David Copperfield Essay, Research Paper

David Copperfield

The novel David Copperfield, written by Charles Dickens, deals with the

life and times of David Copperfield. About a century ago in a small town in

England, David was born on a Friday at the stroke of midnight, which is

considered a sign of bad luck. David’s father has already died and his aunt

comes to stay with him and his mother as this novel gets off to a very slow

start. Soon David becomes aware that his mother has relations with another man

and asks one of his servants, “if you marry a person, and the person dies, why

then you may marry another person, mayn’t you?” David is immediately angered

that his mother has betrayed his father and goes off to live with his aunt. A

while later, David goes back home but quickly gets into trouble and is sent off

to school.

Dickens uses excellent description in his telling of this story and the

reader can easily relate to the characters. The setting of a small town in

England is standard in all of his novels, including Great Expectations. The

reason for this Dickens’ setting is because he was born in the town of

Portsmouth, England in 1812. Although as a young child he moved to Chatham

where he experienced a pleasant childhood in which many scenes from his

childhood are intertwined throughout his novels. Dickens father was constantly

in debt and was eventually sent to jail. This memory was agonizing for young

Charles as years later he wrote: “No words can express the secret agony of my

soul. I felt my early hopes of growing up to be a learned and distinguished man,

crushed in my breast.” This directly relates to Dickens discussion of David in

a wine house later in the novel. A couple of years later, Dickens attends

school at the Wellington House Academy where he fell in love with Maria Beadnell

but her father opposed the marriage and nothing became of it. David Copperfield

is more of a biography of Dickens life made into fiction than of just a regular

story about a boy. Dickens writing skills are apparent as he ties chapters

together in an easy to understand novel where the writing seems to move along

swiftly. Dickens work is rich with metaphors and enjoyable to analyze as in

statements such as, “he eats at one gulp exactly like an elephant.” This book

is a classic and may be considered his best work. There are times when the

novel moves slowly, but the positives outweigh the negatives and David

Copperfield is a book for everyone.

That summer after returning from school he finds his new baby brother,

and doesn’t exactly know what to think of the situation. He soon must leave

again for school but is actually happy for his mother. He and his mother did

not get along, and David knew that he would never see her again. She dies soon

afterward, and although they did not get along, David takes her death with much

grief and sadness.

Soon David sets off to Miss Betsey’s house, an old friend, and again

Dickens’ description is brought out as David is described as being, “a dusty,

sunburnt, half-clothed figure.” The novel is gradually picks up flavor and

humor as David’s aunt, Miss Trotwood, is described. A parallel to his life is

drawn here when he finds out that his previous guardian was put in jail because

of unpaid debts. After not being able to find his aunt he stays with a doctor

and becomes fond of the daughter Agnes. As David is introduced to his teacher,

the plot starts to take a light-hearted, humorous twist. Thus the boring

introduction is forgotten and Dickens graceful style is brought out.

David eventually meets a young girl named Dora and marries her at the

age of twenty one in which time he becomes a successful writer. About a year

passes and he starts to have troubles with his marriage, but his writing becomes

more successful every day. David is soon expecting a baby and he hopes that it

will “make more of a woman” out of Dora, for she is a poor wife. Sadly though,

the baby dies soon after it is delivered. Soon after, David gets a letter which

says it is urgent to meet at his aunt’s house. The letter worries him because

he thinks Emily, his childhood love, is dead. But when he goes, he soon

realizes that Emily is alive and overhears a conversation she is having with a

lady. David then hears the tale of how Emily disappeared. Soon after, his wife

dies as does Emily’s husband. But David is too distraught to take action and

leaves the country for three years, during which time his books gain much

popularity. When he returns the exciting climax of the novel is brought out

through Dickens classic style.

Throughout the novel, there is no set antagonist that Dickens uses. Mr.

Murdstone, the man that David’s mother marries could be classified as the

antagonist because he often beats David and drives David’s mother to an early

death. Because this novel is more of a biography of Dickens life it is hard to

find a certain person that goes against David, however, the man that marries his

childhood love could also be classified as the antagonist. Again there is no

set theme to the novel because of its biography form. Although a theme

throughout David’s life could be to take advantage of the situation and if you

see something you want, grab it, do not hold back and your life will prosper

because of it. As the book ends, Dickens wraps up the novel disposing of all of

the characters in the book. This is basically Dickens “anti-climatic wrapping

up” portion of the novel in which he does at the end of all his books. Overall,

this book displayed humor at times and sorrow at times but was fluent in style

and a fun book to read.