

Charles Dickens

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9dB9BZWDBU&list=PLwxNMb28Xmpfv2COuuJaKzy6E2n8nSMdi&index=5>

1. What did you think of the video?
2. How easy was it to follow?
3. Did you have to use the subtitles?
4. What do you think of Charles Dickens?
5. Have you read any of his books?
6. If so, which one is your favourite?
7. Have you seen any of the movie adaptations or series of his books?
8. Do you agree with the video that he was, “the most famous English writer of the 19th century?”
9. Why do you think he was so famous?
10. The video talks about him being, “one of the best-selling authors of all time”. Although this is actually not true, he was and still is, a very popular writer. Who do you think tops the list?
11. The video says that, “...he has a lot to say to us today.” What does this mean, and do you think it’s true?
12. Do you think it is true that, “writing can fix the big problems of the world?”
13. Do you agree that “entertainment” is at the heart of what Dickens was ‘up to’? What does this expression mean?
14. The video refers to other themes current in Dickens’ books such as industrialisation, working conditions in factories, child labour, social snobbery and the inefficiencies of government. Do you agree that he incorporated these themes to educate a society about its failings?
15. Was Dickens able to strike the right balance between “worthy but dull” and “popular but shallow?”
16. Do you think we can educate people through entertainment?
17. What effect do you think starting work at 10 in the blacking factory had on Dickens?
18. What age did you start working? How has this shaped you?
19. Do you think it’s true that part of the continuing affection for Dickens comes from his very strong sense of the “precarious nature of life and his deep compassion for those who are its victims”?
20. What things made life precarious in the 19th century?
21. Do you think it’s true that Dickens put “nice characters” into terrible situations so that people could identify with the characters and think, “What if that was me?” That people who were more comfortable and had the power to change things would actually do something about it?
22. Is it true that we feel more sympathetic and are likely to do something for someone “we know and find likable” than total strangers? How can we change this and try to make people feel more engaged?
23. What do you think about the idea that Dickens was saying that in order to “do good”, it didn’t mean that we had to disdain the pleasures in life? Do you agree that this was a key element in Dickens’ strategy?

24. The video talks about the number of books Dickens wrote. They use the expression “churned out”. What does this mean?
25. Do you agree that Dickens was “shaping a climate of feeling and opinion,” rather than advocating specific ideas for change?
26. Do you agree that Dickens was true to the idea that, “the task of writing and art more generally is to make goodness attractive,...for us to learn uncomfortable lessons,...and to sympathise with people whose inner lives are not so unsimilar?”
27. Final thoughts.
28. Let’s check the vocabulary identified below:

Remarkable	A fatal choice	To lodge	To shape
A showman	Tricky	Precarious	To move up
Dismay	To work out	Well-to-do	Dull
vicious social snobbery	Crucial	Punctured	Taboo
maddening	Genteel	Plight	Idle
inefficiencies	Looming	Misfortune	Sponge off
Worthy	Modest fees	Keep on board	To plod
Failings	Grim	To disdain	
	Squalid	Nepotism	

