

NAXOS  
AudioBooks

Charles Dickens

# Dombey and Son

Read by **David Timson**

THE  
COMPLETE  
CLASSICS

UNABRIDGED

CLASSIC  
FICTION



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1	Chapter One	5:44
2	Or, at all events, with one drawback.	4:21
3	'Good! We must not disguise from you Sir,'...	5:39
4	The lady thus specially presented...	5:23
5	'Well!' said Mrs Chick, with a sweet smile...	3:37
6	There was no sound in answer...	3:13
7	Chapter Two	5:11
8	Miss Tox had arrived on the wheels...	5:13
9	Miss Tox seemed to be so little enlightened...	5:08
10	Thus arrested on the threshold...	4:51
11	As his unusual emotion subsided...	5:15
12	Chapter Three	4:15
13	The apartments which Mr Dombey reserved...	4:41
14	The child, who had dropped her head...	5:29
15	Spitfire seemed to be...	4:01
16	She suddenly appended...	4:15
17	When little Florence timidly presented herself...	5:15
18	Chapter Four	4:44
19	Here he lived too, in skipper-like state...	4:58
20	'The Lord Mayor, Wally,' said Solomon...	4:59

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21	'Dear Uncle,' said the boy...	4:51
22	Solomon Gills rubbed his hands...	5:46
23	Upon that he whistled as he filled his glass...	5:32
24	Chapter Five	4:47
25	'Louisa,' said Mr Dombey, after a short pause...	5:25
26	The two interlopers...	5:50
27	'Have the goodness, if you please, Towlinson,' ...	5:09
28	It happened to be an iron-grey autumnal day...	4:11
29	The baby soon appeared, carried in great glory...	5:28
30	Before he turned again to lead the way...	4:22
31	There they found Mr Pitt turning up his nose...	4:44
32	'I was about to say to you, Richards,' ...	3:03
33	Such temporary indications of a partial thaw...	3:33
34	Chapter Six	5:25
35	Staggs's Gardens was uncommonly incredulous.	4:52
36	'But where's my pretty boy?' said Polly...	5:03
37	Now, it happened that poor Biler's life...	5:24
38	They had not gone very far...	4:46
39	Mrs Brown's was not a melodious cry...	5:40
40	'If you please, is this the city?'	5:16

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41	As they stood deliberating in the street...	4:51
42	Solomon Gills was quite as hot...	5:01
43	'Why, I believe I found Miss Dombey, Sir,' ...	3:37
44	The entrance of the lost child...	3:59
45	Chapter Seven	4:26
46	Although Major Bagstock had arrived...	4:21
47	But still, when that day...	6:02
48	Chapter Eight	4:59
49	Some philosophers tell us that selfishness is...	5:06
50	Heaven and Earth, how old his face was...	5:29
51	Mr Dombey was so astonished...	5:43
52	'Surely you must know, Louisa,' ...	6:00
53	This celebrated Mrs Pipchin...	4:52
54	'Well, Sir,' said Mrs Pipchin to Paul...	5:24
55	Such was life at Mrs Pipchin's.	5:23
56	This, however, never came to pass.	4:55
57	It being clear that somebody was dead...	4:08
58	With this notable attendant to pull him along...	3:46
59	Chapter Nine	4:07
60	In this way, Walter, so far from forgetting...	5:14

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61	'What I mean, Uncle Sol,' pursued Walter...	5:57
62	Walter looked from the broker to his uncle...	5:07
62	Walter, in his impatience...	5:22
64	These directions were not issued...	4:44
65	'I'm behind the time altogether, my dear Ned,'...	4:23
66	Chapter Ten	4:52
67	'An old campaigner, Sir,' said the Major...	6:06
68	None the worse on account...	5:35
69	At the same time the Captain...	5:15
70	'What was the debt contracted for?'	4:15
71	As he motioned towards the door...	5:09
72	Chapter Eleven	5:33
73	'Mrs Pipchin,' said Mr Dombey...	6:08
74	Mr Dombey waited...	5:49
75	The Doctor's was a mighty fine house...	4:44
76	'Doctor Blimber is at home, I believe?'	4:17
77	'Mrs Pipchin,' said his father...	4:25
78	A learned enthusiasm is so very contagious...	4:10
79	'I think,' said Mr Dombey...	4:06
80	Chapter Twelve	4:55

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81	Cornelia took him first to the schoolroom...	5:01
82	Young Toots who was ready...	5:45
83	'It is remarkable, Mr Feeder,'...	5:09
84	Tea was served in a style no less polite...	4:52
85	Miss Blimber presented exactly the appearance...	5:23
86	He acquitted himself very well...	5:32
87	The books were not easy to procure...	4:40
88	Such spirits as he had in the outset, Paul soon lost...	3:13
89	'I say!' cried Toots, speaking...	4:42
90	Chapter Thirteen	5:02
91	The gentleman last mentioned...	5:28
92	'You respect nobody, Carker, I think,'...	3:59
93	'Gay,' said Mr Dombey, turning a little...	4:54
94	During this conversation...	5:46
95	'You have only yourself to thank for it,'...	3:40
96	Again his last few words hung...	3:05
97	Chapter Fourteen	4:20
98	It was perfectly understood...	5:29
99	'It may be generally observed of Dombey,'...	5:54
100	Over and above these extensive privileges...	4:21

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101	Mr Feeder then told him, to his great joy...	5:02
102	'If I grow up,' said Paul.	5:15
103	'Our little friend,' observed Doctor Blimber...	5:04
104	He had to think of a portrait on the stairs...	5:29
105	There was a grand array of white waistcoats...	5:23
106	It was Sir Barnet Skettles, Lady Skettles...	4:30
107	From his nest among the pillows...	4:20
108	Once, when there was a pause in the dancing...	5:03
109	Diogenes was the dog: who had never in his life...	3:31
110	How Florence laughed!	2:31
111	Chapter Fifteen	5:08
112	This the Captain, in a moment of uncommon...	5:06
113	'Keep her off a point or so!' observed the Captain...	5:13
114	The Captain, however,...	5:47
115	As these reflections presented themselves...	4:46
116	Though still, of what the house had suggested to him...	5:17
117	There was no such place as Staggs's Gardens.	5:49
118	Miss Nipper then took breath...	2:41
119	Chapter Sixteen	4:51
120	The people around him changed...	4:46

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121	Paul closed his eyes with those words...	2:49
122	For an instant, Paul looked at her...	3:08
123	Chapter Seventeen	4:45
124	One fact was quite clear to the Captain...	4:45
125	As it was a contest of affection and self denial...	4:11
126	The Captain's equanimity was so impenetrable...	4:24
127	The acuteness and significance...	4:32
128	The Captain's complacency...	4:02
129	The unconscious Captain walked out...	3:10
130	Chapter Eighteen	5:12
131	The feathers wind their gloomy way...	5:08
132	'My dear child,' said Mrs Chick...	4:34
133	'Florence, my dear child, your poor papa...'	5:00
134	Mrs Chick approved of this resolution...	5:01
135	It was easy to know when he had gone out..	4:58
136	One day, about a week after the funeral...	4:56
137	Mr Toots, seeing Florence in tears...	4:48
138	Although Miss Nipper was nervous...	5:33
139	Her father sat at his old table...	6:15
140	Chapter Nineteen	5:20



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141	'And I added,' pursued Walter...	4:38
142	'You remember me, ' said Florence with a smile...	4:46
143	'Oh! but Walter,' said Florence...	5:18
144	Had Florence any misgiving...	5:09
145	Walter was coming down...	3:47
146	The relentless chronometer at last announced...	4:19
147	Chapter Twenty	5:20
148	'Where is my scoundrel!' said the Major...	4:54
149	'Dombey,' said the Major warmly...	5:57
150	But before the carriage moved away...	5:25
151	'Take advice from plain old Joe...'	5:15
152	Breasting the wind and light...	5:03
153	The sweet, calm, gentle presence...	6:04
154	Chapter Twenty-One	5:04
155	The discrepancy between Mrs Skewton's fresh...	4:39
156	'Stop a moment, Withers!' said Mrs Skewton...	4:39
157	Mr Dombey's eyes sought the ground...	5:05
158	'I hope, Mrs Granger,' said Mr Dombey...	3:28
159	Withers the Wan, at this period...	3:45
160	The Major, who was quite forgiven...	3:29

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161	Chapter Twenty-Two	5:10
162	'Don't mistake me.'	5:04
163	Still that passage, which was in a postscript...	5:14
164	Obedient to a nod from Mr Carker...	5:07
165	Mr Perch was too deferential to express surprise...	5:21
166	Mr Carker the Manager...	5:09
167	Mr Carker looked at Polly...	4:14
168	Mr Carker's mouth expanded...	6:01
169	The Game Chicken...	5:37
170	Everything happened as usual...	4:18
171	Chapter Twenty-Three	5:52
172	For Florence lived alone in the deserted house...	5:19
173	But there was one thought...	5:47
174	'And so,' said Florence...	5:27
175	Arriving in good time...	4:50
176	In time, Rob was despatched for a coach...	5:59
177	But when the Captain...	5:15
178	Captain Cuttle picked up his hat...	5:08
179	'Clara a-hoy!' cried the Captain...	4:50
180	Captain Cuttle, whose delicacy was shocked...	5:35

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181	'My name's Jack Bunsby!'	3:58
182	But meeting the eyes of Florence...	3:40
183	Chapter Twenty-Four	5:38
184	There were some children staying in the house.	5:26
185	As they stopped soon afterwards...	5:44
186	Even in the response she made...	5:24
187	The man drew a deep sigh.	4:22
188	The father and his sick daughter...	4:47
189	Chapter Twenty-Five	3:39
190	'My dear Ned Cuttle. Enclosed is my Will!'	4:18
191	The Captain's first care was to establish himself...	5:07
192	Not a station-house, or bone-house...	5:20
193	These innocent MacStingers...	3:08
194	Rob nodded his understanding...	2:55
195	Chapter Twenty-Six	5:14
196	'I shall have the pleasure, Carker'...	4:50
197	While they were thus engaged...	4:59
198	'I feel that I am weak...'	5:23
199	The Major advancing his double chin...	5:08
200	'This morning, Ma'am,' returned the Major...	5:04

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201	'Your regards, Edith, my dear?'	5:41
202	The Major gave the horse's cough...	4:26
203	'This was respectful and becoming...	4:38
204	Chapter Twenty-Seven	5:00
205	A withered and very ugly old woman...	5:24
206	'Mrs Skewton,' said Mr Dombey...	5:49
207	Few people had less reason to complain...	4:34
208	Mr Carker cantered behind the carriage...	4:27
209	They were not exchanging a word or a look.	5:13
210	Warwick Castle being at length...	6:00
211	The dinner was the counterpart...	4:57
212	The very voice was changed...	3:33
213	'You might have been well married,'...	3:53
214	Chapter Twenty-Eight	5:34
215	Again, Florence, in pursuit of her strong purpose...	5:13
216	Stretched on a crimson cushion...	4:38
217	Such of her late friends and companions...	4:52
218	'There is nothing the matter?' inquired Florence.	3:14
219	'Mrs Skewton,' said her father...	3:50
220	Chapter Twenty-Nine	5:45

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221	A flush – it was warm weather...	4:35
222	Miss Tox assented...	3:52
223	Miss Tox left her seat in a hurry...	3:15
224	In the moment's silence that ensued...	5:26
225	Miss Tox directed an imploring...	5:37
226	Figuratively speaking, that is to say...	4:23
227	Chapter Thirty	5:22
228	Edith sat looking at her...	4:42
229	Oh Edith! it were well to die...	5:46
230	'I hear him now!' cried Florence...	4:53
231	The conversation was almost entirely sustained...	4:39
232	No bad representation of the body...	5:20
233	'My dear Dombey,' said Cleopatra...	5:04
234	'I am tired to death,' said she...	3:41
235	Edith bent the same fixed look upon her...	4:11
236	Chapter Thirty-One	5:35
237	The pastry cook is hard at work...	4:29
238	Mr Dombey leaves his dressing room...	4:12
239	'Dombey', says the Major...	4:17
240	There is a pause while Mr Sownds...	5:38

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241	'I am proud to see,' says Mr Carker...	4:23
242	Now, there are more congratulations...	5:29
243	'But I know sufficient of my friend...'	5:07
244	The chariot is at the door; the Bride is descending...	2:39
245	Mrs Skewton sleeps upstairs...	4:30
246	Chapter Thirty-Two	5:14
247	Nevertheless, the Captain did not tempt ill fortune...	5:12
248	The wind still rushing, and the rain still pattering...	5:36
249	Captain Cuttle proffered a glass of rum...	5:12
250	As I was coming out,' said Mr Toots...	5:10
251	'Wal'r my dear lad,' said the Captain...	5:41
252	'Thankee Captain Gills,' said Mr Toots...	4:50
253	'My lad,' returned the captain...	4:04
254	'You hatch nice little plots...'	4:07
255	But the Captain was not unmindful...	3:30
256	Chapter Thirty-Three	4:47
257	The second home is on the other side of London...	5:44
258	The cordial face she lifted up to his...	5:05
259	'There is a kind of pride, Sir,' she returned...	4:56
260	'We are contented, Sir.'	4:54

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261	Many half forgotten emotions were awakened...	5:00
262	She was now opposite the house...	6:11
263	Chapter Thirty-Four	4:46
264	The old woman, mumbling...	5:15
265	'I!' cried the old woman.	4:13
266	The old woman leaned her elbows on the table...	4:48
267	In uttering this last word...	5:34
268	'You seem to say you know a great deal...'	4:14
269	At the sound of her raised voice...	4:24
270	Chapter Thirty-Five	3:09
271	Florence is ready to receive her father...	4:54
272	With that Mr Dombey stalked away...	5:42
273	Soon after tea, Mrs Skewton...	5:02
274	There are yielding moments...	5:01
275	Florence and Edith, seated before the fire...	5:14
276	She saw that Florence would have spoken here...	2:58
277	She sat for some time silent...	3:42
278	Chapter Thirty-Six	5:05
279	The next arrival was a Bank Director...	5:12
280	Cousin Feenix was in great force...	5:23

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281	Mr Dombey's face was not a changeful one...	5:09
282	Mrs Chick had some such thoughts too...	5:06
283	At last, the guests were all gone...	4:41
284	There was a sharpness...	2:48
285	Chapter Thirty-Seven	5:50
286	'I have presumed,' said Mr Carker...	5:00
287	'You may pass that by, Sir,' she returned...	4:29
288	Edith raised her head quickly...	5:33
289	She got on no better towards night...	4:50
290	'Where is Mrs Dombey?'	5:57
291	Chapter Thirty-Eight	5:23
292	'Polly, my gal,' said Mr Toodle...	5:30
293	At these desperate words...	5:10
294	'You never mean to say, Mrs Richards,'...	4:20
295	Mr Toodle, who had a great respect for learning...	4:39
296	Chapter Thirty-Nine	5:05
297	Captain Cuttle also, as a man of business...	5:46
298	'Well, you'll excuse me...'	5:11
299	'And so you've got another berth...?'	4:27
300	Therefore Captain Cuttle read the newspaper...	5:13



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301	'For why?' growled Bunsby...	5:27
302	'If so be,' returned Bunsby...	5:42
303	'Oh I was a weak and trusting Fool...'	5:57
304	Some uneasy ideas that he must be walking...	5:11
305	Chapter Forty	4:58
306	Yes, and he would have it...	4:59
307	She looked upon him as she said so...	4:59
308	His insolence of self importance...	4:56
309	The hand that had so pressed the bracelet...	5:48
310	Mr Dombey took a long respiration...	5:38
311	But she was youthful...	5:23
312	From Edith she would sometimes look...	5:14
313	Mrs Skewton, on one particular day...	3:33
314	'My Lady, don't believe her,'...	3:40
315	Chapter Forty-One	5:23
316	And here is Doctor Blimber...	4:09
317	There is much shaking of hands...	3:48
318	'Certainly, Miss Dombey,' says Mr Toots...	4:18
319	Mr Toots is likewise roaming up and down...	5:34
320	A shadow even on that shadowed face...	3:27

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321	'There's an uncommon good church...'	3:30
322	Chapter Forty-Two	5:00
323	Thoroughly checked in his expectations...	5:00
324	He directed a sharp glance...	5:24
325	'Mrs Dombey and myself,' said Mr Dombey...	5:18
326	'You know,' said Mr Carker...	5:32
327	Mr Carker bowed his head...	5:01
328	'There is nothing more,' quoth Carker...	4:22
329	He rode direct to Mr Dombey's house...	3:42
330	Nothing escaped him.	3:51
331	Chapter Forty-Three	5:35
332	'Papa thinks well of Mrs Pipchin, Susan,'...	5:43
333	She listened at her own.	4:53
334	He may sleep on now.	5:05
335	'I have dreamed,' said Edith in a low voice...	4:50
336	Chapter Forty-Four	5:02
337	'Miss Floy,' said Susan Nipper...	5:29
338	But the inflexible Nipper...	5:10
339	'What is it! Why is it?' said Florence...	5:21
340	'Yes,' said Florence hurriedly...	5:50

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341	Chapter Forty-Five	5:19
342	'Sir', returned Edith...	5:20
343	She bit her blood-red lip...	4:50
344	'Mr Dombey...'	3:47
345	'You know that you are free to do so Sir,'...	4:35
346	Chapter Forty-Six	4:35
347	'See where he goes!'	5:05
348	'Will you hold your tongue, Misses Brown?'	3:36
349	Turning into a silent little square...	4:12
350	As Rob took another cautious survey of the yard...	4:49
351	Alone again, in his own room...	5:38
352	'I tell you,' said the Manager...	2:59
353	He rode near Mr Dombey's house...	4:03
354	Chapter Forty-Seven	5:12
355	Those who study the physical sciences...	5:12
356	Florence loved him still...	5:27
357	Her voice died away into silence...	5:16
358	Thus living, in a dream...	5:24
359	'However doubtful reason I may have...'	5:13
360	'It may be natural enough...'	5:21

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361	'Release me, then,' said Edith...	4:52
362	'Perhaps,' said Carker...	5:23
363	As Florence stood transfixed...	5:40
364	Her father seized a candle...	5:20
365	Chapter Forty-Eight	3:25
366	With this last adherent, Florence hurried away...	3:29
367	'Cheerily,' said the Captain...	5:30
368	In evidence of these convictions...	5:37
369	'How de do, Captain Gills?'	4:53
370	The Captain nodded his own as a mark of assent.	3:51
371	The Captain removed his hand from his face...	4:16
372	Chapter Forty-Nine	5:11
373	Her tears burst forth afresh...	5:43
374	Florence essayed to eat a morsel...	4:22
375	Unlike as they were externally...	5:37
376	When they were alone again...	4:43
377	The Captain did not go to bed for a long time.	5:22
378	'What! Lady lass,' returned the Captain...	5:51
379	'Were they saved!' cried Florence.	3:50
380	But Walter sought him out...	3:34

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381	'I am the cause of your going away...'	5:01
382	Chapter Fifty	4:42
383	'I have been thinking of this...'	4:39
384	'Yes, Captain Cuttle,' replied Walter...	5:42
385	'The young woman?' returned the Captain.	5:02
386	All these good wishes, and better intentions...	5:29
387	Mr Toots was so manifestly delighted...	4:32
388	Interested in her, anxious for her...	5:00
389	She laid her hand on his...	5:30
390	The head was still bent down, the tears...	5:20
391	Chapter Fifty-One	5:19
392	It is not a phantom of his imagination.	5:20
393	'Dombey!', says the Major...	4:30
394	'Shocking circumstances occur, Towlinson,' says Miss Tox.	4:50
395	'As to Perch, the messenger...'	2:13
396	Chapter Fifty-Two	4:45
397	'Woman,' said Mr Dombey to the old witch...	4:35
398	Mr Dombey followed her with his eyes...	5:39
399	'Drink a little drop to comfort you...'	5:04
400	'What, young woman!' blubbered Rob...	5:08

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401	The impetuous Mrs Brown rising directly...	4:47
402	'No, Rob. Not yet,' answered Mrs Brown...	4:32
403	'Well then, the way was this...'	4:45
404	Chapter Fifty-Three	5:36
405	John Carker broke the seal...	4:50
406	'Oh, dearest sister! Tied, of your own noble...'	5:28
407	'John!' she said, half breathless.	4:45
408	'Its matter was not new to me...'	5:07
409	'That he has abused his trust...'	5:11
410	John Carker had gone out...	3:53
411	Still upon her knees...	3:54
412	'Since then,' said Alice...	3:57
413	Chapter Fifty-Four	5:30
414	The men – the second of whom...	5:19
415	'Hard, unrelenting terms they were!'	4:55
416	'I am a woman,' she said, confronting him...	5:15
417	He sprung up from his chair...	5:33
418	He did not venture...	4:21
419	Chapter Fifty-Five	5:42
420	'Who goes there! Monsieur?'	5:31

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421	The word soon brought carriage, horses...	4:25
422	Of morning, noon, and sunset...	5:13
423	Of receding from the coast, and looking back...	5:19
424	For now, indeed, it was no fancy.	4:37
425	He passed his hand across his throbbing head...	4:09
426	Chapter Fifty-Six	5:43
427	'This, however, ' said Mr Toots, 'is not the point...'	5:28
428	'Aye!' nodded the Captain.	5:58
429	This piece of Generalship accomplished...	5:11
430	Walter was busy and away all day...	5:39
431	Walter seemed to understand her...	5:02
432	The church Walter had chosen...	5:33
433	These proceedings on the part of Mr Toots...	5:46
434	'Although,' stammered Mr Toots...	5:19
435	'Began to think as how he was a scientific...'	5:09
436	At an early hour...	4:03
437	His patron being much engaged...	3:57
438	Chapter Fifty-Seven	5:09
439	Not even in that childish walk of long ago...	5:28
440	They are married, and have signed their names...	5:51

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441	The Captain and Old Sol have been on board...	5:44
442	Chapter Fifty-Eight	4:46
443	Mr Perch always closed these conferences...	5:18
444	The clerks dispersed after holding...	5:29
445	'The extent of Mr Dombey's resources...	4:47
446	'Dear Sir,' she went on to say...	4:40
447	He handed her down to a coach...	5:13
448	Oh the strong eyes, and the weak frame!	4:49
449	'My handsome gal – '	3:58
450	With another of those wild cries...	5:02
451	Chapter Fifty-Nine	4:59
452	It is wonderful how good they feel...	4:36
453	Mr Towlinson then says...	6:12
454	Then the mouldy gigs and chaise-carts reappear...	5:11
455	'Besides,' says the discreet lady...	5:28
456	The house is such a ruin...	4:33
457	And the ruined man.	3:37
458	As one by one, they fell away before his mind...	3:25
459	He came out of his solitude...	5:41
460	The world was very busy and restless...	4:48



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461	He would have said it, if he could.	4:16
462	Miss Tox addressed herself...	3:28
463	Chapter Sixty	4:58
464	The Doctor, with his learned legs...	5:18
465	'My dear,' said Mrs Toots, 'I was only talking.'	5:02
466	'Why, my love,' said Mr Toots...	5:10
467	The first impulse of the Captain was to run away.	5:21
468	'Why not sheer off?' said the Captain.	2:49
469	The ceremony was concluded...	5:15
470	Chapter Sixty-One	5:40
471	It chanced one evening, towards sunset...	4:33
472	'The fact is,' said Cousin Feenix...	4:42
473	'I will leave,' said Cousin Feenix...	5:06
474	Florence was the first to change.	4:42
475	'I trust,' said Cousin Feenix...	4:53
476	Edith remained silent for some minutes...	3:41
477	Her sternness seemed to yield...	4:46
478	Chapter Sixty-Two	5:21
479	As to his partner, Captain Cuttle...	5:15
480	"'Here he is" says my wife..."	5:41

**Total time: 39:08:18**

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Charles Dickens  
(1812–1870)

# Dombey and Son

*'There's no writing against such power as this... it is stupendous'* (W.M. Thackeray)

In his Preface to the 1867 edition of *Dombey and Son*, Charles Dickens wrote: 'I began this book by the Lake of Geneva and went on with it for some months in France, before pursuing it in England.' As was his custom in London when planning a new novel, Dickens walked the streets of Lausanne, as well as the surrounding hills and by the shores of the lake, covering as much as eight or nine miles a night. It was an unlikely book to write on a family holiday, dealing as it does with a dysfunctional family – the Dombey's – and particularly the estrangement between Mr Dombey and his young daughter Florence. It would also seem to be unlikely that Dickens would have found any inspiration in his own family for the book's central theme – his relationship with his daughters appears to have been affectionate and

close. Indeed, his daughter Kate once wrote that he was only strict towards them regarding tidiness and punctuality.

Dickens had taken two years off from his self-imposed writing schedule of producing a new novel in monthly parts on a regular basis, and he began writing *Dealings with the Firm Dombey and Son: Wholesale, Retail, and for Exportation*, to give the novel its full original title, in 1846. It is the first of Dickens's novels for which his working notes have survived, and they clearly show that he developed the shape of his novels in detail beforehand. His subject matter was to be pride and its effects on a family, epitomised by Dombey and his attitudes and actions: he has pride in himself, his achievements and his unchallenged position in the material world of commerce. However, it is an arid world,

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a prison of his own making that shuts out Florence from any emotional contact. She is also considered to be barred by her gender from a future role in her father's business, while he over-burdens his little son Paul with expectations that the child could never sustain.

Incapable of feeling love and affection for his family, his natural emotions being warped by the pursuit of material success, Dombey has to be dismantled piece by piece throughout the novel and reconstructed as a loving father and a man of feeling through the power of forgiveness. It forms the main thrust of Dickens's narrative – an investigation into the mind and heart of Mr Dombey and also, antithetically, Florence, creating in essence what is a psychological novel, though this genre was not given a name until the studies of Sigmund Freud 50 years later. Dickens painstakingly dissects Dombey's emotions as he becomes more and more isolated from the living world and withdraws into a reclusive state of mind that denies everything that contradicts his own fixed opinions of himself and his importance, leading him, by the end of the book, to a

state bordering on madness.

Florence is a study in emotional deprivation and depression (she bursts into tears 88 times). She takes upon herself the blame for her father's indifference towards her. Her confusion leads her to believe that love is something that can be learnt, and painfully observes its effects in other families, seeking the key to affection but never finding it. Such analysis gives a darker and more sombre mood to the novel than anything Dickens had written previously.

It was, apparently, a difficult book to write, and at times a melancholy experience for Dickens. He was always deeply moved by the death scenes he created and whilst he was writing of the death of young Paul, his own son, Charley, was struck down by scarlet fever, a serious and often fatal disease in the nineteenth century. Charley survived but Dickens had decided in the early stages of the novel's publication that, 'Paul I shall slaughter at the end of number five'. Whilst writing this episode Dickens was in France and took time 'wandering desolate and sad about the streets of Paris'. As with the

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death of Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, the Dombey boy's demise 'flung a nation into mourning', but Dickens invests Paul's death with more import than that of Little Nell, as he enters the very mind of the child. Dickens wrote in his notes: 'His illness only expressed in the child's own feelings – not otherwise described', while his friend and mentor John Forster described it as 'a fairy vision to a piece of actual suffering'. Such comments fortified Dickens's reputation with the public as a master of pathos, an important aspect of his relationship with his readers as the Victorians enjoyed pathos. There was even a contemporary song, with music by Stephen Glover, based on Little Paul's story, called *What Are the Wild Waves Saying?* which was sung in drawing-rooms throughout the country.

Meanwhile, Florence, doomed to live neglected in her father's forbidding home, echoed Dickens's own neglected childhood. Desperate for a mother substitute, Florence endows a great deal in Edith, her father's second wife, pointedly calling her 'Mama', but Edith too, we learn, is a deprived child. She

blames her own mother, the grotesque Mrs Skewton, for corrupting her as a child, teaching her, she says, to be 'artful, designing, mercenary. Laying snares for men – before I knew myself.' Dickens's relationship with his own mother was troubled. His bitter experience as a child working in a blacking factory, bottling the noxious liquid used to clean kitchen ranges, which cast such a shadow on his life that he could never talk about it, had been prolonged by his mother. She had insisted that he continue the work, which he found so demeaning, to provide income for the rest of the family. He never forgave her for this betrayal of his sensibilities. Until *Dombey & Son*, Dickens had been reluctant to visit his unhappy youth for fictional purposes. Once he had made the connection, however, it proved to be such a rich source of material that he used it to even greater effect in his next novel, the largely autobiographical *David Copperfield*.

Edith Dombey, too, is a study in pride, and has the power both to attract and repel the reader. The confrontations between her and her husband show

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us the destructive power of two proud temperaments that have developed unnaturally. Dickens contrasts the unnatural (the pursuit of power and wealth) with the natural (the love of family and friends), showing the constant struggle between the two that exists in every human being and the society they create.

Published in book form in 1848, *Dombey & Son* was the first novel to include passages dealing with the burgeoning railway system in some detail. Dickens had an ambivalent attitude to the railway, regarding it as an unnatural development on the one hand, destroying communities and bringing speed and danger into our daily lives, but he could also see that this was the face of progress and perhaps a necessary evil. He also seemed to fear it, with some justification as he was injured in a railway accident at Staplehurst in 1865. In the novel, the railway symbolises the unfeeling and unstoppable, ruthless, mechanical drive of progress and business – Dombey's world.

By contrast Dickens uses water as an image of a flexible, shifting flow

of emotion, epitomised in one of his happiest creations: the 'old salt' Captain Cuttle. 'Glorious Captain Cuttle,' wrote Forster, 'laying his head to the wind and fighting through everything.' He is a comic character but presented as a fully rounded individual, and indeed Dickens integrates all his comic characters more successfully into the plot in this novel than he had heretofore. He surrounds the Dombey's with a set of thoroughly dysfunctional characters, disconnected now from their former place in society. Major Bagstock is used to being obeyed, but out of the army is out of step with the world. Miss Tox clings to the time when she had position, but is now a symbol of faded gentility. Likewise, Mrs Skewton, her beauty gone but once the toast of fashionable society, presents a pathetic picture. They all have an important part to play in illustrating the book's theme of natural versus unnatural, whilst not failing to entertain the reader.

With the novel finished, Dickens regained his usual high spirits, bolstered by the substantial sales figures for the monthly parts which were eagerly snapped

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up as they appeared. And with this novel it can be said that Dickens came of age as a writer. 'I have great faith in *Dombey*,' he wrote, 'and a strong belief that it will be remembered and read years hence.' He was not wrong in this prediction.

**Notes by David Timson**



**David Timson** has made over 1,000 broadcasts for BBC Radio Drama. For Naxos AudioBooks he wrote *The History of Theatre*, which won an award for most original production from the Spoken Word Publishers Association in 2001. He has also directed four Shakespeare plays for Naxos AudioBooks, including *King Richard III* (with Kenneth Branagh), which won Best Drama Award from the SWPA in 2001. In 2002 he won the Audio of the Year Award for his reading of *A Study in Scarlet*. He reads the entire Sherlock Holmes canon.

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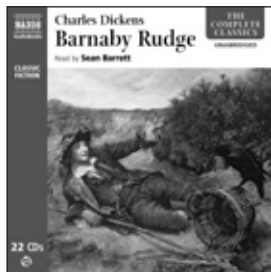
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Charles Dickens

# Dombey and Son

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