, but it is Lady Dedlock, who is also in the lodge. Esther has another violent reaction to the voice because it makes her think of herself. Lady Dedlock introduces herself to Mr. Jarndyce introduces Esther as his ward, and Lady Dedlock hastily turns away. Lady Dedlock asks Mr. Jarndyce if he knew her sister when they were abroad, and he says that he did. Lady Dedlock says she and her sister have gone their separate ways. A carriage arrives for Lady Dedlock, carrying the pretty young girl and the Frenchwoman. Lady Dedlock had requested only the young girl, but the Frenchwoman had come as well. There is no room in the carriage for the Frenchwoman after Lady Dedlock gets in, so she walks after it in the rain, barefoot. It is summertime, and many courts are out of session. Everyone goes on vacation. Snagsby, the law-stationer, relaxes, and he and Mrs. Chadband has the habit of making grand lectures instead of speaking normally. He lectures everyone tirelessly. Snagsby there is someone in the shop to see him. It is a police constable holding a young boy by the arm. The constable tells Mr. The boy, Jo, says he has nowhere to go. The constable says Jo claims to know Mr. Snagsby says he does, from the inquest regarding the dead man. At that moment, Mr. Guppy enters the room, and the constable says that Mr. Guppy said that Mr. Guppy had seen the confusion outside and was looking into it. Jo tells everyone about a lady who gave him money to show her where the dead man was buried. Snagsby invites him upstairs, and Jo follows. Guppy continues to ask him questions. She explains that she was left in charge of a child named Esther Summerson. Guppy tells her that he met Esther in London. Chadband compliments Jo and talks on and on about his lot in life. Guppy suspects everyone of being out to get him. He is glad that Richard spends so much time reading papers about Jarndyce and Jarndyce, since he knows only failure can come from it. Another young man is in the office as well, Young Smallweed also called Chick , who works as a clerk. Although he is only fifteen he seems unusually wise. One day a man named Jobling arrives and goes to dinner with Mr. Everyone at the restaurant respects Smallweed. Jobling considers enlisting, but Mr. Guppy suggests he try to get work from Mr. Guppy hints around at his connection to the Snagsbysâ€”namely, what happened when he was last at their homeâ€”but he refuses to clarify. Guppy also says that he has been giving money to Miss Flite, and that he knows about Mr. Krook could rent Mr. Guppy reveals that he thinks Mr. Krook is very wealthy. Jobling visit Krook, who is asleep. Startled, Krook tries to hit Mr. Guppy, and then he wakes up fully. Krook shows Jobling the room. Guppy introduces Jobling to the Snagsbys, who agree to give him work. Jobling moves into his new room. Dickens never explicitly tells us that the woman in those scenes is Lady Dedlock, but context clues suggest that this is the case. Perhaps most important, we begin to see a connection between Esther and Lady Dedlock. The first clues arise when Esther visits Mr. When their eyes meet, Esther is stunnedâ€”she thinks she recognizes Lady Dedlock somehow, but she is certain she has never met her before. During this same visit, Lady Dedlock alludes to a time in the past when Mr. Jarndyce was well acquainted with her sister. These clues, suggestions, and interconnections add richness and intrigue to the world of Bleak House. Richard idly follows whatever path is suggested to him, never thinking very deeply about what he truly wants to do. Esther places so much importance on the idea of finding what one is passionate about that she encourages Richard to change fields. The idea of passion is not, however, equal to the idea of excitement. Esther is a strong,

confident narrator when she is talking about other people, but she falters and stutters when she touches on matters that are very personal to her. Her descriptions are usually vivid and detailed, and her voice is smooth and mature, but at times her storytelling breaks down entirely. This makes sense when we find out that Mr. Woodcourt is arriving the next day to say goodbye, as he leaves for a very long journey. When she describes the dinner, she stops frequently to correct her narration. Her stumblings suggest that there is more to the story than she is revealing.

Bleak House is held to be one of Dickens's finest novels, containing one of the most vast, complex and engaging arrays of minor characters and sub-plots in his entire canon. The story is told.

Dickens in the preface to Bleak House, "as in this book. Whatever such a fact may not prove, it does prove incontestably that Mr. Dickens has a greater power of amusing the book-buying public of England than any other living writer ; and moreover establishes, what we should scarcely have thought probable, that his power of amusing is not weakened now that the novelty of his style has passed away, nor his public wearied by the repetition of effects in which truth of nature and sobriety of thought are largely sacrificed to mannerism and point. Author and public react upon each other ; and it is no wonder that a writer, who finds that his peculiar genius and his method of exhibiting it secure him an extensive and sustained popularity, should be deaf to the remonstrances of critics when they warn him of defects that his public does not care for, or urge him to a change of method which might very probably thin his audience for the immediate present, and substitute the quiet approval of the judicious for the noisy and profitable applause of crowded pit and gallery. Intellectual habits, too, become strengthened by use, and a period comes in the life of a man of genius when it is hopeless to expect from him growth of faculty or correction of faults. Bleak House is, even more than any of its predecessors, chargeable with not simply faults, but absolute want of construction. In Bleak House, the series of incidents which form the outward life of the actors and talkers has no close and necessary connexion; nor have they that higher interest that attaches to circumstances which powerfully aid in modifying and developing the original elements of human character. The great Chancery suit of Jarndyce and Jarndyce, which serves to introduce a crowd of persons as suitors, lawyers, law-writers, law-stationers, and general spectators of Chancery business, has positively not the smallest influence on the character of any one person concerned ; nor has it any interest of itself. Richard Carstone is not made reckless and unsteady by his interest in the great suit, but simply expends his recklessness and unsteadiness on it, as he would on something else if it were non-existent. This great suit is lugged in by the head and shoulders, and kept prominently before the reader, solely to give Mr. Dickens the opportunity of indulging in stale and commonplace satire upon the length and expense of Chancery proceedings, and exercises absolutely no influence on the characters and destinies of any one person concerned in it. The centre of the arch has nothing to do in keeping the arch together. The series of incidents which answers to what in an ordinary novel is called plot, is connected with the relationship of the heroine again and again of speaking to her mother. Lady Dedlock, who when first. Published by Bradbury and Evans. Tulkinghorn ; a person of eminently respectable standing, but incomprehensible motives, who tortures Lady Dedlock with mysterious hints, and afterwards direct menaces of disclosing her shame to her husband ; at which stage of the proceedings he is shot in his chambers. Tulkinghorn had used in discovering the secret, and afterwards treated with harshness and contumely, that roused her malignant temper to a murderous revenge. The secret, however, is not buried with Mr. Tulkinghorn ; and, maddened by fear of discovery and open shame, Lady Dedlock flies from her home, and dies of exhaustion at the entrance of a wretched City churchyard, where her lover was buried, and where she is found by her daughter and a detective policeman who had been sent in quest of her. Literally, we have here given the whole of what can by any stretch of the term be called the main plot of Bleak House. We should then have less crowd, and no story ; and the book might be called "Bleak House, or the Odd Folks that have to do with a long Chancery Suit. Even then, a comprehensive etcetera would be needed for supernumeraries. So crowded is the canvass which Mr. Dickens has stretched, and so casual the connexion that gives to his composition whatever unity it has, that a daguerreotype of Fleet Street at noon-day would be the aptest symbol to be found for it ; though the daguerreotype would have the advantage in accuracy of representation. In addition to all other faults of construction, the heroine is made to tell her adventures in an autobiographic narrative ; and as this would not suffice, under the conditions of a mortal existence limited to one spot in space at a time, for the endless array of persons who have to talk and be funny and interesting, the writer intercalates chapters in his own person," a mixture which has the awkwardest effect, and is left in its natural awkwardness with no

appliances of literary skill to help it out. But we must plead guilty to having found it dull and wearisome as a serial, though certainly not from its want of cleverness or point. On the contrary, almost everybody in the book is excessively funny, that is not -very wicked, or very miserable. Wright and Keeley could act many of the characters without alteration of a word; Skimpole must be constructed with an especial eye to the genius of Mr. Charles Mathews; 0. Smith will of course choose Krook or the sullen bricklayer, but probably the former, for his effective make-up, and the grand finale by spontaneous combustion, which, however Nature and Mr. Lewes may deride in the pride of intellect, the resources of the Adelphi will unquestionably prove possible: By all which is implied, that Mr. Dickens selects in his portraiture exactly what a farce-writer of equal ability and invention would select, that which is coarsely marked and apprehended at first sight; that which is purely outward and no way significant of the man, an oddity of feature, a trick of gesture or of phrase, something which an actor can adequately present and in his presentation exhaust the conception. And this tendency to a theatrical method shows itself again in the exaggerated form which his satire assumes, and which even when the satire is well directed robs it of its wholesome effect. The theatre is obliged to drive its points home, or they would be lost; the majority of our actors want skill to present a character coloured and drawn true to nature, and a London mixed audience would not appreciate the exquisite art that disdained coarse exaggeration. But the gross caricature of the stage is unbearable in the study: Jellybys of the novel are supremely ridiculous, we only refer to their counterparts in real life to note that the artist has failed in his execution, and has yet to learn by a deeper study of Nature how cunningly she blends motives, and how seldom men and women are entirely absurd or selfish without a glimmering and uneasy consciousness that all is not quite as it should be. This ismting them instead of characters, pervade Hr. His heroine in Bleak mr, is a model of unconscious goodness; sowing love and reaping it wherever he goes, diffusing round her an atmosphere of happiness and a sweet perfume of a pure and kindly nature. Her unconsciousness and sweet humility of disposition are so profound that scarcely a page of her autobiography is free from a record of these admirable palities. Such a girl would not write her own memoirs, and certainly would not bore one with her goodness till a wicked wish arises that she would either do something very "spicy," or confine herself to superintending the jam-pots at Bleak House. Old Jarndyce himself, too, is so dreadfully amiable and supernaturally benevolent, that it has been a common opinion during the progress of the book, that he would turn out as great a rascal as Skimpole; and the fox on the symbolical cover with his nose turned to the East wind has been conjectured by subtle intellects to be intended for his double. We rejoice to find that those misanthropical anticipations were unfounded; but there must have been something false to general nature in the portrait that suggested them some observed peculiarity of an individual presented too exclusively, or an abstract conception of gentleness and forbearance worked out to form a sharp contrast to the loud, self-assertive, vehement, but generous and tender Boythorne. This gentleman is one of the most original and happiest conceptions of the book, a humourist study of the highest merit. Milking-horn, the Dedlock confidential solicitor, is an admirable study of mere outward characteristics of a class; but his motives and character are quite incomprehensible, and we strongly suspect that Mr. Dickens had him shot out of the way as the only possible method of avoiding an enigma of his own setting which he could not solve. He is a capital instance of an old trick of Mr. This gives the effect of what some critics call marvellous individuality. It gives distinctness at any rate, and is telling; though it may be questionable whether it is not a more fatal mistake in art than the careless and unobservant habit which many writers have of omitting to mark the effect of occupations upon the development and exhibition of the universal passions and affections. Conversation Kenge and Vholes, solicitors in the great Sarndyce case, have each their little characteristic set of phrases, and are well marked specimens of the genus lawyer; but as they only appear in their professional capacity, we are not entitled to question them as to their qualities as men. Jellyby is a coarse exaggeration of an existing folly. They may, we think, stand beside the Micawbers. Inspector Bucket, of the Detective Force, bears evidence of the careful study of this admirable department of our Police by the editor of Household Words; and, as in the ease of Kenge and Vholes, the professional capacity is here the object, and we do not require a portraiture of the man and his affections. Poor Yoe, the street-sweeping urchin, is drawn with a skill that is never more effectively exercised than when the outcasts of humanity are its subjects; a skill which seems to depart in

proportion as the author rises in the scale of society depicted. Dickens has never yet succeeded in catching a tolerable likeness of man or woman whose lot is cast among the high-born and wealthy. Whether it is that the lives of such present less that is outwardly funny or grotesque, less that strikes the eye of, a man on the lookout for oddity and point, or that he knows nothing of their lives, certain it is that his people of station are the vilest daubs; and Sir Leicester Dedlock, Baronet, with his wife and family circle, are no exceptions. Dickens were now for the first time before the public, we should have found our space fully occupied in drawing attention to his wit, his invention, his eye for common life, for common men and women, for the everyday aspect of streets and houses, his tendency to delineate the affections and the humours rather than the passions of mankind ; and his defects would have served but to shade and modify the praises that flow forth willingly at the appearance among us of a true and original genius. And had his genius gone on growing and maturing, clearing itself of extravagance, acquiring art by study and reflection, it would not be easy to limit the admiration and homage he might by this time have won from his countrymen. As it is, he must be content with the praise of amusing the idle hours of the greatest number of readers ; not, we may hope, without improvement to their hearts, but certainly without profoundly affecting their intellects or deeply stirring their emotions. Clever he undoubtedly is: Dickens belongs in literature to the same class as his illustrator, Hablot Browne, in design, though he far surpasses the illustrator in range and power.

Chapter 6 : Knoxville Bleak House- Confederate Memorial Hall

created 17 Aug December 16, S1.E15 Episode # Dickens creates a fascinating world of characters in Bleak House and Davies does an excellent job.

Chapter 7 : DICKENS'S BLEAK HOUSE.. » 24 Sep » The Spectator Archive

About "Bleak House (Chap. 2)" We are introduced to most of the main characters of the novel (the Dedlocks, Tulkinghorn, John Jarndyce, Ada, Richard), who have been brought together by the case.

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Bleak House is a novel by English author Charles Dickens, first published as a serial between March and September The novel has many characters and several sub-plots, and the story is told partly by the novel's heroine, Esther Summerson, and partly by an omniscient narrator.