

MACMILLAN READERS

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**UPPER LEVEL**

CHARLES DICKENS

# Bleak House

Retold by Margaret Turner

 **MACMILLAN**

## UPPER LEVEL

Founding Editor: John Milne

The Macmillan Readers provide a choice of enjoyable reading materials for learners of English. The series is published at six levels – Starter, Beginner, Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate and Upper.

**Level control**

Information, structure and vocabulary are controlled to suit the students' ability at each level.

**The number of words at each level:**

Starter	about 300 basic words
Beginner	about 600 basic words
Elementary	about 1100 basic words
Pre-Intermediate	about 1400 basic words
Intermediate	about 1600 basic words
Upper	about 2200 basic words

**Vocabulary**

Some difficult words and phrases in this book are important for understanding the story. Some of these words are explained in the story and some are shown in the pictures. From Pre-Intermediate level upwards, words are marked with a number like this: ...<sup>3</sup>. These words are explained in the Glossary at the end of the book.

1	The Court Of Chancery	4
2	The Dedlocks At Home	9
3	Mr Krook's Rag And Bottle Shop	14
4	At Bleak House	21
5	Tom-All-Alone's	28
6	Richard's Search For a Profession	34
7	Esther Meets Lady Dedlock	42
8	Jo Moves On	47
9	Richard Becomes a Soldier	53
10	Esther's Illness	56
11	'I Am Your Unhappy Mother!'	62
12	Mr Tulkinghorn Gives a Warning	64
13	Allan Woodcourt Returns	69
14	Ada's Secret	76
15	Work For Mr Bucket	80
16	Flight and Pursuit	86
17	Found	91
18	Allan Woodcourt Speaks	97
19	The Will	100
20	Richard Begins His Life Again	104
21	Later On	108
	<i>Points for Understanding</i>	111
	<i>Glossary</i>	119
1	Note on the High Court of Chancery	121
2	Other legal terms	122
3	Terms to do with nineteenth-century England	122
4	Terms to do with family life	124
5	General	124
	<i>List of titles at Upper Level</i>	127

## The Court Of Chancery

*London in November. The Lord Chancellor is in his High Court of Chancery. Ada Clare, Richard Carstone and Esther Summerson meet the Lord Chancellor. He tells the three young people that they are going to live at Bleak House.*

London, 1852. London in November. It was cold winter weather. There was mud in the streets. Dogs were covered in mud, almost drowned in it. Horses, pulling carriages<sup>3</sup> through the city streets, were splashed up to their eyes. Shivering crossing-sweepers<sup>3</sup> tried hard to sweep back the mud and dirt on the busy roads.

There was fog too. The fog was everywhere. It came up the river and down the river. Fog covered the boats on the river and filled the boatmen's eyes. Street lamps sent a pale, yellow light through the thick, foggy air.

Cold, mud and fog filled the streets of London. And the fog was thickest and the mud was deepest near Lincoln's Inn, the very heart of London. The Lord High Chancellor was there, sitting in his High Court of Chancery<sup>1</sup>.

Some of the fog and the mud had got into the courtroom too. Perhaps a little fog and mud had got into the minds of the people in the High Court of Chancery.

Chancery had ruined<sup>5</sup> many men and driven others to madness. Whole families had been destroyed by Chancery and Chancery had brought great houses to decay and destruction. The streets of London were dark that day and in the Court of Chancery



*London. London in November. It was cold winter weather.*

it was darker.

The case before the Court was the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce, and that case had never done anyone any good. The lawyers had lost all interest in Jarndyce and Jarndyce many years before. Whole families had been born and died during the history of Jarndyce and Jarndyce. Pretty young wards of court<sup>1</sup> had grown old and sad; strong young men had lost hope, and still the case had not ended. Over the years, Jarndyce and Jarndyce had slowly ruined the lives of many innocent people.

No decision was reached on that foggy afternoon. The Lord Chancellor moved a little on his high seat.

'We will continue the case on Wednesday fortnight,' said the Lord Chancellor. He stood up. The court stood up. But the Lord Chancellor had something more to say. He looked down at a paper in his hand. Then he spoke.

'The young girl, Ada Clare, and the young man, Richard Carstone, are claimants<sup>1</sup> in Jarndyce and Jarndyce. I am making them wards of court. They will stay at Bleak House with John Jarndyce. I believe he is their cousin. I shall see them in my private room now.'

The Lord Chancellor left the court. The lawyers left too. A little old woman, seated in the front of the court, left last of all. The lights were put out and the doors were locked.

How much better for the wards of court if those doors had never opened again. How much better if Richard Carstone and Ada Clare had never heard of Jarndyce and Jarndyce and had never seen the High Court of Chancery.

Richard and Ada were in the Chancellor's private room standing by the smoky fire trying to keep warm. There was a quiet girl with a calm face and smooth, dark hair standing close to Ada. This was Esther Summerson. Esther was not a ward of court, but the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce was going to darken her life too. The three young people looked up as the Lord Chancellor came into the room.

'Miss Clare?' said the Lord Chancellor to his clerk. 'Who is Miss Ada Clare?'

'This is Miss Clare,' said the clerk.

Ada was a beautiful young girl with golden hair. What was such a young and beautiful girl doing in that dark place?

'You are to stay at Bleak House,' said the Lord Chancellor, looking at his papers, 'with your cousin, John Jarndyce.'

The Lord Chancellor looked up again. 'Richard Carstone?'

Richard Carstone was the young man standing by the fire. His face was eager and happy. As yet, Jarndyce and Jarndyce had not darkened it. Richard bowed.

'And this,' said the clerk, turning to the other girl, 'is Miss Esther Summerson. She will be a companion for Miss Clare and live at Bleak House too.'

The Lord Chancellor nodded.

'Very well. You will all go to stay at Bleak House. But you are to stay in London for tonight.'

'Yes, sir,' Richard Carstone answered. 'We are to stay at the house of Mrs Jellyby.'

'Ah, yes,' he said. The Lord Chancellor had heard of Mrs Jellyby. 'She is a remarkable woman. My clerk will tell you the way to her house.'

The Lord Chancellor left the room and he was soon lost in the fog and darkness. The clerk told the three young people the way to Mrs Jellyby's house and left them outside the court. As they turned to go, a little old woman came smiling out of the shadows.

'The wards-in-Jarndyce,' she said. 'I am very happy to meet you. I am Miss Flite. Everyone knows me here. I come to the court every day. I am waiting for a judgement<sup>1</sup>. It is good to see youth and beauty here.' And Miss Flite smiled again and bowed.

'She's mad,' whispered Richard to Ada, not thinking that the old woman would hear him. But she did.

'That's right, young gentleman,' said Miss Flite. 'I'm mad, quite mad. I was once a ward myself, like you. I was not mad

then. I had youth, hope and perhaps a little beauty. But they have all gone. I have come to this court every day for many years. I am waiting for a judgement. But it is a long time. Goodbye, my dears. You will always find me in court.'

The old lady turned and walked quickly away. The fog covered her.

'Poor creature<sup>5</sup>,' said Esther softly and took Ada by the hand.

The three young people moved away from Lincoln's Inn towards Chancery Lane and Mrs Jellyby's house. A poor crossing-sweeper stood with his broom, waiting to make a way for them through the mud and dirt of the road. Dirty and ragged, he shivered with cold and gladly accepted a little money from Richard. Jo was this boy's name and he was one of the poorest of the London poor. Jo looked at the three young people as, laughing and talking together, they walked away into the fog and darkness.

## The Dedlocks At Home

*The Dedlocks are in their country-house, Chesney Wold. Mr Tulkinghorn, Sir Leicester Dedlock's lawyer, shows the Dedlocks some papers about Jarndyce and Jarndyce. Lady Dedlock is taken ill.*

While darkness and fog were covering London, it was raining in Lincolnshire. The rain fell and the rain dripped from the roof of Chesney Wold, the country-house of the Dedlocks. Sir Leicester Dedlock was a proud old man. He was sometimes troubled by illness. Lady Honoria Dedlock, his wife, was a proud and beautiful woman.

My Lady Dedlock had come to Chesney Wold to get away from the fogs of London. But she found Lincolnshire very dull. Water covered the parkland. Even the trees seemed wet through. The animals in the park and in the stables were cold and miserable.

As darkness fell, the rain dripped on the pavement of the terrace in front of the great house. People called this terrace the Ghost's Walk. Sometimes footsteps were heard on this pavement. They belonged to another Lady Dedlock who had died many years before. She had brought disgrace<sup>5</sup> to her family before she died. Now, when death or disgrace was coming to the Dedlock family, these footsteps were heard on the hard stones.

Had Lady Dedlock ever heard those footsteps? No one knew. Her face – no longer young, but still beautiful – never showed her thoughts. Lady Dedlock was a very proud woman and she had married an even prouder man.

Lady Dedlock was sitting in the library on this wet November evening. She was sitting by the fire, shading her face with a