A Charles Dickens Timeline

• 1812 - Born on February 7

• 1824 - John Dickens arrested and sent to the Marshalsea prison. Charles Dickens worked at the Warren's Blacking Factory.

• 1827 - Rejoins the workforce as the clerk of an attorney.

• 1830 - Dickens meets Maria Beadnell, his first love interest.

• 1834 - Began using the pseudonym "Boz". Meets his future wife,

• 1836 - The first chapters of *The Pickwick Papers* are published. Marries Catherine Hogarth.

• 1837 - The first of his 10 children, Charles Culliford Boz Dickens, is born. Mary Hogarth, Catherine's sister, dies. The publication of *Oliver Twist* begins.

• 1838 - Dickens and Hablot Browne travel to Yorkshire to see the boarding schools. Publication of *Nicholas Nickleby* begins.

• 1840 - Publication of *The Old Curiosity Shop* begins

• 1841 - *Barnaby Rudge* is published. Charles and Catherine tour Scotland.

• 1842 - Charles and Catherine travel to America. Late in 1842 or early in the next year Dickens begins work on *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

• 1843 - *A Christmas Carol* is published.

• 1846 - Dickens and his family travel to Switzerland. Publication of *Dombey and Son* begins.


• 1849 - The publication of *David Copperfield* begins.

• 1852 - The publication of *Bleak House* begins.

• 1853 - Dickens gives his first public reading of one of his works.

• 1854 - *Hard Times* is published.

• 1855 - Publication of *Little Dorrit* begins.

• 1856 - Dickens works with Wilkie Collins on *The Frozen Deep*. Dickens purchases *Gad's Hill Place*.

• 1857 - Hans Christian Anderson is entertained at *Gad's Hill Place*. Dickens meets Ellen Ternan.

• 1858 - Dickens separates from Catherine, his wife.

• 1859 - *A Tale of Two Cities* is published.

• 1860 - Publication of *Great Expectations* begins in *All the Year Round*. Dickens burns his personal papers.

• 1863 - Dickens begins work on *Our Mutual Friend*.
• 1864 - The first installment of *Our Mutual Friend* is printed.

• 1865 - Dickens is involved in the Staplehurst railway accident along with Ellen Ternan and her mother.

• 1867 - Dickens tours America for the second time.

• 1868 - He gives his first *Murder of Nancy* reading.

• 1869 - Dickens is ordered by doctors to discontinue readings. Dickens begins writing *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*.


Opening of *Bleak House*:

Chapter 1 — In Chancery

LONDON. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln’s Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard up Holborn Hill. Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snow-flakes — gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. Dogs, undistinguishable in mire. Horses, scarcely better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot passengers, jostling one another’s umbrellas in a general infection of ill-temper, and losing their foot-hold at street-corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if the day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest.

Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabins of collier-brigs; fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners, wheezing by the firesides of their wards; fog in the stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper, down in his close cabin; fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them, as if they were up in a balloon, and hanging in the misty clouds.

Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets, much as the sun may, from the spongy fields, be seen to loom by husbandman and ploughboy. Most of the shops lighted two hours before their time — as the gas seems to know, for it has a haggard and unwilling look.

The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest, and the muddy streets are muddiest near that leaden-headed old obstruction, appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden-headed old corporation, Temple Bar. And hard by Temple Bar, in Lincoln’s Inn Hall, at the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery.
Jenkinson's recommendations for reading Charles Dickens.

1. Don't read for the plot. The plots are weak and largely beside the point. Read a summary of the plot in Wikipedia or some other source, and then settle into the pure delight of reading Dickens.
2. Dickens' genius is for describing the dark underbelly of Victorian England. Taverns, debtors prisons, rag shops, tenements, the London dockside, the offices of the law courts of England, boarding schools. Luxuriate in those descriptions.
3. You read Dickens not as you would a novel by Hemingway, wanting to know what is going to happen, but for the infinite variety of character, caricature, and incident. Dickens is at his best as a satirical comic writer—describing the quirks, tics, eccentricities, hobby horses, and obsessive compulsive behaviors of humanity.

Here is Clay's list of the 15 novels in chronological order, but he has numbered them in the order in which he recommends you read them for maximum pleasure.

2. Pickwick Papers — Monthly numbers, April 1836 to November 1837
6. Oliver Twist — Monthly serial in Bentley's Miscellany February 1837 to April 1839 (24 installments)
5. Nicholas Nickleby — Monthly numbers, April 1838 to October 1839
8. The Old Curiosity Shop — Weekly serial in Master Humphrey's Clock, April 25, 1840, to February 6, 1841
13. Barnaby Rudge — Weekly serial in Master Humphrey's Clock, February 13, 1841, to November 27, 1841
12. Martin Chuzzlewit — Monthly numbers, January 1843 to July 1844
11. Dombey and Son — Monthly numbers, October 1846 to April 1848
3. David Copperfield — Monthly numbers, May 1849 to November 1850
4. Bleak House — Monthly numbers, March 1852 to September 1853
14. Hard Times — Weekly serial in Household Words, April 1, 1854, to August 12, 1854
7. Little Dorrit — Monthly numbers, December 1855 to June 1857
10. A Tale of Two Cities — Weekly serial in All the Year Round, April 30, 1859, to November 26, 1859
1. Great Expectations — Weekly serial in All the Year Round, December 1, 1860 to August 3, 1861
9. Our Mutual Friend — Monthly numbers, May 1864 to November 1865
15. The Mystery of Edwin Drood — Monthly numbers, April 1870 to September 1870 (six of twelve numbers completed)
Opening of *A Tale of Two Cities*

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way— in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.

There were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a plain face, on the throne of England; there were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a fair face, on the throne of France. In both countries it was clearer than crystal to the lords of the State preserves of loaves and fishes, that things in general were settled for ever.

From Chapter 36 of *David Copperfield*:

'My dear Copperfield,' said Mr. Micawber, rising with one of his thumbs in each of his waistcoat pockets, 'the companion of my youth: if I may be allowed the expression - and my esteemed friend Traddles: if I may be permitted to call him so - will allow me, on the part of Mrs. Micawber, myself, and our offspring, to thank them in the warmest and most uncompromising terms for their good wishes. It may be expected that on the eve of a migration which will consign us to a perfectly new existence, Mr. Micawber spoke as if they were going five hundred thousand miles, 'I should offer a few valedictory remarks to two such friends as I see before me. But all that I have to say in this way, I have said. Whatever station in society I may attain, through the medium of the learned profession of which I am about to become an unworthy member, I shall endeavour not to disgrace, and Mrs. Micawber will be safe to adorn. Under the temporary pressure of pecuniary liabilities, contracted with a view to their immediate liquidation, but remaining unliquidated through a combination of circumstances, I have been under the necessity of assuming a garb from which my natural instincts recoil - I allude to spectacles - and possessing myself of a cognomen, to which I can establish no legitimate pretensions. All I have to say on that score is, that the cloud has passed from the dreary scene, and the God of Day is once more high upon the mountain tops. On Monday next, on the arrival of the four o'clock afternoon coach at Canterbury, my foot will be on my native heath - my name, Micawber!'

Mr. Micawber resumed his seat on the close of these remarks, and drank two glasses of punch in grave succession.