

DID YOU KNOW?

1 Read the text about a famous English author.

Charles Dickens



Charles Dickens is one of the most famous English authors of the 19th century. He was born in Portsmouth on February 7th 1812, and he published his first book at the age of 26.

Sometimes his books are funny and sometimes they are shocking. They give us a very detailed vision of 19th century English life.

Charles Dickens's own life is similar to the lives of some of his fictional characters. When he was 11 years old, his father was sent to prison because he owed a large amount of money. Charles's mother, sister and brother stayed with his father in prison. Then Charles started work in a factory. He was very poor, lonely and unhappy, and the working conditions at the factory were very bad. He later described some of these terrible experiences in his novels *David Copperfield*, *Little Dorrit* and *Great Expectations*.

When he was 15, Charles got an administrative job in a legal firm. There he learnt shorthand, and this skill helped him to become a journalist. By the time he was 21, he was sending articles to magazines. At the age of 24, he began to publish a weekly serial of funny stories, called *The Pickwick Papers*. His first novel, *Oliver Twist*, was published in 1838. Like most of his books, it was published in monthly chapters. Each episode was very cheap, so even people with very little money could buy them. As a result, Dickens became extremely popular.

Dickens worked very hard. In addition to writing seventeen novels, he published an autobiography, he edited weekly magazines, he wrote travel books and he helped to organize some charitable institutions. He also loved the theatre and wrote plays. He even performed in a play for Queen Victoria in 1851. He and his wife, Kate Hogarth, had ten children.

2 Choose the correct answer for these questions.

- 1 Why could poor people buy Charles Dickens's books?
 - a They came in cheap monthly episodes.
 - b They were very popular.
 - c Dickens was very popular.

- 2 Why did Charles Dickens work in a factory?
 - a He wanted to stay with his family.
 - b He was in prison.
 - c He was very poor.

- 3 Which skill helped him to become a journalist?
 - a He had a knowledge of writing articles.
 - b He had a knowledge of the legal profession.
 - c He had a knowledge of shorthand.



3 Who is your favourite author? What do you know about his or her life?