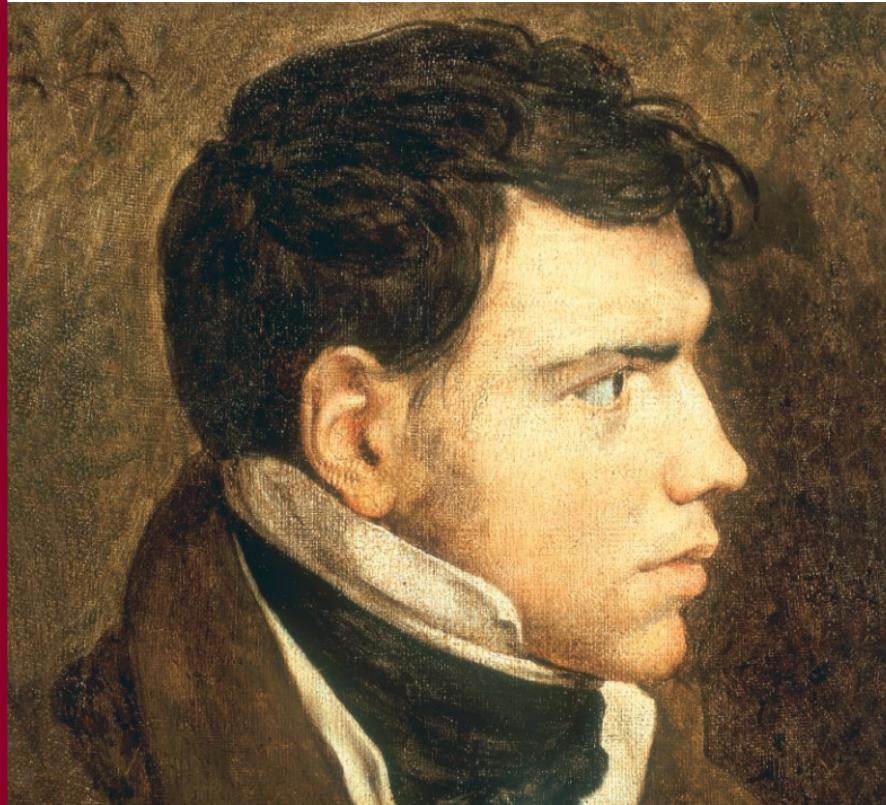


# Charles Dickens **Nicholas Nickleby**

Read by **Anton Lesser**



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[1]	The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby...	5:25
[2]	Mr Ralph Nickleby was not...	1:53
[3]	Having concluded his business in the City...	5:36
[4]	The uncle and nephew looked at each other...	4:13
[5]	In the coffee-room of the Saracen's Head...	3:23
[6]	The schoolmaster had scarcely uttered these words...	3:25
[7]	Having entered Mr Snawley's address...	3:14
[8]	Nicholas found Golden Square in due course...	3:08
[9]	Mr Squeers, being safely landed at the George and New Inn...	3:18
[10]	After some further conversation between the master...	4:58
[11]	'Past seven, Nickleby,' said Mr Squeers...	4:17
[12]	Nicholas distended his stomach with a bowl of porridge.	3:40
[13]	At one o'clock, the boys...	3:35
[14]	This business dispatched...	3:43
[15]	On the second morning after the departure of Nicholas...	5:32
[16]	No crying, or talking, or hoping, or fearing...	1:35
[17]	The wretched creature, Smike...	4:01
[18]	The cold, feeble dawn of a January morning...	4:42
[19]	Mrs Squeers, being out of breath...	4:05
[20]	Lifting up his eyes...	5:40

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- [21] In that quarter of London in which Golden Square is situated... 4:16
  - [22] 'Now listen to me,' said Nicholas... 4:14
  - [23] The first care of Nicholas, next morning... 3:22
  - [24] Smike had scraped a meal together... 3:39
  - [25] After her hard week's work at Madam Mantalini's... 3:37
  - [26] Seven or eight gentlemen were standing around the fire... 5:37
  - [27] The poor girl, who was so overwhelmed with confusion... 3:17
  - [28] 'What is this?' said Ralph... 4:47
  - [29] Miss La Creevy was at breakfast... 3:11
  - [30] In the first moment of surprise... 2:41
  - [31] There came a day when Kate... 5:47
  - [32] The whole capital which Nicholas found himself entitled... 4:14
  - [33] Nicholas promised to do so... 4:07
  - [34] Arrived at the drawbridge at Portsmouth... 5:25
  - [35] Nicholas was up betimes in the morning... 4:45
  - [36] Nicholas having to play Romeo for the first time... 2:42
  - [37] Lord Verisopht and Sir Mulberry Hawk found Ralph at home... 5:35
  - [38] It was four in the afternoon... 5:01
  - [39] Kate hastily attired herself for walking... 3:01
  - [40] The unexpected success and favour... 4:42

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- [41] In blissful unconsciousness... 3:38
  - [42] After a few minutes, Ralph rang his bell. 4:50
  - [43] 'London at last!' cried Nicholas... 4:12
  - [44] The man who had spoken first... 5:11
  - [45] Smike and Newman Hoggs... 2:04
  - [46] It wanted a quarter to eight when they reached Cadogan Place... 3:58
  - [47] 'Have you quite recovered...' 3:47
  - [48] Having established his mother and sister in the apartments... 3:40
  - [49] As the stranger was moving away... 3:23
  - [50] So saying, the old gentleman dragged him back into Oxford Street... 3:01
  - [51] As they shook each other by the hand... 3:01
  - [52] During the next two weeks... 3:24
  - [53] Kate Nickleby had begun to enjoy a settled feeling... 2:33
  - [54] Leaving the omnibus to pursue its journey... 5:08
  - [55] Perhaps because Tim's accounts were more than usually intricate... 3:21
  - [56] Nicholas immediately withdrew... 3:20
  - [57] 'Mr Nickleby,' said brother Charles... 5:10
  - [58] Ralph Nickleby stood regarding Newman Hoggs... 3:37

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[59]	It was evening...	3:42
[60]	'That didn't part us,' said the man.	3:44
[61]	With a disdainful scowl...	2:55
[62]	'As we gang awa' fra' Lunnun tomorrow neeght...'	3:15
[63]	'Stay,' said Ralph, as Nicholas rose...	3:25
[64]	'Stop,' interposed Ralph...	5:42
[65]	This accidental circumstance...	3:45
[66]	After an anxious consideration...	5:07
[67]	Brother Charles leant back in his chair...	3:50
[68]	The place to which Mr Cheeryble had directed him...	5:41
[69]	'There go the three-quarters past!'	3:57
[70]	Whatever reasons there might have been...	5:00
[71]	Ralph sat for three or four minutes...	2:19
[72]	Meanwhile the two plotters...	5:25
[73]	While Nicholas occupied his leisure hours...	3:33
[74]	Any further reflections on this theme...	4:14
[75]	The little race course at Hampton...	3:45
[76]	They dined together, sumptuously...	5:17
[77]	In an old house...	2:35
[78]	Startled by a ring at the door...	3:56

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[79]	'You've been a long time,' said Ralph...	3:34
[80]	Nicholas had drawn Noggs...	2:35
[81]	Finding that Newman was determined...	3:11
[82]	Nicholas started, at the dawn of day...	4:21
[83]	'I speak of this marriage,'	3:47
[84]	That night, being the last...	3:55
[85]	When Nicholas began...	3:41
[86]	There are not many men...	3:33
[87]	If some tremendous apparition...	2:54
[88]	He burst from the room...	4:07
[89]	Although Mrs Nickleby...	4:21
[90]	Nicholas felt that there was only one...	4:30
[91]	Ralph Nickleby and Arthur Gride...	6:20
[92]	The interval between the delivery...	6:08
[93]	It was a dark, wet, gloomy night...	5:13
[94]	Mr Squeers, plying Mrs Sliderskew...	5:59
[95]	Nicholas, at the end of the second day...	5:02
[96]	And now, Nicholas began to see...	4:35
[97]	Ralph sat alone...	5:38
[98]	Turning from the door...	3:21

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[99]	It so happened that...	3:35
[100]	Ralph went home...	3:33
[101]	He had struck upon a key...	4:10
[102]	'Among those who once had dealings...'	3:32
[103]	'I brought the child home...'	4:47
[104]	Creeping from the house...	5:02
[105]	He spoke no more...	4:00
[106]	Some weeks had passed...	3:49
[107]	Without any further explanation...	4:53
[108]	Thus apostrophised, brother Ned...	4:51
[109]	Five minutes after this honest...	3:26
[110]	Nicholas was one of those...	4:53
[111]	John cantered away...	3:57
[112]	When her term of mourning had expired...	6:17

**Total time: 7:40:21**

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## Charles Dickens

# Nicholas Nickleby

'...a faithfull account of the Fortunes, Misfortunes, Uprisings, Downfallings, and Complete Career of the Nickleby Family,' is how an advertisement of 1838 described the forthcoming story of *Nicholas Nickleby*. The story at that time was entitled *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* and was, like all the other novels by Charles Dickens, published in monthly episodes, the first appearing on 31 March 1838, the last in September 1839.

The second child of the Dickens family, Charles was born on 7 February 1812 in Portsmouth.

An intelligent young man, Charles Dickens particularly enjoyed reading works such as Smollett's *Roderick Random* and Fielding's *Tom Jones*. These were both at least partly in the picaresque tradition which chronicles the travels and adventures of the hero together with a companion, usually of inferior intellect and social status. Not surprisingly then, *Nicholas Nickleby*, an early work by Dickens, is written in picaresque style, describing Nicholas's adventures, often in the company of Smike.

Although clever, young Dickens had rather a disrupted education due to the family's fluctuating finances. His father's debts resulted in the twelve-year-old Charles having to leave school and work in a shoe-blacking factory, and only later was he able to return to education for a further two-and-a-half years. His mother would have preferred him to remain at the factory, and it has been suggested that Dickens never really forgave her for this, and, as a result, based some of Mrs Nickleby's less pleasant characteristics on her.

The poverty and harshness experienced by the young Nicholas Nickleby has been seen by some as Dickens describing some of his own early experiences, and we may, indeed, view Nicholas as a partial self-portrait of Dickens. Born a gentleman, Nicholas has to overcome adversity, in spite of a lack of parental support, to finally achieve success and a comfortable life. However, Dickens's own success was a rather more public one, since his episodes of *Nicholas Nickleby* were hugely popular, akin to the popularity of the soap operas of today.

The theme of the power of money is very apparent in *Nicholas Nickleby* where we see money put to good use by the Cheerybles, to bad use by Ralph Nickleby and its lack causing problems for the Mantalinis. Arthur Gride and Sir Mulberry Hawk are greedy for more, whilst the Crummles theatre group members have to work hard to earn theirs. However, one of the main aims for Dickens when writing *Nicholas Nickleby* was to expose the cruelty of the notorious Yorkshire schools which were flourishing in the 1830s. In 1829 young Charles was employed by the *Morning Chronicle* as their parliamentary reporter, and his probing, journalistic skills, together with his philanthropic concerns, eventually resulted in this work which highlighted the plight of many unwanted children. On a visit to Yorkshire in January 1838 Dickens witnessed their ill-treatment in such schools and also saw the graves of children who died as a result. One such grave was that of a nineteen-year-old youth on whom Dickens based the sad character, Smike. Mr Squeers, the headmaster of Dotheboys Hall, one of Dickens's most successfully unpleasant characters, was based on one William Shaw, headmaster of a school which, as a result of the

publication of *Nicholas Nickleby*, was forced to close.

Dickens chose humour as the vehicle for his exposure of the cruelty of the schools, since he felt that this would lighten the horrors of the awful reality. Consequently, *Nicholas Nickleby* is a very funny novel. Dickens's choice of names for his characters amuses us when we appreciate that, for example, Miss Knag is, indeed, a nag, and that Dotheboys Hall is a place where awful things are done to boys. The letter written by Fanny Squeers to Ralph Nickleby has been described as one of the most amusing passages in English literature, whilst the tea party where she pretends to be engaged to Nicholas is a scene of much amusement. Dickens's description of Fanny, a plain girl with an unpleasant nature, in terms more suited to a romantic heroine, is another of his comic touches, and many more instances of comedy are found throughout the story.

Dickens's journalistic skills, such as his ability to use language effectively, and his attention to detail, are evident in *Nicholas Nickleby*. At times he describes at length and in depth, at others he conveys vivid meaning through judicious choice of a single word or a short phrase. His use of

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imagery is also very effective, whilst he conveys information about his characters through those characters' use of language, for example Newman Noggs speaking in short bursts and incomplete sentences, and the Crummles players' use of theatrical language.

The theatre played a prominent part in Charles Dickens's life, and *Nicholas Nickleby* was dedicated to his friend and Shakespearean actor, Charles Macready. Dickens himself enjoyed amateur dramatics, and he also became romantically linked with an actress, Ellen Ternan. In 1858 this resulted in separation from his wife Kate, to whom he had been married for twenty-two years and with whom he had ten children. The inclusion of Vincent Crummles's theatrical troupe in Dickens's novel is, therefore, not surprising.

Giving public readings of his novels was another way in which Dickens enjoyed performing, and many people have suggested that he actually wore himself out doing so. He died on 9 June 1870 and was buried in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey.

During his lifetime Dickens was a prolific novelist. Following the publication of *The Pickwick Papers* in 1836-7, *Oliver Twist* in

1837 and then *Nicholas Nickleby*, he produced *The Old Curiosity Shop* in 1840-41, *Barnaby Rudge* in 1841, *A Christmas Carol* in 1843, *Martin Chuzzlewit* in 1843-44, *Dombey and Son* in 1846-48, and *David Copperfield* in 1849-50. *Bleak House* followed in 1852-53, *Hard Times* in 1854, *Little Dorrit* in 1855-57, *A Tale of Two Cities* in 1859, *Great Expectations* in 1860-61 and *Our Mutual Friend* in 1864-65, whilst at the time of his death Dickens was working on *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.

**Notes by Helen Davies**

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<b>BRAHMS</b> STRING QUINTETS NOS 1 & 2	8.553635
Ludwig Quartet / Bruno Pasquier, Viola	
<b>SPOHR</b> PIANO TRIOS NOS 2 & 4	8.553205
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József Balogh, Clarinet / Jenö Jandó, Piano / Csaba Onczay, Cello / Danubius String Quartet	

**Music programmed by Sarah Butcher**

Cover picture: *Portrait of a young man* undated Ingres, Jean-Auguste-Dominique 1780 – 1867 ascribed to Ingres. Courtesy AKG Images, London

# Charles Dickens Nicholas Nickleby

Read by **Anton Lesser**

One of Dickens's earlier novels, dating from 1839, it charts the fortunes of an honourable young man, Nicholas Nickleby, who has set out to make his way in the world.

Dickens presents his remarkably vivid display of Victorian characters and the life they lead, from the generous to the fated to crushed. Hope springs eternal, however, and righteous persistence brings rewards.

Anton Lesser, the outstanding Dickens interpreter, brings all his narrative expression to bear on this exciting tale.



**Anton Lesser** has worked extensively at the National Theatre and is an Associate Artist of the RSC where he has played over the years many of the principal Shakespearean roles including Troilus, Romeo, Petruchio and Richard III. His many appearances on television include *The Cherry Orchard*, *King Lear*, *The Politician's Wife*, *Invasion Earth* and *Vanity Fair*. For Naxos AudioBooks he has also read *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* and *Other Favourite Poems*, *Paradise Lost*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations*, *Hard Times*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Old Testament*, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*, *The Pickwick Papers*, *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist* and takes the title role in *Hamlet*, *Prince of Denmark*.

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7:40:21

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