

# **Bleak House Study Guide**

## **Bleak House by Charles Dickens**

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# Contents

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| <a href="#">Bleak House Study Guide.....</a> | <a href="#">1</a>  |
| <a href="#">Contents.....</a>                | <a href="#">2</a>  |
| <a href="#">Plot Summary.....</a>            | <a href="#">4</a>  |
| <a href="#">Chapter 1-4.....</a>             | <a href="#">7</a>  |
| <a href="#">Chapter 5-8.....</a>             | <a href="#">10</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 9-12.....</a>            | <a href="#">12</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 13-16.....</a>           | <a href="#">14</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 17-20.....</a>           | <a href="#">16</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 21-24.....</a>           | <a href="#">18</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 25-28.....</a>           | <a href="#">20</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 29-32.....</a>           | <a href="#">22</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 33-37.....</a>           | <a href="#">24</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 38-42.....</a>           | <a href="#">27</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 43- 47.....</a>          | <a href="#">30</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 48-52.....</a>           | <a href="#">33</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 53-57.....</a>           | <a href="#">36</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 58-62.....</a>           | <a href="#">39</a> |
| <a href="#">Chapter 63-67.....</a>           | <a href="#">42</a> |
| <a href="#">Bleak House.....</a>             | <a href="#">44</a> |
| <a href="#">Bleak House.....</a>             | <a href="#">45</a> |
| <a href="#">Bleak House.....</a>             | <a href="#">46</a> |
| <a href="#">Bleak House.....</a>             | <a href="#">47</a> |
| <a href="#">Bleak House.....</a>             | <a href="#">48</a> |
| <a href="#">Bleak House.....</a>             | <a href="#">49</a> |
| <a href="#">Bleak House.....</a>             | <a href="#">50</a> |



Bleak House..... 51

Characters..... 52

Objects/Places..... 55

Themes..... 57

Style..... 59

Quotes..... 62

Topics for Discussion..... 64



# Plot Summary

Bleak House begins with the description of a gloomy atmosphere where everything begins and ends. The atmosphere of fog and smoke pervades everything, seemingly infinite.

In the midst of this dreary weather, Lord Chancellor delivers law. Even though the pursuit of law is serious, as no one can be spared, some cases such as Jarndyce and Jarndyce induce laughter and jokes because of its length. The court is merciless and has no regard for innocence or happiness that can be dragged into a never-ending pursuit.

Lady Dedlock is part of that world and part of the suit, trying to escape the boredom of bad weather of one place and find rescue in another.

Esther, raised by her godmother, never learns from her who are her parents or how she was born. When her godmother dies, Esther, according to her godmother's arrangements, is sent to a boarding house and then lives with her guardian Mr. Jarndyce along with Ada Clare and Richard Carstone. On the day of their arrival they meet Mr. Skimpole who devises various schemes to extract money from people. He manages to get Esther and Rick to pay for his alleged debt.

The house that belongs to Lady Dedlock and Sir Leicester Dedlock is haunted by the ghosts of the past. Esther meets Mr. Jarndyce's friends, such as Mrs. Jellyby who is so devoted to her charity work that she is unable to care for her family. Mrs. Pardiggle deals with poor people and introduces Esther to Jenny, whose child dies. Esther covers the baby with her handkerchief.

Esther becomes acquainted with other friends of Mr. Jarndyce, such as Mr. Boythorn, who is embattled in a court case with Sir Leicester over the property access and trespass, and Mr. Guppy who proposes her marriage.

Lady Dedlock recognizes the handwriting on the legal documents and asks Mr. Tulkinghorn, their family lawyer, to find out who wrote it. When Mr. Tulkinghorn learns from Mr. Snagsby, the law-stationer, that the man employed by him responsible for writing is Nemo, he arrives too late to the shop where he lives, for Nemo is dead. Mr. Krook who owns the shop steals his portmanteau while Nemo's death is attributed to an accidental opium overdose. Nemo's friend, Jo is questioned by Mr. Tulkinghorn only, admitting that Nemo was good to him.

Richard is mostly interested in the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce, although tries to find a suitable career. He is unable to make a choice switching from one profession to another, starting from medicine, then turning to law, and in the end being also unsuccessful with the army.



Esther meets Charley who takes care of her siblings following her father's death. Her neighbor, Mr. Gridley is also engaged in a suit that has devoured most of his life. He takes care of the children while, bitter about his court case, threatening lawyers and judges, including Mr. Tulkinghorn.

Lady Dedlock, dressed in her maid Hortense's clothes, finds Jo and asks him to show her the burial ground where Nemo is buried.

Esther finds out some details about her past. They receive a visit from Mr. Woodcourt who leaves for China and India. He leaves Esther flowers before his departure.

When visiting Mr. Boythorn. Esther meets Lady Dedlock and finds she has a certain connection with her. Mr. Guppy pursues Esther and wants to investigate everything that is connected with her, including her resemblance to Lady Dedlock. He pays his friend Mr. Jobling to spy on Mr. Krook while renting Nemo's room. He wants to get hold of the letters Mr. Krook stole from Nemo (Captain Hawdon). They make appointment to meet Mr. Krook but find him dead. His sister is married to Joshua Smallweed, a money lender who is paralyzed. He lent money to George, a long-lost son of Mrs. Rouncewell, the housekeeper at Sir Leicester's house. George knew Captain Hawdon but believes that he had drowned. When Mr. Krook dies Mr. Smallweed takes hold off his all possessions, including letters written by Captain Hawdon.

Mr. Tulkinghorn, Sir Leicester's lawyer, engages in the investigation of Nemo's death as well. He questions Jo and finds that there was a lady asking about the place where he was buried. He finds that she was dressed in Hortense's clothes.

Richard's blind pursuit in the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce makes him turn against his friends. Mr. Jarndyce wants Ada to break off her engagement with him.

Smallweed and Tulkinghorn want George to hand them the paper with Captain Hawdon's writing. When he refuses, Smallweed insists on immediate loan repayment and George is forced to compromise, agreeing on handing in the paper. He delivers the letter to Mr. Tulkinghorn and upon leaving, Mr. Guppy, who has just arrived, hears accusations from Mr. Tulkinghorn concerning Mr Gridley. Mr. Guppy thinks they are addressed to Mr. George.

Mr. Guppy reveals to Lady Dedlock that Nemo was Captain Hawdon and he is Esther's father. He knows of letters written by him and suggests that he will bring them. Lady Dedlock is shocked at the revelation that her daughter is alive.

Esther brings sick Jo to Bleak House, and although he runs away, she and her new maid Charley fall sick. When she recovers, her face is disfigured. Esther finds out that Lady Dedlock is her mother and Captain Hawdon her father. Mr. Jarndyce proposes to her and she accepts, although she is really in love with Mr. Woodcourt.

Mr. Tulkinghorn finds out about Lady Dedlock's secret love affair and her daughter Esther. He agrees to keep it a secret at first if she keeps everything unchanged. He then decides to reveal everything when Lady Dedlock wants to let her maid Rosa leave. She



wants to know from Mr. Tulkinghorn when her secret is going to be revealed . The next day he is found dead.

Lady Dedlock receives a letter accusing her of murder. Mr. Bucket, a detective who investigates the murder, also finds out about her secret affair as well as that Hortense killed Mr. Tulkinghorn.

Lady Dedlock leaves, meets Jenny, dresses in her clothes and upon reaching the burial ground dies. Mr. Jarndyce discovers that Esther and Allan Woodcourt are in love and, thinking that they will be more happy together, abandons his intention to marry Esther.

Richard is so consumed with the case that he gets into a debt. When the case comes on trial, even despite the new evidence in form of the new will, the case is dismissed due to the legal costs of the value of the property. Richard dies soon after, while his wife Ada raises their son. Esther marries Mr. Woodcourt, has two daughters with him while also caring for Ada's son Richard.



# Chapter 1-4

## Chapter 1-4 Summary

In a gloomy London atmosphere all appears blurred and disconnected. Fog and smoke pervades everything, being the beginning and the conclusion. The daunting November weather dampens spirits and frustrates travelers.

Fog mixed with chimney smoke and soot surrounds everything, concealing sunlight. Such fog is most severe near the Temple Bar in Lincoln's Inn Hall. It fails to discourage court proceedings, where the most famous case, Jarndyce and Jarndyce, is the longest case ever, consumed by expenses. Its complexity deters reporters and confuses lawyers. The original litigant, Tom Jarndyce, committed suicide, but his descendants continue never ending proceedings. The most knowledgeable lawyer in the case is Mr. Tangle, who has devoted himself entirely to this case since leaving school. There are two wards mentioned present. Other litigants are Mr. Flite, awaiting a verdict and Mr. Gridley, a former litigant.

Chapter 2 unravels with Lady Dedlock escaping the constant rain of Lincolnshire with her husband, Sir Leicester, leaving her estate Chesney Wold for London. They meet their lawyer, Mr. Tulkinghorn, a solicitor at the High Court of Chancery. He reports on the progress of their suit, Jarndyce and Jarndyce. He exercises power, gaining insight into the affairs of his clients. Mr. Tulkinghorn relates affidavits that are part of Jarndyce and Jarndyce. One such affidavit makes Lady Dedlock faint when she recognizes the handwriting. She wants to know who is the writer of this affidavit.

Esther Summerson begins her narrative in Chapter 3. She is an orphan, raised by her godmother, Ms. Barbary. Her upbringing was strict and rigid. She had no knowledge of her background or family. Her only friends were her godmother and their servant, Rachael.

Her godmother arranged for her schooling through Mr. Jarndyce's attorney, Conversation Kenge. Esther meets Mr. Kenge, who then appears when her godmother dies. Esther finds that her godmother was in fact her aunt but not in law. He tells her also about the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit as the greatest and the longest Chancery suit. Mr. Jarndyce is her guardian, who wants her to gain an education and become a governess to Ada. She stays in a boarding school run by Miss Donny at her house Greenleaf. When she finishes studying she travels to Kenge and Carboy. She meets Ada Clare and Richard Carstone in Chancery Court, also placed under the care of Mr. Jarndyce. She also meets Miss Flite.

In Chapter 4 Mr. Jarndyce arranges for Esther, Ada, and Richard to spend the night at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Jellyby. Mr. Guppy, who works for Mr. Kenge, drives them there. Mrs. Jellyby is a philanthropist, devoted to alleviating poverty in Africa. She becomes so preoccupied with this work that she neglects her own household. Dictating



letters while conversing, she is oblivious to the chaos and disorder around. Her daughter, Caddy visits Esther at night, and complains about her miserable life, befriending her.

## Chapter 1-4 Analysis

London's dreary weather resonates with the confusion of the legal system that ruins many lives, leaving everything unchanged and stale. Courts reside to keep the system, and make business. Judges are mostly concerned about technical aspects of cases rather than real issues.

The case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce is one of the most famous cases widely discussed and criticized. What is characteristic of such cases is their length, heavy documentation, and impractical nature. Dickens reveals fragments of the action just as fog shows only parts of what makes the whole. The wards of Jarndyce and Jarndyce are mentioned with no names because people do not matter, only their legal status.

Although distant, the world beyond affects us as even more than our immediate milieu. In the same way Lady Dedlock and her world differs from the reality beyond. Her world consists of travel between London and Paris, between her London and the country house in constant escape from boredom that can never be fully satisfied. She has won her life of luxury through sacrifice and self-control.

Dickens skillfully and sharply introduces the main features of two other characters describing their approach to life and the way they think. He probes deep inside their propensities that involve their attitude towards marriage. They are easily bored or vain, being unable to see beyond their world. Sir Leicester married for love. He is most concerned with preserving his integrity. Their lawyer, Mr. Tulkinghorn is most knowledgeable, informed, and influential, holding various secrets. He seems to hold all the cards and informs them about the course of their suit, in which he represents them.

Dickens presents through Esther Summerson the main point of view. She is one of the three main characters, the others being Ada and Richard. Her narrative is most revealing and objective despite appearing subjective. It is essentially Esther's story that is influenced by other people and events in her life. Although deprived of the knowledge of her family background, she ultimately discovers the truth about her past. The harsh upbringing contrasts with her warm-hearted nature as well as social restrictions meant to guard morality.

The Jellyby house portrays attitudes that can be misdirected. Concern about distant matters distracts from the most immediate problems that are more critical the well-being of the family. Esther, Ada, and Richard also learn about themselves and their approaches towards children and household. The longer Esther stays with Mrs. Jellyby the more she is appalled by her lack of concern about their own children although passionately involved in caring for the poor in Africa. Similar contradictions are present



in other Dicken's characters. Dickens unveils that charity can be destructive if it doesn't begin at home.



# Chapter 5-8

## Chapter 5-8 Summary

The next day Esther, Miss Jellyby, Ada, and Richard go for a walk around London. They meet Miss Flite, preparing for her court cases. She invites them to her place rented at Mr. Krook's shop known as Rag and Bottle House. He collects almost everything. He knew Tom Jarndyce, who killed himself during the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit. Miss Flite keeps a cage with birds that are to be released on the day of her judgment, apparently involving the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case. They pass Nemo's room, another lodger living there. On the way out Mr. Krook demonstrates his spelling ability.

Chapter 6 depicts the meeting between Esther, Ada, Richard and Mr. Jarndyce, who is a man in his 50s, with silver hair. They meet his friend, Mr. Skimpole, an artist, also trained as a doctor, but now childlike and caring little for material goods. He borrows money from them for the alleged debt that he incurred, and is now about to be arrested by Coavinses, or Mr. Neckett. Richard and Esther promptly pay his debt. Only later Mr. Jarndyce tells them of Mr. Skimpole's proclivities to extort money. He demands that they never do it again.

Chapter 7 involves Chesney Wold. Mrs. Rouncewell is Mr. Dedlock's housekeeper in Lincolnshire. She is one of the few people Mr. Dedlock trusts, considering other servants devoid of individuality they do not need. Mrs. Rouncewell has two sons. One of them became an iron master and got married. Her other son, George became a soldier, and disappeared. Her grandson Watt in love with Rosa visits Mrs. Rouncewell. Mr. Guppy with his friend Tony Jobling arrive to see the house. They stumble upon the portrait of Lady Dedlock, whose appearance strikes Mr. Guppy as familiar. He thinks he knows her although he never met her. He concludes he must have dreamed of her. They also inspect the terrace called the "Ghost Walk", where the wife of the former owner, Morbury Dedlock walks. She argued with her husband and opposed the civil war. During one of their fights she became crippled and then died, warning that she is going to walk there until his family becomes humble.

In Chapter 8 Esther becomes familiar with Bleak House. Mr. Jarndyce, the grandnephew of Tom Jarndyce tells her about his case concerning the will consumed by costs. Mr. Jarndyce is unable to end it, being a party to the suit. He appreciates Esther's wisdom.

Mrs. Pardigle, involved in charity work, visits them with her five unhappy sons. She takes Esther and Ada to the cottage of the brickmaker's house, where they find a battered woman with a baby, and a man covered in mud. They resent the mechanistic yet exhibitivie manner in which Mrs. Pardiggle tries to help them. During their visit the baby dies. Jenny, who is the mother, is consoled by her sister Liz. Esther covers the baby with her handkerchief. They come back later to comfort Jenny but find her asleep.



## Chapter 5-8 Analysis

Mr. Krook is a character that initiates a set of tragic circumstances. Like Richard, he also works towards his self-destruction, exerted through the desperate pursuit of income that includes dishonesty. Richard's interest in the suit is misguided but more innocent while

also ending in dismay. The legal systems sucks mercilessly all who are not able to stay away from it. Those involved lose control over their lives and themselves. Further developments are foreshadowed through Richard's attitude towards Ada and the case.

Their first impression of the house is enhanced by Mr. Jarndyce's interest in their affairs, education and well-being. They are acquainted with the house as well as people that Mr. Jarndyce knows. One such person is Mr. Skimpole who takes advantage of everyone, including Mr. Jarndyce. It is the first lesson of dealing with trickery and schemes. The ordered house incorporates hope and goodness in contrast to disorder and chaos. The danger of irresponsibility is emphasized as destructive.

Rainy weather is a frequent feature in Lincolnshire, affecting everyone and everything. The only person that is free from the negative influence of rain is Mrs. Rouncewell, a housemaid in Chesney Wold. As the Dedlock family is old, it has dealt with various experiences in the past, including murders. The gloominess of Chesney Wold invites further imminent catastrophes. Its past is connected with its future and nothing can rescue it.

Mrs. Rouncewell's two sons are positive characters in the story. The younger brother remains unnamed. George, who became a soldier has acquired bitter experiences but learned discipline and respect for others. He is compassionate towards others, but his straightforward nature leads to a behavior that is mistrustful towards lawyers on one hand while relying on truth. Mr. Guppy is somewhat comical with his fears of competition at work, adhering to certain principles while breaking them at the same time.

Mr. Skimpole is shown as a man with a child-like nature who loves independence. His philosophy resents work that involves certain gains, represented by bees. He admires drones who are independent because they do not gather honey. Those who gain through their work consequently become conceited. Hence Mr. Skimpole's preference for idleness as deriving more freedom.

Mr. Jarndyce is a victim of the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit. His only salvation is in staying away without any involvement in the case. He becomes involved with philanthropists, but they also become dissatisfying. Ms. Jellyby, who forgets about the entire world when pursuing charity, is almost absent through her lack of concern about her own life. Mrs. Pardigle, who also does charity work, is overbearing and careless. Despite her good intentions, her work is unproductive, leaving her own children resentful and

mistreated. Her attempts to help are met with resentment as they are misguided.



# Chapter 9-12

## Chapter 9-12 Summary

Esther thinks Richard is too restless. She concludes her discussion with Ada of his profession that he may continue his childhood interests in sea. The idea appeals to Richard and Mr. Jarndyce asks his distant relation, great Sir Leicester Dedlock, about assistance. No indication of such help is given in reply. Richard is ready to advance his career on his own, expressing his anticipation of obtaining a positive result in the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit.

Their impetuous, loud, yet gentle and sturdy neighbor, who is also Mr. Jarndyce's schoolmate, Mr. Lawrence Boythorn visits them. Sir Leicester and Mr. Boythorn are suing each other for trespass. Once engaged to Lady Dedlock's sister, he was turned down and remained a bachelor. Mr. Guppy arrives in connection with Boythorn's suit and asks Esther to marry him after stating the details of his financial position. Esther refuses.

Chapter 10 introduces Mr. Snagsby, a law stationer. He is married to Sarah, a jealous and possessive woman. They employ two apprentices and an epileptic maid, Guster. Mr. Tulkinghorn comes to see Mr. Snagsby to inquire about the writer who copied the affidavit mentioned by Lady Dedlock. He is told that the writer is Nemo, meaning "no one" in Latin. Late evening, Mr. Tulkinghorn secretly visits Nemo in his dreadful lodging at Mr. Krook's shop. He finds him lying in bed, with his eyes wide opened, and not responding.

In Chapter 11 Mr. Tulkinghorn and Mr. Krook come back to Nemo's room. They discover he is dead. As Mr. Tulkinghorn sends for Mr. Snagsby, his employer, Mr. Krook steals some of the contents of the man's portmanteau. The inquiry in relation to Nemo's death finds that it was an accidental opium overdose. According to Mrs. Piper, who lives in the court, only a boy called Jo, who sweeps the lane nearby, spoke with Nemo. Jo cannot write, spell, does not know his parents or his second name, while being uncertain about everything he says. His evidence is deemed inadmissible. Mr. Tulkinghorn questions Jo and learns that Nemo was a good man. Nemo is buried in a churchyard. Only Jo visits his grave later that day.

Chapter 12 shows Lady Dedlock returning with her husband from Paris. Mr. Tulkinghorn informs her that he met the writer of the affidavit she inquired about and will inform her of everything when they meet. Upon her return Lady Dedlock meets Rosa, who learns housekeeping from Mrs. Rouncewell. She is impressed with her and her praises arouse jealousy in her current French maid, Hortense. She finds out from Mr. Tulkinghorn that the writer of the affidavit is dead.



## Chapter 9-12 Analysis

Richard is shown as lacking patience, irrational, and not being able to make up his mind. His carelessness and lightheartedness are indication of his shortcomings that lead to his eventual failure. His qualities control him while his enthusiasm is only short lived. Mr. Boythorn is full of passion, humor, and energy. His intense involvement in the legal suit against Sir Leicester is grotesque. Being preoccupied can be dangerous, as Boythorn loses perspective in his desperation to defeat his neighbor. The differences between Sir Leicester and Boythorn are impossible to reconcile due to their own stubborn grievances.

Mr. Boythorn seems sympathetic towards Lady Dedlock and his passionate outbursts contradict his warmth towards those closest to him.

Those who are involved in law, such as Mr. Snagsby, are represented as somewhat faulty. His compliance towards his wife may be viewed in a positive way but Dickens states that Mr. Snagsby is perceived in a negative way by other wives. He is afraid to stand up for himself, preferring his wife to take control. Guster, his servant, is accepted because of her shortcomings. His wife has spasmodic attacks while being overly suspicious and jealous.

Mr. Tulkinghorn is as conservative as his surroundings. He is unchanging, cold, and self-controlled. His knowledge makes him powerful. He seeks safety through finding faults and shortcomings in others.

Nemo, whose name "no one" in Latin implies also the way he lived, is a mystery. No one knew him and few were aware of his life or his past. People like him represent little concern in courts. No one knew him and no one could testify about him in court. The cause of his death remains unclear and the court fails to establish what prompted his death. Jo, the only witness in the matter is also dismissed. This incident ultimately changes the lives of many people, leading to the death of Lady Dedlock. Only Mr. Tulkinghorn senses that his death will have implications. Nemo, although standing for "no one" in Latin, affects the lives of many people. His death is the beginning of the end of the Dedlock family.

The Snagsbys represent somewhat strange couple. Their features are ridiculed and grotesque. Lady Dedlock is never able to find fulfillment. Her boredom is not critical to her relationship with Sir Dedlock. He is more concerned about his own matters. He engages in the political life of the country, engaging in ineffective debates. Various problems are raised but never resolved. In the same way, his conflict with Mr. Boythorn is never resolved despite engaging one of the best lawyers.



# Chapter 13-16

## Chapter 13-16 Summary

Richard is indecisive about his profession. He casually agrees upon Mr. Jarndyce's suggestion to become a surgeon. He starts studying his profession from Mr. Bayham Badger, a surgeon and Mr. Kenge's cousin. Esther realizes that Mr. Guppy follows her everywhere while she tries to avoid him. She meets at dinner a man of dark complexion, Mr. Allan Woodcourt.

In Chapter 14, Richard begins his medical profession, but hopes to gain wealth through the Jarndyce and Jarndyce's suit. He perceives his future with optimism, intending to marry Ada. Caddy Jellyby confesses to Esther that she got secretly engaged to Mr. Prince Turveydrop, a dance teacher, and wants to marry him. His father worships deportment, making his son to do most of the work

In Chapter 15 Esther finds that Mr. Coavinces, who previously came to arrest Mr. Skimpole and whose real name is Neckt, died. He left three children, Charlotte, called Charley, Emma, and Tom orphaned. Esther and friends visit them, meeting their neighbor, Mr. Gridley, a suitor known as the man from Shropshire. Mr. Gridley expresses his anger openly in court and gets into trouble. His inheritance involved payment to his brother. As the payment was disputed, the case was brought to trial. Due to the lengthy proceedings, his estate was absorbed in court costs. The suit continues, destroying Mr. Gridley's life. He was imprisoned for the contempt of court and threatening a solicitor.

Chapter 16 shows Lady Dedlock restlessly traveling between her London house and abroad while her husband suffers from gout. She traces Jo, the crossing-sweeper, who lives in a decayed area called Tom-all-Alone's. Introducing herself as a servant while wearing her maid's dress, she wants him to show her all the places that involved the inquest into Nemo's death. Jo shows her the place of Nemo's burial. When Lady Dedlock pays Jo a sovereign, she takes off her gloves. He notices that the rings on her fingers are too expensive for a servant. Steps on the ghost walk become very distinct.

## Chapter 13-16 Analysis

Richard is chronically indecisive led by false hopes, unjustified trust, and neglect of his own matters. He has determination and enthusiasm that is only short lived.

Mr. Bayham Badger employs him as a trainee. His wife is fascinated with her previous husbands, whose lives influence their current marriage. They both represent a snobbery that is somewhat comical. Their authority acknowledges both Ms. Badger and her husband. Their achievements are always present in Ms. Badger's head and her admiration for them apparent throughout her conversation.



Dickens criticizes the approach parents had towards their children in portraying Mr. Turveydrop and his attitude towards his son. His inclinations to make others do all the work led to his wife's death. It is also his son's fate to work as hard as he can while his father dines and relaxes. His worship of deportment is an example of vanity. Esther is rightly worried about Caddy, who is likely to have problems adjusting to Mr. Turveydrop's unusual habits. Caddy is determined to leave her house no matter what. She is even oblivious to the fact that Mr. Turveydrop neglected his son's education so that he could pursue his preoccupation with deportment. The connection between characters become more apparent along with their closer involvement. Ms. Flite becomes to feature more prominently, sharing her burden of the law suit.

Esther gets to know Mr. Skimpole better and analyses his lack of concern for everything around him. In contrast to Mr. Boythorn, who gets passionate about everything, Mr. Skimpole shows that he has a similar proclivity that courts display of lack of concern of others. He gains advantage by winning arguments through twisting various notions and even engaging philosophy. He cares little that he incurs debts taking advantage of

vulnerability and good nature of others. The legal system causes many people to suffer. Mr. Gridley is unable to recover from his law suit relentlessly damaging all his prospect for happiness. His anger leads to his imprisonment. He represents another tragic end to unforeseen circumstances.

The story gains suspense through Lady Dedlock's pursuit of Nemo's whereabouts. Her travel barely her restlessness. Jo's misery, his lack of education and any means of help, including larger amounts of money. initiate a sad portrayal of children deprived of their parents in London at that time.

Mr. Tulkinghorn is worried about Mr. Gridley but avoids women. He is only interested in one woman, Lady Dedlock. He suspects that here is his opportunity to reach for power. Ghostly appearances provide a sense of doom and the inevitable end the Dedlock family faces.





# Chapter 17-20

## Chapter 17-20 Summary

Mrs. Bayham Badger observes that Richard lacks passion for medicine, criticizing his inexperience. Richard himself thinks medicine is tiresome and decides to switch to law, especially that it would enable him to control the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit. Mr. Jarndyce helps to place him under Kenge and Carboy.

Mr. Jarndyce tells Esther that her aunt wrote to him, revealing that she raised Esther in secrecy, begging him for help before she died. Mr. Kenge was appointed to be an agent and Mr. Jarndyce was to be her guardian. Allan Woodcourt visits them before departing for China and India as a surgeon on a ship. The next day he sends Esther flowers through Caddy.

In Chapter 18, Richard undertakes his studies of law at Kenge and Carboy. The opportunity to untangle the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit makes him so absorbed with the case that he has no time even for Ada.

After helping Mr. Skimpole, whose furniture was repossessed due to accommodation debts, Esther, Ada, and Mr. Jarndyce visit Mr. Boythorn. They encounter Lady Dedlock at church. The next day they meet her again in a lodge, where they hide from the rain. She introduces herself and apologizes for the disputes between her husband and Mr. Boythorn. Esther is impressed with her. A carriage arrives for Lady Dedlock with both Rosa and Hortense. Lady Dedlock chooses Rosa as her maid. Hortense refuses to accept the notice to leave and protests by walking away in the rain.

Chapter 19 unveils the summer recess in London. Most lawyers are away except for Mr. Snagsby. He invites the reverend Mr. Chadband with his wife. She is a former Mrs. Rachael who worked for Ms. Barbary. The row erupts in front of Mr. Snagsby's office as a constable wants to take into custody Jo, who will not move on. Jo claims that he knows Mr. Snagsby while the constable becomes suspicious about the money Jo has in his possession. Jo explains that this is the remainder of the money he received from a lady, who looked like a servant. The entire incident immediately raises Mrs. Snagsby's suspicions that Jo must be her husband's son. Mr. Guppy, who happens to be passing by, interrogates Mrs. Chadband, learning that she was put in charge of Esther Summerson by Kenge and Carboy. Mr. Chadband wants to lecture Jo, but he departs.

In Chapter 20, Mr. Guppy engages in idle pleasures during the summer, plotting against new employees who may threaten his position. Such threat pertains to Richard studying the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case and displaying little interest in what is happening around him. Another trainee at Kenge and Carboy, Bart Smallweed, is full of admiration for Mr. Guppy. When Mr. Jobling arrives, the three go for dinner. Mr. Jobling is currently unemployed and Guppy offers him help if he rents a room formerly occupied by Nemo to spy on Mr. Krook. Mr. Jobling agrees to do it under the name of Mr. Weevle.





## Chapter 17-20 Analysis

Esther pursues questioning about her past while Lady Dedlock is impelled to find out everything about Nemo. This apparent connection proves later to be most significant. Mrs. Badger indicates how important is passion in any pursuit, admiring Richard but finding him lacking involvement. His only devotion seems to be directed towards Ada.

Esther finds out more about her past from Mr. Jarndyce while meeting a man who is to figure later prominently in her life.

Richard continues to be indecisive and unable to commit. His inability to handle money makes him vulnerable to those who want to take advantage of him. Richard spends all his money on expensive items. Mr. Boythorn and Sir Leicester Dedlock are absorbed with fighting each other. Further connections that become apparent are unveiled as Esther meets Lady Dedlock and then encounters her in a lodge. Her maid Hortense's

hate towards Lady Dedlock is decisive in the final resolution.

The Snagsbys become part of the problems Jo has with the adult world. This

world is unable to understand him as much as he is unable to understand it himself. He is constantly pushed, paid money, then questioned about it, then asked to move. He gets into trouble because of the money he received from Lady Dedlock. The amount of money he received from her is unlikely and raises suspicion that he must have stolen it, encouraging others to steal from him. He has to keep moving and is confused. It was a common fate for children like Jo to be deprived of any opportunities to be able to provide for themselves.

Mr. Guppy exhibits obsessive proclivities when pursuing his love interests and following Esther, as well as towards any threats in his employment. He sees threats that do not exist, fearing every new trainee. He is bored yet always suspicious. He wants to get rid of Richard as well as any other new employee. He plots to substitute Hawdon's letters, that are in Mr. Krook's possession, for false ones. His legal profession does not deter him from engaging in illegal acts that serve his purpose. He engages Mr. Jobling to spy on Krook and steal the letters in his possession.



# Chapter 21-24

## Chapter 21-24 Summary

Bart Smallweed's grandfather lives in Mount Pleasant with his grandfather Joshua Smallweed, a money lender, his grandmother, and twin sister Judy. His grandmother is senile while his grandfather is paralyzed in the lower part of the body. They employ Charley Neckett as their maid. The family tends to take up careers early, taking advantage of any financial opportunities. Mr. George, a former soldier, comes to Mr. Smallweed about his difficulties with debt repayment to his principal. His loan was taken for a shooting gallery, after serving with Captain Hawdon, also a debtor to Mr. Smallweed. Mr. George thinks Hawdon drowned.

In Chapter 22, Mr. Tulkinghorn and Mr. Bucket, a detective, intend to find out from Mr. Snagsby about Jo and a lady he met. Mr. Bucket and Mr. Snagsby trace him at Jenny and Liz's place. They bring Jo to Mr. Tulkinghorn's place, and ask if he recognizes a veiled lady. Jo identifies her clothes but not her voice. Mr. Bucket pays him and Jo leaves. The veiled woman is Hortense. Mr. Tulkinghorn and Mr. Bucket conclude that Jo must have met a woman dressed as Hortense.

Chapter 23 reveals Hortense begging Esther to employ her as her maid but Esther refuses. Richard believes he will win his suit and does Miss Flite favors. Finally he becomes discouraged with law through the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case, and enlists in the army. Esther helps Caddy and Prince to reveal their engagement to their parents so that they can gain approval to marry. Upon return Esther finds that Mr. Jarndyce employed Charley as a maid.

In Chapter 24 we find that Richard exhausted his resources when joining the army. Mr. Jarndyce advises Ada to break off her engagement with Richard, and they separate for a time. Richard persists with his commitment to follow the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit, distancing himself from Mr. Jarndyce. Mr. George prepares Richard for the army although he thinks Richard is only partially engaged in it. Mr. George finds that French ladies also learn how to shoot.

He is hiding Mr. Gridley at his shooting gallery. Upon Mr. Gridley's request he brings there Mr. Gridley's close friend, Miss Flite. At the same time Mr. Bucket comes to arrest Mr. Gridley, introducing himself as a physician. Mr. Gridley falls down and dies.

## Chapter 21-24 Analysis

The Smallweed family is a grotesque portrayal of greed, being deprived of any humane aspects of their existence. Grandfather Smallweed, although invalid himself, abuses his wife by throwing objects at her at his own liking, encouraging his grandson to use any situation where he can gain financial advantage, including payment for his dinners. Their relationships are dictated by any possible financial gains over one another.



They treat those who work for them with even less respect, avoiding spending any money if not necessary and engaging in anything that can render profit, including lies, blackmail, or bribery.

Charley works for them, suffering from their greedy attitude and unwillingness to spend money if it is not absolutely necessary. Grandfather Smallweed lends money for interest, encouraging his grandson to accept when other people offer to pay for dinners.

Mr. George is not likely to find any sympathy when he comes to discuss problems with his debt payment, despite adhering to all previously set conditions. He is also a victim of Smallweed's greed.

As Mr. Tulkinghorn finds out from Mr. Snagsby about Jo's encounter with a mysterious lady and intends to find out everything he knows. He presents Hortense in disguise, paying her for that. Mr. Snagsby is unaware at first that Mr. Bucket is also involved in the matter. Mr. Tulkinghorn wants Mr. Snagsby and Mr. Bucket to bring Jo and confront him with a lady looking like Lady Dedlock.

When Jo sees veiled Hortense, he recognizes her clothing but not her voice. It is clear for Mr. Tulkinghorn that someone must have dressed as Hortense and talk to Jo. He can only speculate that the most likely person to do that would be Lady Dedlock.

Hortense is desperate to get employment and begs Esther to employ her but Esther refuses. Richard continues his progression towards failure, disengaging from law and concentrating mostly on his law suit. Esther strives to be a good influence on everyone, helping Caddy Jellyby with her marriage arrangements.

Richard's efforts become questionable. He tries hard to make a good impression on Esther and Ada, who thinks she has to trust him, being in love with him.

As it turns out, the legal profession is also unsuitable for Richard, who is mostly worried about his case. He is also unable to control his debts, only studying the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case that discourages him in the end from law.

He decides to enlist in the army, which is viewed by Mr. Jarndyce with criticism and concern for Ada. Mr. Jarndyce suggests that Ada break off her engagement to Richard and she agrees. The influence of the lawsuit deprives Richard of his relationship and career.

George detects in Richard lack of interest in what he is trying to achieve, as something else is on his mind. Richard's obsession with the suit obstructs any positive developments in his life. The case is heard but adjourned again, only leading to another disappointment.



# Chapter 25-28

## Chapter 25-28 Summary

Mrs. Snagsby is worried about the real identity of Nemo and even more preoccupied about Jo and his revelations about the woman he met. She searches her husband's pockets, letters, ledgers, and tills. Mr. Snagsby is also vigilant, and frightened by his experiences. Jo is absent, despite being told to see the Snagsbys and Mrs. Snagsby suspects that someone must have told him to do so. In the end, Jo is delivered by Guster from Cook's Court so that Mrs. Snagsby can examine his connection with her husband. Mr. Chadband lectures Jo about truth.

Chapter 26 opens at the shooting gallery, where George listens to his apprentice's life history. Phil Squod failed as a tinker due to his lack of singing and playing abilities. He was blown by the fire, ran against hot metal, and scorched. Such incidents affected his appearance.

Mr. Smallweed visits them with Judy. He knows that Richard Carstone has debts paid by his friends. Most of all, he wants from George Captain Hawdon's handwriting so that Mr. Tulkinghorn can compare it with the writing he has. Mr. George refuses to do so until he learns more about everything. He hides Hawdon's last instructions in his breast, unaware that Mr. Smallweed noticed it. They go to see Mr. Tulkinghorn.

In Chapter 27 Mr. George, Mr. Smallweed and Judy appear at Mr. Tulkinghorn's place. Mr. George admits that he served under Captain Hawdon's but refuses to hand any of his handwriting. Mr. Tulkinghorn considers it a business transaction but Mr. George wants to consult his friends about it. Mr. Smallweed tells Mr. Tulkinghorn that he has seen Mr. George hiding something and announces that he will force him to give it up.

Mr. George asks his friend, Matthew Bagnet and his wife for advice. They were also soldiers, now owning a musical shop. Mrs. Bagnet concludes that George should stay away from the matter. Mr. George relates his decision to Mr. Tulkinghorn. Mr. Tulkinghorn warns Mr. George that he knows of Mr. Gridley hiding previously in his place. He tells Mr. George, as he leaves, that he thinks Mr. Gridley is dangerous. As Mr. Guppy just arrives, he thinks these last words refer to Mr. George.

In Chapter 28 Sir Dedlock entertains his visitors, including poor relations, such as Volumnia Dedlock, who survives by visiting richer relatives and remains unmarried even though she has talents involving singing and cutting ornaments.

Mrs. Rouncewell's son, an ironmaster, is invited to the parliament but he declines the invitation. He has novel views that include demanding a better education for women such as Rosa. Only if she is educated can she become his son's wife. Sir Leicester disagrees, which prompts Mr. Rouncewell to ask his son to abandon his love interest.



## Chapter 25-28 Analysis

Mrs. Snagsby finds her husband's behavior suspicious especially in relation to the treatment of young Jo. She displays a propensity in becoming obsessive in matters that are out of the ordinary that she cannot explain. Her attention is particularly directed towards Jo. Such attitude indicates the unhappy life she and her husband have created. Her investigations about Jo and following her own husband fail to clarify anything to her. She forms an impression that everybody is plotting against her that complicates her own and her husband's life.

Mr. Chadband lectures Jo about truth. Such meeting helps little Jo in overcoming his problems but it gives Mr. Chadband an impression that he managed to help him somehow and provide him with a feeling of satisfaction and self-gratification. Jo is only happy to disappear, confusing Mrs. Snagsby even more.

George and Phil are discussing their past while getting ready for breakfast. They are interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Smallweed and his granddaughter Judy to inquire about Hadown's writing that may be in George's possession. Hawdon's writing may help Mr. Tulkinghorn compare it with his sample. Mr. Smallweed never misses any opportunity to make money, regardless of the consequences. Phil is devoted to George and ready to sacrifice for him. Mr. George appears to be warm-hearted, generous, and kind.

Mr. George and Mr. Smallweed arrive at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Mr. George recognizes his name and admires his wealth, but he is disciplined and careful of any entanglement. He consults with the Bagnets about the decision to hand over a piece of Hawdon's writing.

The Bagnets appear honest and direct. Mr. George fully trusts Mrs. Bagnet who is also opposed to getting involved in matters that are mysterious, underhanded or not understood. Her family, apart from Bleak House, seems to be the only family maintaining happy relations, values, and love. It is also evident that Mr. George has their trust; they can rely on him as well as he can on them.

George informs Mr. Tulkinghorn that he has not changed his mind and is not going to help him. Mr. Tulkinghorn immediately resorts to threats, telling of Mr. Gridley who used to hide at Mr. George's place.

Sir Leicester Dedlock recovers from his gout and is visited by his relatives, including Volumnia Dedlock. His engagement in politics has no particular benefit as most vital matters fail to be executed. Sir Leicester can only address the shortcomings that the country is facing rather than remedies. Inefficiency of the system presents a gloomy prospect. He maintains his conservative view that education is not essential for people like Rosa.



# Chapter 29-32

## Chapter 29-32 Summary

As Sir Leicester reads a letter about the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case to Lady Dedlock, their servant Mercury announces that Mr. Guppy has arrived. Mr. Guppy reveals to Lady Dedlock that he noticed the resemblance between her and Esther. He knows about Nemo as the father of Esther Summerson, whose real name is Esther Hawdon, and of letters written by him that he is going to get. If she is interested, he can bring them. He is mainly motivated by bettering his chances with Esther. Lady Dedlock is shocked by the revelation that her child she thought was dead is alive.

In Chapter 30 Mr. Jarndyce invites Allan's mother, Mrs. Woodcourt. She tells Esther about her son's relations that include the connection with the king himself. She has a good opinion of Esther but thinks she will marry someone older and rich. As her son may be confused about various ladies he meets, his real intentions may be misunderstood.

Caddy Jellyby visits them, announcing her marriage despite her father's bankruptcy. Esther helps her to prepare outfits while Mr. Jarndyce offers a wedding dress and a bonnet.

Chapter 31 reveals Esther teaching Charley to read and write. She finds out that Jo is sick and wants to bring him to Bleak House. Mr. Skimpole protests, fearing his sickness is contagious. Mr. Jarndyce decides to take care of him, prepares a place for him, but the next day Jo disappears. Charley becomes ill and then Esther.

In Chapter 32, Mr. Snagsby ventures towards Mr. Krook's shop, encounters Mr. Weevle, who now works for him. He is awaiting Mr. Guppy. Mr. Snagsby is concerned that his current employee lives in the same place where his former employee Nemo used to live. They talk, and as soon as Mr. Snagsby leaves, Mr. Guppy appears.

Mr. Krook has not yet learned how to read, and wants Mr. Weevle to learn the content of the letters he stole from Nemo. At twelve at night, Mr. Weevle is to meet him, take the letters, and give him the general idea of them. With the help of Mr. Guppy, he is to substitute the bundle of letters for a false one. Mr. Weevle enters the empty room of Mr. Krook. He runs back, and bring his friend. They find Mr. Krook dead near the smoldering fire. His death is determined to be due to spontaneous combustion.

## Chapter 29-32 Analysis

In the autumn Chesney Wold becomes particularly frightening, with ghosts being ever more present. Mr. Tulkinghorn is a frequent visitor.



Lady Dedlock fears Mr. Tulkinghorn, who it seems to be in want of power, money, or her. Mr. Guppy tells Lady Dedlock that Esther reminds him of her while Esther's birth is surrounded by mystery. Brought up by Miss Barbary, she in fact is the daughter of Captain Hawdon. He knows that Nemo was Mr. Hawdon and he is to obtain letters that have been found in his possession following his death. Lady Dedlock is unsure what to make of it and wants to pay Mr. Guppy. She realizes that her daughter has not died as she thought. Lady Dedlock is aware that her secret can be exposed through Mr. Tulkinghorn's prying into her matters.

While Richard is away Mrs. Woodcourt visits Bleak House. She makes Esther aware of the family connections Allan has, such as Ap Kerring, Highland family, the Mac Coorts of Mac Court and his position. She seems to indicate that her son should marry someone of his own rank. Esther is unsure how to approach her comments, especially that Mrs. Woodcourt seems to be sympathetic towards Esther.

Caddy Jellyby regards Esther as an excellent adviser. She is getting married in a month and wants her and Ada to be her bridesmaids. Esther offers help in preparing for the wedding as Caddy's mother is most interested in her charity work and knows nothing about weddings.

Charley informs Esther that Jo is sick. They both go to see him. He is in delirium, fearing everything while being unable to travel. Esther takes Jo to Bleak House but Mr. Skimpole opposes Jo staying there claiming that the disease, most likely smallpox, may be contagious. Mr. Jarndyce decides to take care of Jo but he disappears at night. Searches bring no result but Charley falls sick. When she recovers, Esther becomes ill, gradually feeling weaker until she finally isolates herself from others so that she does not spread her illness and asks Charley to look after her. The disease implies that poverty affects not only those at the bottom but it spreads up, paralyzing the entire society.

Mr. Weevle stays at Mr. Krook's place, raising the suspicions of Mr. Snagsby, who is concerned about the coincidence of his employee living in Nemo's room. Mr. Guppy proceeds with advancing his prospects with Esther—nothing will stop him from that. He wants to get hold of the letters that are in Mr. Krook's possession. Mr. Krook wants to profit from their content, but he cannot read. Mr. Weevle is to help him only to hand these letters to Mr. Guppy. Mr. Krook dies before giving letters to Mr. Weevle.

Gradually Mr. Weevle become more opposed to Mr. Guppy's schemes. It is too late and they are also part of the suit now. Such suits connect unlikely people in unlikely manners. Esther's connection with the suit has been arranged by assigning her as a ward to a party in a suit.

Mr. Krook's death can be compared to the self-destruction of chancery. He continues to affect people's lives even after his death, as the letters he held become the subject of extortion attempts.





# Chapter 33-37

## Chapter 33-37 Summary

Mr. Krook's matter is examined at the Inquest held at the Sol's Arms. Mrs. Snagsby is even more suspicious about her husband. Mr. Guppy and Mr. Weevle discuss the evidence they are to give in court in connection with the incident. Mr. Weevle refuses to be part of Mr. Guppy's schemes just as Mr. Smallweed, with his granddaughter Judy, arrives. Mr. Smallweed tells them that Mr. Krook is his wife's brother and he has come to claim his property.

Mr. Tulkinghorn confirms in court the relation between Mr. Krook and Mr. Smallweed, entitled now to take possession of all the inheritance. Mr. Guppy visits Lady Dedlock to let her know that he is unable to deliver her the letters because the person who had them died. He thinks the letters have been lost as well. Mr. Guppy leaves coming face to face with Mr. Tulkinghorn, who just arrives.

In Chapter 34 Mr. George receives a letter demanding him to pay the rest of his loan immediately. He is unable to fulfill this request. As Mr. Bagnet cosigned the loan, he may have to repay the entire debt. They both visit Joshua Smallweed, but he shouts at them and sends them to their lawyer. When they visit Mr. Tulkinghorn, he agrees to free Mr. George from his obligation if he gives up the letter written by Hawdon. Mr. George is forced to agree to save his friends. When he visits the Bagnets later that day, he advises their children to take care of their mother while they can.

In Chapter 35 Esther recovers with a scarred face after being sick for an extended period of time. She goes to the country to restore her strengths. Miss Flite visits her there, telling her that a lady took from Jenny the handkerchief she used to cover her dead baby.

The ship Mr. Woodcourt worked on sank but he himself is safe and is to return. Esther expects that she will have to give him up. At the same time she is happy not to be involved with him because she would have to suffer disappointment.

In Chapter 36 Esther sees her face at Mr. Boythorn's place. She still keeps the dried flowers from Mr. Woodcourt.

Lady Dedlock meets Esther and confesses that she is her mother asking for forgiveness and secrecy. She shows Esther the handkerchief she left with Jenny's baby, giving her a letter explaining that her godmother was her sister, who secretly raised her. Esther assures her of her feelings. For fear of Mr. Tulkinghorn, who tries to find out about everything, she has to keep everything secret. When Esther reads her letter, she becomes worried that she herself can be the destruction haunting Lady Dedlock's house.





Chapter 37 reveals Richard obsessed with the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit, refusing to be accountable even to Mr. Jarndyce. He is suspicious of Mr. Jarndyce's intentions, neglects his work, and befriends Mr. Skimpole, who takes advantage of him.

Mr. Skimpole introduces Mr. Vholes to Esther as Richard's lawyer. Both Ada and Esther are unsuccessful in their pleadings with Richard as well as Mr. Skimpole to stop supporting Richard's pursuits.

## Chapter 33-37 Analysis

Mr. Krook's death is the beginning of the end. The letters that had been in his possession have been hidden until now. Their content is feared by Lady Dedlock while Mr. Tulkinghorn wants to take advantage of that. All the main characters become affected.

Lady Dedlock is aware of the inevitability of their exposure, as it exposes her past. Although she fears its consequences, she loses the motivation to persevere with preserving her world. With Hawdon's death being revealed, her world falls apart. Even despite Mr. Tulkinghorn's initial intention to preserve everything the way it was, things get out of control.

Mr. Guppy loses his part in the discovery of the letters that linked him to Esther's past. Other events also indicate devastating changes. Mr. George receives a notice to pay off his debt immediately. Only if he gives up his letter from Hawdon he can save his friends, the Bagnets, from bearing the responsibility to repay his loan. He is forced to give up the paper that allows Mr. Tulkinghorn to identify Hawdon's handwriting.

Esther's sickness is heroic and private. This experience changes her outlook on the world. She maintains her positive outlook, even though her face is scarred, happy to keep her friendships. She is worried more about how others would react to changes in her appearance, including Ada and Mr. Woodcourt. She wants to spare Ada the pain of seeing her disfigured. She is happy that she does not have to suffer disappointment of losing Mr. Woodcourt. Ada's delicate nature seems to concern Esther, as it affects Ada's ability to control her own life.

Lady Dedlock's fear is stimulated by the harshness with which illegitimate children were treated. The fear makes her pursuits desperate. She recovers Esther's handkerchief left with the dead baby. She is distressed about Mr. Tulkinghorn's access into her private life. The harshness of Esther's upbringing involved the strictest secrecy. Her existence can no longer be hidden.

Reputation in these times meant everything and Esther wants to preserve most of all her mother's secret. Richard drifts even further away from his closest friends, distancing from Mr. Jarndyce with the growing lack of care. His association with Mr. Skimpole and Mr. Vholes becomes stronger.



Richard blindly believes in the inevitability of a positive result. He gets more into debts, increasing his sense of hopelessness and despair. Esther is worried that Richard proceeds in the wrong direction. The only thing she can do is to influence Mr. Skimpole not to take advantage of Richard but she fails in this.



# Chapter 38-42

## Chapter 38-42 Summary

Esther becomes busy but visits Caddy Jellyby in London. Caddy is married now, teaches dancing, and learns music.

They both go to see Mr. Guppy. Esther reveals her face and allows him to withdraw from any commitments regarding their marriage. He apologizes but readily agrees.

In Chapter 39 Mr. Vholes assures Richard that he has good prospects of winning his suit. He asks him for an advance for his expenses in the amount of 20 pounds and informs him that he is aware that his interests differ from those of Mr. Jarndyce. He assures Richard that he is going to pursue his interests, skillfully gaining his trust.

Mr. Weevle goes with Mr. Guppy to collect his belongings from Mr. Krook's place. They consider the possibility that the letters they were to get from Mr. Krook are still in the shop. They meet Mr. Smallweed searching for anything of value and Mr. Tulkinghorn, who comments sarcastically on Mr. Guppy's acquaintance with Lady Dedlock. .

In Chapter 40 Sir Leicester is entertaining his guests following the election. His party lost along with large amounts of money that are suspected to be part of bribery. Volumnia admires Mr. Tulkinghorn, eager to hear his views on the subject of elections. He expresses his appreciation for the party in opposition with Mrs. Rouncewell's son. The lawyer, however, has no political views himself. He entertains the guests with a story of a lady who had an affair with a soldier. The story is in fact Lady Dedlock's story, who loses her composure when realizing it.

In Chapter 41 Mr. Tulkinghorn enters his room satisfied, only to be confronted by Lady Dedlock shortly afterwards. She wants to know what prompted him to tell her story in public even though he did not mention any names. She is concerned when he is going to reveal all its details. Her other concern is for her maid Rosa. She announces she is going to leave, but Mr. Tulkinghorn is worried about the effect it would have on Sir Leicester due to his infatuation with his wife. Unsure what to do with the newly acquired knowledge, he suggests that it is better if things remain unchanged for now. He stipulates that Lady Dedlock has to do the same.

Chapter 42 unveils Mr. Snagsby hounded by Hortense, raising suspicions of his jealous wife. Hortense traces Mr. Tulkinghorn. The French maid is resentful about being used by Mr. Tulkinghorn for her presentation in front of Jo. She demands that Mr. Tulkinghorn get her a new position, throwing the two sovereigns she received from him on the floor. She insists that she will continue with her pursuits until she gets what she wants. Mr. Tulkinghorn threatens her with jail, but Hortense departs unmoved.



## Chapter 38-42 Analysis

Esther is devoted to Caddy Jellyby rendering her help when needed. Caddy gets sick but soon recovers under care of Mr. Woodcourt. She is dedicated to her marriage and manages to satisfy her husband's father.

Esther wants to release Mr. Guppy from any commitments he may feel he has. She shows him her scarred face, hoping that it will ultimately discourage Mr Guppy from pursuing her or any proof of her background or past. She wants to do it in front of a witness to provide additional reassurance of her good intentions. Mr. Guppy finds it difficult to deal with everything, but is happy to withdraw from his commitments upon seeing her face.

Mr. Vholes is Richard's lawyer and he knows how to work the system. He knows how to encourage Richard in his pursuits and knows what to tell him when no results are achieved. Richard trusts his ability to represent him in the suit. Mr. Vholes assures him of his commitment until the end.

Mr. Smallweed with his grandchildren visit Mr. Krook's premises. They meet Mr. Tulkinghorn, who suspects that Mr. Guppy is close with Lady Dedlock. Mr. Guppy quickly explains that the association between him and a member of aristocracy ended.

The political climate in England becomes difficult. Sir Leicester's involvement in politics is ineffective despite enormous need for various political and administrative reforms.

Lady Dedlock faces Mr. Tulkinghorn, who seems to enjoy telling her story in front of their guests. Lady Dedlock handles his performance with extraordinary self-control and strength even he admires. His mission seems to be accomplished with unveiling yet another secret that enables more power.

Mr. Tulkinghorn is confronted by Lady Dedlock in his room. She is distressed with the revelation although it contained no names. Her situation makes her even more desperate as she appears to have lost everything. Mr. Tulkinghorn continues to exhibit cold calculative manner in his behavior, studying her reactions and strength. He admires her determination and courage. She wants to leave, but such movement may turn out to be destructive for Sir Leicester. Mr. Tulkinghorn is mostly interested in extending his power but he is unsure what to do with the secret. He realizes that Leicester is infatuated in her and it may be better that he finds out nothing about her past for now. If she acts the way she has acted so far, her marriage can be saved until he makes further decisions.

Mr. Tulkinghorn drives to London secretly. He is always the same, expressing everything in the same manner. Mr. Snagsby seeks help from him, being troubled by Medemoiselle Hortense raising his wife's suspicions.

Hortense is determined in her retribution against all those who wronged her, including now also Mr. Tulkinghorn. She demands that he arranges for her employment by

threatening him. She rejects the payment she received from him. Mr. Tulkinghorn is little concerned about her threats, making her aware that he is capable of putting her in jail. His words only aggravate her more.



# Chapter 43- 47

## Chapter 43- 47 Summary

Esther fears for her mother. She avoids all contact with her that can expose her, worried also that she may never see her again. She is preoccupied with Richard, negatively influenced by Mr. Skimpole. Mr. Jarndyce wants to even offer Mr. Skimpole money to stop seeing Richard.

They visit Mr. Skimpole, meeting his three daughters, and then they all travel to Bleak House. Unexpectedly, Sir Leicester arrives. He heard that Mr. Skimpole has an interest in art, which he also shares, but fears that they are discouraged from visiting him by Mr. Boythorn.

Esther thinks that such visits may expose Lady Dedlock and reveals everything about her background to Mr. Jarndyce. She learns that it was Boythorn who was in love with Ms. Barbary, her godmother, who rejected him to raise Esther.

In Chapter 44 Mr. Jarndyce gives advice to Esther, fearing Mr. Tulkinghorn. He thinks that he and Esther should keep everything secret. He proposes her marriage in a letter a week later. Esther feels flattered by the proposal. Even though he keeps quiet on the subject afterwards, she accepts his proposal.

In Chapter 45 Mr. Vholes visits Esther and Mr. Jarndyce, informing them that Richard is in debt while about to also lose his army commission. He requires payment for the work he did for Richard.

Esther decides to see Richard at Deal. She takes Charley and a letter from Ada with her. He gave up his commission but refuses to accept Ada's inheritance offered in the letter.

As they leave, Esther meets Allan Woodcourt, who has just returned home from India. Esther is touched by his warm attitude when seeing her scarred face. She suggests that Allan befriends Richard to support him and he is happy to oblige.

Chapter 46 shows Allan Woodcourt encountering Jenny in Tom-all-Alone's early in the morning. With a bruised forehead, she is waiting for the sun to warm her up after being beaten her husband. Allan offers to treat her forehead and Jenny accepts. As they converse, Jo appears. Jenny asks Allan to chase him. They met in Saint Alban's when they were both ill.

Allan finds out from Jo why he left Mr. Jarndyce's place. It was Mr. Bucket who took him to the hospital, giving him money to get out of London for good. Allan takes Jo with him to get him a place to stay.



In Chapter 47 Allan Woodcourt and Jo find Miss Flite, who left Mr. Krook's shop, asking for help. She suggests that they see Mr. George. He agrees to take care of Jo as a favor to Esther.

Allan brings Mr. Snagsby who agrees, upon Jo's request, to write an apology to Esther for making her sick. The next day Jo dies as Allan teaches him to pray.

## Chapter 43- 47 Analysis

Esther is unable to communicate with her mother but tries to help Richard face his problems. He is involved with Mr. Skimpole who manages to exert a destructive influence on him.

Esther attempts to analyze Mr. Skimpole's behavior. He inspires with youth and makes his other features less apparent. Mr. Jarndyce wants Mr. Skimpole to stop taking advantage of others and borrowing money, offering his financial support himself. Mr. Skimpole ignores the offering. His childish nature turns into self-serving pursuits that only Mr. Skimpole understands in his want of freedom and independence. His family is equally absurd.

Sir Leicester appears to be welcoming Mr. Skimpole and friends into his place, which makes Esther fear for her mother. She decides to reveal everything about her background to Mr. Jarndyce.

Following her revelation, Mr. Jarndyce proposes her marriage in a letter. Their unexpected relationship develops despite her obvious feelings for Mr. Woodcourt. Esther thinks her relationship with Mr. Woodcourt has little chance of success and accepts Mr. Jarndyce's proposal. He himself remains silent on the matter but is happy to hear she agrees.

Mr. Wholes further exacerbates Richard's inevitable demise towards the fatal end. No one and nothing can help him. Even Mr. Jarndyce is unable to do so.

Dickens introduces another romance in Esther's life rather than being only absorbed with her relationship with older and respectful Mr. Jarndyce. Esther, being mostly concerned about others, tirelessly tries to rescue Richard and just as she thinks she achieves her purpose it turns out that Richard returns to his previous course of action. She needs reassurance yet she provides comfort to Mr. Woodcourt who is to undertake another voyage. She is still concerned about Richard asking Mr. Woodcourt to become his friend.

Allan Woodcourt engages with Esther's concerns. He is drawn into contact with Jo and Jenny through his compassion. The mystery of Jo's disappearance is further revealed. The connection even between minor characters helps to advance both the revelation and suspense. The characters are challenged in both their weaknesses and pursuits. Jo is destined to fail for his lack of prospects and lack of pursuits other than survival. There is no place in London for children like Jo, who is either used or chased away.



Allan takes Jo to Mr. George who agrees to help. Jo is now dangerously sick. George shows him his bed while Allan gets medicines for Jo. The following day Jo's health deteriorates. As Allan teaches him a prayer, Jo dies. His death is sudden and needless.





# Chapter 48-52

## Chapter 48-52 Summary

Lady Dedlock wants to dismiss Rosa to spare her dealing with the scandal. Mr. Tulkinghorn does not approve of Rosa's departure, considering such act to be against the agreement between him and Lady Dedlock. Consequently, he is going to reveal her secret, but refuses to say when. Upon his return home, he is murdered.

Chapter 49 unveils Mrs. Bagnet's birthday. Her family gets ready to celebrate, and invites Mr. George. Upon proposing a toast, Mr. Bucket unexpectedly appears and joins them. He leaves with George, arresting him for the murder of Mr. Tulkinghorn. George has been seen at Mr. Tulkinghorn's place, and he admits he was there on the night of the murder.

In Chapter 50 Esther receives a short letter from Caddy Jellyby letting her know that she is sick. Caddy thinks she would feel better if Esther came to see her. In the end, Esther, Ada, and Mr. Jarndyce go to London, arranging for Mr. Woodcourt to attend her. Soon Caddy recovers. It is also Ada's birthday but she seems distressed. Esther thinks she is preoccupied with Richard.

In Chapter 51 Mr. Woodcourt fulfills his promise to be a friend to Richard, visiting him as soon as he gets to London. Richard looks worn out. He admits he is not doing well with the suit, and feels as if he was dragged into a net.

When Mr. Woodcourt informs Esther about his meeting, she fears that Mr. Vholes managed to get Ada's property. Esther visits Richard with Ada, who behaves unusually. At Richard's place she admits that she has been secretly married to him for two months and will not be coming back. Both Mr. Jarndyce and Esther worry about her.

Chapter 52 unveils Mr. Woodcourt coming to Bleak House with the alarming news that Mr. George has been imprisoned for the murder of Mr. Tulkinghorn. They are all certain of his innocence and immediately visit him in jail. Mr. George assures them that he is not involved with the murder, but refuses to have a lawyer, whom he distrusts, considering the truth as sufficient to clear his name. When the Bagnets visit him he tells them that on the night of the murder he saw a woman at Mr. Tulkinghorn's place who reminded him of Esther. Mrs. Bagnet travels to Lincolnshire to bring George's mother.

## Chapter 48-52 Analysis

Lady Dedlock is a character who cannot be saved even though her position seems strong, assuring the best opportunities to prosper. She is elegant and admired. Most of all she is loved by her husband, despite being dissatisfied with the state of her matters. Even though she treats Rosa well, she is unable to assure her own survival.



Her strength of character is admired even by Mr. Tulkinghorn. He also meets a fatal end despite being powerful and strong. His position gives little indication that he is also preparing his own downfall when gaining enemies. The similarity between Mr. Tulkinghorn and Lady Dedlock involves their strength. As Lady Dedlock is unfortunate to face dangerous Tulkinghorn, so is Tulkinghorn in meeting such an enemy as Hortense who is desperate to exert her revenge on both. His death is a relief, as opposed to Jo's death, which seems needless.

Mrs. Bagnet's birthday is prepared, as usual, by Mr. Bagnet while children follow his directions. He wants it to be a treat while George is going to accompany them. When George turns up he is pale and shocked. He is still affected by Jo's death. His hands shake and he is even unable to fasten his own present. The family appears to be warm-hearted and caring for each other. It is the only family that has no significant issues to resolve of their own making. The only problem has been caused by Mr. George but is quickly solved.

They propose a toast while Mr. Bucket appears. He engages in conversation at first inquiring about music and musical instruments and then entertains children. The children think that George is not himself.

George and Mr. Bucket leave together. When they are alone, Mr. Bucket stops George and arrests him for the murder of Mr. Tulkinghorn who was shot the day before. George is stunned by this revelation. George happened to be near Mr. Tulkinghorn's place and have been previously described as mad and threatening.

Caddy Jellyby and her husband represent a married couple that has to carry the burden of their parents. Caddy receives little help from her mother while her husband has to learn to deal with his father's odd proclivities, including taking advantage of him. Esther attends her friend in need, spending time with Caddy while she is sick.

Her mother also tries to help but becomes immediately preoccupied with her own charity matters. Esther notices that there is something wrong with Ada. She notices that Ada behaves as if she was hiding something. Esther tries to ignore her worries but the distance created between them remains. The revelation of Ada's and Richard's secret marriage is disconcerting. This otherwise fortunate event provokes worries and pity, presenting little chance of success.

Mr. Woodcourt fulfils his promise to be a friend to Richard to help Esther, although he is also worried about Richards' pursue of the case. Richard finally admits that he is not doing well with the suit and that it is a trap. He is unable to provide care for him and Ada.

Esther and Mr. Jarndyce learn about Mr. Tulkinghorn's murder and disbelieve that George is the murderer. Mr. Woodcourt agrees with them. They decide to help George in the same way he helped Mr. Gridley and Jo. Mr. Jarndyce goes to see George with Phil.



George appears too idealistic in his view of the world and truth. His refusal to hire a lawyer when accused of murder is partly dictated by his belief that truth would prevail as well as a distrust of lawyers. His dislike of Mr. Tulkinghorn has also contributed to such attitude.



# Chapter 53-57

## Chapter 53-57 Summary

Sir Leicester hires Mr. Bucket to find Mr. Tulkinghorn's murderer. The detective attends Mr. Tulkinghorn's funeral, observing it with scrutiny. He examines letters, discovering some written by the same person that may incriminate Lady Dedlock. He also finds out from Sir Leicester's servant Mercury that Lady Dedlock went out on the night of the murder.

In Chapter 54 Mr. Bucket meets Mr. Leicester in the library. He informs him that Mr. Tulkinghorn knew of Lady Dedlock's past lover, whom she met before she married Sir Leicester. Mr. Smallweed arrives to demand money for the letters that belonged to Hawdon. He found them, read them, and handed them to Mr. Tulkinghorn. Now Mr. Smallweed wants them back. Mr. Bucket knows that Mr. Tulkinghorn paid for the letters already.

The Chadbands relate that Mrs. Rachael helped to raise Esther. Mrs. Snagsby also appears, claiming that everybody plotted against her. Mr. Bucket arrests Hortense. He can prove she wrote letters that accused Lady Dedlock of murder. He also knows that she tried to dispose of the murder weapon, her pistol, in the lake when having tea with his wife. The two suspects, Mr. George Rouncewell and Lady Dedlock visited Mr. Tulkinghorn, but were both innocent. Sir Leicester is shocked, dealing with the revelations on his own.

In Chapter 55 Mrs. Bagnet brings George's mother so that she can reunite her with her son. George is ready now to accept a lawyer. Mrs. Rouncewell asks Lady Dedlock for help but she has to deal with a letter accusing her of Mr. Tulkinghorn's murder.

Mr. Guppy arrives announcing that the letters from Hawdon have not been destroyed. There may be extortion attempts by people like Mr. Smallweed, who holds them. Lady Dedlock writes a letter to her husband saying that she is accused of murder but innocent, describing what happened on the night of the murder. She admits she is guilty of other offences he may hear of, and leaves.

Chapter 56 unveils Lady Dedlock missing while her letter to Sir Leicester is on the table. Sir Leicester has a stroke and is unable to talk, only communicating by writing. Mrs. Rouncewell tells him that his wife left. When he is better, he gets hold of his wife's letter but then has a relapse. Upon waking up later on, he hires Mr. Bucket to find his wife with the message that he forgives her.

Mr. Bucket informs Mrs. Rouncewell upon encountering her that her son is discharged. He finds Esther's handkerchief when searching Lady Dedlock's room. He proceeds to the Shooting Gallery to find out from George Esther's address and then to Mr. Jarndyce to ask him to allow Esther to search for her mother with him.



In Chapter 57 Esther and Mr. Bucket seek any traces of her mother around London. They give her description at a police station. Upon arriving at Saint Alban's they discover that Lady Dedlock passed this way before them. Mr. Bucket knows about Esther's contact with Jo. He tried to move him away so that Lady Dedlock's affairs were kept quiet. His removal of Jo from Mr. Jarndyce's place was aided by the bribe he paid to Mr. Skimpole. They find Liz and learn that Jenny left to Lunnun after meeting a lady looking pale and exhausted. They lose Lady Dedlock's trail, and decide to look for Jenny.

## Chapter 53-57 Analysis

Mr. Bucket investigates the murder of Mr. Tulkinghorn while his friends attend his funeral. He is a thorough man that can reach any place any time. He is also analytical and hard working. The mystery is further enhanced through the detective part of the story.

As Sir Leicester attends Mr. Tulkinghorn's funeral along with Lord Doodle, William Buffy and a cousin, Mr. Bucket carefully examines the procession from a distance, observing everything in detail. His use of detective methods is admired by those who know him. Even despite the limited means he has at his disposal, his methods prove effective.

Mr. Bucket reveals who committed the murder, along with the mystery of Lady Dedlock's previous lover. Everybody wants to benefit through this revelation, including Mr. Smallweed who demands money for the letters he handed to Mr. Tulkinghorn. It is Hortense who killed Mr. Tulkinghorn out of revenge.

Mrs. Rouncewell, who found that her son is in prison, wants to help him asking Lady Dedlock for assistance. Lady Dedlock receives a letter accusing her of murder just as Mr. Guppy informs her that Captain's Hawdon's letters have not been destroyed and may be used as blackmail. This revelation adds suspense as Lady Dedlock is unaware of the investigation results.

She realizes that everything is to be revealed and she has to leave. She writes a letter to Sir Leicester describing the accusation she is facing and that she only followed Mr. Tulkinghorn to plead with him and had nothing to do with the murder. Mr. Guppy's visit determines her departure.

Lady Dedlock is unaware that Hortense has been discovered to be the murderess. She leaves and her whereabouts are unknown. Her letter to Sir Leicester is on the table and he himself suffers a stroke.

Her pursuit is made difficult because of snowy weather. Her death is foreshadowed by the handkerchief she recovered from the baby that also died.

Mr. George has been released but Mr. Bucket has one more difficult task to fulfill. He previously tried to free Lady Dedlock from suspicions by removing Jo from the area. It



shows his sympathy towards Lady Dedlock, who may have been better predisposed to face her future had she known that she had support in her husband and friends.

Esther joins Mr. Bucket in the search for her mother. Their pursuit adds to the suspense of the story as well as shows Mr. Bucket as skillful and kind towards others.

The search through police stations, likely acquaintances or friends proves fruitless. It becomes evident that this pursuit has little chance of success. It has also been complicated by Sir Leicester's stroke and inability to communicate.

Although they manage to follow Lady Dedlock's journey to some extent. they ultimately become lost. The change in clothing between Lady Dedlock and Jenny add to the difficulties in finding her. They have to follow Jenny as they lose her trail.



# Chapter 58-62

## Chapter 58-62 Summary

Sir Leicester is still sick amidst the spreading rumors about Lady Dedlock. He watches the window, unable to talk. He wants to see Mr. George remembering him when he was young. Mr. George becomes familiar with the house.

Chapter 59 shows Mr. Bucket and Esther arriving at Islington. When passing Chancery Lane they encounter Mr. Woodcourt, who has been visiting despondent Richard. He joins them in search.

They arrive at Mr. Snagsby's office. Mr. Bucket knows of a letter held by Guster that can help them in their search. Esther manages to extract information from Guster, concerning a poor looking woman that approached her to deliver a letter. The letter is written by Lady Dedlock, who has no other hope but to proceed to a place that has been on her mind. As she inquired with Guster about the burial ground, they rush there only to find Lady Dedlock dressed in Jenny's clothes, dead at the gate. Jenny, dressed in Lady Dedlock's clothes, went around the country to mislead the pursuers.

In Chapter 60 Esther becomes sick, but visits Ada as soon as she recovers. Ada suffers due to Richard's delusions about the case; he is the most frequent visitor in the court. Miss Flite recognizes his zest and makes him executor of her will. Richard is in low spirits but glad to see Esther and Mr. Jarndyce. Mr. Woodcourt declines voyages in the pursuit of his work, applying for a medical position for the poor. Ada is pregnant and her only hope is her child, as Richard is most likely to be ruined.

Chapter 61 unveils Esther determined to stop Mr. Skimpole from using Richard, driving him thus into poverty, and pays him a visit. He agrees at first but persists with the same course of action in the end. She discovers a proclivity in Mr. Skimpole to suit his own purpose, although appearing childish. When confronted about being bribed by Mr. Bucket to release Jo, he justifies it with his lack of understanding of matters that relate to money. The relations between him and Mr. Jarndyce become distant. A few years later he dies, leaving a diary portraying the way the world used him, and describing Mr. Jarndyce as selfish.

Esther learns that Mr. Woodcourt is still in love with her and realizes that the feeling is mutual. She thinks she is not free to accept his love because she is involved with Mr. Jarndyce.

In Chapter 62 Esther agrees to marry Mr. Jarndyce whenever he wants. They decide to marry in one month. While they converse Mr. Bucket appears, bringing with him Mr. Smallweed. The money lender discovered among Mr. Krook's papers a new will, and wants to profit through this. Mr. Jarndyce announces that he first wants to investigate the value of the will, and immediately takes the document to Mr. Kenge. The will has a



later date and advances the interests of Mr. Richard Carstone more than that of Mr. Jarndyce.

## Chapter 58-62 Analysis

Sir Leicester becomes more friendly and more warm-hearted to those around him. He is friendly with Mr. George, but most of all forgives his wife, although too late. Sir Leicester remains sick although he can speak. He wants to watch the window, anticipating the news of his wife. The events inspire him to become a warm-hearted and forgiving man.

Sir Leicester faces the dreadful weather while George becomes acquainted with the Chesney Wold. Sir Leicester keeps asking for anything that could have been missed or overlooked but there is nothing that can help in Lady Dedlock's search.

The relentless pursuit is doomed due to the amount of time that has elapsed since Lady Dedlock left and weather conditions. Esther fears for her mother and they finally reach Chancery Lane where they meet Mr. Woodcourt, who joins them.

They all visit Mr. Snagsby and find from Guster that Lady Dedlock approached her giving her a letter. She proceeded towards the burial ground, where they also find her. Her death seems partly fatal, partly tragic, and partly of her own making. Her boredom with her current life may have been due to the loss she felt missing her lover and her child. The emptiness of her life may have been difficult to bear while the realization of her real loss made it even more difficult to bear.

Snowy weather contributed to the inevitability of the end induced by her small world. Her death can be compared to Mr. Krook's, although it is at the same time needless as she is fully forgiven.

Esther falls sick but soon recovers and is visited by Mr. Woodcourt. She resumes her work and Mr. Jarndyce sends her to see Ada.

Richard remains persistent in his hopes of winning the case but his situation is getting worse along with his finances. He looks ill and anxious. Ada fears the worse, only hoping that their child will make her proud.

Esther is unable to avert the negative influence Mr. Skimpole on Richard at first as Mr. Skimpole has an explanation for everything and can justify anything if it suits his own purpose. His relationship with Esther and Mr. Jarndyce becomes severed when his real attitudes are exposed and she never sees Mr. Skimpole again.

Richard is unable to change the course of events. Ada feels guilty that she is the only reason why Richard persists in his case.

Esther feels that she is committed to Mr. Jarndyce and agrees to marry him. A new will discovered by Mr. Smallweed is finally to end the suit. Although it changes the outlook in



the case and is claimed as important, it only raises the hopes of those involved. The case remains purposeless.



# Chapter 63-67

## Chapter 63-67 Summary

George sells his shooting gallery as he prefers to work for Sir Leicester. He travels north and meets his brother, receiving a warm welcome. He learns that his nephew Watt is getting married to Rosa, and agrees to give her away at the wedding. George writes to Esther, explaining why he had to hand Hawdon's letter over to Mr. Tulkinghorn.

Chapter 64 unveils Richard excited at the prospects of the new will. Mr. Jarndyce visits Mr. Woodcourt and asks Esther to join him. He doubts that he can make Esther as happy as Mr. Woodcourt can, learning that Mr. Woodcourt and Esther are in love. Esther agrees to marry Mr. Woodcourt. Mr. Guppy makes one last attempt to win her affection. He appears with his mother and Mr. Jobling in Bleak House and proposes to her. When Mr. Jarndyce refuses for Esther, Mrs. Guppy become so infuriated that she needs to be taken out of the house by her son and Mr. Jobling.

In Chapter 65 the case in the matter of Jarndyce and Jarndyce is heard again to the amusement of all but those directly involved. As the entire estate has been absorbed in legal costs, the new will has not even been considered. Richard falls sick and dies. Miss Flite releases her birds.

In Chapter 66 Sir Dedlock managed to hush any rumors about his family. Lady Dedlock has been buried at the Chesney Wold mausoleum. Sir Leicester continues his dispute with Mr. Boythorn in his otherwise quiet estate. Volumnia entertains him with reading, bored with political matters. The life in Chesney Wold subsides into apathy.

Chapter 67 unveils Esther happily married for seven years. She takes care of Ada and her son, Richard, following his father's death, while she herself has two daughters. Mr. Jarndyce becomes guardian to Ada and her son, inviting her to stay with him. Charley marries a miller while Caddy learns to adjust to Mr. Turveydrop's habits. Mr. Jarndyce's generosity is rewarded as Ada's son becomes fond of him. The Eastern wind that used to worry Mr. Jarndyce now ceases.

## Chapter 63-67 Analysis

George's family remains intact, reunited by his return. George decides to work for Sir Leicester and visits his brother. He manages to regain his relationship with his brother. His family survives due to its values and virtues.

Mr. Jarndyce recognizes the feelings Esther and Mr. Woodcourt have for each other and facilitates the confession of their feelings. Mr. Jarndyce wants Esther to be happy and thinks she would achieve that with Mr. Woodcourt. Esther agrees to marry Mr. Woodcourt, achieving happiness despite her background but due to her qualities.



The Jarndyce and Jarndyce case is heard but is found to be absorbed in costs and the new will cannot be considered, driving Richard into despair and death. Richard's tragic end seems to be deplorable partly due to its inevitability. Even despite various indications that no positive end can be expected, its lack of hope is disappointing.

There was never to be any hope in the gloomy and in need of much repair Chancery, absorbing lives and desires.

Ghostly sightings remain present in Chesney Wold, which becomes dull and empty. Sir Leicester realizes the extent of his love for Lady Dedlock, and is less interested in political life.

Family relations that are based on trust become the most successful and ultimately survive.

Despite Richard's death, both Esther and Ada lead a happy life.

Such an ending glorifies family life as most important, although if love is misguided it can also lead to destruction, as in Richard's example.



# **Bleak House**

## **Summary**

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## **Analysis**

# **Bleak House**

## **Summary and Analysis**

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# **Bleak House**

**Summary**

**Analysis**

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## **Summary and Analysis**



# Characters

## Esther Summerson

Esther Summerson is raised by Ms. Barbary, her godmother, who denies her the knowledge of her background, only disclosing that it would be better if she had never been born. Her godmother never mentioned to her anything about her mother's grave or her parents past, as she regarded as suitable for Esther only what was useful and needed.

Esther, in her modesty, considers herself to be only a little clever as she has no means of quick understanding. She has always longed for friendship and love. Her only companion in her childhood was a little doll while she was brought up with care but without idleness.

While staying with Mrs. Barbary, Esther was never allowed to have friends or make friendships. She was not allowed to accept invitations and had difficulties getting along with children in her class that were older than her.

Her disposition is affectionate and her manner quickens with affection. When her godmother dies, Kenge from Kenge and Carboy tell her that they can renew the offer previously made to Miss Barbary to place Esther at a boarding school.

Esther's guardian is Mr. Jarndyce and as part of the suit she also becomes part of it. After she finishes her school, he undertakes to be her guardian and care for her. Esther is always grateful, full of compassion, and care for others. In her devotion she often forgets to care for herself.

## Richard Carstone

Richard is Ada's cousin, handsome, inclined to laugh and displaying a light-hearted manner. He is good-natured and sometimes thoughtless. Despite his good intentions, his carelessness and getting involved with people like Harold Skimpole, who live on other people's money, leads him to his own demise.

Richard is full of enthusiasm and passion but seems to be consumed by these emotions in any pursuit he undertakes. He is described as an excellent acquisition to the society. His efforts are appreciated and admired. He is also described to be a Neophyte but the choices he makes are made without proper consideration. Despite his easy disposition, he has a leisurely way of going about his profession without a positive interest. Easily discouraged in his professional engagements, he is adamant about the legal suit. He finds professional engagements tiresome. While unable to make a decision about his career, he seems to be indifferent to anything he does.



Richard also displays a strange attitude towards financial matters. When calculating his spending, he justifies higher expenditures with savings on other things that could be purchased instead. His restless nature disrupts him in considering anything seriously.

He becomes entirely possessed by the chances of success in his legal court case concerning his inheritance. His reliance on the right course of the suit becomes fatal. The oppressive power of Chancery leads to his death. He fails to deliver a proper home for Ada, for whom he chases the law suit.

## Lady Dedlock

Lady Dedlock is married to Sir Leicester Dedlock. She has a daughter Esther and is regarded as wealthy and refined. Changing her accommodation releases her from boredom. She has an illegitimate child with Captain Hawdon, her fiancé prior to her marriage. Believing the child died at birth, as was told her by her sister Mrs. Barbary, she marries Sir Leicester. When the truth comes out she flees from her husband's anger and dies where her fiancé was buried.

## Ada Clare

Ada is Mr. Jarndyce's ward and Richard's cousin. She is pretty, with golden hair but naïve and sweet. Becoming close with Esther, she confesses everything to her and they become best friends. Her relationship with Richard, although based on love, turns out sour and unhappy because of his pursuit of the court case. She secretly marries him and even shares her inheritance, but Richard's debts and reckless obsession with the court case in the matter of Jarndyce and Jarndyce makes their relationship disintegrate.

## Sir Leicester Dedlock

Sir Leicester is a baronet from an old family. He is respectable, instilling the notion of his own family's importance. He regards the Dedlocks as essential to the existence of the world. He admires nature, but such a notion is always connected with the notion of county families. His most important aspect of life is maintaining his integrity, which needs to be achieved at any price even if it is the matter of life or death. His conscience and generosity are part of his honorable and spirited attitude towards life. Although truthful, he is prejudiced and unreasonable.

He is older than Lady Dedlock and suffers from gout that affects his walking. In appearance he is well presented, with grey hair and whiskers. His dressing is always perfect and always buttoned, dominated by light colors, such as a white waistcoat or blue coat.

He eventually changes, weakening after the disappearance of Lady Dedlock. He wants to forgive her but his intentions are expressed too late.



## Mr. Jarndyce

Mr. Jarndyce is Esther's guardian who owns Bleak House. He also takes care of Ada Clare and Richard Carstone. He can be generous but does not like to display it in public, finding it difficult to deal with gratitude. He is considerate and understanding. He is involved in Jarndyce and Jarndyce but, aware of its sad consequences for other members of his family, he tries to distance himself from it. Mr. Jarndyce proposes to marry Esther and she accepts it but he realizes that she is in love with Mr. Woodcourt and steps aside.

## Harold Skimpole

Harold Skimpole is a man who engages others to pay his debts. He is poor and wants to live outside of the business area of the world. As he himself admits, he knows nothing about money and does not want to know. Although somewhat comical at the beginning, Skimpole becomes a sorrow example of the way one human being uses another. He accepts his own position even though somewhere at the back of his mind he realizes that what he is doing is not quite right. Perhaps his book written before he dies explaining why he thought and acted in a particular way is the way to justify what he did also to himself.

## Mr. Tulkinghorn

Mr. Tulkinghorn is a Sir Leicester's lawyer who is also involved in the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case. He holds many secrets, including Lady Dedlock's, and in the end threatens to reveal them. As he also threatens other people, he is murdered. The investigation finds that Hortense, a former maid of Lady Dedlock, is responsible for his death.

## Grandfather Smallweed

Joshua Smallweed is a money lender. His body is partly paralyzed. As he lends money, he takes advantage of the opportunities it creates. He lends money to George, and tries to get hold of the paper he has written by Captain Hawdon.

## Mr. William Guppy

Mr. Guppy is employed by Kenge and Carboy. He falls in love with Esther Summerson and wants to marry her. Her refusal incites him to find out about her past to gain her sympathy. Mr. Guppy recognizes that Esther resembles Lady Dedlock. His investigation confirms that Lady Dedlock is Esther's mother.



## Objects/Places

### Lincoln's Inn Hall

A place where the Lord Chancellor sits.

### Jarndyce and Jarndyce

A legal suit that goes on for years as lawyers are unable to resolve it—to the extent that it became a joke.

### Lincolnshire

A place where it constantly rains, pursued by the fashionable.

### Greenleaf

Miss Donny's house and a boarding school attended by Esther.

### Kenge and Carboy

An office made of gravestones in a churchyard outside cloisters.

### Krook, Rag and Bottle Warehouse also called shop Chancery

A shop with another sign, Krook, Dealer in Marine Stores, as well as information on goods sold, belonging to Mr. Krook. The shop appeared to be in the legal area with ink bottles, law books, and letters.

### Newgate Market

A market in London

### Barnet

A place on the way to Bleak House where horses were prepared for Esther, Ada, and Rick.



## **Bleak House**

Bleak House was an old fashioned house owned by Mr. Jarndyce, located on the top of a hill. The house has three peaks in front, and a circular sweep that leads to the porch. The house is little but comfortable.

## **Chesney Wold**

A house owned by Sir Leicester in Lincolnshire, where Sir Leicester and Lady Dedlock live with constant rain.





# Themes

## Law and society

Dickens expresses his protest against the law that delivers little justice while being arrogant and full of folly. Chancery is the most unjust system there is and even the name suggests that the result has more to do with an accidental chance rather than the steady pursuit of justice. It is surrounded in fog, dragged by fog, and at the very center of the fog. Its judgments are clouded with ignorance and pretense.

Those that engage in it most deeply become ruined by the system, despite the fact that the system is considered great by lawyers. Dickens shows that the system is able to finance itself, leaving those that come for justice penniless. It is against any reason to put trust in something that turns out to be only a matter of chance.

Richard Carstone is one of the most affected characters. His life ends up in tragedy even though he is not involved directly with the law suit. Both Mr. Gridley and even Sir Leicester Dedlock gain little by law suits that make their lives unhappy, full of anxiety, and even death.

Mr. John Jarndyce, who tries to pretend that his law suit does not exist, manages to lead a relatively happy life that is greatly improved through his generosity and care for others.

Only your own efforts seem to be able to produce effects while relying on any form of assistance from law may lead to demise rather than delivery.

## Tragedy

The main theme is the tragedy of Richard Carstone, showing all the negative sides of engaging in legal battles.

Tragedy pervades human lives in Bleak House. Those that decide about other's lives remain unhappy as is the case with Mr. Tulkinghorn, who lives a lonely and secluded life while connected with other lives through keeping their secrets. The power that he holds over them is what makes such pursuit exciting. His admiration for power is reflected in his admiration of a Roman that is depicted on his ceiling.

Lives are ruined by Chancery through incompetence and destructiveness. The court structure is unstable while the entire system is in disarray. Those who live on the streets as well as those who exert law over the rest of the society live lives of misery—evident in their treating it as a game or being unable make any choices due to poverty. Those that hold the papers, such as Mr. Krook, in the end resolve cases although they die.



Nemo, who becomes "no one," also has to die for he has lost purpose in life. His personal tragedy starts with an unsuccessful relationship and the inability to keep his family. His loneliness has to be his end.

In a similar way death is inevitable for Mrs Dedlock, who is too cold to realize that she has lost what is most important in her life, her daughter. It is her denial of contact with her daughter that is alienating her and leading her towards doomed choices.

## Symbolism

Dickens engages symbolism in conveying various issues. The Chancery Court employs waste, delay and incidence rather than method. Its foggy atmosphere symbolizes confusion about everything that involves cases.

Rain that pervades various places, including Lady Dedlock's home, conveys sorrow and lack of hope. It is difficult to escape mud that is part of corruption.

The misery of Bleak House involves its name, the symbol of the unhappiness that is connected with the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit. The name Dedlock suggests the inescapable nature of death implying that death is imminent in the Dedlock family. Such insinuation is also evident through the ghostly walk that pervades the house.

In the same way the name Nemo means "no one" in Latin. Captain Hawdon's nickname reflects the reality of his existence deprived of friends, family, and even humane accommodation. As he sinks he becomes nobody.

Other symbols that are incorporated in the book are the cage of birds held by Miss Flite. They represent cases that are unresolved. Those that are trapped in such cages become oppressed by the system and their lives succumb to a dreary existence. Upon the result, such a cage can be opened and birds released. Consequently she opens the cage when the trial comes to an end.

Other symbols, such as the case Jarndyce vs. Jarndyce contains the same names, as if the case was conducted against the very person that initiates it. It can also mean that such cases become directed at society itself.



# Style

## Point of View

The story is narrated from two points of views. One narrator is Esther Summerson who describes her experiences in first person as if in a diary. She engages analysis and reflection. The other point of view is conveyed in the present tense in the third person.

The point of view is the same as the audience, with performances similar to stage performances. Unrealistic, expressionist, and allegorical expressions resemble theatrical forms. The reader is part of the third person narrator looking as an outsider which allows for distancing from the action while remaining uninvolved. There is little explanatory information that is not more narrative. Rather than describing expression Dickens uses action.

Esther appears to be objective but her position as depicting events in the first person leads to the inability to maintain objectivity. She assumes the position of a reader. The first person narration cannot be reliable as it is based on personal experiences, individual opinions, and subjective views. The reader needs to put together the information that incorporates selection. Her narration is sometimes random, made of observances, and sometimes thorough.

Instead of placing a protagonist as central to the plot as classic formula suggests, Dickens uses various elements that make one journey. Through Esther's point of view, Dickens presents her journey to become stronger and learning about herself. The more Esther learns about her past the more she gains control over her life.

The final narrative that is the third person remains an objective spectator. The point of view of Mr. Guppy provides a perspective that incorporates some part of society as well as part of legal profession that engages in not entirely legal pursuits, as if standing on cross roads.

## Setting

All sites that are depicted by Dickens are authentic. Although dreary, city sites remain most interesting. Bleak House takes place in or around 19th century London, depicting sites that are mostly authentic. The dense fog surrounding streets and suburbs features in London in that time. The Dedlocks lived in Lincolnshire that is part of east-central England, some 200 miles away from London.

St Albans, where Bleak House is situated, was on the outskirts of London in 1850. Windsor, the place where Esther Summerson was born, is 20 miles away from London. The main site that involves the Jarndyce case is set in Tom-All-alone that is full of misery while the two other worlds of Chancery and Chesney Wold are stagnant and



decayed. Each setting represents a different public sphere conveyed symbolically, with Chancery involving the entire society.

Although Chancery represents a great system as involving the entire society, members of this society engage in methods that are selfish and based on self-interest. Disease that arises from the way Chancery operates is represented by sickness that engulfs various characters. Chancery creates and spreads such disease that affects the entire country. Its corruption is also reflected in Parliament that engages either in power dividing factions or bribery to win elections. Chancery is also part of the emptiness that pervades society through either being childless, as is the case with the Dedlocks, or their deadened world full of coldness and boredom.

## Language and Meaning

Dickens uses language that engages anger, sarcasm, and sadness. He manages detachment through irony, allowing for certain justified ignorance on the part of the lawyers. Humorous character portrayal makes them appear amiable and sympathetic while sarcasm allows for delineating narrow mindedness, such as depicting Sir Leicester as well disposed towards nature as long as it is within certain limits and controllable. The language expresses the dependence between subjective expression and objective irony of social analysis. Revelation is conducted through the depiction of a certain individual's transformation.

Some parts are clearly impersonal. Language depicts vividly meaning through symbolism and underlying theme. The variety of means engage emotionally through combining reality with unreal elements of the story. Dickens provides a sense of mystery through revelation and partial revelation of certain aspects. Others combine only general aspects that induce distance.

The use of language allows for cinematic conveying of meaning, where fog represents symbolic significance. When emphasizing only certain parts of events, the narrative nature of the book acquires the function of a close up, where certain elements only become apparent.

Some parts incorporate the journalistic use of language, where only fragments of sentences are used while bitter irony interlaces with outrage. Language used allows the third person narration to connect various worlds. Such connections intensify with the progression of the book, further emphasizing the way everything is interconnected.

## Structure

Structure involves no string of incidents but a cycle of incidents. There are recurrent motives, artistic constancy, and artistic revenge. The story takes place in three symbolic places. The Bleak House turns into Chancery but ends with Bleak House. The unity of the book is fulfilled by motif and calculated in relation to the influence of evil doing in society.



With many themes and people intertwined, the plot ventures into various areas of life and meaning. All story-lines connect somewhere, while all characters are in one way or other involved in a legal suit.

The story combines various narratives. The main narrative is written by Esther Summerson whose life becomes successful despite many difficulties. Her personality and attitude towards life is positive. She delivers help while being affectionate about those around her. Her deliberation in her actions, along with careful consideration of others, allows her certain control in her life. She feels responsibility and she delivers it. Those that lose control over their lives through obsession, even a most noble one such as charity work, are punished. Only caring for others can assure that personal lives can thrive along with society.

Those who maintain their course of action exhibit insight and become rewarded as everything that is constant. Richard's constancy towards Ada is rewarded but he places financial interests above her. Lady Dedlock also terminates her contact with her daughter, fearing that it would destroy her. Despite such termination the inevitable happens, while her relationship with her daughter may have saved her.



## Quotes

"forget your worldly arts and play with me," p. 45.

"The universe," he observed, "makes rather an indifferent parent," p. 45.

"The weather is so very bad, down in Lincolnshire, that the liveliest imagination can scarcely apprehend its ever being fine again," p. 50.

"Come night, come darkness, for you cannot come too soon, or stay too long, by such a place as this!" p. 93.

"The Augurs of the Detective Temple invariably predict, that when Mr. Bucket and that finger are in much conference, a terrible avenger will be heard of before long," p. 437.

"the law is so despotic here, that it interferes to prevent any of our good English citizens from being troubled, even by a lady's visits, against his desire," p. 362.

"They said there could be no East wind where Somebody was; they said that wherever Dame Durden went, there was sunshine and summer air," p. 262.

"Thrown on the wide world, doom'd to wander and roam,  
Bereft of his parents, bereft of a home," p. 269.

"It is night in Lincoln's Inn—perplexed and troublous valley of the shadow of the law, where suitors generally find but little day—and fat candles are snuffed out in offices, and clerks have rattled down the crazy wooden stairs, and dispersed," p. 272.

"From tiers of staircase windows, clogged lamps like the eyes of Equity, bleared Argus with a fathomless pocket for every eve and an eye upon it, dimly blink at the stars," p. 272.

"It is a line steaming night to turn the slaughterhouses, the unwholesome trades, the sewerage, bad water, and burial-grounds to account, and give the Registrar of Deaths sortie extra business," p. 273.

"One disagreeable result of whispering is, that it seems to evoke an atmosphere of silence, haunted by the ghosts of sound—strange cracks and tickings, the rustling of garments that have no substance in them, and the tread of dreadful feet, that would leave no mark on the sea-sand or the winter snow," p. 278.

"Call the death by any name Your Highness will, attribute it to whom you will, or say it might have been prevented how you will. it is the same death eternally—inborn, inbred, engendered in the corrupted humours of the vicious body itself, and that only—Spontaneous Combustion, and none other of all the deaths that can be died," p. 280.



"It is, that he cannot have too little to do with people who are too deep for him, and cannot be too careful of interference with matters he does not understand; that the plain rule, is to do nothing in the dark, to be a party to nothing underhanded or mysterious, and never to put his foot where he cannot see the ground," p. 238.

# Topics for Discussion

Which character is most likable?

Which character is most dangerous and why?

To what extent does the law in the story represent the evil of the world?

What was the situation of orphaned children in England in the 19th century?

What was the situation of poor people in England in the 19th century?

To what extent does Bleak House represent the reality of the 19th century society?

What was the situation of the court system in 19th century England and to what extent does Dickens show its real faults?