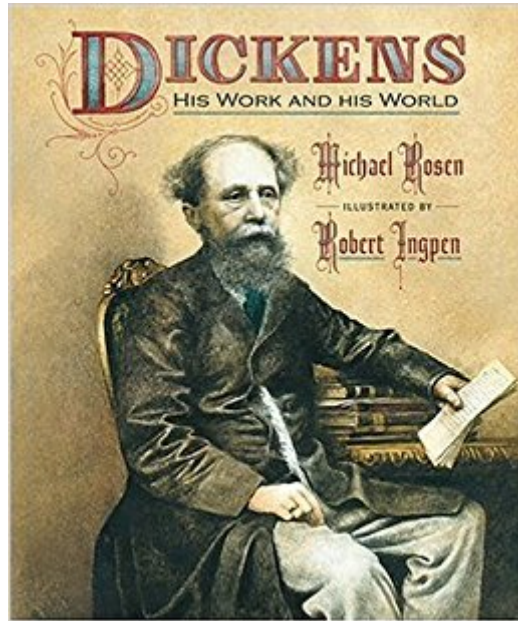




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# Dickens: His Work And His World



## Synopsis

What the Dickens is all the fuss? Take a lively look at an author whose indelible characters live on in our language and culture – and whose legacy shapes our literature to this day. Join award-winning author, critic, and anthologist Michael Rosen for a spirited tour of the life and work of one of our greatest novelists. With stunning illustrations by Robert Ingpen, this accessible, child-friendly book vividly re-creates the world of Charles Dickens, from the author's childhood in London to his early career, his performances, and, of course, the great social and political upheavals of the time, which inspired so much of his work. Michael Rosen's vibrant discussion covers some of the best-known novels by Dickens, describing *OLIVER TWIST*, *A CHRISTMAS CAROL*, and *DAVID COPPERFIELD*, and providing a fascinating detailed analysis of *GREAT EXPECTATIONS*.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 5-8 – Opening with Dickens's touring life and final London performance, Rosen then turns to the writer's humble beginnings and nomadic childhood, paying particular attention to the people he met, the sights he saw, and the situations he endured – all of which were to find their way into his writings. The author looks at 1800s London, pointing out the societal changes that were to influence Dickens's progressive thinking. He

investigates the writer's best-known works: *A Christmas Carol*, *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, and *Great Expectations*. For the first three, Rosen retells the basic plots and clarifies the major characters; he covers the fourth work in greater depth, giving a fairly detailed yet age-appropriate analysis of the characters and of the meaning behind some of Dickens's literary choices. The author excerpts relevant sections from the novels and explores the writer's legacy. Ingpen's marvelous acrylic illustrations, whether small inserts or color spreads, lend a sense of realism to the prose, particularly in the details of period dress. The full-page portraits of some of the major characters give clear insight into their physical attributes and emotional realities. Though geared to a similar audience as that of Diane Stanley and Peter Vennema's excellent *Charles Dickens* (HarperCollins, 1993), this title has merit for elucidating some of the literary devices for which Dickens is known. It will be a welcome addition to libraries looking for new ways to promote his classics, particularly as Christmas approaches and a new film version of *Oliver Twist* is released.

—Nancy Menaldi-Scanlan, LaSalle Academy, Providence, RI Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

**\*Starred Review\*** Gr. 4-7. The worlds of Charles Dickens, both his personal one and the ones he created, come alive in this terrific book, which will entice readers to his works. After a dramatic introduction that depicts Dickens' last performance onstage, the savvy Rosen moves to a lengthy retelling of Dickens' growing up, a tale as gripping as any of his stories. With children now hooked, he discusses important influences on Dickens--London life, political and social upheavals, the revolution in publishing--and follows with concise retellings of some of Dickens' works, with emphasis on *Great Expectations*. Adults will be familiar with that story and with *A Christmas Carol*, *Oliver Twist*, and *David Copperfield*, but it's difficult to tell the extent to which Rosen's plot digests will intrigue children. That said, it's hard to resist his narratives, especially when he inserts himself and his opinions ("I won't say how this all works out in the end"). In fact, the personal writing style, which draws readers close, is as appealing as any other aspect of the work. Ingpen's handsome paintings range from lavish two-page spreads to spot art decorating the oversize format. The landscapes sometimes trump the portraits, as in the case of Miss Havisham's, which doesn't quite capture the character's spirit. Even so, the art adds to the richness of a volume designed and written with care. A time line is appended.

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I bought this book more for the illustrations by Robert Ingpen than the information. With that said,

Mr. Rosen presents information on a very basic level about the world of Charles Dickens, and gives an overview of some selected works. For anyone interested in Mr. Dickens, this is a nice book to have as it provides a brief biographical sketch of Mr. Dickens. It is written with younger readers in mind, but I enjoyed the overview of the selected novels by Mr. Dickens as well as the anecdotal information on the man himself. For such an interesting historical figure, this is a great introduction for any age. It would certainly help a younger student doing a research project!

Very nice illustrations and a great read.

Is beautiful

DICKENS: HIS WORK AND HIS WORLD by Michael Rosen is a nice introduction to Charles Dickens' life and works. The book does a great job of placing both into their proper context. The book is divided into five chapters. Chapter one "The Tour" gives a brief overview of Charles Dickens. It provides a glimpse into his talents performing in front of audiences and serves as an introduction as to WHY Dickens is so memorable. Chapter two "The Life" provides the reader a biographical summary of Dickens' life. "Great writers aren't often people born into some special family, nor are they necessarily very rich or very clever or very lucky. They're not always people who have seen or heard hundreds of amazing or odd things. But a great writer has to be someone who spends a good deal of time watching, listening, and wondering--and a good deal more time telling us about it" (12). Chapter Three "London" provides the reader with a description of the world in which Dickens lived and wrote. It discusses the cultural and political as well as physical environment in which he wrote. Chapter Four "The Work" discusses four literary masterpieces: A CHRISTMAS CAROL, OLIVER TRIST, DAVID COPPERFIELD, and GREAT EXPECTATIONS. Rosen devotes most of the chapter to his in-depth analysis of GREAT EXPECTATIONS. Chapter Five "Legacy" is a summary of why Dickens is still relevant to today's culture. The book concludes with a thorough timeline and index. (There is not a bibliography). Throughout DICKENS: HIS WORK AND HIS WORLD are one and two-page illustrations by Robert Ingpen, winner of the Hans Christian Andersen medal for illustration in 1986, which are magnificent. Rosen's style is conversational. He writes directly to the reader, often asking the reader to join in his questions and become involved in the text.

Michael Rosen's DICKENS, HIS WORK AND HIS WORLD is a charming, informative introduction to, arguably, the greatest novelist of all times. A 2005 Candlewick Press release, Rosen's book is

clearly aimed at younger readers yet will enchant Dickens' fans of all ages. Rosen examines Dickens' life and times in five chapters. The first two chapters offer a biographical account of Dickens; chapter 3, a description of 'the Good Old City;' chapter 4 describes and critiques Dickens' works especially CHRISTMAS CAROL, OLIVER TWIST, DAVID COPPERFIELD and GREAT EXPECTATIONS; while chapter 5 provides an appreciation of Dickens and his work. A timeline completes the book. Rosen writes in an easy-to-understand style. He presents a balanced, appealing account of Dickens life and legacy. The text is wonderfully complemented by illustrations by Robert Ingpen. Ingpen's atmospheric artwork compellingly recaptures the man, his times and the myriad characters that populated his works. The artwork is truly magnificent. Having read a number of adult biographies of Dickens, I found Michael Rosen's book an appealing overview of the great writer, an enchanting text-and-picture portrait that should attract readers young and old. Highly recommended. \*\*\*\*\*8,400 Helpful Votes!

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