

UPPER LEVEL

Our Mutual Friend by Charles Dickens

A Before Reading

- 1 Look at the chapter headings in the *Contents* on the third page.
 - (a) Which chapters might be exciting?
 - (b) Which chapters might be sad?
 - (c) Which chapters might be happy?
 - (d) Are there any headings which are puzzling?

B While Reading

- 2 Keep a 'Reading Diary' while you are reading the book.
 - (a) Read the Preface – Coming Home. Make a prediction – how do you think the story will end?
 - (b) Read the story in sections.
 - First Section: Chapters 1 to 4
 - Second Section: Chapters: 5 to 9
 - Third Section: Chapters 10 to 14
 - Fourth Section: Chapters 15 to 19

After you read each section write in your diary:

- (1) Write the most important things that happened. Do not write in great detail.
- (2) Explain which characters were important in the section.
 - Did any new characters appear?
 - Did any characters from an earlier section not appear?
- (3) Choose three important paragraphs from the section. Explain why you think each paragraph is important. (eg Does the paragraph tell you something important about a character? Or does it tell you something important about the story?)
- (4) Sections 1, 2, 3, 4: Make predictions – explain what you think will happen next.
- (5) Sections 2, 3, 4, 5: Did you make good predictions in your last answer to (4)?

C After Reading

- 3 Here are the pictures of the main characters from pages 4 and 5. You have read the story now.
- (a) Re-arrange the characters. Move them into different groups. Draw lines between pictures of characters who should be together. Think about relationships between people – eg about marriages, friendships and deaths. (You do not have to move all of the characters.)
- (b) Explain what you have done.



John Harmon



Bella Wilfer



Charley Hexam Bradley Headstone



Jesse Hexam Rogue Riderhood



Noddy Boffin Mrs Boffin



Mortimer Lightwood Eugene Wrayburn



Jenny Wren



Lizzie Hexam

- 4 The River Thames appears many times in this story. Why is the river important?
- 5 (a) John and Bella have a child. One day, when the child is fourteen years old, he/she says to John and Bella, *'Tell me about when you met. Tell me about your lives before I was born.'* What do they tell their child? Write the conversation as a script. (Decide if the child is a boy or a girl.)
- or (b) Imagine that Lizzie and Eugene also have a child. He/she also asks them about their past. What do they tell him/her?

Bleak House is another Upper Level reader by Charles Dickens. You might also enjoy *Precious Bane* by Mary Webb or *The Return of the Native* by Thomas Hardy.